

**Social Justice: An Ethnography of Experiences Lived and Choices Made**

by

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## **Abstract**

My research explores the historical-social-cultural-intersubjective context of the meanings for social justice held by a small group of leaders. Drawing on dialogue theory, I hold a stance in the research that it is in our language and our relationships with 'others' that we re-shape and co-create understandings of our social world. In relationship we draw out from one another our lived experiences and moments of dialogue, making visible in them the underlying currents of language that weave in and through our meanings of what is just. This research foregrounds the relational and language processes through which these leaders construct meanings for social justice. Over a six month period, a series of thoughtful conversations were held within a space that was carefully created to foster relationship and trust. By eliciting stories, engaging around questions prompted by deep curiosity, and fostering reflexivity, the processual moves of making meaning for what is socially just were made visible. Key theoretical concepts were drawn from the work of Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. The findings these conversations elicited are shared through four landscapes: stories of awakening and deepening awareness of social (in)justice; experiences and choices in acting in socially just ways; the creation of dialogic moments and the practices that foster them; and the language and utterances that contextualize these meanings for social justice. The core premise of my research is that our meanings of social justice are evolving and living constructs and the locus for acting justly is situated in our relationships. This research offers a glimpse into how our search for meanings of social justice dwells in the day-to-day lived experiences of people. Processual practices of meaning making made visible in the research are an ability to create relational space with 'others,' an understanding of one's own deeply held beliefs about one's self and about 'others,' the crossing of social boundaries that bring understanding of diverse perspectives, and a holding open to the ambiguity of contesting language forces.

## **Preface**

This research was conducted under the Okanagan Campus Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) certificate number H13-02122.

The research process was conducted in partnership with Christine Bonney. Together we designed the research questions, invited the participants into the research process, and co-facilitated the one-on-one conversations and the group teleconferences.

The conversations that comprise the research data were recorded. I am solely responsible for the transcribing of the conversations, the analysis of the research data, and the writing of the dissertation.

The individuals who participated in this research have each been asked to give their consent to the use of their first names. When a pseudonym was requested, that change has been made. The names, therefore, are a mix of real names and pseudonyms. Organizational names and other identifiers have also been changed, removed, or not specified except where specific permission has been provided and when the name is broad enough to maintain anonymity.

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I also have a heart full of thanks to my research companion and dear friend Christine Bonney. We started this journey filled with questions and uncertainty and one of our most common phrases to each other contained some version of the thought “if it weren’t for you doing this PhD with me, I would not be doing it at all!” Thank you for your encouragement and your ability to ask the questions of me that push me deeper into understanding my own thinking and assumptions.

My supervisor Diana French and my committee members, Naomi McPherson and John Burton, have each been critical to my arrival at this point of the academic process. The demands on their time is enormous and yet they made themselves available to me whenever needed and their insights and questions became important touchstones throughout this journey of learning. As a ‘later in life’ doctoral student the academic learning environment can be a challenge. Each of you gave to me the gift of independence, allowing me to explore areas of theory and approaches to research that supported my research questions. For this and everything else I say thank you.

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I have many close friends who have encouraged me in this journey. When many have questioned my sanity in taking on a doctorate at this stage in my life, each of you from the unique place you hold in my life have offered both encouragement and probing questions, along with a safe a place for me to speak out what is spinning around in my mind.

To my family I cannot fully articulate how important your love and support has been to me. To my parents who taught me well, thanks are insufficient. To my husband Larry—you have waited patiently for our season of travelling to arrive while I have pursued something that had always seemed a distant dream for me. Your quiet support and encouragement has been a gift. To our children Rachel, Alysha, and Dave—your continued confidence and faith that I can do this has kept me going. Each of you give me incredible hope for the future as I see in your lives a deep love for what is just.

## Chapter One Introduction

The notion of social justice is one that resonates viscerally for me, as something that is good and noble. Indeed, it seems a concept that most people in their hearts and minds would want to be a part of creating. Those of us born in the latter half of the 20th century have been privileged to live during a period marked by dramatic shifts in our societies' awareness of human rights and social justice, shifts largely attributed to the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. There may never have been another time in history in which the unjust acts of human beings against one another have been so intensely theorized, witnessed, documented, and debated. Nor, perhaps, has there previously been a time in which people, nations, and global institutions have been more prepared to address injustices through legal, national and international frameworks, and social movements. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the women's movement of the 1970s, the fall of apartheid in South Africa, the actions of *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina, and the global war on poverty all demonstrate the focus of attention on human rights and social justice (Odinkalu 1999; Ignatieff 2002; Smith and Schaeffer 2004; Johnson 2005).

At the same time, we have continued to witness conflicts and economic and political upheavals around the world in which human rights violations are recounted through reports, narrative, and stories (Cohen 1989; Shute and Hurley 1993; Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification [CEH] 1999; Farmer 2005; Tsing 2005; Goldman 2007; Orbinski 2008). Not all human rights violations result from repressive government regimes or oppressive societies. The 2009 world financial recession brought to the forefront, for many people, the significant role that business organizations and their leaders play in human rights and social justice within our global society. Prior to the recession of 2009, a number of well-known businesses collapsed from the weight of a single-minded focus by their corporate leaders on profit as the sole business purpose and in the absence of a strong

business ethic (Cunliffe 2004; Raufflet and Mills 2009). In Canada, we are seeing increased attention being paid to the role of our extractive sector businesses as they operate in other countries and accusations being made against them of human rights and environmental violations by a number of credible organizations such as Amnesty International, Mining Watch Canada, and El Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales.

The research presented in this dissertation is an exploration of the processes through which leaders construct meanings for social justice. The core premise to my research is that the locus for acting justly is situated in our relationships. My thesis is that the meaning of social justice is an evolving and living construct and the search for social justice lies in the day-to-day lived experiences of people within communities around the world. Through open and generative dialogue, we use language to re-shape and create our relationships and our social structures. Through our experiences we bring understanding to the meanings being given to what is just. My research was designed to explore the historical-social-cultural-intersubjective context of the meanings for social justice held by a small group of leaders. In conversation together we drew out and made visible our lived experiences, the moments of dialogue, and the underlying currents of language that weave in and through these meanings as we relationally engaged in talking about what is just.

My curiosity about how leaders make sense in the moment of deciding and acting on what is socially just arises from a realization, based on my own life and work experiences, of the importance of the meanings we construct together. I have been privileged to be born into a time and place where I have known social stability, political freedom, and access to the means to pursue a life primarily led by my dreams rather than by the need to see my own basic needs met. Working in health care for many years has given me experiences in an environment where our Canadian social values of caring for others are aspired to and expressed. It is also an organizational context where socially just actions and behaviours as defined by one individual or group may not be experienced or perceived as socially just by

another individual or group—particularly by those who are marginalized or without voice in the system. It is my contention that it is in the complex moments of deciding and acting that our meanings of what is just are made real.

Over time, I have become more and more disenchanted with the dominant or normative narratives that inform our social and organizational concepts of what is just and how justice is reached. Some of the narratives we hear echo with the objective and rational notions that come to us from discourses within political science. Still other narratives come to us in the language of business; a discourse and way of thinking that places a high value on hierarchy, productivity, measurement, and profit while placing a lower value on relationships, reflection, and collaboration. Other narratives of what is socially just come from our social and cultural contexts. We see in our society many examples of inequality and systematized marginalization that become entwined with diversity in ideological and practical tensions. In my own work with organizations, I have seen a number of approaches and practices that are designed to ‘engage’ those who are ‘dis-engaged’ and to give voice to those who do not have a voice. These practices can, and often do, fall short of challenging the preferred organization or social-cultural centric narrative for the socially just way forward on complex and contentious issues. The desire of many people to ascribe value to social justice as a value or principle within our society can become marginalized or de-valued when faced with other belief systems, priorities, and imperatives.

Indeed, efforts aimed at contesting the ‘right’ to articulate the dominant, most acceptable or winning narrative of what is just, continues to create polarities that can make issues seem unresolvable and justice unattainable. This propensity for creating polarities is captured in a reflection shared by Gary, one of our research participants:

You know, on a personal level it is quite exciting to set aside judgment and really try to understand someone and be curious.... I should have learned that 50 years ago. And I think, on a social or practical level, the excitement for me is... I think it is much more the solution to our issues and complex difficulties than the other. I will give you a funny example—or it is not that funny...but I was looking on the internet the last

few days. I am a little involved on things around the Northern Gateway pipeline and it was something that was put together by industry to promote it, and one of the big taglines on the site was “why does it have to be the economy or the environment?” [And I thought] right! And then I was looking at one of the anti-Gateway sites and they have the same tagline [*laughs*]. So I thought okay—that is the right question! It is just one of them is asking it as if everyone on the environment side hates the economy and the other people are asking it the opposite way. So what if those groups of people sat at the table and they really genuinely tried to answer that question? Why does it have to be the environment or economy and came up with—maybe not those people because they sit on opposite ends—but say most of us...because most of us probably understand that the answer to that question is complicated and involves stewardship and environmental concern as well as concern for our economic welfare. So that was an example I saw last night. It made me laugh but doesn't seem very funny in the telling [*laughs*]. (Gary Call #7)

Gary has articulated in this reflection an example of how we can get caught up in trying to convince others (the public, the government, etc.) that ‘our side’ is right and that we hold ‘the truth’ and that the other side is ‘wrong.’ This creation of polarities perpetuates notions of winning and losing, thus perpetuating the pursuit of ownership of the dominant discourse on the issue, even if it means drowning out the other side(s).

Engaging in this research process with a small group of leaders who think about what is socially just, deepened my own awareness of how I make meaning of justice within my own actions and decisions. Becoming a person who is attentive to social justice in all spheres of one's life is a journey of choices. In preparing for this research and in my search for a theoretical perspective from which to start, I also came to the realization that my own ontology required re-examination. In my lived experience, and with a background in science and health administration, I have absorbed a worldview that objective and real social truths exist. In this worldview, the uncovering of these truths could be achieved by objective, empirical and positivist means, including rational arguments, and thus the replication of these truths could be pursued. Further, this worldview held (and still holds) that ‘real’ truths exist external to one's subjective experience resulting, at times, in the negating of the value of my own experiences and understandings.

From this rationalist and objectivist viewpoint, establishing social justice is achieved through the rational articulation of laws or principles and the establishment of social structures that enact them. Social institutions, rather than individuals in relationship with 'others,' become the locus for moral assessment, the means for protecting people from injustice, and for righting any wrongs (Rawls 1971; Follesdal and Pogge 2005). This ontology or worldview is increasingly being challenged both by globalization and by social theories premised on alternative ontologies. For me personally, this belief that an objective truth of what is just exists and waits to be discovered, ceases to be helpful in my own lived experience where more and more diversity in perspectives of what is socially just are encountered. In reaching a place of questioning what I had previously assumed to be an unquestionable truth of the way to see the world, I began to explore social theory for alternative ontologies or beliefs about being and ways to see social realities, and for making meaning of what is just.

I have chosen to draw on two ontologies that I see as complementary to one another because both are dialogic. The first is one of 'being' in relationship with 'other' and the second is 'being' through understanding. The first ontology presumes a philosophical anthropological stance in which we create meanings in relationship, while the second ontology presumes language as the means through which we understand (Gadamer 1982; Bakhtin 1986; Cunliffe 2002; Buber 2004; Freire 2011). These ontologies together bring a relational, processual, emergent, and contextualized or situated perspective to the meanings we make of social justice. It is from within these two ontological perspectives that my research questions became framed, my approach to the research developed, and the contribution of my research to theory conceptualized.

At the start of the research process, I held a set of questions as a frame or container to hold the space for the conversations with the research participants as we explored the meanings we hold for what is just. The notion of creating meaning with language and in

relationship with 'others' became visible to me even in the simple act of revisiting the words I used to construct this frame over the course of the research. Throughout the time of the research and from the space of dialogue among the research participants, my own processes of making meaning of what is socially just as it was embedded in my lived experiences became clearer, deeper and sharper—reflecting my own journey with reflexivity and understanding. The following paragraphs provide a glimpse of what was happening within my own thinking as I participated in the research:

ORIGINAL THOUGHTS: The meanings we hold of social justice are made visible in the acts and decisions we take within our social settings. I contend that the meanings of social justice underlying our assumptions and actions emerge in and through relationships and are informed by the historical, social, cultural and language context of our lived experiences.

[PENNY: I realize, part way into this process of working with my research question and thesis, that the word *justice* still holds for me an expectation of a truth that would be revealed. Yet—shades of Paulo Freire—I am hearing that justice really is the humanizing of 'other' and that we all stumble our way forward in this as we have opportunity to confront the judgments we hold of ourselves and of 'others' (April 22).]

[PENNY: More than *informed by*, our assumptions and therefore our actions are continually *unfolding* in the historical, social, cultural and language context of our lived experience because our historical, social, cultural and language context is not static (April 22 and 24).]

ORIGINAL THOUGHTS: The dominant normative discourse of social justice and human rights is based in modernism, rationality, empirical objectivity and individualism leading to a belief that social justice is to be found through the embedding of normative principles into our social institutions.

[PENNY: Hmm modernism seems to hold us in a subjective-objective dualism that can impede the transcending of boundaries of our ideas and relationships (April 24).]

ORIGINAL THOUGHTS: The forces of globalization, however, are creating an opening for more voices to be heard and stories to be told about social justice that influence our ways of knowing and acting and thus challenge this dominant discourse. To understand alternative ways of knowing what is just, I take a dialogic theoretical frame to the meaning leaders construct for social justice within the context of engagement with those who are 'other.' The underlying premise to my research is that the locus for justness is situated between people. It is people, relating with one another, who hold the opportunity to act justly.

[PENNY: And acting justly, I am hearing, is the opening up of space for the voice of 'other' to be spoken, to be heard, to be reflected upon and to be changed by (April 17).]

ORIGINAL THOUGHTS: The theoretical problem is the historical-social-cultural-intersubjective context that contributes to an individual's capacity to understand and act in ways that are socially just. The space 'between' self and 'other,' the space created in dialogue, takes place over time and through relationship (Deetz 2003), and is the 'locus' for my research.

[PENNY: and it is not necessarily in the physical presence of 'other' but in the memory of 'others' that we hold in our thoughts as we live life. For example Lex holds in his memory the wisdom of a group of campesinos who caused him to re-examine his own assumptions regarding the value of what they knew (April 22).]

ORIGINAL QUESTIONS: The research questions to be explored include: What is the constituting nature of the dialogic moments between leaders who are in the process of co-creating an understanding of social justice? What do the leaders, as the constituters of meaning, bring to the process and how do they see themselves and 'others' in the process of the dialogic experience? What sensemaking, stories and narratives emerge as meanings of social justice are constituted? What context, contributions and constraints do the leaders, the organization(s) and the community(ies) bring to the dialogic experience?

Articulated in the 1776 United States Declaration of Independence and also found in both the writings of the French Declaration (1789) and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an assumption of the inherent internal or interior knowing of the essence of human rights (Hunt 2007). Where does this inherent and self-evident knowing of human rights and their expression in social justice arise? Is it an intrinsic condition of being human to know this truth of social justice, or does the knowing pre-exist an individual's subjective understanding by its presence in our language, cultural, social and historical context and utterances? Are our understandings of social justice continuing to be shaped and do these understandings become co-constructed in our relationships with the 'other'?

These are the questions I held throughout the research process to help create a space for meaning and understanding to emerge. As dialogic ontologies of being in relationship and language imply, understanding, language, and meanings are interpretive and not fixed: rather, we each bring in our own lived experience to create meanings in the relationships we form and the texts that we encounter. Theoretical and research perspectives on social justice are found across a broad spectrum of disciplines including political science, anthropology, organizational studies and business, and education. The contribution this research makes to the field of social justice is in the focus I place on how leaders draw on lived experiences, relationship, and language to make meaning of what is just in the situated moment, rather than on the justness of the social structures and culture

that surround them. I hold a view in this research that people act justly based on how they make meaning of the relational and language context in which they find themselves.

The dominant voice in this dissertation is mine as the researcher and primary writer. In compiling the conversations that emerged from the research, I have invited back into the process the individuals who kindly agreed to give of their time, their minds, and their hearts as research participants. I also attempt to honour the divergence of voices that dialogue and language fosters, as new understandings are elicited as the process of writing extends the conversation beyond the period of time defined by the research process. Indeed it is my hope that you, as the reader, will interact with what is shared and that you will feel invited to reflexively explore your own constructed meanings and understandings of social justice as they arise for you from your experiences—thus far in your lived journey.

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In chapter two I locate dialogue theory within the broader frame of social theory and continue on to examine dialogue theory as it has been influenced by the linguistic turn in social theory—a perspective that foregrounds language and meaning as the means by which social reality is constructed. While many theorists and researchers have contributed to an understanding of dialogue, I highlight the work of four theorists who have contributed significantly to my own thinking and understanding of dialogue as a way of seeing and understanding: Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, Mikhail Bakhtin and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Their contributions are reviewed in some detail along with the contribution of contemporary theorists on dialogue theory. In the latter part of chapter two I focus on the literature related to social justice, a term used interchangeably in the literature with human rights and justice. Political science, anthropology, and corporate social responsibility comprise the bodies of literature that I accessed to develop an understanding of the narratives and utterances that permeate the meanings of social justice in our historical, social, and cultural space and time.

In chapter three, I describe the research process including the core methodologies and the methods underpinning the inquiry. The research for this dissertation was conducted in partnership with my colleague Christine Bonney. Together we created a research approach that would address both of our research questions. Christine's question centres on the individual as a leader, exploring their practices and their identity as they act in just ways: and my question looks to the meaning that leaders construct, with 'others,' of what is just. We both have an interest in leaders and social justice and the research process that we created together elicited rich experiences and understandings of leaders and leaderships and how social justice is understood from lived experiences. Together we engaged in conversation with the participants, building deeper relationships over a time frame of six months. We held eight individual conversations with each participant and facilitated three teleconferences in which all of the participants participated. We also used a secure website for group discussion and individual journal postings. The essence of this research is ethnographic and draws on ethnographic methods to immerse us in the relationships, contexts, and patterns from which meanings for social justice emerge.

In chapter four, four landscapes are created for the purpose of exploring the language, context, relationships, and meanings that emerged in the research: the individual stories and experiences that awakened each of the participants to social justice; the exploration of the choices and experiences through stories of making meaning of what is just; the dialogic moments in which collective meaning making of what is social justice emerged or that fostered their awareness of social justice; and, the utterances that refract the social, cultural, historical and intersubjective experiences of the participants and the researchers in the meanings of social justice. These landscapes are not fixed, other than for the purposes of explicating what emerged in the research, and neither are they mutually exclusive. No hard boundaries exist between them and I want to declare early on my intent to tread lightly on the words expressed within the conversations I felt privileged to be a part

of. These four landscapes are simply choices I have made to foreground what emerged for me as a researcher-participant in this research process.

The final chapter brings us back from the research itself to the implications of this research for dialogue and social justice theory along with a few concluding perspectives.

## Chapter Two Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the literature on dialogue theory and social justice as they pertain to my research thesis: that the meanings of social justice underlying our assumptions and actions emerge in and through relationships and are informed by the historical, social, cultural, relational and language contexts of our lived experiences. First, I review dialogue theory in relationship to the broader context of social theory. I then review in some depth the work of four key theorists (Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Hans-Georg Gadamer) as their work pertains to dialogue theory. This is followed by a review of contemporary dialogue theory as it is conceptualized and applied in research.

Secondly, I provide a review of selected modern discourses on human rights and social justice. This section opens with an exploration of the historical, social and cultural context for the meanings constructed of social justice and human rights and includes examples of the contestations that have produced them. In the remainder of the section I focus on selected readings from political philosophy, anthropology and corporate social responsibility in which, through language, social justice and human rights are theorized.

Before I continue with this introduction to the literature, I want to pause and reconsider a phrase I have continued to use as I prepared for the research and as I have been engaged in the writing of what took place in the research process. It is the term 'lived experience.' A friend of mine posed to me the question: "What is the difference between experience and lived experience? Are they not the same thing?" As I held myself open to this question, I was delighted to encounter Mikhail Bakhtin's (1993) work titled *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* in which he speaks of the emotional-volitional lived experience. We experience the world concretely. We see it, hear it, touch it, and think it, "permeated in its entirety with the emotional-volitional tones of the affirmed validity of values" (Bakhtin 1993:56). Bakhtin argues it is in the moment of acting that we bring to concreteness the

meaning upon which we are compelled to act, and in the acting we embody the meaning and the core values that we hold. Each moment is contextualized uniquely, and the meanings, as in this case the meaning of social justice, are actualized in the deed within that context. Bakhtin (1993) argues that “everything taken independently of, without reference to, the unique centre of value from which issues the answerability of a performed act is deconcretized and derealized: it is deprived of its weight with respect to value, it loses its emotional volitional compellentness, and becomes an empty, abstractly universal possibility” (59).

Exploring the academic literature on dialogue and social justice creates the risk of decontextualizing meanings from acts of dialogue and social justice and from the weight of the values that compel us in the moments of acting justly. Bakhtin’s words are highly reminiscent of Paulo Freire’s (2011) understanding of the authentic word, a word that holds both reflection and action. I invite you, as the reader of this chapter, to reflect upon your lived experiences of acting justly and the values that compelled you in those moments of acting. Dialogue theory, the lens that I have chosen to explore the meaning leaders co-construct of what is just when engaged with ‘others,’ holds out the possibility of co-constructing meanings in relationship with one another, meanings that shift our view of, and potentially our influence on the world, around us (Anderson and Cissna 1997; Deetz 1996, 2003; Buber 2004; Wood 2004; Freire 2011). Together perhaps, we might mitigate the risk of decontextualizing these meanings of justice and, by holding out these experiences, be open to seeing the possibilities.

A further risk of intellectualizing our notions of dialogue is to fall into a pattern of reducing dialogue into irreducible and replicable practices. Martin Buber’s words, exhort me to hold onto the sacred nature of a dialogic encounter with another:

Imagine two men sitting beside one another in any kind of solitude of the world. They do not speak with one another, they do not look at one another, not once have they turned to one another. They are not in one another's confidence, the one knows nothing of the other's career, early that morning they got to know one another in the course of their travels. In this moment neither is thinking of the other; we don't need to know what their thoughts are. The one is sitting on the common seat obviously after his usual manner, calm hospitably disposed to everything that may come. His being seems to say it is too little to be ready, one must also be really *there*. The other, whose attitude does not betray him, is a man who holds himself in reserve, withholds himself. But if we know about him we know that a childhood's spell is laid on him, that his withholding of himself is something other than an attitude, behind all attitudes is entrenched the impenetrable inability to communicate himself. And now – let us imagine that this is one of the hours which succeed in bursting asunder the seven iron bands about our heart– imperceptibly the spell is lifted. But even now the man does not speak a word, does not stir a finger. Yet he does something. The lifting of the spell has happened to him – no matter from where – without his doing. But this is what he does now: he releases in himself a reserve over which only he himself has power. Unreservedly communication streams from him, and the silence bears it to his neighbour. Indeed it was intended for him, and he receives it unreservedly as he receives all genuine destiny that meets him. He will be able to tell no one, not even himself, what he has experienced. What does he now “know“ of the other? No more knowing is needed. For where unreserved has ruled, even wordlessly, between men, the word of dialogue has happened sacramentally. (Buber 1984:25–26)

As I explore dialogue from a theoretical perspective, a perspective that can be held as an intellectual process, I appreciate the reminder in Buber's words, that there is a first movement in dialogue, a relational turning of one to an other—a movement that is a choice and a lived experience—a sacred moment.

## **Dialogue Theory**

### **In the Context of Social Theory**

Broadly, the human and social sciences focus on the exploration of the nature of our humanity and our social realities, to gain understanding and knowledge for application to the problems of humanity. Dialogue theory, as understood today, is a minor theory, particularly when compared to the interest in feminist, critical, and poststructuralist schools of thought and the long-standing traditions of structuralism. Two conceptual frameworks have helped me to locate dialogue theory within the broader context of social theory: Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan's (1994) sociological paradigms for organizational analysis and Stanley Deetz's (2003) discourse distinctions.

Burrell and Morgan (1994) proposed that all social theory could be differentiated in terms of the underlying assumptions of the nature of social science and the nature of society. In privileging a view of the nature of social science on the basis of an objective–subjective continuum, they explored the implications of the underlying ontology and epistemologies of social theories. Social theory that holds to an objective view of reality or a reality that exists “external to the individual” (1994:1) is characterized by ontology of realism, an epistemology of positivism, a view of human nature that is deterministic, and methodologies that are nomothetic. Social theory that holds to reality as subjective, seeing it as the product of consciousness, is characterized by ontology of idealism, an epistemology of anti-positivism, a view of human nature that is voluntaristic, and holds to methodologies that are ideographic.

The perspectives held in social theories on the nature of society can be differentiated in terms of an order–conflict continuum. Burrell and Morgan (1994) define theory along this continuum as either seeking to understand the stability of social reality through systems or structures of regulation or, the radical change of social reality that arises from “deep-seated structural conflicts” (17) and “modes of domination”(17). A regulation (order) perspective of society is characterized by stability, integration, consensus and status quo and thus, stands in contrast to a radical change perspective characterized by structural conflict, domination, contradiction, and emancipation (Burrell and Morgan 1994; Deetz 1996).

Attempting to locate dialogue theory within Burrell and Morgan’s four sociological paradigms provides a place to begin in considering dialogue theory and its relationship to the objective–subjective nature of social science and its positionality towards the radical change-regulation nature of society. Dialogue theorists and practitioners often trace the lineage of dialogue theory to the work of Hans–Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas (Crapanzano 1990; Maranhão 1990; Anderson, Baxter and Cissna 2004; Deetz and Simpson 2004; Stewart, Zediker and Black 2004; Anderson and Cissna 2008;

Kim and Kim 2008). Within the paradigms proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1994), Habermas and Gadamer are identified within the radical humanist and interpretive paradigms respectively. Both paradigms are oriented towards a subjective perspective of reality, a perspective that sees social reality as one that is socially constructed and that examines the relationships of individuals to reality through their subjective experience of it. Interpretive social theory is less concerned with change and is more accepting of social reality as it is, while radical humanists challenge social reality as it is constructed in order to critique it, particularly in relation to the alienation of humanity. As Burrell and Morgan (1994) do not explicitly represent dialogue theory within their framework, the placement of the work of Habermas and Gadamer serves as a proxy for the positioning of dialogue theory with reference to the subjective–objective and regulation–radical change dimensions they propose.

Hans-Georg Gadamer is viewed in dialogue theory literature as a theorist who held a philosophical hermeneutic stance within human sciences (Gadamer 1984; Maranhão 1990; Anderson et al. 2004; Deetz and Simpson 2004; Stewart et al. 2004). As a philosophical hermeneutic theorist, Gadamer’s contribution to social theory has been his focus on knowledge and understanding embedded in the “experiences of the world and human living” (Gadamer 1984:xviii) and the privileging of language both as expression and manifestation of being (Burrell and Morgan 1994). In Gadamer’s work the hermeneutic becomes ontological with a centering on language and understanding in relationships and a decentering of subject as the source of meaning (Crapanzano 1990; Maranhão 1990; Burrell and Morgan 1994; Deetz and Simpson 2004; Stewart et al. 2004).

As I contemplate the relationship between Burrell and Morgan’s framework and the understanding of Gadamer that is offered by different academic authors, I am struck by the awkwardness of the fit between Gadamer’s contribution to dialogue and the subjective–objective continuum. Gadamer (1984) focuses on the effective historical context

of understanding and on the relational nature of human understanding with language as the site and tool through which meaning emerges (Deetz 1996, 2003; Stewart et al. 2004). His view is at odds with the subjective view of the nature of social reality that posits understanding as originating within the self or consciousness, shifting significantly where one focuses to further explore the emergence of meaning and understanding. Indeed, Stewart and Zediker (2000) concur with this observation and its implication for dialogue theory when they state that “accounts of dialogue...clarify both why the subject-object dichotomy that western thinkers inherited from Descartes and Kant is deeply problematic and how it might be overcome” (228). Our external and internal worlds are not separate; they are displayed in the unfolding and spontaneous encounters between people in the process of living life. The influence of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics is to cause a shift in focus away from self and towards historically contextualized language as the meaning making source of understanding in relationship with ‘*other*.’

The second theorist profiled by Burrell and Morgan, one seen by many contemporary dialogue theorists as a significant contributor, is Jürgen Habermas. Burrell and Morgan (1994) place Habermas’ contribution to social theory in the radical humanist paradigm. This placement highlights Habermas’ interest in theory that is emancipatory as it addresses or makes us aware of what is inherently dominant in our discourses, as well as “hermeneutic in its endeavour to understand the socio-cultural world in which subjective meaning is located” (294). In a line of thought that is similar to Gadamer, Habermas holds to the role of language in conversation as the problem to be explored, rather than consciousness, in generating an understanding of social cultural reality (Kim and Kim 2008). Habermas’ interest in public discourse led him to examine how divergent views and perspectives could be brought in to achieve “agreement that ends in mutuality and intersubjectivity” (Anderson et al. 2004:6).

Burrell and Morgan’s framework, premised as it is on the belief that reality originates either as an interior or an exterior view of reality and the locating of hermeneutics in the

subjective end of the continuum, succeeds in acknowledging both Gadamer and Habermas' positions as distinct from the work of theorists who held to a view of social reality as one that exists external to the individual. Still, the work of both Gadamer and Habermas fits awkwardly in Burrell and Morgan's paradigms primarily due to their underlying premise of the socially constructed nature of meaning making in relation with '*others*,' rather than the individual's subjective creation of an external reality that can subsequently be examined (Deetz 1996).

Dialogue theory, grounded in the notion that human beings construct reality through relationship and language, foregrounds the nature and essence of the interactions that support mutual understanding over the perceptions a subject brings into the dialogic encounter (Gadamer 1984; Deetz 2003; Buber 2004). In his argument for rethinking Burrell and Morgan's framework, Stanley Deetz (1996) proposes an alternative frame for examining social theory that emphasizes the linguistic turn. In doing so, Deetz (1996) builds from the premise that social reality is socially constructed, that language and meaning making comprise the process of constituting social reality, and that social discourses can be differentiated on the basis of a priori or emergent understandings and on the basis of consensus and dissensus with the dominant social discourse.

The linguistic turn in social theory is an attempt to move away from the subjective-objective dualism and its "assumption of a psychological foundation of experience" (Deetz 2003:422), to an intentional turn toward "recognition of the constitutive conditions of experience and the de-centering of the human subject as the center or origin of perspective" (422). The linguistic turn shifts the focus away from the objects that have been constituted and the meaning attributed to them and looks at the constituting process itself. Within discourse theory, the underlying premise is that meaning is contested. In this contesting, distinctions are made between what meanings are similar and ones that are different. A dominant group within society can determine the dominant meaning as well as

attribute value to the meanings, thus perpetuating inequities in the construction of meaning and marginalizing others in the process (Deetz 1996).

In his critique of Burrell and Morgan's framework, Deetz (1996) suggests that they have given preference to the premises of the social theorists who have worked within the structuralist paradigm, positioning their work with a positive valence and assigning the role of 'other' to theorists working from contrary positions. In doing this, Deetz (1996) argues, the 'other' theorists have been left using language and meaning defined within the structuralist paradigm to describe their own work, a language that does not adequately express the thinking and the concepts they are using.

In shifting our focus towards language as a means of constituting the meanings given to objects, Deetz (1996) proposes a frame for an alternative perspective to social and organizational research approaches. Similar to Burrell and Morgan, he offers a frame with four quadrants based on two dimensions. The first dimension replaces the subjective-objective paradigm used by Burrell and Morgan and is anchored by an a priori perspective and an emergent-local perspective for the lens a researcher brings to the question being researched. At the a priori end of the continuum, the question being asked is based on the inquirer's knowledge, understanding, and perspective on the phenomenon to be examined. Since our questions embody our implicit assumptions, the inquirer brings with them assumptions that are grounded in their own social-cultural-historical-intersubjectivity.

At the other end of the continuum, the inquirer comes as a collaborator to participate in what is created locally, recognizing that all who are involved bring their own social-cultural-historical-intersubjectivity to the context. This polarity acknowledges the social construction present in all inquiry positions, highlights whose concepts are used in object construction and makes accessible different kinds of knowing.

The second dimension is distributed on a continuum anchored by consensus at one end (the seeking after of existing social orders with the objective to highlight the dominant

discourse and to seek order) and dissensus at the other (the focus on the struggles and tensions that are normal so that a new and fairer social order can emerge). The four discourses created by these two continuums are normative, interpretive, conflict and dialogic. Each discourse provides an orientation towards social reality, a perspective on the ways in which people orient towards their reality based on the events they experience and their own ways of narrating or making sense.

Within this frame, dialogic discourses work to hold open ideational space for meaning making, and make available a place and space where new and holistic meanings emerge. Dialogic discourse focuses on the constructing processes of both people (identity) and reality with an emphasis on relations, partiality, and recovery of voices in a space where transformation is possible. Within Deetz's discourse frame, the dialogic occupies a distinct space characterized by local emergent understanding and a fostering of dissensus with the dominant social discourses. The dialogic is emergent, is local in terms of the origins of the questions, and inherently values difference. Within the frame of the linguistic turn, Deetz argues that dialogue theory focuses on 'other' rather than 'self,' holding hope for the reclamation of lost and marginalized voices and the constructed nature of peoples' reality, and emphasizes the role of mutual language and meaning in the reality construction process (Deetz 1996).

The sociological paradigms of Burrell and Morgan (1994) and the discourses of Deetz (1996) help to connect dialogue theory within the hermeneutic traditions, philosophically and critically. Within these traditions, meaning and reality are socially constructed through language. It is through language that meaning is explored and constructed and our humanness is expressed. We are at essence understanders, sense-makers, and meaning-makers and through relational processes what is knowable emerges. The linguistic and critical turn of theory, which has emerged over the past century, reminds us that, in the emergence of meaning, some voices become marginalized and silenced. As

the focus of study becomes the processes of meaning construction and the decentering of self as the location of knowing, we are able to foreground the constituting process, make visible the marginalized voices, and background the meaning that is constituted. Within the context of social and discourse theory, dialogue emerges as processual and multivocal and reflects the unfinalizableness of meaning.

### **Key Theorists and Their Contribution**

In the previous section, I attempted to position dialogue theory within the broader context of social theory. In this section, I turn to the work of theorists who have laid the groundwork specifically for dialogue theory. Theorists most commonly identified as having a significant influence on dialogue theory as it is conceived today, include Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Hans-Georg Gadamer.<sup>1</sup> Other theorists, such as Jürgen Habermas, Søren Kierkegaard, and Emmanuel Levinas have also been acknowledged for their contributions to dialogue theory through their focus on human contact and communication (Stewart et al. 1994; Herrmann 2008). The focus in this section, however, will be limited to developing an understanding of contemporary dialogue theory based on the key contributions made by the four theorists identified above because of their emphasis on dialogue and language as fundamental to being.

#### **Martin Buber**

Martin Buber's philosophical anthropological stance of 'I-Thou' as the relational essence of what it means to be human, has become a touchstone for dialogue theory and theorists today (Maranhão 1990; Anderson and Cissna 1997; Cissna and Anderson 1998; Czubaroff and Friedman 2000; Gordon 2000; Stewart and Zediker 2000; Anderson et al. 2004;

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<sup>1</sup> The following authors identify these four theorists as key contributors to dialogue theory: Maranhão 1990; Crapanzano 1994; Anderson and Cissna 1997, 2008; Cissna and Anderson 1998; Czubaroff and Friedman 2000; Gordon 2000; Murray 2000; Artz 2001; Anderson et al. 2004; Arnett 2004; Baxter 2004; Deetz and Simpson 2004; Stewart et al. 2004; Bebbington, Brown, Frame and Thomson 2007; Kim and Kim 2008; Black 2008; Herrmann 2008; White 2008; Simpson 2008; Johannesen 2009.

Arnett 2004; Stewart et al. 2004; Kim and Kim 2008; Johannesen 2009). His experiences in Germany as a Jew during the nationalist rise of Nazism, his move to Palestine in the late 1930s, and his work in the Palestinian and Israeli conflicts represent for many who have studied and written about his work, the socio-historical-cultural context that was significantly influential to his thinking (Johannesen 2000; Stewart and Zediker 2000; Stewart et al. 2004).

In his book, *Between Man and Man* (2004), Buber built on his earlier thinking related to 'I-Thou' and the elemental nature of the 'between,' in which human meaning and existence is dialogue (Johannesen 2000). For Buber (2004), 'I-Thou,' the 'between' of the relation of one and *other*, "where each of the participants really has in mind the *other* or *others* in their present and particular being and in turning to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship between himself and them" (89) is the display of genuine dialogue. Genuine dialogue is distinguished by Buber from technical dialogue and monologue interactions, which also characterize human relations, in the openhearted authentic presencing to 'other' that leaves oneself open to be changed while not losing one's own ground (Anderson and Cissna 1997; Johannesen 2000; Stewart and Zediker 2000; Buber 2004; Friedman 2004). These three types of human interaction are differentiated by their outcome and their nature. In genuine dialogue mutual relation is established in which exploration unfolds, in technical dialogue objective understanding needs to be conveyed and, in monologue speaking can seem to be almost torturous in its uni-vocality.

Buber (2004) describes from his own experience a deep desire for a genuine dialogue that arises from a crying out and a listening for a response. It is in the hearing of the response, the rejoinder, that he declares 'now it has happened,' that lays the sense of completeness: In one's crying out and knowing a response from an 'other.' Buber holds this completeness as the essence of human communion, the connection between people that is the place of genuine dialogue. Truth is what is revealed when we turn to one another in our human situation and where the nature of dialogue is expressed as one open hearted person

turning to another open hearted person and together finding “anguish and expectation” (Buber 2004:58).

This communication is not just through words and in speaking; it is through the senses and the internal opening of one to an ‘other’ and the internal places of speaking that convey to others a representation of our dialogue in the “mutuality of the inner action” (58). In genuine dialogue, what exists ‘between’ two people becomes filled in by what is possible without boundaries. The basic movement of dialogue is the turning towards the ‘other’ and this turning is distinct from what is seen in monologue where the ‘other’ only exists as ‘I’ experience him. For Buber the ‘between’ provides a third alternative to the locating of relation between human beings (as contrasted to the individual’s soul or in the interaction with the world). As he states:

What is peculiarly characteristic of the human world is above all that something takes place between one being and another the like of which can be found nowhere else in nature.... Man is made man by it; but on its way it does not merely unfold, it also decays and withers away. It is rooted in one being turning to another as another, as this particular other being, in order to communicate with it in a sphere which is common to them but which reaches out beyond the special sphere of each. I call this sphere, which is established with the existence of man as man but which is conceptually still uncomprehended, the sphere of ‘between.’ Though being realized in very different degrees, it is a primal category of human reality. (309)

Buber’s (2004) thinking on dialogue and his philosophical grounding in the ‘between’ of ‘I–Thou,’ has contributed to dialogue theory the notion of mutuality in relation with ‘other,’ the momentariness of dialogue, the ethical choice in turning from the dominant monologic communication to dialogue, and interest in the limits to dialogue (Anderson and Cissna 1997; Cissna and Anderson 1998; Johannesen 2000; Stewart and Zediker 2000; Stewart et al. 2004; Black 2008; White 2008). In the 1957 dialogue between Martin Buber and Carl Rogers, Buber articulates his perspective on mutuality as an openness between two people that is as a call to an ‘other’ (Anderson and Cissna 1997). This is not a fusing of two selves into a oneness, as in the moment of mutuality one’s “own separate ground is not lost” (Anderson and Cissna 1997:32; Stewart and Zediker 2000). Further, Buber is clear that one

does not “have the right to want to change another if I am not open to be changed by him as far as it is legitimate” (Anderson and Cissna 1997:32). Within this mutuality of dialogue, Buber sees the differences each holds as being important, while in the same moment holding out the value of the ‘other,’ as in this awareness and openness the uninhibited expression changes “communication to communion” (Buber 2004:27; Czubaroff and Friedman 2000; Johannesen 2000; White 2008).

Cissna and Anderson (1998), in their later writings, based on the transcripts of the Buber–Rogers 1957 dialogue, highlight the perspective on mutuality that emerges between Buber and Rogers as one that does not mean the same as symmetry, reciprocity or equality. Rather, mutuality suggests something done together in response to the ‘other’ and that is characterized by responsiveness (Buber 2004; Arnett 2004). Buber’s view of mutuality becomes further illuminated in his dialogue with Rogers as he questions whether or not dialogue can occur within the setting of therapy (Anderson and Cissna 1997). To him this question arose from his perspective that, a psychologically unwell client may be inherently unable to enter into the dialogic with the therapist and that the inequality in the power relationships between the therapist and the client hinders mutuality. Roger’s response is that, in his experience, moments of mutuality occur within the therapeutic context when there was experiential equality of meeting the ‘other’ that may not be seen from an objective view of role equality.

This exchange of perspectives between Rogers and Buber perhaps captures the self-awareness in the dialogic moment—awareness of the attitudes one holds towards the ‘other’ —attitudes of authenticity, inclusion, confirmation, and of being present (Johannesen 2000). In the presence of these attitudes which foster dialogue and are expressed in dialogue, the focus becomes the ‘between’ rather than ‘other’ and is the inherent quality of the ‘I–Thou’ in which Buber locates the being of being human, the authentic human life (Buber 2004; Kim and Kim 2008; Anderson et al. 2004; Stewart et al. 2004).

Importantly in Buber's view of dialogue, he does not idealistically suggest a life of perpetual dialogue, a being present in 'I-Thou' at all times and in all relationships, as possible or practical. His contrasting concept of 'I-It' recognizes that in life the self is at times interacting with objective 'its.' In life there is the role of observer, one who sees a person as an object that can be assessed, and the onlooker, one who sees in order to see what appears. Both share an orientation that sees another person as an object "separated from themselves and their personal life" (2004:33) and as something that can be perceived. Further, for Buber, the dialogic meeting that is an expression of authentic human life exists in a moment (Anderson et al. 2004; Anderson and Cissna 1997; Stewart et al. 2004). In this moment there exists an awareness of others as unique beings, a genuineness that suggests openness to engage, and a respect that prevents one from imposing their reality upon the 'other' (Cissna and Anderson 1998). This authentic dialogue experience is a totality rather than an "isolated utterance" (65), and as Buber's parable of silence suggests, may be a moment without words. Indeed, that unique and authentic connection with 'other' can occur in any setting, and often arrives with an element of surprise (Buber 2004; Anderson and Cissna 1997; White 2008).

In exploring the notion of dialogic moments, Buber, in his 1957 dialogue with Carl Rogers, expresses his personal interest in the limits of dialogue. He articulates his own experiences of trying to enter into a dialogic experience and encountering a barrier or wall that cannot be ignored and that, in effect, limits dialogue (Anderson and Cissna 1997). The limits to dialogue may lie in the absence of elements that create the space for the surprise of the dialogic moment to occur. In *Between Man and Man* (2004), Buber suggests, "the limits of the possibility of dialogue are the limits of awareness" (35) and that we live "encased in an armor[sic] whose task is to ward off signs" (35) of being addressed by 'other's. Dialogue is found in openness, authenticity, and unreservedness. In their absence, we may not be listening for nor receiving the signs of what is present before us in an 'other'—the invitation

to enter into authentic dialogue where we are open to be changed while we stand on what we know.

Buber's stance in seeing what it means to be human as being-in-relationship, in essence the 'between' of the 'I-Thou,' provides a philosophical anthropological foundation for dialogue and dialogue theory. His thinking and his writings have influenced subsequent theorists to explore dialogue as something that is missing in the dominant monologic discourses experienced in modern life, and as the hope for addressing the intractable and challenging questions society faces today.

### **Paulo Freire**

An equally strong influence on dialogue theory today is the work of Paulo Freire, a renowned educator and social activist exiled from his native Brazil for his literacy work with Brazilian peasants (Macedo 2011). His lived experiences in a family that slid from middle class into poverty due to the economic upheaval in Brazil in the early 1900s are thought to have contributed to the ideas contained in his written works, including his seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. First published in 1970, the ideas expressed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* continue to be recognized in both the developed and developing world as key contributors to understanding dialogue within the context of oppression, and for the praxis of dialogue within participatory research and education (Brown and Tandon 1983; Maranhão 1990; Hall 1992; Cissna and Anderson 1998; Corburn 2002; Wallerstein and Duran 2003; Bebbington et al. 2007).

For Freire (2011), dialogue leads to liberation. In his thoughtful reflections on the nature of oppression, he posits both humanization and dehumanization to be real alternatives in the human condition and chooses in his writing and in his work, to pursue humanization as the "real vocation" (43) of humanity. The objectification of 'other' leads to dehumanization and oppression. The liberation of the oppressed and the oppressor is through communion, relationship, and friendship in which the nature of the socially

constructed reality can be explored, a critical consciousness birthed, and the structures of oppression addressed. The praxis for this work of liberation is dialogue. The attitude one holds towards an 'other' is critical for the emancipatory and dialogic process and the engagement with an 'other' is based in the understanding that, as "people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire 2011:83).

Consistent with Buber's view of dialogue, Freire argues that one must hold an openhearted, authentic and listening attitude towards an 'other' and risk being transformed in the process. Viewing dialogue as a human phenomenon that is grounded in the speaking of a true word that transforms the world, he writes that,

within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the *other* immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world. (2011:87)

Critical to fostering emancipation, Freire (2011) holds that the word spoken to name the world cannot be spoken alone, nor can it be spoken for another. "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (88). Dialogue exists in the presence of profound love, humility, faith in humankind, mutual trust and hope, in a willingness to think critically, and in a perception of "reality as a process" (92). In the absence of these qualities he argues that manipulation, domination, and control result and the structures of domination and oppression are perpetuated. Articulating a critical philosophical view of dialogue that is grounded in the relational nature of being human, he sees potential in the naming and the addressing of the social structures that oppress. It is the role of the oppressed to act in response to these structures that were once invisible and bring the emancipation for both the oppressed and the oppressors.

For contemporary dialogue theorists, the influence of Paulo Freire is captured in his positioning of dialogue as being fundamental to being human in the world, his emphasis on the process of dialogue and the critical awareness of the structures that make up the constructed reality, in transformation, in his naming of social realities constructed in the absence of the dialogic that take the form of domination of people, and in his valuing of the differences in world views that emerge in dialogue to inform and support one another. His unique contribution is in his notion of the praxis of dialogue that lives in the word, a word that is characterized by reflection and action and leads to transformation and change at both a personal and systemic level (Maranhão 1990; Hall 1992; Cissna and Anderson 1998; Stewart et al. 2004; Bebbington et al. 2007; Kim and Kim 2008).

### **Mikhail Bakhtin**

Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian 20th century thinker known for his social, literary, language, and cultural scholarship, has had a significant impact on contemporary dialogue theory through his emphasis on the richness and diversity of language and the nature of language in the co-constituting of Self and Other (Holquist 1990; Maranhão 1990; Koschmann 1999; Anderson et al. 2004; Baxter 2004). Bakhtin lived, taught, and wrote in Russia during the early and mid 1900s. Exiled in the 1930s to Kazakhstan, much of his written work is thought to have been lost through the chaotic circumstances of his era. His influence is seen as coming late to the West, with many of his located works being translated into English in the 1970s and 1980s.

Bakhtin's contributions to dialogue are considered to be his insightful and "highly distinctive concept of language" (Holquist 1990:xviii), with his attention to "the pervasiveness of dialogue in language and human history" (Anderson et al. 2004:4). While many linguists focus on a unitary meaning to language, in many ways assuming static, systematic and fixed meanings that lend themselves to an authoritative and monologic language, Bakhtin celebrated and embraced the chaos of meanings and the ever-changing interpretations

brought by individuals and groups into a co-constituting dance (Maranhão 1990; Holquist 1990). It was in language that Bakhtin saw the dialogic principle of the co-constituting of Self and Other, and the perpetual complex interplay of unitary centripetal forces of language that serve to centralize meaning within the “social and historical heteroglossia” (Bakhtin 1990:272) and the centrifugal forces at play simultaneously working to diversify meaning (Bakhtin 1990; Maranhão 1990; Murray 2000).

Bakhtin’s understanding of language contributes to contemporary dialogue theory notions of heteroglossia and utterances, and the emotional-volitional character of lived experiences (Maranhão 1990; Holquist 1990,1993; Bakhtin 1993; Czubaroff and Friedman 2000; Irving and Moffatt 2002; Baxter 2004; Bebbington et al. 2007). Heteroglossia, the multiplicity of meanings, is thought by Holquist (1990) to be the fundamental concept upon which Bakhtin builds his reflections on language and meaning. For Bakhtin language is contextual, with context serving to “refract, add to or, in some cases, even subtract from the amount and kind of meaning the utterance may be said to have” (Holquist 1990:xx). Bakhtin saw in literary and social discourses two language forces: one centripetal and the other centrifugal (Bakhtin 1990; Baxter 2004; Holquist 1990). The centripetal forces of language seek to unify and centralize language and meaning, and to “make its real presence felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding ... the unity of the reigning conversational [everyday] and literary language, ‘correct language’” (Bakhtin 1990:270).

The opposing centrifugal force is at the same time at work creating a “decentralization and disunification” (Bakhtin 1990:272) of language that is dynamic and alive, continuing to emerge “into languages that are socio-ideological; languages of social groups, ‘professional’ and ‘generic’ language, languages of generations and so forth” (272). As both forces are always present, then it is within dialogue that meaning is processually and mutually generated, rather than resulting from a competition for one idea to prevail over

another as being more true than the other ((Holquist 1990; Maranhão 1990; Baxter 2004; White 2008). It is his view of the heteroglossia of language and his commitment to the open and unfinalizability of social life that Bakhtin contributes to dialogue, a view that encourages one to hold open to the multiplicity of meanings that are present, to recognize the unique socio-cultural-historical context from which meaning emerges, and to become aware of the contest for meaning that is underway in a given time and space (Holquist 1990; Bebbington et al. 2007). As Leslie Baxter (2004) states, Bakhtin saw

monologic wholeness, a oneness or unity achieved through the hegemony of a single voice dominant over other voices, as the wholeness of totalitarianism....By contrast, aesthetic wholeness accomplishes a momentary sense of unity through a profound respect for the disparate voices of dialogue. (118)

The utterance, a second key contribution made to dialogue by Bakhtin, was the whole event of the speech encounter (Maranhão 1990; Irving and Moffatt 2002; Stewart et al. 2004; Baxter 2004). A specific speech encounter cannot be held separate from the nonlinear influences of context, worldviews, previous utterances and utterances yet to come. As Murray (2000) articulates, on behalf of Bakhtin, “there is always a trace in the word of a previous word; there is always a trace of the words of Others in the words that we ourselves use” (137). Meaning emerges contextually and responsively, it arises from the turning of Self to Other rather than from the subject’s will, “giving precedence to the social over the individual” (Maranhão 1990:4). The contextualizing of the speech act as an utterance connected to other utterances across space and time, serves to illuminate the whole and the totality, rather than the separateness and categorization that characterizes the Enlightenment period (Holquist 1990). For Bakhtin (1990) “the authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance” (272).

By shifting the perspective of language and meaning away from “a referential–representational account of language use to a more relationally responsive account” (Shotter 2008:503), Bakhtin dramatically expands our thinking on how we understand ourselves, how we understand ‘others,’ and the meanings we create. Rather than attribute pre-conceived meanings, Bakhtin sees in the wholeness that each person brings, the intent in their utterances in the moment of being spoken to create responsiveness in the ‘other,’ and the meaning created, as emergent in the moment. In the moment of dialogic speaking, Bakhtin draws our attention away from the monologic communication of historical representation of a concept to the creative expression of speaking in anticipation of the other’s understanding and one’s responsiveness to what is being conceived (Bakhtin 1986; Baxter 2004).

The relational responsiveness articulated by Bakhtin is not solely a cognitive understanding; it is an embodiment of understanding that is different for each participant in the dialogue and, as such, expands the multivocality of meaning rather than constraining it. What is present within an event is the multiplicity of voices in which multiple perspectives exist within the multiple worlds of each person’s lived experience. Shotter (2008) speaks of this within dialogue as when there is no observer or onlooker, there is rather a relational engagement between speaker and listener such that our “inner feelings play a crucial role in guiding, in being constitutive of, our actions” (511).

Yet for Bakhtin, there is beyond the essence of relational responsiveness, something more. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin (1993) weaves our concrete experiences of the world into moments where the emotional-volitional affirmation of our values uniquely compel us to act and in the process we “acquire an actual, lived experienced, heavy and compelling...validity or operativeness from the unique place of my participating in Being-as-event” (57). Abstract meanings remain abstract and unrealized in the absence of “deed-performing thinking, as a constituent moment of thinking only when it is correlated with

actuality” (59). It is in the unique moment of time and space and being that value and unique meaning is constituted.

Bakhtin’s work is challenging and provocative. He illuminates our assumptions and ways of thinking about dialogue and meaning making within a world of emergent, dynamic and unfinalizable meanings. In dialogic relationships, we can see language is an evocative tool, rather than a static and closed attributer of historic and reproduced understanding.

### **Hans-Georg Gadamer**

Hans-Georg Gadamer’s contribution to dialogue theory is through the influence of philosophical hermeneutics. Dialogue theorists attribute to him a perspective of dialogue as “fundamental to human-being-in-the-world” (Stewart et al. 2004:22), the view of language as fundamental to what gives us a world, the perspective that language is socially and historically situated, that “meanings are relational” (Anderson et al. 2004:6), that understanding is what emerges out of a complex process contextualized by history, language and audience, and that meanings are not reproductions of ‘others’ understandings but something produced processually and collaboratively by participants who are speakers and listeners (Stewart et al. 2004; Anderson et al. 2004; Deetz and Simpson 2004). Gadamer’s contribution encourages us to see the processual creation of meaning that is grounded in context and relations through the use of language: Meaning that is essentially productive, rather than reproductive, and creative.

Crowell (1990) highlights in Gadamer’s work, his privileging of the ontological in dialogue, the seeking after understanding as the essence of being human. In textual dialogue, Gadamer attends to the meaning that emerges through the process of questioning and answering, and positions the text as the ‘other’ in the I–Thou relationship that is so essential to dialogue. Dialogue theorists draw from Gadamer’s work his premise that an author’s intent is not pre-set as a truth “waiting to be excavated” (Anderson et al. 2004:3) by the reader, that in dialogue participants are not bound by the ‘others’ interpretation, and that

humans are in essence understanders (Crowell 1990; Weick 1995; Anderson et al. 2004; Stewart et al. 2004; Gergen 2009). Maranhão (1990) and Crowell (1990) both recognize Gadamer for his contribution to the notion of symmetry and goodwill among participants: a goodwill that is characterised by listening to 'other' and symmetry in access to participation in the dialogue itself. Optimistically, Maranhão (1990) attributes to Gadamer the possibility of hope through dialogue: a hope that in dialogue, interpretation can bring us to understanding and in that hope, the possibility for bringing forth both ontological truth and ethical justice.

Gadamer (1982) also brings to dialogue the idea of horizons of understanding. In hermeneutics, the idea of horizon,

expresses the wide, superior vision that the person who is seeking to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand...to see it better within a larger whole and in truer proportion. (272)

For Gadamer horizons of understanding bring to us a heightened awareness that there are limits to our own understanding because of our situatedness. As insiders to the situation in which we find ourselves, we can never fully understand because we ourselves are historically situated. He argues that since our situation limits our vision, this in itself suggests a horizon to our understanding. One who seeks to understand, senses the horizon that limits them and attempts to find a further horizon. One who does not seek to understand is content with what lies close to them. Horizons are constituted by our prejudices and in addressing them through questions, we begin to distinguish differences and open ourselves up to the possibility of something beyond the horizon established by our current understanding.

### **Summary**

Each of the theorists explored in this section have had significant influence on contemporary dialogue theory. Martin Buber's influence on the open and authentic presencing to 'other' grounds dialogue theory in human relationship both philosophically and in practice. The emphasis on the quality of relationship as a pre-requisite of dialogue can be seen as a conscious choice one makes to view 'other' wholeheartedly and subjectively, rather than as

object. Paulo Freire demonstrates this in his exploration of the nature of oppressor–oppressed relationships and the requirement of genuine relationship as a precursor to dialogue as an emancipatory act. Freire’s influences on dialogue are seen through the foregrounding of the word. Through a true word, one that is both reflection and action, humans name the world – a creative and constituting act. The Freireian concept of naming the world finds resonance in Gadamer’s thinking which places the essence of humanness in language and the understanding that emerges. In relationship and with words, humans create something that has not existed and is not a reproduction of existing understandings. This something—a meaning or understanding—emerges, as Freire, Gadamer and Bakhtin describe as on the horizon of consciousness (Maranhão 1990; Bakhtin 1990; Crowell 1990; Freire 2011).

For Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paulo Freire, the themes that exist in our reality are first understood before they are ‘seen.’ Freire’s (2011) focus on critical *conscientização* describes learning to see the “oppressive elements of reality” (35) in order to act on them. For Freire, the recovery of voice to name the limit-situations of the “human-world” (106) in the “historical-cultural context” (108) relationship leads to emergence. With emergent understanding people can objectively make problematic something that was previously unseen. This notion of something that exists but cannot be seen until understood presents as a horizon of understanding. Only as people fuse their horizons through dialogue, does understanding emerge and action result. Critical to Freire’s praxis is that the naming of what exists on the horizon, cannot be named for people by ‘others’: “it is only as they rethink their assumptions in action that they can change” (108). Mikhail Bakhtin brings to dialogue a fresh and unique understanding of society as examined through language. His perspectives on utterance, heteroglossia, and polyphony resonate within dialogue theory in a valuing of unfinalizability in meaning creation, the openness to hearing and celebrating of differences,

and the dynamic and fluid nature of language creation that stands against certitude and closure.

### **Contemporary Dialogue Theory**

Contemporary perspectives of dialogue have moved away from seeing dialogue as a method for establishing truth (as when the idea that can best be argued emerges as truth) and towards a processual view in which the focus is on how we know, how understanding emerges, and how moral and ethical rightness is known (Gadamer 1984; Maranhão 1990; Stewart and Zediker 2000; Wood 2004; Belova, King and Silwa 2008). In the presence of a genuine relationship with 'other,' one's identities, horizons, and understandings become reshaped and we emerge to interact with our world, our understanding, and our reality differently (Gadamer 1984; Bakhtin 1990; Buber 2004; Wood 2004; Black 2008; Heidlebaugh 2008; Freire 2011). Black (2008) captures the notion of being changed in dialogic moments in her description of the use of storytelling as part of an online forum called *Listening to the City*. In her example, two participants explore their experience of, and their reaction to the events of 9/11. Through sharing their personal experience of the event, as well as their own social-historical-cultural perspectives and aspects of identity, the use of the terms 'us' and 'them' shift throughout the interaction as their sense of identity and connection to 'other' evolves and emerges as something different from where they began. The impact of dialogic moments can be simple and yet profound, as an individual's "experiences are connected with larger social issues worthy of public consideration" (Black 2008:104).

From a processual perspective, Freire (2011) describes the experience of dialogue as a human phenomenon where authentic words have the potential to transform reality. This is a powerful notion that is mirrored in the 20th century theoretical roots of dialogue, and in the grappling with the successes and failures of human interactions to create transformation. The human phenomenon inherent in contemporary dialogue rests in the notion of Self and

Other and moves away from the notion of self as bounded and separate (Maranhão 1990; Arnett 2004; Buber 2004; Shotter 2008). In dialogue, participants hold the tensionality of their self, even as they fuse to some degree their perspectives and conceptual and historical horizons with 'others' (Baxter 2004; Stewart and Zediker 2000; Maranhão 1990). Fostering dialogue also requires a conscious awareness of self, including knowing one's own perspective and a thoughtful intention to hold oneself open to 'other.' Stewart and Zediker (2000) argue that this tension of "letting the other happen to me while holding my own ground" (232) is the primary tension in dialogue and that, in the moment "the other happens to me *while* and as I hold my own ground" (234). Their experience in a teaching setting has demonstrated that, for many students, there is a discipline that can be developed in which a choice is made to listen to the 'other' and to hold one's own ground that holds open the possibility of dialogue.

Dialogue is responsiveness in relationship (Anderson and Cissna 1997; Cissna and Anderson 1998; Hyde and Bineham 2000; Stewart and Zediker 2000; Anderson et al. 2004; Arnett 2004; Baxter 2004; Buber 2004; Pearce and Pearce 2004; Stewart et al. 2004; Wood 2004; Black 2008; Shotter 2008; White 2008). The nature of the relationship is characterized by openness, authenticity, a longing for 'other,' and a willingness to be changed in the moment as utterances intermingle and meaning and understanding emerge—to create rather than to reproduce understanding. For Shotter (2008), "our expressive acts in their temporal contouring, that is in their 'emotional-volitional' tone (Bakhtin 1993), can exert an influence on the others around us, thus to shape not only their actions but their very way of being in the world" (503).

The responsiveness inherent in dialogue is also the practice of listening. Wood (2004) characterizes the responsiveness as "depending less on self-expression and other transmissional aspects of communication than upon responsiveness" (xvi), where the "elusive goal of unity becomes less important than the process of learning to listen" (xviii).

One's listening becomes the mark of one's presence when self is decentred from the co-creation of meaning in dialogue (Maranhão 1990; Anderson et al. 2004). Shotter (2008) elaborates the experience of listening and co-creating meaning in his exploration of Bakhtin's notion of polyphony and suggests there is a need to attend not just to the words spoken and our cognitive understanding but also to the emotional-volitional tone that shifts our awareness towards living events as they are emerging.

Contemporary dialogue theorists also speak of symmetry within dialogue. Crowell (1990) holds that symmetry is what drew Gadamer to dialogue—symmetry between “equally ignorant” (344) participants. In this symmetry the object of interest is elevated above the interests of the participants and requires selflessness and a setting aside of one's own convictions to achieving a “fusion of horizons” (344). In the dialogical process, neither party manipulates the discourse for reasons that are not the focus of the discourse itself. In the presence of symmetry, deep and focused listening leads to an understanding of the object of interest. As understanding emerges and a shared language is generated a bridge is created between the horizons of understanding the participants brought with them to the dialogue. This notion of horizons is attributed to the work of both Bakhtin and Gadamer (Maranhão1990).

Through dialogue, relational humans, as understanders, build understanding and co-constitute and name the world around them (Crapanzano 1990; Cissna and Anderson 1997; Pearce and Pearce 2004; Stewart et al. 2004; Wood 2004; Freire 2011). The responsiveness to the expression of ‘other’ can challenge previously held beliefs and deepen a shared understanding or meaning (Simpson 2008). The knowing that emerges in dialogue, however, is not a singular or dominant knowing. The mutuality that exists among participants, the deep listening for meaning, a listening without filters, shifts held beliefs and understandings in a way that does not demand consensus or unity and creates an opening to explore ‘other’s’ commitments and perspectives. Dialogue holds the tensions of

difference. Its multi-vocal, emergent, non linear, unfinalizability and its contextualized social-historical-cultural characteristics, challenge a desire for coherence, a need for certainty and requires of its participants an ability to hold ambiguity and indeterminacy (Deetz 1996; Dawson and Buchanan 2003; Baxter 2004; Pearce and Pearce 2004; Black 2008).

Dialogue, with its very essence of 'being human in the world,' experiences limits. In their 1957 dialogue, Martin Buber and Carl Roger explore the notion that dialogue occurs in moments, suggesting that dialogue is less conducive to being structured and planned and, as Buber describes, is a moment that can surprise. If dialogue is indeed the essence of what it means to be human, and it is in relationship with 'other' where we encounter our humanness and in our humanness we are understanders in the world, then one would expect dialogue to be almost common and not worthy of notice. Yet the opposite appears to be true. Poulos (2008) describes his search for glimpses of the magic of dialogue in the everydayness of life and how,

it eludes me. Often. But then out of the blue, it comes upon me, often when I am least prepared for it ... it is a moment where the light of truth and co-being and joyous engagement infuses the human spirit ... Indeed, sometimes ... we may find ourselves dancing in the light of dialogue. (119)

In their consideration of dialogue as prescriptive or an ideal, Stewart and Zediker (2000) hold that dialogue is a "*situated relational accomplishment*" (230). A situated relational moment where a seemingly intractable issue can become a creative moment through openness to a possibility to see a linguistic term in a different way (Heidlebaugh 2008). For those who choose a posture of dialogue, there is a realization that

there are many ways to "do" dialogue, and one cannot predict in advance exactly what it will take for this quality of contact to come into being. Dialogue can be enhanced or blocked by such features as the time available, exigencies of space, the presence or absence of an audience, role definitions, and cultural norms. (Stewart and Zediker 2000:230)

Buber explores symmetry and mutuality as important elements in dialogue and by implication suggests that their absence will create an impediment

(Anderson and Cissna 1997). The notion of expert may preclude the presence of dialogue as it brings asymmetry, privileges one way of knowing and meaning over 'others' and, thus, marginalizes the voices of 'others.' Any prevention of an 'other's' ability to name with words is an act of dehumanizing and prevents the communion that is the essence of dialogue (Freire 2011). Freire (2011) presents an argument for the requirement of a willing communion with an 'other' for dialogue to exist. He states emphatically that, individuals who oppress, who resist seeing the oppressed in their humanity objectify and dehumanize 'other,' preventing the possibility of dialogue. An unwillingness to see 'other' as subject closes off the possibility of dialogic understanding.

Anti-dialogical actions of oppressors can include conquest (making a possession of 'other'), divide and rule (preventing the unification of people), manipulation (conforming 'others' to the dominants objectives), and cultural invasion (penetrating the 'other's' culture and imposing a world view) (Freire 2011). Similarly, Zoller (2000) identifies the presence of authority and power as impediments to dialogue in her study of a Healthy Communities initiative. She acknowledges that, in practice, it may be unrealistic to remove completely the vestiges of power and authority; yet finds hope in the possibility of individuals who hold power and authority to relinquish their roles in order to engage in dialogue.

Dialogue theory is distinguished from other forms of 'conversation,' 'discourse' and 'communication' by its support for the recovery of voice, the value of multiple perspectives, the discovery and management of difference, the creation of identity, the social construction of meaning, and the widening of our conversations "to more fully explore the complexities of other people's commitments" (Black 2008:95; Isaacs 1999; Deetz 2003; Deetz and Simpson 2004; Bebbington et al. 2007; Black 2008). Dialogue theory draws our attention to a holistic framing through which meanings, understanding, relationship, responsiveness, reflection, and action exist and emerge.

## Summary

The work of contemporary dialogue theorists' foreground the complex interplay of the numerous nuances and details of the dialogic moment, including the constituents, the constituting process, the context, and the momentary meaning that is constituted. The relational responsiveness of the constituents, the individuals who participate dialogically with one another, requires a presencing, an openness, a mutuality, and a listening that is engaging of mind and emotion. The constituting of meaning and reality at a point in time involves the humanization of an 'other,' the connection of utterances with other utterances, the forces of language construction that tug between emergent meanings and pre-existing meanings, the decentering of self and the centering of the object of meaning. In this constituting, multiple voices are present and yet no voice is privileged as the unity is in the event rather than a single ideology. Dialogue preserves and, yet alters the self and the identities of the constituents.

The challenge to dialogue lies in the ability to create awareness that the process of meaning making and understanding is emergent and creative. Contextually, dialogue exists in moments that are historically, socially, and culturally situated and each participant brings with them their identities and utterances that both pre-exist and are formed in the process. Each participant's language and expression contains their own social-cultural-historical context and leads to an expectation of heteroglossia—meaning made in language that is emergent, changing, localized, and nationalized, ever in flux, and multi voiced. The richness of dialogue is in the merging of horizons of understanding to elucidate a new awareness of what was not known before in tension with the knowing and responsiveness to 'other.'

That which is constituted in dialogue, the meanings and understandings co-created, creates action as participants respond to what is constituted and to one another in new ways, thus influencing and changing the world around them. Importantly, what is co-constituted dialogically is not fixed. It is a momentary unity of experience and understanding

amongst the participants that creates shifts in understandings and in identities that are brought with them into subsequent dialogic experiences.

## **Social Justice Theorized**

My research question is focused on the meanings we co-construct of what is just when we are engaged with 'others.' In the previous section I reviewed the literature on dialogue theory to build an understanding of how meanings emerge within relational space. Yet I wanted to also hear and attend to the language forces, the narratives, and the utterances brought to the research conversations that might be shaping the meanings we hold. To foreground these pre-formed utterances I review in this section, selected literature on constructed meanings of social justice.

Current thinking on social justice is the expression of thought that comes from centuries of human experience. Mikhail Bakhtin's (1990) perspectives on language and heteroglossia suggest that the language, meaning, and understanding of social justice is ever evolving, being constituted and re-constituted through the interplay of lived experiences. In a rapidly globalizing world, these meanings now refract a broader logosphere than has, perhaps been experienced before in history. If an utterance exists in the context and flow of previous and subsequent utterances then our understanding of social justice and human rights will continue to emerge and be reshaped, as we dialogically co-constitute with 'others' in our worlds.

The meanings I explore here arise from the frames and perspectives shaped by the narrative and discourse of each authors' discipline, culture, history, and lived experience. While meanings of social justice are often presented in the literature as definitive, there continues to be contesting across the disciplines and within the disciplines of what is just.

A comment on terminology at this point may be helpful. In the social justice and human rights academic literatures and in our everyday conversations, a variety of terms are used interchangeably or in complementary ways including global justice, human rights,

social justice, justice, social responsibility, and ethics. It is often difficult to differentiate clearly the meanings attributed to each term as they appear across disciplines and are explored from a broad range of discourse perspectives and traditions. In this literature review, I have selected literature from three fields of discourse in which these broader terms are encountered: political philosophy, anthropology, and corporate social responsibility. Looking for the contextual constituting of the meanings for these terms as they are presented in the literature, my intent is to elucidate the meanings that are emerging and being contested, as well as the meanings that may be presumed to be static, neutral or contrived. I begin with creating a historical context for modern notions of human rights and social justice along with an exploration of the notion of 'other' as it appears in the selected social justice and human rights literature.

### **The Context for Human Rights and Social Justice**

Both the Enlightenment and the Western emphasis on, and belief in, individualism and rationality have significantly influenced the discourses on human rights and social justice taking place today. In her book, *Inventing Human Rights*, Lynn Hunt (2007) outlines a historical perspective on the development of Western human rights thinking through the influence of the social changes that gave birth to the American and French Declarations in the 1700s. She contends that the discourse of rights in the 18th century, developed from the growing expression of autonomy and individualism within European and American society. Hunt (2007) makes the case that, in that same social and cultural era, the influences of literature and art created the opportunity for the development of empathy in the minds of individuals for 'others,' contributing to significant social shifts in conceptualizing 'otherness.' These foundational ideas of individualism, empathy and, 'otherness' continue to shape the utterances in today's human rights and social justice discourses.

The notion of inherent rights being held by all men can be traced back to the 1700s. There is expressed a 'self-evidence' of human rights articulated in the 1776 United States

Declaration of Independence and in the French Declaration of 1789. Both texts state an assumption of the inherent internal or interior knowing of the essence of human rights in their opening statements. The American Declaration of Independence states: “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights” (Hunt 2007:216). The French Declaration states: “considering that ignorance, neglect or contempt of the rights of man are the sole causes of public misfortunes and governmental corruption, have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable and sacred rights of man” (220).

In the 18th century, language that was in prevalent use within discourses of rights represented these inherent rights as ‘natural rights,’ ‘human rights,’ ‘rights of humanity,’ and the ‘rights of mankind.’ The meanings attributed to these terms served to distinguish humans and their rights from those of the divine and of the animals. Hunt (2007) notes that the idea of rights in the American and European context of that era contained little on the specific definitions of these rights and, while the concepts were not expressed within any political mandate, their three interlocking qualities were clearly that they were natural, equal and universal. Ensuring these rights still required political structures and processes, yet their articulation began to redefine the social relationships of humans with one another within European and American society.

At the same time, strong social norms, practices and beliefs shaped the understanding of the ‘other’ to whom these natural, equal and universal rights were extended. To have rights in the 18th century, it was thought that one must be capable of holding “independent moral judgement” (Hunt 2007:27). The underlying assumptions about an individual’s ability to reason and make moral judgement gave rise to distinctions between those who, by the social standards of the day were determined to hold “the ability to and the independence to decide for oneself” (28) and those who were not. On this determination,

rights were not extended to 'others' who were children, insane, slaves, without property, or women.

Richard Rorty (1993) suggests that 'otherness' has been used throughout history by humans who have sought to distinguish themselves, not just from animals, but from 'other' humans who are not like us. He summarizes three paradigms that have been used to distinguish us from 'others.' The first is the human–animal distinction in which we view unjust and atrocious behaviour as something that the 'other' group has always engaged in and, therefore, we are not like them. Whether the 'other' is the Nazis exterminating the Jews, the Serbian participant in ethnic cleansing, rape and personal degradation, or the participant in the ethnic conflict in Rwanda, we view them as different, like animals, and borderline examples of humanity.

The second paradigm described by Rorty (1993) is the 'other' as childlike. A child cannot make autonomous moral decisions and therefore holds a different level of humanity. 'Others' may be considered 'like a child' because of their level of education or are thought to be un-educable, and thus, their humanity is denied and their access to self-determination and power are limited. The third is to consider those who are non-male to be non-human – and on that basis rights are either accorded to them or denied to them. A fourth paradigm not addressed by Rorty (1993) is cultural superiority—the notion that Euro-Western cultures have achieved a level of moral functioning that respects rights, and is therefore morally superior to 'other' cultures. The morally inferior cultures are seen as needing to adopt Euro-Western ideas of rights, or their cultural ideas of rights would not be afforded the same level of protection (Brown 1997).

Philosophically the idea of 'other' continues to be present in our language as our humanness, and our subjective and intersubjective experiences of our social reality, are explored and contested. Who we see as 'other,' how we see ourselves in 'other,' what we believe about 'other,' and how we interact with 'other' has occupied the thought of

philosophers for centuries. It is important to be aware that just as 'other' runs as a theme throughout the literature on dialogue theory it is also integral in the discourses on human rights and social justice (Rorty 1993; Lyotard 1993; Brown 1997; Buber 2004; Freire 2011).

Hunt (2007) suggests that in the context of emerging individualism and autonomy throughout the 18th century and the associated social shifts then occurring, that it was through empathy—the understanding that 'others' who are 'like me' could have rights 'like mine'—that the attribution of rights to 'others' became actionable. The recognition of who is 'like me,' however, continued to be filtered through the social norms and political structures of the times. Hunt (2007) goes further to propose the role of empathy and autonomy as cultural practices through which human rights are extended. She suggests that empathy and autonomy

are not just ideas...they are therefore quite literally embodied, that is, they have physical and emotional dimensions... Empathy depends on the recognition that others feel and think as we do, that our inner feelings are alike in some fundamental fashion...Human rights depend both on self-possession and on the recognition that all others are equally self-possessed. It is in the incomplete development of the latter that gives rise to all the inequalities of rights that have preoccupied us throughout all history. (29)

This lack of a sense of sameness, the incomplete development of seeing the 'other' as autonomous and empathetic, is perhaps an inherent and underlying aspect in the search for social justice that will always confound humanity. This tension between sameness and difference becomes refracted in the broader human rights and social justice debates such as between universalism and relativism. For some theorists, this incompleteness in seeing the 'other' as autonomous and 'like me' is attributable to our subjective and intersubjective position to the world and the sense of boundedness that we create (Karagiannis and Wagner 2007; Scheper-Hughes 2002). The risk, in the desire to establish boundaries through a set of objective and universal principles for human rights, as promoted in the western liberal human rights frame, may lie in the loss of the generative possibilities diversity and difference offer.

Karagiannis and Wagner (2007) bring this view of boundedness for 'individuals' and 'otherness' into their work on diversity in world-making. Their multiple world-making perspectives are grounded in a belief that each individual exists in a reflexive position to the world around them. Individuals draw boundaries around themselves as part of the process of sense-making and conceptualizing of 'other.' Situated in time and context, this notion of boundedness can be seen as a fractal pattern that is present in societies, communities, politics and individuals. Societies construct boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, as do nations and communities. In praxis this boundedness may appear fixed in time, however, many researchers and theorists suggest that the boundedness is ephemeral and fluid, open to being changed by the discourses and relationalities that it spawns, demonstrating the centripetal and centrifugal nature of language and meaning creation (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson 2001; Dembour 2001; Speed 2006; Karagiannis and Wagner 2007).

Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2002) observes that, when our boundedness becomes fixed and static, the boundaries that are constructed to separate us from the 'other' can foster the seeds of genocide and lead to policies of mass destruction. She explores this boundedness as it is expressed in everyday lives and argues that our denial of the 'other' through the creation of boundedness can lead to objectification, de-humanization and de-personalization, creating separateness of space and people. This separateness can be found in our social structures and institutions and can lay the foundation for genocide through the everyday violence that becomes normalized in the process of acting out "basic strangeness" (Scheper-Hughes 2002:32) towards 'others.'

The events of the Second World War are powerful examples of how the cumulative effect of storytelling and narrative can shift discourses and perceptions away from the boundedness of nation states and towards an understanding of the connectedness of humanity across boundaries. Nazi Germany vividly demonstrated to the world the consequences of institutionalized 'otherness,' and created an opening for human rights and

social justice to become formalized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR was viewed as a moral act by the global community and a stepping beyond the boundaries and frameworks of nation states in order to set limits on the internal actions of a regime towards their citizens (Messer 1993; Brown 1997; Smith and Schaeffer 2004; Goodale 2006a; Fraser 2007; Forst 2010).

For the later part of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the UDHR and the universal human rights framework that it offers have defined human rights discourses. In establishing a declaration of human rights, world leaders established a world or universal standard by which the acts of nations and groups could both aspire toward and could be judged against. The UDHR has become “the foundation for the entire range of legal frameworks, interventions, institutional interventions, and discourse that is captured by the phrase *human rights*” (Goodale 2006a:1; Messer 1993; Smith and Schaeffer 2004).

Yet even at its inception the UDHR was not without controversy. Over the subsequent decades human rights and social justice discourses and debates have been sustained across academic and intellectual disciplines, cultures and geopolitical boundaries. These debates continue to be re-ignited when acts of war, ethnic cleansing, famines, nationalist inspired murder and genocide, and localized injustices sponsored by economic and political agendas take place (Miller 1991; Messer 1993; Shute and Hurley 1993; Smith and Schaeffer 2004; Follesdal and Pogge 2005; Farmer 2005; Cowan 2006; Goodale 2006b; Merry 2006; Orbinski 2008; Mining Watch Canada 2012).

Four generations of human rights have evolved since the UDHR was written in 1948 (Messner 1993). The first generation, defined by political and civil rights, focused on the “basic security of persons” (Messner 1993:222). The second generation, characterized by social democracy movements, saw the addition of socioeconomic and cultural rights into formal frameworks. The third generation, characterized by the entry of Third World nations into the discourse, brought in the recognition of collective rights and the development of

rights to peace. Finally, the fourth generation has resulted in recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination and control of resources. Each generation of discourse, in turn, has laid the groundwork for the next generation of thinking and understanding to emerge.

In her examination of the historical search for social justice by Latin American women, Francesca Miller (1991) introduces the notions of *abertura*, an opening, and *parenthèse*, “a brief break but little change in politics as usual” (xiv). Human rights scholar Michael Ignatieff (2002) poses a question of whether or not the era of human rights is coming to an end. The question itself would suggest an assumption of the fragility of the human rights regime and serve as a call to vigilance. There lies the possibility of subsequent generations of human rights alongside the possibility of experiencing a modern day *parenthèse*.

### **Summary**

The last three centuries have ushered in an era of rich discourse on human rights and social justice. When examined from the perspective of competing understandings, the places of contestation become clearer. Beginning in the 1700s with important societal statements that linked the idea of rights to the notion of being human, a historical, cultural, social, and language journey has been travelled. Exactly what these rights are, to whom they apply, to whom do they not apply, and the means by which they are upheld have been theorized, institutionalized, challenged and re-interpreted. The literature I have explored here serves to highlight and affirm the notion that our meanings and understanding continue to develop in fluid and unfinalizable ways.

### **Political Philosophy, Social Justice, and Human Rights**

The purpose of this section is to explore the themes of social justice that appear in the political science discourse to create a broad awareness of the thinking and the places of contestation. Beginning with an overview of John Rawls’ Theory of Justice and the role of

social institutions on social justice, I briefly explore the impact of globalization and 'otherness' on justice theory.

Political philosophy draws our attention to the characteristics of a society and the impact of these characteristics on justice for its citizens, the role of social institutions and their practices in perpetuating or alleviating situations of injustice, the normative principles that may or may not be required to sustain a just society, and the impact of globalization on human rights and social justice frameworks. There is much to be contested in political philosophy discourse and almost every author reviewed for this paper presented nuanced theoretical perspectives through which to view the principles of justice, the assumptions underlying the agency of individuals and the role of social institutions, the role of power, and the competition between core values, such as individualism, collectivism, communitarianism, universalism, and relativism.

A dominantly normative, rational, and liberal narrative is evident in the work of influential philosophers such as John Rawls and in the theories of justice currently influencing national and transnational policies and frameworks (Fraser 1996; Mertens 2005; Karagiannis and Wagner 2007; Pogge 2007). Rawls (1971,1993) grappled with presenting a theory of justice that would articulate a set of fairness principles for social institutions (Shute and Hurley 1993; Rorty 1993; Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith and Huo 1997; Mertens 2005; Fraser 2007; Pogge 2007). Created as a theory of justice as fairness within an ideal social context, Rawls' (1971) ideas were presented as principles for the working of social institutions to ensure the protection of the inviolability of people "that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override" (3) based on the belief that justice principles could be logically reasoned and embedded into social institutions.

Follesdal and Pogge (2005) acknowledge Rawls for establishing the domain of social institutions as a locus for moral assessment and linking social institutions with "the terms justice and social justice" (4). For Rawls, the notion of social institutions is distinguished from

the organizational entities themselves and he refers instead to the rules and practices that structure the relationships and contribute to the ordering of a society (Pogge 2007). The founding of social institutions based upon the principles of justice as fairness is therefore fundamental to Rawls' theory of justice and to his concept of social justice (Pogge 2007). Rawls (1971) states that social justice is established when "the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation" (7). The importance of embedding justice principles into social institutions is founded in the recognition that, inequalities that occur in the economic, political and social circumstances of life and the favour created for some over others can be pervasive and profound in their impact (Rawls 1971; Follesdal and Pogge 2005).

Recognition of social institutions and the role they play in social issues such as poverty, unemployment and other economic inopportunities is thought to be a relatively recent phenomenon. Follesdal and Pogge (2005) note the consolidation in thinking that became evident in the first half of the 20th century, with a shift from an assumption that individuals singularly bore responsibility for their ability to achieve social, economic and political mobility within society, to a perspective that recognized the role of governments in the design of institutions and their responsibility in creating institutions that contributed to or constrained human need.

The discourses of Western justice theorists, whether focused on principles for fairness, just distribution of resources or, on procedural justice and recognition, until recently, have also been built on a frame that presumes the context and dominance of the modern and territorial nation state (Rawls 1993; Fraser 1996, 2005, 2007; Tyler et al. 1997; Forst 2001; Follesdal and Pogge 2005; Mertens 2005). Described by Nancy Fraser as the "Keynesian-Westphalian frame" (2005:69, 2007), issues of justice were assumed to belong within the boundaries of the state, were related to concerns between citizens of the state,

and were subject to debate and redress within the boundaries of the state. Social justice was understood to be the resolution that citizens within modern territorial states owed to one another. With “equal standing before the law...[and] equality of opportunity...all citizens gain access to the resources and respect they need in order to be able to participate on a par with others.” Arguments became focused on “what should count as a just ordering of social relations within a society” (Fraser 2007:194).

The ‘who’ for whom justice was being argued, were the citizens within the national territorial state. The debates about justice were viewed as taking place within primarily national discourses, addressing the fair distribution and access to national resources, the responsibilities citizens owed to one another, the responsibility of the state to their citizens, and issues of recognition as citizens by the nation state (Fraser 2007). The major claims from schools of justice include socioeconomic distribution or redistribution, legal or cultural recognition, relative deprivation with the distribution of goods and services, procedural justice as the perception of fairness in conflict resolution or allocations, and retributive justice or, the reaction of people to the consequences received by those who break the rules of society (Fraser 1996, 2005; Forst 2001; Follesdal and Pogge 2005; Tyler et al. 1997). Regardless of the theoretical thinking about the ‘what’ of justice and the norms that shape it, the presumption was that the ‘who’ of the justice question were the citizens of the nation, and the nature of the nation state was liberal and democratic (Fraser 2005; Rawls 1993; Gould 2004).

The discourse within political philosophy in relation to the context of justice, shifted dramatically in the 1990s as a result of globalization. Globalization in this context is primarily expressed in economic terms and is seen in the presence, role and interconnectedness of transnational agencies and the expansion of multinational corporations into developing countries (Gould 2004; Fraser 2005, 2007; Karagiannis and Wagner 2007). Globalization was seen as a destabilizer of the nation state frame, within which theories of justice had

been constructed and, as a result, changed the arguments about social justice (Fraser 2005).

The influences of social institutions on the lives of people now extend beyond the boundaries of the state. Economic policy is viewed globally. Goods move around the world throughout the production and marketing processes. The activities and influence of transnational institutions and corporations transcend national boundaries as capital and knowledge each move around the globe with disregard for borders. Global issues now require sovereign governments to respond within the context of global strategies and solutions (Fraser 2005). The impact of globalization on social justice has shifted claims of redistribution from national economies to the creation of transnational alliances. The agencies from whom justice is being sought has shifted from national governments to the “governance structures of the global economy” (Fraser 2005:71) and has led to the creation of new institutions and mechanisms by which transnational corporations can be regulated (Follesdal and Pogge 2005; Kuper 2005).

The impact of transnational political, economic and social activity over the past two to three decades created an imperative to theorize a global frame for justice (Rawls 1993; Fraser 2005, 2007; Kuper 2005). Since the early 1990s, the degree of shift necessary in the frame for justice within the context of globalization has become the preoccupation of a number of political theorists. In 1993 Thomas Pogge wrote on the notion of cosmopolitanism and laid out a position for institutional cosmopolitanism based on human rights. Rainier Forst, in 2001, pursued a theory of transnational justice through a critical theoretical frame. In 2004, Carol Gould pursued democratic decision making, within a global frame as the locus for justice. Nancy Fraser (2007) took a further step and challenged the normative–social–scientific approach that has been dominant within the discipline of political science, offering for consideration alternative discourse conceptions of what justice means.

Cosmopolitanism begins with the idea that all human beings, regardless of citizenship, ethnicity or other political and cultural differences share a common morality. Pogge (1993) identified three elements common to cosmopolitanism as individualism, universality and generality. Individualism holds that the core 'unit' of concern is each human being, rather than groupings of people based on some criteria of membership (i.e., family, community or religion). Universality holds that the rights or status attributable to human beings are equally applied to all. Generality holds that rights or status have worldwide or global force and application. Pogge (1993) further identified that cosmopolitanism is generally held to have two distinctions: legal cosmopolitanism, that is, the idea of a global governance structure within which all people would have equal standing, rights and duties; and, moral cosmopolitanism, which is the idea that all people stand in moral relationship to one another.

It is within the conceptual space of moral cosmopolitanism, including the moral analysis of the social institutions that have and are developing within globalization, where human rights, social justice and global justice discourses primarily rest. While there may be a drift towards legal cosmopolitanism within these discussions in considering alternatives to existing institutions, the focus is primarily on the moral assessment of the institutions which we (as humans) create and the choices we make in the rules and practices that become embedded into them. The underlying premise is that, our global institutions have impacts on human lives. Pogge (1993) argued that the

present global economic regime produces a stable pattern of widespread malnutrition and starvation among the poor... and there are likely to be feasible alternative regimes that would not produce similarly severe deprivations. In such a case of avoidable deprivations, we are confronted not by persons who are merely poor and starving but also by victims of an institutional scheme—impoverished and starved. There is an injustice in this economic scheme. (56)

Rainer Forst (2001) offers a different stance from Pogge's moral institutional cosmopolitanism perspective as the context for global justice. Taking a transnational view of

justice within a critical theoretical frame, Forst (2001) positions his argument for transnational justice outside the confines of the statist and globalist positions as the locus for resolution. He accepts that issues of justice transcend national boundaries; however, he seeks an alternative context for addressing “conflicting claims that call for adjudication in light of principles of justice” (161). His challenge lies in the true nature of these transnational relationships and deems them as sufficiently lacking in reciprocity that they cannot be considered as interdependent and cooperative. Rather, he suggests they represent a context of injustice and characterizes the relationships as a “context of force and domination” (166) in which poor countries are placed in subordinate and disadvantaged positions.

Forst (2001) argues that a critical theory of justice starts with a recognition of multiple dominations and that the deeper roots of injustice, as expressed in extreme inequality and poverty, lies not in distributive or economic justice but in the question of power. He side-steps the debate of the frame for justice as being either domestic or global and argues for core principles that allow particular political contexts to be the locus of justice, while holding to a universal individual right to justification. Justification, for Forst (2001, 2010), is the premise that all human beings are treated in a way that can only be justified by their standing as a person equal to ‘others.’ In other words, each person has the right “to be respected as autonomous agents who have the right not to be subjected to certain actions or institutional norms that cannot be adequately justified to them” (712). The outcome of a transnational justice discourse based on principles will lead, he argues, to the establishment of basic structures, both within and between domestic societies, and will create equal relationships and influence between domestic states and begin to alleviate oppression and injustice.

Carol Gould, in her book *Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights* (2004) also explores the impact of globalization on the rights of people to the basic conditions they

require for an adequate standard of living and the retention of cultural and social uniqueness in local settings. Gould builds her discussion on the observation that nation states are now less relevant to the locus of democratic decision-making that is required to secure social justice for all people. Taking a cosmopolitan perspective to globalization, Gould works from a premise that democratic decision-making creates a context for human rights and social justice through the equal participation of people in the decision-making processes that affect them.

Similar to Pogge (1993), Gould (2004) distinguishes between moral and political cosmopolitanism. However, in her work, she explores the application of democratic theory to political cosmopolitanism and underpins this approach with the assumption that democracy is the preferred political philosophy for ensuring human rights in part because “democratic participation is... a human right” (183). Gould is intentional in developing her framework for democracy and human rights in a globalizing world within a social ontology of humans in relationship with other humans. What stands in contrast to the more traditional and normative philosophical approaches to social justice and human rights in the context of globalization, is Gould’s stance that human rights are relational and build on the dignity and empathy we extend to one another—those close to us and those who are distant from us. Gould’s approach to globalization is essentially dialogic and processual. Her recognition of diverse perspectives and their contributions to global approaches to human rights and social justice, embraces both normative and feminist theoretical constructs and encourages the exploration of the ‘between’ spaces of personal, plural and global perspectives.

Nancy Fraser ‘s (2007) contribution to the discourse on social justice in a globalizing world is to encourage a stepping back from the philosophical debate that has traditionally been grounded in a normative–social–scientific approach and to raise a challenge that this approach in itself needs to be re-examined. Fraser (2007) argues that globalization has changed the redistribution school of justice claims from what fellow citizens owe one

another, to how much inequality is permitted and amongst whom the inequalities are to be considered. Within the recognition school of justice, claims against status hierarchies are now being made in cosmopolitan institutions, such as the International Criminal Courts. In both schools of justice, the shift is significant and debates centre not solely on what justice is owed within a community but now includes questions of who is a member of the community and which community is involved.

The significant challenge that Nancy Fraser (2007) offers to the discourse is not which justice principles need to be embedded into global justice, nor which of the constructs of cosmopolitanism, internationalism or liberal nationalism best apply, but the question of “how, in a given case, should one determine the pertinent frame for reflecting on justice? By which criteria or decision procedure should one decide? And who is the ‘one’ who should determine the relevant frame?” (197). She argues that considerations of how the global frame is theorized

cannot... be entrusted to a positivistically conceived social science. It must, rather, be handled dialogically in a multifaceted practical discourse that canvasses alternative conceptions...in full awareness of the internal relations between social knowledge and normative reflection. (204)

Fraser (2007) calls for a critical and democratic approach to the question of how the determination of the ‘who’ takes place in a globalizing world. Her challenge is to the inherent tendency of the normal–social–scientific perspective to objectify the subjects of justice, to assume that a given structure can be empirically determined in the absence of understanding the complexity and emergence of interdependencies, and the dependence on ‘experts’ rather than participants to determine the frames and the questions of justice. Critical and dialogue theory, she contends, are social theories that would offer understanding of alternatives for the framing of global justice.

## **Summary**

Political philosophy has been grounded in an ontology where the objective and ideal truth for the principles for social justice can be rationally determined and argued. Once established, these truths give the shape and form to social structures by which justice can be fostered. John Rawls treatise, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), is an artifact of this perspective and while well-reasoned, makes a number of assumptions regarding the society into which these principles will be embedded (liberal, democratic and stable) and that a normative and scientific approach is the way of knowing. Yet the need to re-frame the work as the events of the world unfold and to create change at multiple levels, is becoming more evident. In response, theorists are rethinking past knowledge in the context of current and emerging realities. Globalization is one of these changes and political philosophers have been challenged to re-articulate their liberal, democratic, and universal worldview within a reality in which an awareness of diverse worldviews, values, and principles is growing. 'Otherness' is becoming apparent as different subjectivities are explored, as critical discourses heighten the voices of those who are marginalized and oppressed, and as ways of knowing are broadened.

## **Anthropology, Social Justice, and Human Rights**

Anthropology's relationship with the human rights discourse over the past 60 years reflects in many ways the distinct perspective that anthropologists bring to the social sciences. Clifford Geertz (1984), in exhorting anthropologists to do what anthropologists have always done, articulates this perspective as one that sees the world, and the humans who inhabit it, in new ways and elucidates the manner in which previous perspectives were historically and culturally contextualized. More recently, Jane Cowan (2006) describes the work of anthropologists as empirically descriptive with a focus on linking the data of 'what is' with theory. In the area of human rights, she sees anthropologists bringing the reality of what is happening in the world in regard to rights and culture, into an active and reflective

engagement with theory to both refine the theories and re-frame the questions that need to be asked. In this section, the work of anthropologists in human rights and social justice will be overviewed. I explore the significance of anthropology's relationship with the 1948 UDHR and the subsequent impact on the work of anthropologists, followed by examples of the current work being contributed by anthropology to human rights and social justice theory and practice.

In the late 1940s, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was being crafted, the perspective of leading academic anthropologist Melville Herskovits was sought to both endorse and legitimize the UDHR proposed "basic and universal moral facts" (Goodale 2006a:1; Merry 2001). Rather than responding with an affirming nod to the UDHR, Herskovits instead chose to reject the UDHR's notion of universal human rights and the underlying theoretical frames of liberal individualism, based on empirical, epistemological and ethical grounds (Goodale 2006a; Cohen 1989; Messer 1993).

In the Executive Board of the American Anthropology Association's (AAA) alternative statement—published as a position statement for *American Anthropology* in 1947—these grounds were articulated as the privileging of the respect for the individual, while neglecting cultural differences as being of equal importance (AAA 1947). The AAA effectively drew attention to the UDHR as a document that reflected the values and valuations and, therefore, the perception of basic rights, of the Western countries who participated in crafting it.

Goodale (2006a) recounts that the AAA (1947) identified three principles on which to base their rejection of the possibility of a universal declaration of rights. First, the AAA saw the UDHR as disrespectful of moral and ethical systems that differed from Western perspectives and, in asserting a universality of rights these Western perspectives could only become prescriptive rather than descriptive. Second, the UDHR was seen as a normative judgement that established a comparison of other cultural practices to a set of universal

rights, an epistemology the AAA could not support. Third, the UDHR was seen as a representation of moral imperialism intended for use in reshaping the world to a preferred standard that would lead to a loss of freedoms for cultures whose ideas and practices of rights differed.

Taking this stance at a time when the world was recently shaken by the Second World War atrocities of Nazism, likely contributed to a general misunderstanding of the arguments presented by the AAA and served to effectively marginalize anthropology from discourses on human rights and exclude human rights as a sustained topic of interest in anthropology until the 1980s (Goodale 2006a; Messer 1993; Merry 2006; Speed 2006). It is also plausible that the stance taken by the AAA in 1947 did serve to hold open ideational space for alternative perspectives that influenced subsequent discourses on human rights.

The references to cultural relativism in current human rights discourses and the sensitivities to accusations of ethnocentrism that emerged from the debates of the late 1940s, appear pervasively in the literature and appear to have shaped the discourse of human rights in other disciplines. In some situations, the arguments for cultural relativism have been used to the detriment of a nation's citizens, while in other cases the debates of cultural relativism have been used to extend and broaden the understanding and language of the practice of human rights within societies and cultures (Follesdal 2005; Odinkalu 1999; Jaggar 2005; Messer 1993).

The cultural relativism argument proffered by the AAA in 1947, has also served a critical role in maintaining sensitivity to the perceived polarity between the privileged values of universality and individuality expressed in the UDHR and the elided values of diversity and collectivism. Cultural relativism has played the role of the 'pebble in the shoe,' an uncomfortable irritant within many discourse traditions and thus contributed to surfacing the complexities inherent in the translation of human rights and social justice theory to practice

and social change (Cohen 1989; Messer 1993; Farmer 2005; Goodale 2006a; Bhambra 2007; Karagiannis and Wagner 2007).

Since the 1980s, anthropology has begun to experience a resurgence of interest in human rights (Goodale 2006a; Cohen 1989; Messer 1993). Mark Goodale (2006a) attributes this resurgence to a small number of key anthropologists who helped to produce, within the discipline, a “distinctive anthropological reorientation to human rights” (4). Clifford Geertz’s 1989 lecture, titled *Anti Anti-Relativism*, initiated within the discipline’s discourse, a different approach to considering human rights and the work of anthropologists. Geertz (1984) positioned the initial notion of cultural relativism as the fear of the accusations of provincialism. Anthropologists, aware of their tendency to carry their own cultural and social biases with them, became concerned with “the danger that our perceptions will be dulled, our intellects constricted, and our sympathies narrowed by the overlearned and overvalued acceptances of our own society” (Geertz 1984:265).

Anti-relativism, Geertz (1984) contended, emerged in response to cultural relativism as the concern that, anthropologists, in their desire to avoid cultural comparisons, would declare every cultural practice as significant and in the process lose important distinctions and render everything insignificant as moral. Anti anti-relativism was presented, not as a return to relativism, but as an encouragement to delve deeper into the complexity of meaning construction and the relationship between morality, culture and knowledge.

Moving away from the polarities of individualism versus collectivism and from the intellectual responsibility or burden of defending cultural diversity against universalism, anthropologists began to build their involvement in human rights on the rights of “people and groups [to] ...a generic right to realize their capacity for culture” (AAA 1999:1), to work within the working definitions of the UDHR as international principles, and to consider “the social practice of rights as an object of ethnographic inquiry” (Goodale 2006a:3; Messer 1993; Cohen 1998).

Ronald Cohen (1989) contributed to the exploration of the complexities of seeking universal moral principles within a context of cultural diversity and the emerging internationalism of justice, by encouraging a search for middle ground. Noting, what he labels as the third generation of human rights, the right to development and the addressing of inequities of power between the poor and wealthy nations, he argued for the setting aside of the simplicities of the individualism–collectivism and universal–cultural polarities as the focus and encouraged the engagement of anthropologists in

real world experiences, where rights or a sense of what is just and fair emerge.... Without the crutches of relativism, or the unthinking arrogance of ethnocentric Kantianism, differences have to be judged not just as ‘variations’ – interesting scientifically and morally defensible, or indefensible. There is today an obligation to ask as well whether or not such differences enhance or degrade the lives of those who hope to survive and flourish under their sway. (Cohen 1989:1016)

Collectively the impact of the reflections by anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz, Ellen Messer and Ronald Cohen in the 1980s and early 1990s on anthropology’s engagement with human rights began to shift the discipline towards a different framing of human rights and the role of anthropology research. These shifts included the exploration of what Geertz (1984:268) referred to as “culture-free conceptions of what we amount to as basic, sticker price homo and essential, no additives sapiens” and what Cohen (1989) posed as “which among the relativity of moral values judged to be an aspect of our common humanity have true or supportable validity, and which are simply context-determined aspects of specific traditions?” (1016).

Ethnographic practice and the work of anthropologists with human rights lives at the nexus of theory and practice—in essence exploring the social practices of people through their “specific cultural processes and meanings” (Goodale 2006a:3) to further inform human rights theory, to address specific movements of social change, and to participate in the protection of marginalized peoples. In her 1993 article, Messer argues for the contribution that anthropologists can bring to human rights discourse to build bridges between the

polarities that have characterized the discourses in other disciplines. A contribution she sees being made through comparative studies of the approaches societies take to human rights formulations, in examining how guidelines for conduct are developed, expressed, and practiced within a society, and how international norms for human rights become translated into cultural practices. More recently, Goodale (2006b) suggests that a key perspective, critical to the work of anthropologists, is their role in retaining the nature of the specific and contextualized understanding of human rights in order to understand the structural power–knowledge environment within which rights are interpreted and practiced.

In the past decade, anthropologists working in the area of human rights have begun to explore these new avenues. The work they are doing is broadening the definitions of human rights that contribute to emancipatory cultural politics and emerging cultural norms as well as contributing to empirical understandings of the relationship between culture and rights and the ways in which power is expressed in human rights discourses and social action. In applying ethnographic methods, anthropologists are also generating greater understanding of the relationship between transnational activities and the local expression of human rights and social justice (Goodale 2006).

The broader purpose of social justice and human rights systems is presumed to be the remaking of societies into social spaces in which all humans experience the opportunity to achieve all they are capable of being. Sally Engle Merry (2006) contends that anthropology has a role to play in the production of knowledge and understanding of the variety of ways in which human rights and social justice ideas and practices have spread throughout the world. Citing a number of ethnographies in which the use of human rights ideas and language has influenced expectations of marriage, land ownership, and women's rights, as well as, at times, being used to entrench existing power structures and relationships, she demonstrates the impact of Western notions of human rights on people around the world.

Reflecting a move occurring within anthropology to side-step the universalism–relativism argument, Merry (2006) chooses to focus on “the social processes of human rights implementation and resistance ... to explore what difference they make” (39). In the process, she created an analytical framework to address the questions that arise. Using empirical studies on the appropriation of women’s human rights from transnational sources into local settings, Merry focuses on the role of translators, the people in the middle, and the processes involved in the translation of human rights concepts originating in global legal institutions into the local situations where oppression and human rights violations occur.

Merry’s (2006) description of the translator’s role within the processes of translation resonates with tension. The individuals in these roles are responsible for bringing transnational concepts to the historical–cultural–social situatedness of the local in a way that connects to local issues and, at the same time, bridges to the expectation of their own organization’s political and funding agendas. Concurrently, the translator lifts the local issues out of their situated context to the transnational level in a way that they will be recognized as legitimized human rights issues, while respecting and honouring the needs of the people in the local setting.

In the translation process, Merry (2006) suggests, the translators engage in language processes of vernacularization and indigenization. Vernacularization is the adaptation of meaning to reflect the language of the nation or people group into which the meaning is being transferred. Indigenization is the shift in meaning that occurs as the concept is integrated through cultural norms, values and symbols. At a deeper level, the meaning of the human rights concepts being translated are intended to create change within the subjectivities of individuals and within the social structures through which more just conditions may result.

It is at this level that the idea of the frame, as used in social movement theory, elucidates the contestation for meaning of the human rights concept locally (Merry 2006).

The strategy adapted to create the shift for individuals to whom the human rights concepts are being introduced, may use a frame for the human rights ideas that creates a greater tension between 'what ought to be' and 'what is' in order to create momentum towards a change while risking resistance if the change is too significant. Alternatively, the frame for the human rights ideas may be created to align with current practices to minimize the degree of change while risking a co-opting of the ideas into existing practices.

Merry (2006) explores several ethnographies in which the processes of translation have been studied to highlight the uniqueness that each contributes to an understanding of the complexities that are in play. She suggests that the flow of influence in regard to the understanding and practices of human rights is multidimensional in its' movement cyclically from transnational to localized, as well as in the spread of local adaptations to other localities around the globe. Importantly however, she notes the inherent 'Western-ness' of the human rights framework that is spreading among localities and suggests the translators are

restricted by the discursive fields within which they work. All the translators used human rights discourse, with its reference to international standards and its focus on individual injury and cultural oppression rather than structural violence. ...The larger structure of economic and political power that surrounds human rights activism means that translation is largely a top-down process from the transnational to the local and the powerful to the less powerful...the processes of vernacularization are intimately connected to the interests of states and funders as well as those of local communities... consequently, human rights ideas are not fully indigenized... . They are embedded in a distinctive version of the good society that envisions the state as the provider of social justice and the individual responsible for making claims on the state. (48-49)

### **Summary**

Anthropology has contributed to 'holding open' the human rights discourse in the face of a strong normative perspective that seeks logically coherent frameworks that may make sense in ideally constructed scenarios but do not reflect the situated and "social life of human rights" (Wilson 2006:78). As anthropology engages with the human rights discourses and processes, a richness of the implications, nuances and unintended consequences of

global human rights structures, frameworks and processes emerge. These contributions ensure diversity in perspectives and utterances and, I believe, serve to hold open discursive spaces to the centrifugal and emergent meanings that can challenge hegemonic Western and liberal theories of social justice offered by political philosophy.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Justice, and Human Rights**

In this final section, I review the discourses on social justice and human rights that are found within the business discourse of corporate social responsibility. The work of corporations and the impact they have on human rights and social justice is increasingly capturing the attention of trans-national organizations (i.e., United Nations), governments, non-profit and non-governmental organizations, and academics. Broadly, the role of corporations and the impact of their operations on local communities and individuals have been subsumed within the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Centering on the impact of corporations on society, the meanings of social justice constructed within this discourse differs from the meanings of social justice that have arisen from discourses within political science and anthropology. The linguistic turn, discussed previously in this literature review, draws our attention to a way of seeing that recognizes the process of constituting meaning and brings an understanding that our ways of seeing are shaped by our social-cultural-historical-intersubjective experiences. The meanings we construct from differently situated positions, remind us that what we perceive is not fixed or static but is perpetually in the process of being constituted (Deetz 2003). The transcending of nation state boundaries that is occurring in the context of globalization is raising questions regarding the impact of transnational corporations on communities and rights, and it is also contributing to the creation of broader meanings and understandings of corporate responsibility and justice.

As transnational corporations increasingly hold greater economic power than nation states, there is a growing discourse on the effects of involvement by transnational

corporations in development activities in the third world or the Global South—a role that has traditionally involved nation states and nongovernment organizations. Debates on the role and responsibility of corporations to attend to and work towards the betterment of society and the lives of citizens are not new and have long existed as an ideological tension in the views of the corporation’s role in broader society. The dominant discourse on the impact of commerce on society and the role of government, continues to be embedded in notions of democracy, the role of the state as the representative of the nation’s citizenry, the benefits of capitalism, the attribution (or not) of virtuous characteristics to corporations, and the opportunities for corruption (Levitt 1958; Friedman 1970; Banerjee 2008). What is changing, however, are the venues that are increasingly becoming accessible to the marginalized voices of people and communities who have been negatively impacted by the operations of business.

Subhabrata Banerjee (2008) explores the notion of corporate social responsibility from the perspective of “the relationship between business and society” (52). In providing a historical perspective on the modern American corporation, Banerjee (2008) helps to expose the roots of the discourse tension between a view of the corporation as the creator of private wealth and the perhaps contrary or alternative view of the corporation as holding an obligation to society and the social good. In the 1800s, the American system of incorporation consisted of a formal charter granted by the state to an organization—the charter stipulated both the organization’s mandate and its responsibility to serve the public interest. In situations where the corporation was found to not be acting in the public interest, the charter would be revoked and the ‘right’ to operate as a business would cease to exist (Banerjee 2008). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, state oversight of corporations was significantly reduced through successive legal actions and reflected, in Banerjee’s analysis, “shifting power structures in the economy, society and polity” (2008:53) that have had significant

import for the current discourse on corporate social responsibility, primarily in the relationships between business and the state.

While legal structures are acknowledged for playing a key role in holding corporations accountable for their operations, the notion of a corporation holding a social right to operate continues to be held out as a societal norm. John Ruggie, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (UN), recently authored a framework for the UN on the role of transnational corporations in respecting human rights. He states that one social norm that has “acquired near-universal recognition by all stakeholders, including business, is the corporate responsibility to respect human rights—or, put simply, to not infringe on the rights of others” (Ruggie 2009:284).

It may be debated how widely this societal norm is held, given the sufficient examples of corporations whose actions demonstrate practices contrary to the broader social good. Often, the questionable actions of corporations have been justified based on the view that their economic role is a sufficient contribution to the social good (Banerjee 2008). For sceptics, examples of corporate harm foster the argument that, in the absence of the influence of external laws and regulations to which they are held accountable, corporations will self-orient towards profit regardless of the impact on social good or social justice.

In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, Theodore Levitt (1958) articulates the argument that the business of business is profit alone. At a time when a number of corporate leaders were speaking to the socially responsible role of corporations as the new mantra of business, Levitt berated them and challenged them to return quickly to the virtuous activity of making profits. Acknowledging that, for some leaders, there may be a genuine belief in the need of corporations to take society more seriously, Levitt (1958) suggests that a primary motive in adopting a creed of social responsibility was the deflection of criticism and political attacks on profit making.

While charity may yield returns on profit margins, Levitt (1958) contended that a wholesale turn toward social responsibility as an equivalent objective to profit could only have a long-term effect that would be the demise of capitalism and blur the line between the responsibilities of government and business. His belief was that

capitalism as we like it can thrive only in an environment of political democracy and personal freedom. These require a pluralistic society – where there is division, not centralization, of power. (44)

Business is responsible for business, the state is responsible for the welfare of its citizens, and the citizens are responsible for holding their governments accountable. Milton Friedman's (1970) stance that "the social responsibility of business is to increase profits" (1) echoes Levitt's arguments and extends them further by giving primacy to the corporate leader's responsibility as solely to the corporate interests.

Perspectives that favour CSR, argue that corporations should think about social and environmental issues as well as profit, should demonstrate ethical behaviour through integrity and transparency and, at a minimum, be philanthropically involved with the communities in which they operate (Banerjee 2008). Arguments for the balancing of moral and ethical actions with the business objective of creating capital and wealth continue to contend with the narrower and purist view that the corporation's primary purpose is profit creator, while leaving the social wellbeing of society to the state.

For proponents of CSR today, the relationship between business and society is typically represented by terms such as corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship, and sustainability. These terms are often used rhetorically, as descriptions for corporate activities that are to be perceived as beneficial to society and the environment. In the past decade, these terms have become pervasively present in discourses on CSR and, building from a normative theoretical perspective, are becoming embedded in regulatory and accountability frameworks that hold at best an underlying assumption of the possibility for a positive contribution by corporations to individual, societal and environmental wellbeing

(Kuper 2005; Campbell 2007; International Organization for Standards 2009; Ruggie 2009; UN Framework 2011). These discourses recognize breaches of human rights in the actions of corporations and acknowledge the need for external standards and legal frameworks to which corporations can be held accountable.

In the past, the territorial state in which a corporation operated was assumed to be responsible for holding corporations accountable (Kuper 2005; Ruggie 2009). In the current global context, however, where 51 of the 100 largest economic entities in the world are corporations, transnational solutions for corporate accountability are being pursued (Anderson and Cavanagh 2000; Kuper 2005). Corporations are growing both in number and in size, frequently transcending the boundaries of nation states and thus, moving outside the Keynesian-Westphalian frame described by Nancy Fraser (2005).

Previously, the relationship between corporations and the states that regulate them presumed common territorial and statutory domains. In a globalized world, nation states are less able to regulate the activity of corporations and this role is falling to transnational structures such as the UN, International Courts, International Agreements and the World Bank (Blowfield 2004; United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Working Group 2001/3; Kuper 2005).

Discourse tensions in the relationship between corporate social responsibility and social justice continue to be evident in the plurality of globalization. These tensions arise from ideologically driven expectations, responsibilities, and obligations placed upon corporations by theorists and activists who see the world from different perspectives, from shareholders who demand economic returns, and from the agents of state and transnational structures such as the United Nations and World Bank, who recognize the power held by corporations (Ruggie 2009; Campbell 2007; Kuper 2005). Diverse viewpoints are contributing to alternative theoretical perspectives that counter the economic business ways of knowing.

CSR, within the business environment, is strongly influenced by normative, rational and positivistic approaches to knowing because these are deeply embedded in the knowledge practices of business. Banerjee (2008) argues that, as power is given to corporations in the global and transnational systems and structures, the discursive power/knowledge biases of these spaces towards the interest of the corporation will silence the voices and perspectives of others. He identifies this as a theoretical challenge for researchers in regard to corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship and suggests a critical theory lens would contribute to a counter-narrative and bring alternative theoretical perspectives that could displace the strongly entrenched shareholder-centric discourse of business.

The power/knowledge gradient within the current discursive spaces related to CSR and social justice or human rights is strongly oriented to the goals of the organization rather than to the needs and goals of people in communities. Given the inherent belief in market competition that makes up the ethos of corporations, the power/knowledge systems that are emerging globally are tilted towards the corporation: Competing and swaying process to their needs is what corporations are bred to do.

As the culture and values of Western corporations assume universalism and thus replicate “the social, ethical, economic and political norms embedded in the hegemonic form of globalization” (Blowfield 2004:65), conflicts inevitably arise. The corporate values and norms of profit embedded in CSR are often undeclared, yet are given primacy over local values, norms and priorities. In local settings, where the norms and values are not shared, different expectations may exist between the communities and the corporation. The managers and the investors of the corporation become the definers of social and environmental justice, rather than those who live with the impact of the corporation’s business.

As a result, CSR often reinforces the structural elements of the global corporation, leading to a neglect of the local, contextual, social, and historical spaces into which an organization intrudes (Blowfield 2004, 2005). Blowfield (2004) similarly notes the perception by those who work in international development “that international law protects capital and intellectual property rights while the global legal framework for human rights, worker rights and environmental rights is far less certain” (63). He suggests that global CSR standards, whether voluntary or mandatory, perpetuate this granting of rights to corporations. These rights include “the rights of capital and private property, the acceptance of the free flow of capital, the right of business to invest and disinvest at will, and the paramountcy of the market as the determinant of price” (Blowfield 2004:65), the right to make profits, the commoditization of all things including labour, and the “privileging of companies as citizens and moral entities” (Blowfield 2005:520). These rights become problematic and conflictual in countries with “pluralistic economies, social constructs and values” (Blowfield 2004:65). In this business centric environment there is little room for the voice of ‘other’—particularly for those voices and perspectives that cannot be quantified and weighted within a culture that assigns value based on commoditization. The voice of ‘other,’ often the people who are marginalized and poor, remains silenced.

Blowfield (2004) optimistically suggests that these shifting roles and relationships have infinite possibilities once the universalist assumptions of corporate norms and values are examined and set aside. What is critical to people involved in the debates of CSR and the role of corporations in international development is to debate the need for “a business case for our social, moral and economic options” (Blowfield 2004:67). Where there is an entrenched norm which regards the business case as the primary basis for assessing the role of CSR in organization decision-making, the absence of a counter and centrifugal discourse will likely lead to the embedding of global capitalistic principles into issues of justice and development and a failure to find alternatives.

In posing the question of how this power alignment can be shifted towards the interests of society, Blowfield (2004) suggests that, focusing on the individual corporation, as the unit of study, is insufficient. Shifts in thinking are required at the macro levels, new discursive spaces need to be opened up and the relationships among the multiple actors (i.e., states, organizations, non-government organizations and communities) examined. Focusing on asking the questions that challenge the current economic and political constructs and engaging in dialogue at the local community level in a way that steps outside the existing systems of dominance, may increase mutual accountability between all the actors involved.

The CSR regime appears to be lacking a robust examination of the underpinning justice theories. CSR, conceptualized as it is on an ethical frame rather than a justice frame may contribute to an inconsistent ability of CSR to deliver on social justice issues. Pogge (2005), building on Rawls' work to differentiate justice and ethics, offers a distinction between the two. Justice is the analysis of institutions and the moral assessment of the social rules, laws and practices that inform their structures and processes. Ethics is the moral analysis of interactions between individuals and collectives in terms of their conduct and character. The CSR discourses do not appear to address these distinctions.

Expecting corporations to be arbiters of justice and respecters of human rights when their very ways of acting have not been constituted on principles of justice, may prove to be a non sequitur. Additionally the inability of individual decision makers to engage in just decision making in the absence of discourses that allow the constituting of meanings for social justice, will continue to constrain the engagement of organizations in actions beyond the primarily economic paradigm. Banerjee (2008) briefly touches on this when he considers and then rejects the notion of a moral manager within the organizational context. Presumptions that organizations act based on narrow economic interests precludes the agency of managers who can exercise autonomy and judgment. If, as identity theory

suggests, managers secure their identity and meaning through their relationships with the organization, then their agency is limited and their decision making will be determined by the dominant organizational and institutional discourses.

### **Summary**

The development of social justice theory for the practice of corporate social responsibility would perhaps benefit from a similar analysis of the question of the frame, as has been undertaken within the political philosophy discourses on justice. The historical relationship between corporations and the state was assumed within a frame of the territorially defined nation state that holds an accountability relationship to that nation's citizenry. Within that frame, the relationship between the state and the corporation can be seen as contested through both legal and ideological frameworks.

Corporations have used legal means to gain standing and rights before government and social institutions and have used lobbying to influence legislation that they felt would bind them unnecessarily (Blowfield 2004; Banerjee 2008). The role of government and the role of corporations become entwined and yet the nature of the relationship and the impact on the citizens of a nation is highly variable both within and across nation states. The role of governments in maintaining a regulatory and accountability context for corporations is heavily influenced by the corporation's interests to be free to act without constraint on their ability to maximize profit. Any attempt by a government to legislate or constrain corporate activity or to mandate their responsibility to society is rhetorically contested as government interference, infringement, and a threat to the economic contribution of the corporation to the wellbeing of society.

When a polarity is created between two ideological positions—'corporation as solely an economic institution' and 'corporation as socially responsible'—differences in perspective are amplified and may be helpful for analysis and/or can perpetuate the rhetoric. When used as normative discourses, they become attempts to bring closure and to 'fix in place' an

understanding upon which social structures are created and the hegemonic positions are defended. Building alternative interpretive subjectivities between social justice and CSR may also contribute to hold open the discourses and to allow alternative understanding to emerge before social structures are formed to fix in place the hegemonic position of the powerful. In calling for clear distinctions in roles of government, corporations and other civil society entities based upon 'ideals,' the risks associated with the use of power, knowledge, and influence by corporations to create environments that favour their autonomy and minimize their accountability are ignored (Kuper 2005).

Corporations are not established upon the principles of justice required of social institutions as articulated by Rawls in his *Theory of Justice*; they are built upon principles of economics and capitalism. The CSR discourse is heavily influenced by the principles, values and accepted truths of Western business knowledge. Bringing in theories of justice and the voices of 'others' would benefit the discourse and contribute to opening up the discursive space fostering alternative ways of world-making and knowing.

## **Literature Review Summary**

In this chapter I have explored dialogue theory within the broad context of social theory and examined in some detail, the perspectives on social justice that emanate from the disciplines of political science, anthropology, and business. I intentionally began the chapter by placing dialogue theory within the broader frame of social theory, because understanding the ontology of the theory sets the trajectory for my research and holds the frame for my thinking as I seek to understand the data. Dialogue, grounded in relationship and in the possibilities of bringing forth understanding that is transformative, is also disruptive, noisy, and chaotic. It is a difficult place or space to hold if we are drawn to certitude and knowing. However, when we attend to the processes of understanding, dialogue reveals the pre-formed understandings that are being held and, as we are open to the understandings of others, we are offered opportunities to understand in new ways.

As I explore in the research the meanings the leaders make of what is just, dialogue theory holds my attention on the processes, the relationships, the situatedness, and the language and helps me to resist the temptation to try to create a constituted and abstract object called social justice. Dialogue theory directs my attention to the constituting processes and encourages an expectation of fluidity and unfinalizability of understanding. Within relational space and in language, the historical, social, cultural, and intersubjective experiences that each person brings into the process can be explored. The literature serves to direct my attention in the research process towards listening for and watching for the places of connection and communion, for the relational responses, for the appearance of and the humanizing of 'other,' for openness, for the language currents that open up meanings and close them down, and for the emergence of understandings as horizons are stretched.

Building on the notion within dialogue theory that our ways of understanding are historically, culturally, and socially situated and that all utterances hold meaning from previous utterances, I felt it was important to explore this selection of discourses in which social justice is addressed. This includes a historical perspective that grounds human rights and social justice in the Enlightenment and the American and French Declarations from the 1700s. Viewing what has transpired from the 1700s to our current place in history, the shifts in Western understanding of human rights and social justice become clearer. Our utterances today reflect many of the currents in thinking that have issued forth over the centuries as people have contended with the questions of 'who is human like me' and thus to whom do these rights extend. Beginning from a place of narrow and limited privileging of white men with property as the holder of these rights, we have seen barrier after barrier breached as rights become normalized for more people. Much has been achieved; however, without a doubt more work remains to be done. The historical review I provide is not comprehensive

and it privileges Western perspectives on human rights and social justice, however, it serves to connect our current understandings of social justice to a historical context.

The historical review of human rights and social justice and the review of selected disciplines (political science, anthropology, business) serve to heighten my own awareness of some of the possible origins for understandings that the research participants and myself as the researcher-participant bring into the conversations. I was curious, as I began pursuing my research question on the meaning leaders make of what is just, about the meanings that existed in the academic literature and whether or not they would be reflected in the understandings and meanings that we would be exploring within the research. Their inclusion in the literature review serves to make me more aware of these ideas within the research.

Each of the disciplines reviewed hold dominant understandings of social justice and human rights, as well as places of contestation. The selected literature from political science alerted me to the theoretical underpinnings of truth concepts that could be embedded into social institutions, thus assuring justice for a society's citizens. The contesting to articulate a core set of justice principles is now arising from the reality of globalization and the re-ordering of the role of nation states, international institutions, and trans-national globalization. Contestation within the academic traditions of political science is also arising from opportunities to examine the question from alternative social theoretical frames, including the need to dialogically consider alternative conceptions of what is just.

The selected literature from anthropology reminds me that our conceptions of social justice are contextualized by culture. I am aware that I have inherited a dominant Western view of social justice grounded in individualism and a sense of cultural superiority. Anthropology reflects back to me an understanding of the social processes in which meaning and understandings of social justice are situated and created and that alternative ways of understanding social justice are present when I listen for them. The work and

thinking within both the fields of political science and anthropology alert me to meanings that exist beyond the horizon of my own understandings and encourage me to hold open to the possibilities that they bring. Both of these bodies of literature provide a repertoire of language and meanings for me to listen for in the research conversations and utterances.

Initially, when I began to engage with the question of the meaning leaders make of what is socially just, my question was conceptualized within the context of organizations. At the time, the field of corporate social responsibility was being used to promote and engage organizations in understanding the impact of their operations on communities and the environment. As I spent time in the literature attempting to understand the meaning of social justice within the CSR discourse, it became more evident to me that the dominant language of business remained one of profit, while the language of social responsibility remained marginalized. This awareness generates a curiosity for me about the understandings and meanings that the leaders who participated in the research hold, as they navigate the terrain of organizations and business, and the language they use to attend to social justice.

Finally this review of the literature informs my research approach. My focus in the research is on the nature of the relationships, the contesting of meanings and the emergence of understandings, the historical-social-cultural contexts in which meaning has and is emerging, and on the nature of dialogic moments that shift understandings and fuse horizons. The research practices and processes that I draw on, therefore, must have the ability to elicit the processes of understanding within relationship and in language. In the next chapter I overview the practices of participatory action research, narrative, reflexivity, utterances, and sensemaking which I have chosen for the design of the research, as well as describe the overall design for the research.

## Chapter Three Research Approach

In this chapter, I lay out the practices and processes used to explore the research question of the meanings leaders' make of what is just. To begin, I provide a preamble that introduces Christine Bonney, my co-researcher. This is followed by a review of the research practices that informed the research process. In conducting this research, a grouping of methodologies have been incorporated, including participatory action research, narrative, reflexivity, utterances, and sensemaking. A brief literature review of each of these is provided. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I describe the research processes and the broad structure we established to guide the research. Examples from the research are provided to create for the reader a sense of the experience as it emerged for the participants and for us as the co-researcher-participants.

As I write this section of the dissertation my invitation to you, the reader, into this journey of exploration into meanings for social justice remains extended. The sense of linearity that a written document creates can in many ways cause the process of the research to seem disconnected or compartmentalized from the research outcomes. From the conception of my research, there was a planned iterative nature to the process that allowed a weaving of the threads of conversation into a unique tapestry of understanding leadership and social justice. The conversations that comprise the research stand in a moment of time as the participants and the researchers held open a space to explore, to listen, and to be transformed by the meanings of social justice that caught our attention. Sheila McNamee (2000), as cited by Ann Cunliffe (2002) in her article on social poetics, makes a statement that sets a context for our approach:

Research as conversation is sensitive to reflexive critique and multiplicity of voices. If language is our starting point, the entire research process looks different. There is nothing to discover or explain but rather linguistic turns to be jointly performed. (Cunliffe 2002:10)

Resting on the principles of dialogue, these conversations took place over the course of six months. Through the building of trusting relationships, the safe exploration of language, the telling of deeply personal stories, the asking of questions that formed for the asker in the moment of listening, the reflexivity, and the revisiting of the research questions each step was unknown to us until we were in the moment of creating it. As the reader of this dissertation, you have the opportunity to engage with the conversations as they appear in this text. I invite you to reflexively attend to what surprises you, what strikes you, and what is challenging you as the words are shared.

### **Co-Researcher**

The research process was a collaborative effort with my colleague and fellow student Christine Bonney. We began our doctorate studies with a plan to 'do it together.' At the beginning of the process we did not know how the 'doing it together' would unfold, and consistent with our worldview, it unfolded as we both experienced the reality of a doctorate program that is both interdisciplinary and individualized. We each tailored our courses and comprehensive papers based on our inquiry question and collaborated jointly on the creation of our research proposals, ethics approvals, and in conducting the research.

Although our research questions are distinct, they are complementary in their focus on leaders, leadership and social justice. Our shared work experiences have led us into a way of working together that is, at its essence, collaborative and relational, and the theoretical perspectives we have each chosen for our research led us both towards a research methodology that aligns with our way of working. Christine's question is oriented toward 'what leaders tell themselves about themselves as they act in just ways?' while my question is oriented toward 'the meaning that leaders create with 'others' when acting and deciding in a just way.' Both questions lend themselves towards dialogic and relational ways of understanding and being.

We collaboratively developed our research proposals, applied for our ethics approval, created the supportive structures for the research, invited participants, and emerged the questions that held the space for conversations. We are sharing the research data produced from the process; however, we are each exploring the data from the perspective of our research questions and independently writing up our findings and dissertations.

## **Research Practices**

As highlighted earlier in this paper, my ontology or the way in which I have determined to view our social world, is one that is based in relationship and in language. I am taking the position that we are understanders and creators of our social world through our relationships with 'others' and through language. This ontology turns my attention toward seeing the world or, in this context the meaning that leaders make of what is just, as a processual, co-constituting, emergent process that takes place in relationships with those who are 'other'—and, indeed, at times we are 'other' to ourselves as we make meaning for our own contextualized and situated experiences in the world. In developing an approach to the research through which we could explore both of our research questions, it was imperative that the process and methodology were aligned with this ontology. Steven Krauss (2005) highlights that the philosophical stance a researcher takes is crucial to understanding the methodologies that are applied. He states, "epistemology is intimately related to ontology and methodology: as ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it." (758-759)

This research is grounded in the subjective and inter-subjective experiences of the participants, in the processual creations of meaning for social justice, as well as in my own reflexive experiences as a researcher-participant. It was important to foster within the research the opportunity for spontaneous encounters of meaning making. Research

practices that supported this approach (participatory action research, narrative, reflexivity, utterances, and sensemaking) have been drawn on to explore, dialogically, the experiential-historical-cultural-social contexts the participants bring to the processual creation of meaning that leads to acting justly in relationship with 'other.' Questions were used to hold open discourse space amongst the participants and with the researchers for the processual emergence of meanings for social justice and the differences that may be present. Sense-making, reflexivity, story-telling, and narrative form the data from which the (potentially contested) knowing and meanings for social justice emerged—not as fixed meanings but in the fluid and temporal moments of the research experience to elicit embodied and contextualized understanding. In this section, an overview of these core research practices that I drew on in the research is provided.

### **Participatory Action Research**

Participatory research holds a subjective and intersubjective view of reality and is grounded in a tradition of research that holds a predisposition to action, a levelling of power amongst the researchers and participants, a sharing of ownership for the work, and the use of dialogue (Brown and Tandon 1983; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Strand 2000; Corburn 2002; Minkler and Wallerstein 2003; Stoecker 2003; Pain 2004; Minkler 2010). While participatory action research approaches can be differentiated broadly based on their alignment with either the conservative traditions of Kurt Lewin's work in the 1940s or the radical and emancipatory work of Paulo Freire, there is evidence of an interweaving of the traditions based on the principles of collaboration between researchers and participants and the valuing of multiple sources of knowledge (Strand 2000; Stoecker 2003; Minkler and Wallerstein 2003; Wallerstein and Duran 2003; Pain 2004; Minkler 2010). The notion of collaboration between researchers and participants presents a radical departure from the prevalent Western stances on knowledge discovery. Traditional Western research assumes that the world is objectively knowable, that the generation of knowledge and the discovery of new truths is the result of positivism, and

empirical studies supported by instrument construction and replicability are the 'best' ways to create knowledge (Burrell and Morgan 1982; Hall 1992; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Strand 2000; Wallerstein and Duran 2003). Participatory action research is viewed as an alternative to the well-embedded (in Western thinking) positivist approach to research that values the objectivity and expertise of the researcher in all stages of the research process (Schrijvers 1995; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth and Donohue 2003; Wallerstein and Duran 2003).

Participatory action research's challenge to traditional Western approaches has been supported ontologically and epistemologically by feminist theory, interpretive theory, critical theory, conflict theory, and social construction (Schrijvers 1995; Wallerstein and Duran 2003; Pain 2004). Collaboration, as a core principle of participatory action research, is based on a belief that all participants involved in the research process have a voice, have information to contribute and have a role in constructing social reality. Collaboration occurs when the participants and the researcher jointly create the research process (Freire 1993; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Mosse 2001; Minkler and Wallerstein 2003; Stoecker 2003; Strand et al. 2003; Wallerstein and Duran 2003; Wright and Nelson 2005).

The second principle of participatory action research is a valuing of multiple sources of knowledge. If one comes from the perspective that there exists considerable agreement on what constitutes knowledge or that knowledge is objectively knowable then developing empirical surveys or interview processes to gather from a community their knowledge on an issue or problem would seem straightforward. Hall (1992) notes that the "question of whose knowledge counts has always been with us" (16) and the implication that some knowledge may carry a higher value than others is clear. The participatory action research principle of valuing multiple sources of knowledge reflects the underlying belief that knowledge is socially constructed and all ways of knowing hold value.

Within the emancipatory tradition of participatory action research, knowledge production is, therefore, inherently dialogic. The potential for people to develop their own consciousness,

create social change, and produce knowledge is seen as a transforming process rather than a commodity (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Strand 2000; Wallerstein and Duran 2003; Stoecker 2003; Cunliffe 2004; Nelson and Wright 2005; Freire 2011). Knowledge is constructed relationally throughout the production process, and knowledge holds transformative potential (Hall 1992). The theoretical roots to knowledge as expressed within the participatory action research tradition includes the interpretive view that meaning emerges through action, and the critical view that knowledge is not simply to describe the world but to change it (Strand 2000; Freire 2011).

As a result of this view of knowledge, Hall (1992) argues that the method of participatory research is creative and should “flow from those involved and their context” (20). Participatory action research is epistemologically consistent with the ontology of dialogue theory. The leaders who will be engaging with me in this research will bring with them knowledge and experiences that continue to shape their understanding of social justice. In this research, the focus is on the processual creation of meaning that emerges in relationship over time. The transformation that may occur for each leader and their own understanding of social justice becomes captured through narrative and reflexivity throughout the research experience.

### **Narrative**

Narrative is, in essence, the use of language to link events and to create a causal plot that is meaningful (Sparrowe 2005). Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) define narrative as the spoken or written statements about events and their relationship to one another. Within this definition narrating as a verb entails the act of narrating and the act of listening, which in combination is an interpretive act (Tsoukas and Hatch 2001). Narrative is also viewed as a protocol or approach that works to link social action with antecedents through which plausible causes for the action can be explained within a social context (Ruggie 1998). Ochs and Capps (1996) identify narrative as the means by which individuals make sense of experiences and as a process of social interaction with both narrator and listener participating in the emergent

narrative. Narrative is an unfolding of a “reflective awareness of being in the world” (Ochs and Capps 1996:21) that connects oneself with ‘others’ and society. Ezzy (1998) views narrative as the process by which an individual integrates the events of their lived experience to create a sense of self through the creation of the story they tell about their life.

Narrative provides rich ground through which the explanations that individuals create to make meaning over time can be made explicit. Narration is linked to individual identity yet it is also a fundamental social and socializing activity. Based on the meaning that is made individually and collectively of social justice, actions may result that contribute to the ongoing story that unfolds. Understanding the sources and perspective of meaning through narrative, illuminates the actions of leaders who have engaged in socially just decision making.

### **Reflexivity**

Including reflexivity in the research process creates the opportunity to explore more deeply the narratives that each of the participants bring, through an examination of the underlying assumptions, values and constituting of reality that are inherent in the narratives. Where an interview approach may elicit from the research participants what Cunliffe (2004) refers to as a reflex or in-the-moment understanding of a situation or experience, reflexivity invites the participant into an examination of the very nature of the reality they have been part of creating.

In this research my goal is to move beyond the objectivizing of an experience with ‘other’ and the socially just actions that result, and into a reflexive examination of the subjective and responsive experience that engaged the tacit and the ethical ways of being and knowing for each research participant. In this process, the participants and the researchers interacted in conversation and through on line discussion forums and journals. The conversations, discussion forums and journals comprise the narrative data, which I use to explore interactively and reflexively with the research participants. The research process becomes the container for the participants and the researcher-participant to mutually explore meanings of social justice.

## Utterances

As discussed in the previous chapter, the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1990) focuses our attention on language as the means by which we constitute our social reality and, in proposing that our language meanings are fluid and unfinalizable, he suggests that our social realities are as well. Bakhtin's contribution to dialogue theory has already been covered, however, in this section on methodology it is his concept of "utterances" that I want to highlight. The contextualizing of the speech act as an utterance connected to other utterances across space and time serves to illuminate a discipline and characteristic of Bakhtin described by Stewart et al. (2004) as holism: holism looks for the whole and the totality, rather than the separateness and categorization that characterizes the Enlightenment period. For Bakhtin (1990), "the authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance" (272).

In the moment of dialogic speaking, Bakhtin draws our attention away from the monologic communication of historical representation of a concept, to the creative expression of speaking in anticipation of 'others' understanding and one's responsiveness to what is being conceived (Bakhtin 1986; Baxter 2004). The relational responsiveness captured by Bakhtin is not solely a cognitive understanding; it is an embodiment of understanding that is different for each participant in the dialogue and, as such, expands the multivocality of meaning rather than constraining it. What is present within an event is the polyphony of voices within which multiple perspectives exist in the multiple worlds of each person's consciousness. Taking Bakhtin's perspective of utterances can lead us towards a focus on the constituting processes of the meanings for human rights and social justice and a hearing of the utterances that are present and being drawn upon.

## **Sensemaking**

Weick (1995) provides one of the simplest definitions of sensemaking—that it is about the making of sense. However, within the simplicity of this definition there lies significant depth and complexity. Sensemaking is described alternatively as a perspective, a frame of mind, a social process, a set of heuristics, a thinking process to explain surprises (Weick 1995), a process of organizing (Weick and Sutcliffe 2005), a paradigm in the interpretive quadrant of Burrell and Morgan's sociology of organizations framework (Boyce 1996), and a process by which people create their own reality (Nijhof and Jeurissen 2006). Although often used interchangeably with interpretation or described as an interpretive process through which people gain understanding and share these understanding with 'others,' Weick (1995) goes to some length to differentiate sensemaking from interpretation. He states that interpretation is drawn from an understanding or knowledge of something that is there—for example a problem. Sensemaking, in contrast, recognizes that the problem does not present itself as a given. Therefore, with sensemaking there is more interest in the construction processes based on the cues that a person is attending to and subsequently gaining an awareness that 'something is different' and that there is a need to make sense of something that does not at first make sense. Sensemaking is an ongoing process and most often includes a retrospective awareness that something does not fit or that a pattern has been disrupted, consideration of plausible explanations, a sharing of what has been noticed with 'others' and a shift in identity and reputation (Weick 1995).

Nijhof and Jeurissen (2006) describe sensemaking as a process by which people create their own reality as attention is paid to cues, behaviours, symbols and events that are taking place around them. They identify sensemaking as a social activity that invites an examination of how people see things, rather than examining the structures and systems that may be in place. Sensemaking is closely linked to social constructivist approaches to

organizations as it favours a “reflective, narrative analysis of group process” (Nijhof and Jeurissen 2006:317).

Weick (1995) identifies seven properties of sensemaking. First, sensemaking is grounded in identity construction and is best captured by the question posed by Wallas (1926), “how can I know what I think until I see what I say?” (Weick 1995:12). The construction of identity becomes a social act: in the process of seeing what ‘I’ speak with ‘others’ the identity of the individual and ‘others’ involved emerges and develops. Secondly, sensemaking is retrospective and therefore influenced by memory and the notion that “people can know what they are doing only after they have done it” (24). Thirdly, sensemaking is enactive of sensible environments. As one acts, so they contribute to the environment of which they are a part. The actor is neither independent of the environment nor under the control of the environment, there is an interaction between the two. Fourth, sensemaking is social: it is through conversation with ‘others’ that meanings are created and sustained. Fifth, sensemaking is ongoing—it is not a process that starts and ends: one is always in the middle of a flow of events about which assumptions are generated. Flow can, however, be interrupted by events that are unexpected and that cause the prevalent assumptions to be examined more carefully. Sixth, sensemaking is focused on cues, “simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring” (50). Small cues become the equivalent of full sets of data as we select what cues to pay attention to as the basis for extracting meaning and determining action. The seventh property of sensemaking is that it is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. In sensemaking there is not an emphasis on the ‘right’ decision or meaning; rather, there is an emphasis on what seems plausible to explain the events experienced.

Sensemaking is happening at all times and it becomes explicit in situations where what is occurring is different from what is expected. People have a need to create order and organize out of what they are experiencing (Boyce 1996). Examining sensemaking provides

an opportunity to see how people make sense of ambiguity, search for meaning, and choose courses of action (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005). Sensemaking can help to understand the role and function of values and norms as choices for action based on what is considered to be of value to an individual and within an organization (Nijhof and Jeurissen 2006). Nijhof and Jeurissen suggest that sensemaking can highlight the assumptions that underlie socially responsible or irresponsible behaviours.

Sensemaking examines the conditions and processes by which people become aware of the events they are experiencing out of which stories, meaning, narrative, and social constructions emerge. In a dynamic interplay of retrospection and present action, sensemaking is an attempt to freeze frame the pre-decisional process from which choice and action emerge. Understanding or illuminating these moments of sensemaking can surface assumptions about the broader social system and the beliefs and actions that dominate around leadership and social justice.

## **Research Process**

Parker (2004) suggests that in action research one “always reinvents method in the process of research... the ‘method’ itself is likely to be something that will emerge in the course of the research” (125). In adapting this notion to her work, Simon (2012) suggests “‘method’ may become apparent [only] after the activity of research has taken place and while describing the research process” (116). Consistent with this perspective, our research process became emergent within the frame created by our research question, our ontology and the methodologies we chose. However, there is more to what the researcher does beyond showing up with questions to ask. There is also the intention that I, the researcher, bring of my own identity and presence within the research process to my relationship with each of the participants and with my co-researcher Christine. The posture that I, as a human being engaged in dialogic and language grounded research, choose, creates an ethos for the process in which each person in turn is free to choose how to respond and create their own

way of being within the research setting. Buber (2004) speaks of the first movement of dialogue as an interior turning towards the 'other.' I-as-the-researcher must, therefore, be attentive towards my own interior turning toward opening, knowing that what I hold to be truth will be challenged and stretched. It is the creating of this ethos that I wish to foreground as it contextualizes the conversations I will be sharing and it will also invite you, as the reader, to enter into the conversation with us.

Both Christine and I have a background in leadership coaching and in the practice of facilitation. Within these practices we have learned the importance of creating spaces for relationship to be fostered and for people to feel invited to engage with one another around the topic at hand. We have also learned how important it is for the people leading or sponsoring the conversation to be open, vulnerable and authentic within the process. Our observations have been that, as much as leader-sponsors are prepared to share and be present, the participants will respond in a similar way. Given the personal nature of the research questions that we wished to explore with the participants, we believed it to be necessary to bring these principles and practices into the research process through our roles as researchers-sponsors of the process. The principles we brought into the research process to create an ethos of open, vulnerable and authentic sharing are reflected in how we built the process of invitation, applied the processes of facilitating, and incorporated the processes of coaching.

### **Invitation**

Invitation or the 'act of inviting' can be a formal, impersonal and, in some settings, an imperial process that may leave the person receiving the invitation little choice about attending.

Invitation from a person or a representative of an institution, who carries a weight of power or authority, can bring with it dominant social norms that may result in a person being physically present yet at the same time, limit the level of their engagement or the authenticity of their contributions. Peter Block (2009) describes invitation as a conversation that invites "accountable and hospitable community" (113). We have found that the process of invitation

can create a shift in how people think about what they are being invited into, can influence the authenticity with which they participate and create the opportunity for deeper relationship with one another. It was important in our research process, based as it is in dialogue and participatory research principles, to think carefully about our invitation processes.

In the end, Christine and I approached approximately 30 individuals with an invitation to participate in our research. We had been gathering names of people who we thought would bring a range of experiences to the topic of leadership and social justice over the previous year(s) and many of the individuals we were able to invite directly. We also used third party invitations as we discussed our research with friends and colleagues who were willing to share our invitation with people in their networks who met our criteria. Specifically we were seeking individuals who are seen as leaders, either in formal or informal roles, and who are recognized for bringing to their work and into their lives intentionality for being socially just in their actions and decisions. Additionally they would be willing to participate in critical reflection throughout the research process, have the time to commit to the process and be over the age of eighteen.

Seven individuals agreed to participate and to make a commitment of their time and of themselves to our process. We had a balance of four women and three men, an age range that extended from late twenties to mid-sixties, a mix of not-for-profit, healthcare, corporate and academic work experiences, and all from North America. Our one disappointment was our inability to bring into the group greater cultural diversity; however, in the end we had a committed group of participants, a broad range of perspectives and experiences and all of them stayed with the process through to the end.

Preferably, the invitation would have been offered either face-to-face or by phone. However, to meet the requirements of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) of UBCO, we were encouraged to communicate in writing first, in order to provide consistency and clarity of communication and to leave the invitee free to respond uncoerced by the

researchers. In keeping with these parameters, we endeavoured to keep the tone of the formal letters warm and personable as we highlighted the research topic, explained the reasons we were approaching them, stated the research questions, identified ourselves as the researchers, explained the time commitment (duration and intensity), the nature of their involvement, the benefits of participating and affirmed their freedom to exit from the process at any time (Appendix 1). We felt however, that the formality of the letters put at risk the ethos we wanted to create from outset of the process, and chose to append the formal letters of invitation with personal emails. For example:

Hello Gary,

Well we are finally at the place of 'invitation to participate' in our research! As you know, Christine and I have been engaged over the past three years in pursuing our PhDs and are now at the research phase of the process. We are conducting the research together with a focus on the relationship between the practices of leaders and socially just outcomes.

We are writing you at this time to ask you to consider being a participant in our research. We would like to understand more about why it is critical to you to lead and to act in socially just ways. By participating in this research you will both contribute to and connect with others who have similar interests for the purpose of sharing stories, wisdom, insight and learning. Attached is a formal letter of introduction to the research and in it you will find specific details regarding the research questions, the research design and the nature of the commitment we are asking of you. Gary we know that you are a very busy person and that there are many demands on your time and appreciate your consideration of this invitation.

We would be delighted to have you participate. Additionally you may also see this as an opportunity to contribute to the development of a leader within your network and we would be interested in exploring that with you - in fact we will be sending you a request in another day or two to ask (again) for you to connect us with some specific people in your network.

Please let us know if you are interested in participating and we can set up a phone call to explore in more detail and to answer any questions you may have.

In this case the response from Gary was pretty immediate:

Hi Penny,

I am delighted to be included, have read the letter and am pleased to make the commitment you are asking for. I'm really interested in your quest and look forward to this new piece of learning about something really important.

All the best,

Gary

Aspects of the invitation process carried into the initial phone call that was held with each participant. We are aware that when interacting by phone, our voices are our tools and we use them to convey warmth, humour, and invitation. We model the use of first names, leave space for each other and the person we are inviting to speak and to ask questions, and we speak not just to the third person, but to each other. In this first call, Christine and I both thanked them for their interest, explained the consent and confidentiality forms (the confidentiality form was created to provide accountability among the participants for maintaining confidentiality on what was shared in the group sessions). We also spent some time explaining, in more detail, the participatory nature of the research, the level of commitment (both in time and personal sharing) asked of them, and responded to any questions they might have had.

This intentional approach to invitation was also used to foster the participant's sense of contribution to the norms of how we would come together in our one-on-two calls and our group calls. An example of how we did this is made visible in the introduction to the first teleconference we hosted. First, we helped prepare the participants in advance for the conversation by sharing an outline for the call, in which we again spoke to the emergent nature of the research and the hope for interaction and relationship among the participants:

Next week we will be hosting our first group conversation as part of the research process. As we have mentioned in our individual conversations with you, we created a process for our research that would allow us to adapt to what emerges as we interact with one another. Your postings on the web site, our one-on-one (or two) conversations, and the group teleconferences are all important processes for us to hear from you and interact with you around the ideas that emerge. We are anticipating a great conversation. (Email from Penny and Christine to the participants)

By re-articulating in the outline for the call, that we (the researchers) were fulfilling the role of hosts for the conversation, that we are creating a process for the research in response to what emerged in the conversations, and that the conversation will be 'great' because of what they bring, we were deepening the authenticity of the invitation and building a context for

deeper relationship. On the first teleconference call, we took a further step to demonstrate and to practice the shared nature of the work: at the beginning of the call we invited the participants to speak out their ideas about how they would like to see this group be together. What emerged were statements of exploration, openness and trust:

I believe...it is a safe environment for us to share our real feelings about the topics we are talking about. So I am excited to hear what people really think about things—and to learn from everyone's experience. So I am looking forward to people being open and honest about their thoughts and feeling comfortable with talking about them with everyone. (Teleconference #1, Kathy)

It is more of a question that I have, than it is around principles or ground rules and that is around confidentiality about this work. I was thinking the other day when I read an article—and I went to share that article and my experience reading from it. I wondered are we allowed to—or is it encouraged that we share our learning? Not what people have related or our deep conversations and meaning—but when we have an 'ah ha' with people that we are sort of—I know in my case coaching and leading. What is the groups' feeling? Like are you sharing with your partner—say hey “I am involved in this amazing leadership opportunity?” (Teleconference #1, Dorrie)

I don't know why we wouldn't share all the brilliance that we could [*laughs*]. I don't think there would be a confidentiality issue. I have been telling people about it and talking about it. And I think I am learning part of my responsibility is to pass on any goodness, any tidbits, any helpful advice. I mean ... anything that will build capacity and move people forward. (Teleconference #1 Kerri)

From my perspective anything that I say, it is my personal opinion. Because I work for a very large American corporation...As long as anyone wasn't representing it as a truth of the [...] company, I would feel okay and good about you sharing my opinions [*laughs*]. (Teleconference #1 Kathy)

Jessica here, I think that is a great point. I obviously represent a university and all my experiences I feel are very personal and I appreciate the opportunity to share my journey—I think much of this study is trying to get at some insights that are shared but also a part of our own process and throughout that process those ... and thoughts might change—so I think insider thoughts are not necessarily—I will, and probably will continue to share my own thoughts but they will probably change as a result of what we discuss and so just understanding that and also understanding who we represent from an organizational standpoint is different from where we are at individually.(Teleconference #1 Jessica)

Invitation sets the ambience for the whole process. We wanted each person to feel ownership of the process and to feel completely safe in the process, as we would be asking each of them to open up and share with us and the others, some very personal experiences. Indeed, in the process of being engaged with us and with the research, levels of awareness

from their lived experiences were deepened for most of the participants, in a way that they had not fully explored or reflected on before. All of the participants finished out the full process, and the attention we paid to the processes of invitation set the context for that outcome, as well as the rich stories and meanings that emerged.

## **Facilitation**

In our facilitation work, we incorporate four explicit and intentional practices. First, we pay close attention to our purpose and intent, and use these to ‘hold the container’ for the conversations. We are intentional about building our intent into all of our processes. For example, an important part of our approach to facilitation is the creation of a welcoming space. We think about how we ‘bring people into the room’ by giving them an opportunity to share something of themselves. Often this requires giving time and space for getting to know the people with whom they will be interacting.

In this research, we worked within a virtual room because of the geographical distance between us. As it was important to create multiple opportunities for interaction between the participants and ourselves as research-participants, we created a website with a discussion board for asynchronous interactions. We encouraged people to use video-cameras on the calls in order to have the opportunity to see the people we were speaking with and listening to. Our first request of the group was that they register on the website, post a picture of themselves and respond, in a posting, to the following question:

Each of us comes into this conversation with experience, passion and stories to tell about leadership and social justice. Take a moment and introduce yourself to each other sharing a bit about what you have been up to and what prompted you to accept our invitation to participate in this research (Discussion prompt on the discussion board by Penny and Christine).

Within this question we reiterated our research intent (that we were interested in their experiences with leadership and social justice), and laid the groundwork for two of our tenets or beliefs, making them explicit (again) to the participants. The first principle is that each participant brings experiences that are valuable to all of us; and secondly, we began to lay the

expectation that we are engaging in storytelling as a part of the research process. In the invitation to the first teleconference call, this welcoming into full participation was again intentionally conveyed:

Next week we will be hosting our first group conversation as part of the research process. As we have mentioned in our individual conversations with you, we created a process for our research that would allow us to adapt to what emerges as we interact with one another. Your postings on the web site, our one-on-one (or two) conversations, and the group teleconferences are all important processes for us to hear from you and interact with you around the ideas that emerge. We are anticipating a great conversation.

To prepare the ground for the first teleconference we are sending you two articles. The first is a very short article from the Globe and Mail on the Aga Khan and the idea of plurality—and is a very easy read. The second is an article that we have found to be very thought provoking about the everyday violence that exists in societies. This article, while it touches on theoretical perspectives, also contains some interesting concepts and case studies. Both articles will help set the container for our conversation next week. We will post these articles on the web site as well.

The outline of the call will be as follows...

Introductions and check-in question (What do you hope to get from your involvement in this [research] process?) (20 min) (facilitated by Christine)

Principles or Commitments for the group conversation (10 minutes) (Facilitated by Christine)

Conversation on the articles—grounded by a question that will hold the space (45 min) (Facilitated by Penny and Christine)

Wrap up—what practices did you see yourself and others use that helped foster dialogue? (15 min) (Facilitated by Penny)

Again, in opening the call with a space for each person to give voice to their hopes for their involvement in the research, we created an opportunity to focus everyone's attention on the overall purpose—exploring leadership and social justice—and to begin the process of connecting with one another and to hear each person's reasons for participating.

A second practice that we incorporated into our facilitation is support to each of the participants to come into the conversations prepared for what we are inviting them to speak with us about. This support was provided through sharing with them in advance of our call a set of opening questions, a request for a story from their lived experience, and occasionally, a

prompt from some provocative article or quote. For the initial and final calls with each of the participants, Christine and I worked together to create the focus and the introduction for the call, and co-lead the facilitation of the conversations. Similarly, this was the approach for the first group teleconference call. For these co-led calls, we would prepare by sharing our ideas with each other to ensure that the conversation would inform both of our research questions. Then together we crafted the email that would go out in advance of the call. For the six one-on-two calls that, in the end, comprised the middle of the research process, we alternated the roles of lead and listener. For the teleconferences, I took the lead on the second teleconference and Christine took the lead on the third. The full set of questions developed for each call can be found in Appendix 2.

Regardless of who was the lead, the facilitation approach was similar and we soon created a flow between our roles on each call, developing a rhythm that replayed across all the calls with the participants. The lead researcher would create the focus for the call and invite input and refinement from the other researcher. An introduction to the coming call would be sent to the participant a few days in advance, giving time to think and reflect. Both of us would be on the call; however, the lead researcher would facilitate, inviting comment from the other researcher when needed, and the non-lead researcher would be left free to listen, observe, and reflect on the conversation.

The following two examples demonstrate the way in which the context and prompts provided to the participants for the coming calls would be shaped. In each one we were intentional about our respective roles, the focus of the call, and the stories or quotes we use to engage the participants in a memory from their own lived experience.

#### Call #3—Exploring Experiences of Acting Justly (Penny as lead)

We have our third call coming up, and on this call I will be taking the lead and Christine will be listening in. To begin our call we will talk a little bit about your journal post(s) and then we will move into the next conversation. This time we will be talking about your own experience(s) in acting justly. To help you prepare for the call, we have a few questions for you to be thinking about. Again there is no need to journal

in advance of the call, as we will be posting a follow-up question in your journal as a prompt for you.

Here is the question:

In the doing of our work and also in the doing of life, there are times when we find ourselves in situations and events where the outcome has significant impact for ourselves and for 'others.' Often the 'way to go' is not clear or straightforward. Tell me a story of a time in your life where what you did and the decision(s) or influence that you made impacted significantly or made a difference in the lives of others. What guided you in the experience? How do/ did you feel about the outcome for yourself and for the others who were involved?

Similarly, is there a situation that you were a part of and in which you held some level of authority or influence and you find yourself revisiting it and questioning if there was something different that you could have done for a more just outcome?

Call #4—The basic practical-moral problem in life (Christine as lead)

I'm looking forward to our call tomorrow. In studying leadership over the past few years, I have come to see it as a process of thinking about ourselves, our actions and reflecting on the situations that we find ourselves in. It seems to me to be about learning to deal with challenges, thinking critically, trying to see situations in new ways, dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity and learning from experiences and mistakes. Quite different, I think, from the more classical perspectives on leadership. The following quote seems to capture quite eloquently the centre of this kind of thinking...

"The basic practical-moral problem in life is not what to do, but instead what kind of person to be" (Shotter and Cunliffe 2002:20).

In prep for our session could you reflect on this statement? Have a wonderful weekend...

Once the 'container' for each conversation was set and shared with the participant(s), we would lean on the use of a third practice I want to highlight—the use of questions to open up space to more deeply explore what is being spoken. Vogt, Brown, and Isaacs (2003) suggest that the

usefulness of the knowledge we acquire and the effectiveness of the actions we take depend on the quality of the questions we ask. Questions open the door to dialogue and discovery. They are an invitation to creativity and breakthrough thinking. (1)

As facilitators, our challenge is to pay attention to how we use questions to hold space open for deeper exploration, rather than as devices to shut down conversations. Vogt et al. (2003) draw our attention to the risk that our own assumptions are reflected in the questions we ask: we can ask questions in a manner that lead to the answers we want to

hear. For myself, as I prepared in advance of the calls, I would find my place of curiosity around how each person might respond to the opening topic for the conversation and I would be intentional around letting them ‘take the lead’ in the subsequent conversation. My following questions would be formulated in the moment in order to be ‘in response’ to the thoughts they chose to share.

The following examples help to illuminate how these conversations could unfold in a way that was unique to the two people in conversation and the relationship that had developed with us as the researchers, thus far in the process. These examples are drawn from the opening portions of the fifth one-on-two call. The first example is from the conversation with Jessica and the second example is from the conversation with Jeff.

The focus for the fifth call with each participant was shaped by the following email that was sent a few days in advance (the quotes that are referenced can be found in Appendix 2):

Continuing on from our conversation about ‘other,’ I invite you to read through the following excerpts/ quotes in preparation for our call on Monday. The first two quotes are by Martin Buber whose writings on dialogue suggest a more profound experience between people than what is reflected in the common applications we see of this term today. The second excerpt is by Paulo Freire whose writing on oppression is both evocative and challenging.

I look forward to hearing the thoughts that these words stir in you...

Jessica, in her opening response to these quotes, incorporated her reflections from the most recent teleconference call with the participants. She drew upon her generation’s practices of communication, some recent current events, and recalled, with some nostalgia the relative simplicity of her time in Guatemala.

JESSICA: I did check back and listened in on the dialogue [teleconference call #3] and just started to really think a little bit more deliberately about... and I read the quote almost at the same time for today’s discussion and just the concept of what dialogue means. What struck me as interesting is how different the ... dialogue and a broader term, communication, looks and feels to us particularly for my generation. And what I mean by that is how ... if we were going to have a conversation with somebody or work with somebody on anything or have relationships of any kind, 50 years ago you had to actually physically see the person. Or you had to write it. Now

you can have virtually little connection and be connected. And that flipped me for a reflection on how does that help and hinder the way that we believe ourselves—and a whole piece that I have been consistent about reflecting on is authentic leadership—how do we truly and authentically be ourselves in relationship and or dialogue with others when that communication can be distant but still have impact? Meaning, it is so easy for me to send a text but is the impact the same? Is it different? Is it negative? Is it positive? Which also led into this whole new notion, and this is another thing to think about, the whole formative experience of oppressors and the whole excerpt that you sent, which I really loved. I have read Pedagogy of the Oppressed before but it was a nice refresher to think about and a little bit timely in that in the US news—I don't know if you heard that one of the owners of the NBA, Ronald Sterling, was seen as having very flat out racist comments and has been rescinded and banned from the NBA ... It is everywhere here. You can't go anywhere without hearing about this. I felt like it was so fitting to the quote and the excerpts you had sent in regards to everything we are thinking these days of what...how do the historically oppressed approach oppressors and how do we react, as much as how do we act—in accordance to and with a lot of these injustices.... What dialogue looks like, how it is inner change, how it impacts other people, how words spread to really change both positively or negatively an outcome. And how we react to it. What do we do as a result of it and how do we then act as leaders in an authentic way to be able to do that? That is just where my head is at right now. Not sure if that is helpful for conversation or from the past if there is anything that we can think about, but definitely something that has struck me as part of how we dialogue.

As the 'other' person in the conversation with Jessica, and as the host for the conversation, I experienced, in the moment of conversation, a place that I could not have anticipated in advance of our call. She had just presented me with a lot of information on what was going on in her mind in response to the quotes and where she was 'at' in the moment of the conversation. As I reflected on my inner response to what she had shared, and in my desire to consider her ideas in a fresh and non-preconceived way, I accessed what was catching my attention. I began to speak and in the process of speaking, I found my entry into formulating a question that would keep the conversational space open for the ideas that were circulating. In the moment, I spoke in a paced and measured way:

PENNY: I think it is a really interesting observation and I appreciate the generational perspective that you bring. Certainly both Christine and I text, and we text because our kids text. But those are relationships that we have other ways of connecting with people around. It builds over time on that relationship. So when you think of what Buber is saying in terms of genuine dialogue, "where you have in mind the other and you present to their being and turn to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationships," from what you are saying, it strikes me that there are so many impediments to that. And that is one of the things that Buber talks about in another place—about what the limits are on dialogue. What does a leader such as yourself

bring into that encounter that can constitute a dialogic moment? But what also can be happening that presents limits that shut down the opportunity for a genuine dialogic moment? (Jessica Call #5)

Jeff responded to these prompting quotes in a different way. My conversation with him demonstrates why it was important that I not carry into each conversation an expectation of where the initial questions would lead. The question that arose in me, in response to Jeff's opening thoughts, was unique because it came into expression from the unique place and space that was becoming our relationship.

PENNY: Did you have a chance to look at the email I sent to you Jeff? I know there was a bit of reading for you to do on that...

JEFF: Ahh yes...just...briefly. I did read it, but just once. I can't ...I will confess to not having done deep reflection, but I have read them.

PENNY: Ok, great. And before we jump into them, I also want to hear if there were any reflections that you had from our last teleconference. I know it I has been a week and a half?

JEFF: Yes [*speaking over top of my words*] I think absolutely. It was a conversation we need to have. I...really...struggled with the last call. I am ... and when I agreed to participate in this process and the conversation was around leadership and social justice. I...each of us would have had our own mindset around what is inside that box. What is inside that topic. And, I guess my belief or my presumption was that it would be somewhat more macro level. So, when we talk about social justice, I think more around ... what are state responsibilities, and again this stems from my work with Amnesty, what are ... what on a global basis is happening around human rights, gender equality ... you know, any number of issues of inequality? Maybe environmental issues? And, with the last call in particular, but this process in general, it seems to be...it strikes me as very much at a micro level...at an individual...how do individuals approach almost issues of...right and wrong, ethics and then individual behaviour. And I am struggling at the micro level. I am feeling almost like this conversation and this process is almost around...behavioural psychology. How do people make decisions? If you have an opportunity to make a decision that is 'quote unquote' ethical, why is that at certain times we make certain decisions and not others. Or, why is that we as individuals will sometimes stand up for what we believe in and sometimes won't. I found it—on the last call in particular—I was really struggling. I just felt really trapped in the micro, at the person. Like, 'All of you, can you tell us a story about a time you personally struggled with this or felt this or experienced that?' And yeah I wondered if I was in the right room. I am glad, because if you hadn't raised the questions I would have raised it as I really felt almost on the verge of disengaging during the last call.

PENNY: Okay. Thanks Jeff. I am glad I asked. Both Christine and I try to touch base and see where everybody is at with the conversations. And I think you had reflected these concerns in an earlier conversation. You have been great saying 'gee I am

really kind of struggling with this and not really sure where it is going.' I want to say that we really value your perspective because we really wanted to bring together a group of people who in their leadership, think about social justice but anticipated there would be differences in how people think about that—their role, their influence, and how they see social justice unfolding in the world and around them. And I think...I am glad you didn't disengage. I am glad you are still here because I am really interested in your perspective in terms of how you see it and how you see your role—because you have agency in your own role, [your] own way of choosing to show up...but how you connect that to the broader picture of social justice. And I am also interested because with Amnesty, I think they do work at that global level, and yet they also bring it down to individual circumstances to an individual who is in prison...(Jeff Call #5)

Over time, and in each subsequent conversation there was a laying down of what I conceptualize as a tapestry of stories. This tapestry contained the narratives, utterances, and understandings that each person turned to in order to make sense of their lived experiences. Our questions, as the process unfolded over time, drew on what had been shared in previous conversations and we would re-weave these ideas as deeper understandings emerged on their own journey with social justice and leadership.

The fourth facilitation practice that we incorporated was the exploration of our own responses to what we are hearing in the ideas and thoughts being generated. In this practice we attend to the co-construction of meaning through re-stating, responding, and reflexivity. In doing our work this way, we are also modeling a permissible way of being and are creating a space that is safe. The following excerpt, from the final (eighth) one-on-two call with Kerri, demonstrates the level of interaction and mutual exploration of the meanings of social just and leadership that the process emerged 'at that moment' and in the 'in-between' relational space created among Kerri, Christine and myself. The context for this conversation was created by the questions we created to introduce these wrap up and reflection calls (Appendix 2). Following some 'settling in' and 'check in' conversation, Kerri is invited to jump in with her thoughts and begins to respond to the first question.

KERRI: Okay well a couple of [insights] come to mind, related to both leadership and social justice. I find there is such cross over here. [*small laugh*] This idea about ... that the only way to lead people...is...to—[*sigh*] I am not going to get the words right but—oh let me think what is this? ... I feel, this isn't right but, I was going to say the

only way to lead people is to model ... with yourself. To be... ah, we have talked about this. I wrote about it in the journal. I can't remember.

CHRISTINE: Hmm. Hmm. You know what? I...

KERRI: [interrupts] What? I am not saying it right.

CHRISTINE: I think you are!

KERRI: [*laughs*] I am not saying it in a way that makes me happy.

At this point Christine offers a way of expressing the ideas Kerri has put out 'there,' and re-states them in a way that Kerri is invited to respond back to.

CHRISTINE: [*laughs*] I think I hear you say...that leadership is about who you are.

KERRI: Right.

CHRISTINE: About who you are being.

KERRI: Yes.

CHRISTINE: And not necessarily the model that you are following or what you are doing.

KERRI: Right...that makes sense. Yeah, I have never said it that way but I totally agree with that [*laughs*].

Christine stays in the moment of exploring what she and Kerri have both offered in response to the question that framed the conversation so far, yet also nudges a little deeper with another question to the meaning this creates for Kerri herself.

CHRISTINE: That is a pretty big insight, I think, into leadership. When you process that idea, what meaning does it have for you? When you think about yourself as a leader, what does that mean to you?

KERRI: That I have to be my best self and keep my ... vision clear and ... act with as much integrity as I can muster. So that, yeah, I think you have to inspire people to change—you can't chain them into changing or scare them into changing. You know? Yeah, you have to inspire them. You can scare people into changing and shame them into changing but those changes aren't authentic and they will often backfire and they won't last—is what I think. Yeah, so to be your best self and act with courage and integrity and inspire other people to do the same—that is the true leadership.

CHRISTINE: I think that is a great insight [*both chuckle*] around change in relationship to leadership and in relationship to social justice.

KERRI: Yeah.

CHRISTINE: And I love that leadership and social justice are actually kind of fused.

KERRI: They are there. Yes, they really are! [silence] Yeah [silence] Yup, definitely.

[Silence]

As the listener so far in the conversation, I have been pondering what both Christine and Kerri have been speaking out and a question has been forming for me, which I now attempt to speak into the silence.

PENNY: Can you articulate that for me Kerri, because I hear you saying that leadership is, whether we use the authenticity word or it is really that ... deep exploration of who I am and who I want to be in these times when I am leading and then how does that ... produce justness or social justness. How do you see that coming through in that way?

This question that I speak produces in both Christine and Kerri responses that we explore together—and co-create a meaning of the relationship we are seeing ‘in the moment’ between leadership and social justice. Kerri re-phrases in her words what the conversation is eliciting for her.

KERRI: Hmm. I think justice and social justice is something we co-create. You know it happens with other people... and, when you are open and clear and acting with integrity, you know, you are more able to connect with others. I think we need joint decisions, we need to share our information, we need to move forward together. And when you are able to say, ‘what are you interested in?’ and ‘this is what am I interested in?’ You know: ‘what are your concerns?’ ‘these are my concerns.’ You are clear on where you are coming from. Then all of that co-creation is easier.

As I listen to her words, I am sparked to re-call something I have recently read, and I weave it into the conversation as an offering of my own thinking. This sparks a thread of conversation in which all three of us offer to one another, in an egalitarian way, an understanding of leadership and social justice.

PENNY: Yeah, it seems as you are speaking—and I was reading over some stuff this morning—in your own authenticity you are actually celebrating and seeking the ... humanity in the people you are with. So it is a humanizing.

KERRI: Yes, that’s nicely said. That’s nicely said—yes.

PENNY: Yes, see together we kind of take this apart and put it back together again.

KERRI: [*laughs*] I like that! [*laughter*]

CHRISTINE: Yeah it is interesting ... I ... think [*Kerri chuckles*]. I am trying to ... I am kind of working ... with ... something ... right now around deconstruction. It strikes me that certain things are ... de-constructible but, ... leadership and justice aren't actually.

PENNY and KERRI: uh ... hmmm

KERRI: Say more about that.

CHRISTINE: Well, you know I think I feel a little like you do on this [*laughs*]. I am not sure if I can articulate this. If you look at the law and the law is created to ensure justice... If the law is applied unilaterally in the same way in every set of circumstances, injustice is actually very often the result.

KERRI: I agree.

CHRISTINE: You can deconstruct law. But justice is ... about the examining of the circumstances around which something is happening for 'other' and it only comes—it is not de-constructible—it is only something that can be created.

KERRI: Wow ... right.

CHRISTINE: I am not sure I explained that very well but it just strikes me as interesting. You know when you see that the relationship between leadership and social justice are so deeply entwined—it is almost like you can't have one without the other.

KERRI: [*pause*] Yeah, for me, true leadership is about social justice.

PENNY: What I am hearing from that, and I think it is nicely said Christine, in terms of going to the law, which is often what we associate with justice...

KERRI: [*interrupts*] Yeah that is great.

PENNY: And in clarifying what you are saying—it is not just leadership ... you can't just say that leadership is entwined with social justice it is... the meaning of leadership that has actually emerged from these conversations. So not necessarily the leadership of 'you must have a vision,' 'you must be able to communicate it in a few words'—those other models of leadership aren't necessarily entwined with social justice.

KERRI and CHRISTINE: [*sounds of agreement*]

PENNY: But the way that we in this group and in this process have been exploring leadership... it is because it is relational, and when in that relationship you are open to the others who are in relationship with you then in that space there is space to know what is just here.

CHRISTINE: Right. Excellent. And it is also for me Penny—I loved the way you described that; it also strikes me that when we are talking about... the meaning of leadership that has emerged from the conversations is the kind of leadership that can't be deconstructed because it is always different.

KERRI and PENNY: Right.

CHRISTINE: So, rooted in this moment that we are constructing together, that it is different and in it lays a possibility for something different. (Call #8, Kerri)

## **Coaching**

Both Christine and I use a coaching-learning approach in our work. We also offer leadership coaching for clients who are interested in exploring the learning and developmental edges of their leadership within the situatedness of their current lives and work. As part of the coaching processes we pay particular attention to building a collaborative and egalitarian relationship with the participants through “empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity” (Stober and Grant 2006:21). We encourage reflection and reflexivity and the putting into practice of the new ways of thinking, to create a learning process that, in turn, impacts the participant and ourselves, as we are in this learning relationship with them.

In the invitation process for our research, we intentionally framed the process as one that incorporated the principles and practices of leadership coaching. In both the Letter of Invitation (Appendix 1) and in the Research Participation Overview (Appendix 1) we outlined a set of principles for the process to set up the foundation for our relationships. With these principles as a frame, space was created for learning and for reflecting on how each person's life experiences has been brought into how they understand leadership and social justice today. Coaching also creates a place for the possibility of becoming explicitly aware of how those meanings have been shaped and even in this research process, are being changed. As the research process unfolded, we developed consistent practices that built an expectation of reflection. At the beginning of each call, we would invite the research participants to reflect on what the conversations were sparking for them and then explore this with them, before jumping into the focus of the conversation for that session. These opportunities for reflection helped to

make explicit what had caught the attention of the participant in previous conversation(s) and to hear how their reflection had shifted or deepened understanding.

The following excerpt from a reflection with Dorrie demonstrates how sitting with the ideas that have been explored after the conversation has ended, can shape perceptions and actions that may occur in the future—the essence, perhaps, of transformational change that comes from the creation of the ‘in between,’ the place where deeper understanding and meaning emerges. In our sixth one-on-two call we take the time to follow-up on our fifth call with Dorrie,

CHRISTINE: Before we get started Dorrie, let me ask you...you and Penny had a really awesome conversation last week and I was just wondering if there were any reflections on that you might want to share?

DORRIE: You know, I went away, again, and... I thought about my personal relationships in other countries, particularly Mexico. And how I am, and wondering sometimes, whether I am in danger of imposing my values or my principles—I mean sometimes you do it just quietly and when you are frustrated or in judgment... but even in my actions. So, I went away and I thought about that because we are in business in Mexico and that has a whole other layer. So, that was a really nice opportunity for me to reflect on that business relationship. But... [also on] the very precious personal relationships we have... and sort of the things that we often, my husband and myself, ...and the nature of the relationships with our families down there, you know, sort of appreciative, and supportive, and loving and all of those things. But, I was reflecting and thinking on the types of things that we... celebrate with them in terms of successes for the business and... I felt myself feeling—an awareness came to me—that we celebrate those things that we place value on! [laughs]—doing well in business, or expanding in business that sort of thing— or that business capital, capitalism kind of layering—and I thought, ‘oh is that not interesting.’ Versus sharing with them and being that appreciative piece around what we learn and value from their world. So I think it will shape how I show up—I mean I don’t show up there like a blazing ring of fire by any stretch of the imagination... . But it will certainly set me to pause and thinking about how we continue to inspire and appreciate the things that we learn from them. I do already in many, many ways but I want to be more focused on that.

CHRISTINE: What a great reflection that is – and even the taking the time to think about ‘how do I view business’ and how much that is part of my history, and where I am in my life, and the cultural context that we have and suggests that bigger is better [laughs] You know?

DORRIE: Yeah ...yeah. And ... that desire oftentimes, that is part— I know— that it is a real cultural part of México, and that is desire to please, to be of service. And so, holy smokes, can you ever mess up that message?

CHRISTINE: Yeah. No Kidding.

DORRIE: So I thought about that. Thank you Paulo. Thank you. Thank you, thank you [*laughter*].

CHRISTINE: Yeah, you know it is interesting. Penny and I were talking today about the process of reflection, or, we would probably call it reflexivity. And there is a level of reflexivity where you do exactly what you just described, which was, you looked at deeply held assumptions about the way things are or the way things should be, and you examine them in light of other ways of being and other ways of thinking about being. I enjoyed listening to your reflection because it is a lovely illustration of what we were talking about this afternoon. (Call #6 Dorrie)

This conversation highlights the power of conversations and the influence they have on our thinking, long after the conversation has taken place. These reflections by Dorrie demonstrate how the places of increased awareness and learning for a person become opportunities to engage with the deeper thinking that is being generated.

### **Website for Online Discussion and Journaling**

To support the level of thinking on leadership and social justice we hoped to foster within the research process, we created a secure website for the research participants to journal their reflections and critical insights throughout the research process. This site included a discussion board for group conversation and also provided a place to post the taped teleconference conversations. Early in the research processes we worked to incorporate the site into the research by posting support materials and asking the participants to respond to questions either on the discussion board or in their journals (Appendix 3). We had varying degrees of success with the site, which we attributed to busyness and the degree of comfort and ease with the technology.

All of the people who participated in this research are busy individuals, and we asked for a considerable amount of their time over the six months. Every two weeks we attempted to schedule a 60 minute call with each person and every three to four weeks, a 90 minute teleconference. These calls required the participants to dial into an online meeting site. It was more challenging for people to find time in their week to go online to the website and post a

reflection. For some people there is a comfort, often coming from their own use of social media, with online posting and for others it is an added task that can become 'too hard to do.' As the research process progressed, we 'let go' of asking for online postings and came to appreciate the depth of sharing that was taking place on the calls.

## **Research Approach Summary**

Our approach to the design of this research was to intentionally create spaces for thoughtful and deep conversations. In these spaces, each person's understandings of social justice, as they have emerged from their lived experiences, were held and explored. It was also an approach that we anticipated would elicit the production of meaning in responsive relationship with one another and illuminate the historical-social-cultural-intersubjective utterances that have shaped the meanings that we hold. Drawing on the research practices outlined in this chapter, we experienced deep and insightful exchanges and came away from the experience with our understandings changed about what it means to act justly.

In the next chapter I describe and explore the findings from the research. The conversations and the stories shared are the data and, as the researcher, I find that the depths of the conversations continue to yield ideas on the processual making of meaning for social justice. As the conversations were unfolding, my own responses in relationship and in language shaped my questions and understandings of what was emerging. In re-listening to the taped conversations, I would find my attention being caught by utterances that I had not fully attended to while in the research process. Again in the writing process, I would hear nuances that I missed initially. I am convinced that sitting together with the participants and with what I have written in this document would uncover yet other understandings that would shift my understandings again and expand my capacity to act justly.

## Chapter Four Stories and Meaning

*Love without courage and wisdom is sentimentality...*

*Courage without love and wisdom is foolhardiness...*

*Wisdom without love and courage is cowardice...*

—Ammon Hennacy

This chapter is organized into four landscapes. In the first landscape, I explore stories and experiences of ‘Awakenings’ to and ‘Awareness’ of social (in)justice. These are stories of early remembrances of social (in)justice for the research participants. It is here where we begin to hear the historical, social, and cultural contexts, the language forces at play, and to see the relationships that have been significant to each person in their lived experiences. These stories invite us into understanding the research participants and their early lived experiences and the contribution these experiences make to their meanings of social justice. In re-telling these stories, I am listening for the presence of dialogic qualities in the experiences and the meanings that are made, qualities such as outsiderness, the recovery of conflict and indeterminacy, the relationships with ‘other,’ the utterances, and the impacts on their horizons of understanding.

The participants’ stories of their experiences when they felt they acted justly bring shape to the second landscape. In these stories, we can hear the context and the subtle expressions of what acting justly looks like, sounds like, and feels like for the participants. In this section, I highlight the exploration of these experiences and delve more deeply into what social justice means in the context of the stories being told. As I look for the constituting of meanings and the processual nature of understandings for social justice, I draw on dialogic qualities of responsiveness, deep listening, holding ambiguity, and holding the tension between ‘what I know’ and ‘what is happening’ in the moment.

I explore, in the third landscape, the dialogic moments in which the processual creation of meanings of social justice emerged in the research process. These are the meanings that may 'not have been imagined' by the research participants and researcher-participants, outside of our time together. In foregrounding these moments, I pay attention to the ways in which the research process fostered dialogic experiences for the participants. The research process was designed to foster time and space for the possibility of dialogic moments. Cissna and Anderson (2002:11) speak of the possibility in dialogue of "futures that could not have been available or even imagined beforehand" (quoted in Cissna and Anderson 2004:196). In this landscape, I am specifically listening for the practices that contributed to creating a space for dialogue and for the dialogic moments that were experienced. Here I am attending to the ideas that dialogue theory offers for openness, mutuality, boundedness, and limits that become visible in the 'being in the act of acting justly.'

In the fourth landscape, I highlight and examine the nature of the centripetal and centrifugal currents in the language that appeared to envelope and shape the experiences and discourses of acting justly. Bakhtin's (1981) perspective on the nature of language forces that are contending for the containment and for the expansion of meaning are used to foreground the narratives that are often invisible to us in the presumptiveness of what is thought to be true. This is also explored through Deetz's (1996) frame for discourses, primarily as an approach to distinguishing the meanings that emerge in dialogue and the normative discourse and meanings that hold dominance in our social, cultural, and historical context. In this fourth landscape the meanings of social justice that were spoken out by the participants during the research process are foregrounded. The dialogic is the space in which the possibility of unending meanings dwells. The focus in this section is on the expressions of meaning for social justice throughout the research process; expressions that demonstrate the enriched meanings that emerge when a space for dialogue is created.

A short word on my approach to presenting the conversations on social justice as a set of 'findings.' Dialogic research, I think, can be said to be an emerging field. I make this statement with reservation, as many researchers have dedicated their careers to the work of dialogue. In re-visiting the literature, however, I was reminded of the care that I want to take in this section to hold gently the words that were spoken during the research. Cissna and Anderson (2004) note that the challenge for dialogue scholars is to "keep research into dialogue itself dialogic" (203). They offer the following advice:

Dialogically oriented research cannot become objectified...we cannot kill or freeze talk in order to analyze it. ... Conversations are texts ... coauthored in dialogue ... they arise through created space. ... Authorship belongs to all of the parties involved ... and resounds with voices beyond those of the coauthors. (203-204)

In presenting the research findings, I draw extensively from excerpts of conversation in order to elicit the dialogic qualities of the conversations and the understandings that emerged through the process of listening, questioning, and responding for the people involved. In organizing these conversations to address the research questions, I continue to foster the dialogic experience, not to extract and summarize but to explore, to understand, and to hold these conversations from an open stance as texts to be carried on into other conversations on meanings for social justice.

### **Landscape One: Awakenings and Awareness's**

My intent in this section is to hold a space for listening carefully to the stories the research process elicited from the research participants. In re-telling these stories, you will hear for the first time, and I will hear again, the language and the relationships that have influenced the participants' past and present meanings of social justice intermingled with my own. In the re-hearing of the experiences as they are expressed in words, and the emotions that are elicited in the telling and the listening, I again participate in the co-constituting of meanings that took place in the unique time-space of the research process. These meanings, as I am

open to them, hold the potential to lead to new understandings that will live on in future moments of making decisions and the taking of actions that, I hope, will be just.

The individual experiences shared by the participants are woven together as vignettes. On their own, the stories hold much value; however, they also provide a backdrop to the recovery of the constitutive processes for the meanings of social justice. Several theoretical concepts are used to explore the stories and to help see into the constitutive process; Deetz's call to rediscover the conflicts and indeterminacy in meanings; Bakhtin's notions of language forces, emotional-volitional experiences, lived experience, and outsideness; Freire's notion of communion with 'other;' Buber's first movement of dialogue as turning towards 'other;' Weick's work on sense-making; and, Hans-Georg Gadamer's horizon of understandings are some of the threads I draw upon for the purpose of recovering the constitutive processes.

Each of the stories told reverberate with many voices. If we listen closely, we hear not only the voice of the person telling the story, but also the voices of those who were a part of the story experientially, and the voices of those eliciting the story who were hearing it and responding to it. The questions that I am holding as the researcher-participant in the telling of and listening to the stories are: what are the stories that emerge as meanings of social justice are constituted? What do these stories reveal of the context in which the experiences take place? What is the constituting nature of dialogic moments from which meaning emerges?, and, finally, How do the story tellers see themselves and how do they see 'others' as they make meaning of what is just? From all of the stories that were heard throughout the research process, I selected those that foreground variety in the experiences that contributed to the constituting journey of understanding what is just. These stories illuminate what is, in my mind, a dance, a movement of meaning that is unique to the teller, yet elicits some steps in common in response to the music of language, context and meaning making for the listener.

## **Awakening to Social (In)Justice**

Where do we awaken to social justice? The seven participants and the two researcher-participants who came together to have deep conversations about leadership and social justice came with experiences that have developed within them a deep care for what is just. Their stories of early remembrances provide a window into their awakening of seeing the world in new ways. If each of us were to sit with the question, ‘what is your earliest memory of social injustice?’ the stories would tell much of the place in time culturally, historically, and socially and of the events that breached our way of seeing the world and opened us to a realization that our own lived experiences may be different from the experiences of ‘others.’ In the stories that follow there is an encounter with the world that jars the storyteller and confronts them with choices—choices to see, to understand, and to act. But first, perhaps, one must awaken and see. The following three stories from Dorrie, Gary and Jessica are evocative of their times as places of beginnings and awakenings.

One of the first things one notices about Dorrie is her laugh! Even in the telling of stories of challenging times, she will chuckle as she makes an observation on the situation and the stretch she personally experienced in holding to a leadership centred on the inherent dignity of each person. Self-deprecating yet determined, I have come to know Dorrie as a person who is committed to creating a place within residential care environments where people living with dementia, their families, and their care staff are valued and seen as fellow human beings. At the same time as Dorrie was participating in our research, a radio program did an investigative piece based on person-centred care for people living with dementia—the idea of person-centred care being promoted by the Alzheimer Society of Canada—and one of the sites they chose to profile was the one where Dorrie is the manager. Listening to the excerpts and the interviews from her site, her warm voice invites you into a world where each person has a story and a contribution to make to the place where they now live and work.

Growing up in a small community on Vancouver Island, that place of rain and old growth forests, Dorrie remembers how who she is was shaped in part by trying to make sense of the treatment of the children from the local residential school.

DORRIE: I reflected on the years that I have been so sensitive and aware of oppression and how—and how dehumanizing that is—and how I, as an individual and as a young person, was really sparked in my curiosity and my need to understand. I think I have spoken before that my experience being in a small town on Vancouver Island and... there was a residential school as well as some large—I hate even using the language of reserve—but that is what they were called. ...I was shaped from being in this community where the children came on separate buses... So I remember as a very young child ... a feeling of sadness watching the separateness, watching the buses pull in and these very, very, obviously shy and vulnerable people getting off... I remember that one of the really important learnings for me was to de-mystify that script by reaching out and getting to know these kids and becoming friends with these kids. (Dorrie Call #5)

Dorrie's story awakens my own memories of growing up in a town with a residential school and the curiosity I felt for a young, quiet, and shy girl who came to our class. The words used by Dorrie sparks pictures and emotions for me. Words such as oppression, dehumanizing, residential school, reserve, separateness, sadness, curiosity, and 'needing to understand,' all paint a picture of a place and a time marked by difference and boundaries. Dorrie tells this story from a present day perspective and I hear it in a present day perspective; however, at the time in history that she is describing, we lived in a society that clearly demarcated difference and otherness between First Nations people and ourselves. In that place and time, Dorrie is experiencing a deep conflict about these children and wants to 'de-mystify the script.' She faces a choice: accept the script and maintain the social and cultural boundary or step outside of her culture and become friends with these children. In Bakhtin's words, she experienced emotions grounded in the values that she held and believed in, and these compelled her to act in a way that was contrary to the social norms of her family and community. At a young age she chooses to turn openhearted to those who are 'other,' seeking communion with them in order to understand.

Gary's story comes from a similar era yet is reflective of a different place. Gary is a person who, from a casual conversation with a stranger, can develop a lifelong friendship. Intelligent, world traveller, philosopher of life, and a human rights advocate, he persistently seeks to understand people and their actions and beliefs in the events of the world. Perhaps this is what makes it possible for him to reach deep connections with people in short periods of time—his genuine openness to listen and not judge. He has lived a life worthy of a book and yet is rarely compelled to self promote his own knowledge, choosing rather to listen and to pose questions that arise from a genuine place of curiosity.

Growing up in a military family meant frequent moves for Gary, as his father was transferred to military bases in different parts of Canada, as well as internationally. At one point, Gary assumed that he would attend the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario and continue on in the military tradition of his dad. However, the experience of coming of age in the 1960s led him on a different path. Choosing a monastic life for most of his twenties, Gary discovered upon leaving the monastic life, that to enter the workforce he needed to translate what he had been doing into language for a résumé. Gary reflects on what he realized from this process and where it led.

GARY: You know, when I left the monastic life, I hadn't worked for almost 10 years as an employee. And I actually used probably one of the first editions of 'What Color is Your Parachute' [as] I spent about a week in the Toronto library really trying to take what I had learned and done and translate it into language for a résumé—and realized I actually did have a lot of experience—and also to try to find the values of what I wanted. And it was interesting, because it became clear to me, and it was almost—it should have been obvious—but it was a surprise, as I worked through those exercises how important it was for me to work somewhere that I could believe what the 'thing' itself was doing was good and it was beneficial to people or humanity. And that was really high for me as opposed to just a good work environment or good people or honesty in the workplace or something. So when I started job hunting I ended up being offered a number of jobs and some of them I might have made a lot of money [*laughs*]. But the job I took was as a community developer for the Canadian Red Cross in two of the rougher parts of Toronto—and they still are, the Jane and Finch area and Flemingdon Park area. And I was hired to establish programming in those areas and create something. And it was really just such a great fit for me as a person. But it wasn't that conscious at the time—I wasn't that clear about who I was. (Gary Call #7)

In his early teens, Gary's father was stationed in Michigan. Gary recalls, with humour, a child's typical experience of a perceived lack of fairness among his siblings; however, his profound awakening to injustice was the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

GARY: A more direct moment was when I was a pre-teen living with my family in the United States. This was during the civil rights drives of the 1960s. I asked my dad what it was all about and he noted that there was a reason there were no Negro people (word of the era) living on the lake [where] we lived... and that it was segregated. I had such a visceral reaction against this information that it troubled my sleep. I joined actions led by our community church minister (almost no one else did) and longed to board a bus and join the freedom fighters in Mississippi. I was alarmed to encounter overt racism from some of our neighbours during this time...and had to rethink my impressions of some adults.

This might not be my earliest memory but it did trigger something that is still alive, something that understands the inherent right of every human being to be respected and treated equally. (Gary Journal Post January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014)

In Gary's story as in Dorrie's, we hear and sense the awareness that the world around us is flawed and conflictual. The language strikes me; words of Negro, segregation, and racism. There is in this story an echo of Gadamer's (1982) 'horizons of understanding.' In our situatedness, there are limits to our understanding and Gary's story resonates with his horizon being breached by his realization that there is a different experience of the world outside of his own—experiences that are based on a socially constructed difference. In this story we hear Gary's visceral response, the jarring that occurs for him as he hears people he has known speaking in ways that he now resists, and the compulsion to act in communion with those his society has constructed as 'other.' In telling the story in the present, Gary speaks in the language of human rights: 'The inherent right of every human being to be respected and treated equally.'

The third 'awakening' story comes from Jessica. Jessica is a competitive runner and this part of her identity and personality spills over into our conversations and into her responses to the questions we asked. She embraced our questions and literally ran with the thoughts they prompted, with all of her intellect, energy, and honesty. Jessica lives life full on and open to the experiences that come her way. In the time we spent with her, it felt to

me that she brought an incredible openness and vulnerability from her lived experiences, using them to reflect deeply, to challenge herself to examine what is or was happening and what it means to who she is and how she shows up.

At the time of our research, Jessica was attempting to ‘make sense of her world,’ and to bring together in fresh ways a set of complex events and identities. Her parents who both grew up poor, significantly shaped her childhood upbringing. She uses her deeply held faith to challenge herself in her relationships and life choices. Her competitiveness as an athlete and as an academic offers her a more traditional identity, yet she also spoke about the challenges she faced as a female in an academic workspace. In the midst of learning about her own identity in the spaces she occupies, she remains deeply committed to support and mentor students and young girls—a commitment that consistently spoke to me of her self-discipline and desire to think deeply about life and choice making.

Throughout the course of our conversations, I often heard her acknowledge the role her parents played in creating her sense of herself. Although they came “more from survival than service” they desired the best for their two children. They always provided for Jessica and her brother “no matter what the circumstance” (Jessica call #2). Growing up in San Diego, she became a part of a wealthier community because of the school she attended, even though her family was not wealthy. At times, this would lead to feelings of being economically marginalized, particularly when her friend group made plans that she was not able to participate in.

A move from her hometown of San Diego to the mid-western state of Ohio to attend university brought an experience of a profound culture change for Jessica. Coming from a place of diversity to a mid-western culture of political, religious, racial, and ethnic homogeneity, brought her to a heightened awareness of unfairness, specifically for immigrants.

JESSICA: Something that I am struck by—and I just notice quickly the question that you asked in terms of writing about an experience where you are seeing social justice play out—a lot of people have some sort of testimony about [experiencing social injustice] where there is one particular experience that either they were ostracized, or they felt injustice at some point in time, and that has become their motivation to fight for justice on a particular topic. Some ‘ah ha’ moment of some sort. I have felt left out because I don’t have an ‘ah ha’ moment, if that makes sense. I believe that my ‘ah ha’ moment has been much more a progression of understanding my own self, by understanding pieces of my identity that I was not or, that I was, a minority in the majority. The first being [the] very minimal things of coming from the west coast to Ohio where culturally, values are very different. And understanding that diversity was something that was very different, and seen very differently. (Jessica Call #1)

Jessica elaborates on this experience of mid-western homogeneity in her journal posting:

When I moved to Ohio to go to college, I started to realize the lack of [other] language, culture, and ethnicities around me. What began as a Mexican food craving led me to a passionate endeavour for fighting for social justice among immigrants in the U.S. I started to learn about the racial tensions around race and ethnicity, simply because of the lack of exposure and general stigmas. I became frustrated with the assumptions my colleagues, professors, and local newspapers would make. I became enraged by the fact that the police station posted a gigantic sign in front of the jail that said: "Illegal aliens this way" with a gigantic finger pointing to the jail.

How could these intentions seem right to anyone? (Jessica Journal Post February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014)

JESSICA: [Continuing on from Call #1] And so I started to understand racism from a different lens and that was interesting to me, and particularly for Latin American immigrants. It was interesting. I felt injustice by being a third party of some sort. Like I felt that I held some sort of notion that a lot of folks should be: ‘There is an injustice and I should do something about it!’ Although I don’t necessarily come from a Latin American background whatsoever.

The second was gender. So being a female, either in an athletic space or in an academic space, and [I] have over the years come to really, deliberately seek out, not necessarily injustices, but seek out females who may be feeling the same thing—particularly in the college space—and bring them into more a place of self-awareness. So I get the whole “Lean In” movement particularly in the business space. But instead of saying ‘let’s fight this injustice,’ let’s just become a little more aware of ‘my’ surroundings and how ‘my’ identity plays a role in that and what I can do about it. (Jessica Call #1)

The injustices described in each of these stories are distinct. For Dorrie the injustice is in the separateness of the children from the reserve and the residential school because they are ‘Indians.’ In Gary’s story there is an awakening to the intentional exclusion of people from the community in which he is living because of their skin colour. For Jessica

injustice is the blatant rejection of a group of people on the basis of 'they are different from us because of the soil they were born on' and in her own experiences of being female in masculine settings. Bakhtin's (1993) idea of the concrete reality seems particularly relevant as I reflect on these stories and the moments they capture as "the eternal meaning of an actually realized thought blazes up with the light of value" (59). We may hold an idea or a meaning conceptually, however, outside of a concrete reality to which we can attach it, it remains abstract and "deprived of its weight with respect to value ... and becomes an empty abstract universal possibility" (59).

Embedded in these stories is an emotional awareness of a contravention of a deeply held belief or value. Dorrie articulates as an adult what she saw as a child, the dehumanizing of the children from the reserve, and recalls the distress this caused her in her realization that her community was accepting what she saw as wrong. Gary attributes to his experience the awakening of a belief that has become core to who he is today—the belief in the inherent right of every human being to be respected and treated equally. Jessica is distressed by the diminishing of the people who were seen as different from the majority because of where they were born and struggles to understand why that should matter. The value that becomes evident in these stories of being awakened to social injustice is the value of all humanity regardless of difference. In these stories there are hints of Freire's (2011) concept of the word: a whole word and an authentic word is one that holds constitutive elements of reflection and action. For Freire, the core value at play in the authentic word is in its essence, love.

As I listen to and re-read these stories, I hear the expression of deep emotions. Dorrie expresses a feeling of sadness. Gary describes a visceral response that disturbed his sleep. From Jessica I hear heightened indignation and anger. There is a confrontation, for each of them, of a profound difference between what they recall seeing or experiencing in those moments and the expectation they hold of what should be. This is deeply personal for

each of them as they see and hear their families, their community, and their nation with new eyes and understanding. As the listener and reader of these stories, I become flooded by my own memories of seeing and hearing injustice.

The emotional response sparked by injustice occurs in moments. In these moments described by Dorrie, Gary, and Jessica there is a connection, as Bakhtin (1993) suggests, to a unique place of 'being' with the world around us. What becomes significant in the moment(s) shared in these stories, even as they are re-told as remembrances, is the role the events play in eliciting emotions that hold the potential to propel one to act: an emotional propelling towards a choice. These interruptions and the emotional responses that arise, signal a need to re-interpret our understandings of our world.

There is also an element expressed in each story of differentiation. A distinction is made between their own sense of self and the stance they have taken, from the stance taken by those around them. Jessica expresses feeling like a 'third party' to what she was seeing, belonging not with the oppressed nor with those who were demonstrating racism, but still impacted and confronted with a need to take a stand. Dorrie speaks of the script that her community was working from and the knowing that she held of the need to keep her friendships with the children as a private knowledge and not one to be shared with her family. She recalls

...learning to censor. I didn't talk about that at home. I didn't come home and say 'I have the most amazing friend and she is from the coast and her name is Annabelle.' That was my private place. (Dorrie Call #5)

Gary speaks in his memory of an awareness of the different views that were held by his family, by the neighbours next door (who expressed racist views), and the pastor of the church who "more or less practically lost his job" (Gary Call #7) because of his stance for the civil rights movement. The world becomes less homogeneous, diversity begins to be seen in the circumstances and views of people around them, and horizons are stretched.

Perhaps what we are hearing in these stories is a shifting of boundaries, a shift that is arising from empathy. Hunt (2007) attributes an understanding of 'others' to be 'like me' to empathy. In dialogue theory, theorists speak of the tension one holds between myself as separate and bounded and myself as open to be changed by 'other.' These early memories of social (in)justice heighten our awareness of boundaries between self and 'other.' In the processual creation of a meaning for what is just in the three stories, there is a turning towards 'other' who is 'more different' than me (the children from the residential school, African Americans, and illegal immigrants) and away from those who have been 'like me' (my family, my neighbours, my community). Karagiannis and Wagner (2007) view boundedness as arising from an individual's reflexive position to their world. These stories suggest that in response to the boundaries that we hold, we take a stance towards 'others,' a stance that can shift in our reflexivity as an awakening and awareness to injustice. Demonstrated in these stories is a fluidity and openness to shift boundaries. As Scheper-Hughes (2002) argues, it is perhaps in recognition of 'other' that we overcome the objectification, de-humanization, and de-personalization that perpetuate our separateness.

Each of these experiences is contextualized historically, socially and culturally. The experiences of Dorrie, Gary, and Jessica took place in North America, post World War II and after the articulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The stories, however, carry within them social and cultural conflicts that stand as contradictions to this historical context. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been enacted in the western world as a response to the genocide carried out during in World War II. The Declaration speaks to the inherent rights to personhood of all peoples. Yet in each of these stories, the social and cultural attitudes of the times stand in stark contrast to the ideals spoken in the UDHR and in the founding principles of the United States and Canada.

For Dorrie, her childhood experiences came at a point in history in Canada, when the residential school system was still sanctioned by federal and provincial governments and

socially accepted by Canadians. For Gary, the civil rights movement in the United States was gaining momentum and could be seen in acts of open defiance against social and cultural norms, defiance that often resulted in events of violence. Both of them are 'seeing' injustice in the actions of their nation toward its citizens. Jessica's story captures a 21st century narrative arising from the construct of national boundaries and the value being placed on people who come from outside those boundaries.

The effect of these experiences is jarring, and the jarring elicits a response that is different from what is being shown by 'others.' Dorrie, coming from a place of curiosity, wants to understand why these children were treated differently. Gary wants to get on a bus and support the pastor of his church whom he sees as one of the few adults around him speaking out. Jessica becomes deeply curious about the experience of Latin Americans in the Midwest. For all three storytellers, their response is to hold in abeyance the social narrative that surrounds them about the children who are from the reserve, the people who are black, or the people who are illegal immigrants and that justifies and condones the explicit social norms. In these experiences, they are becoming open to other ways of seeing and understanding even though this sets them apart from the thinking of 'others,' including family, neighbours, and communities, who make up the fabric of their worlds.

### **Deepening Awareness**

Once awakened to social (in)justice, where does the journey of making meaning of what is just lead? Is there clarity of now knowing how to make sense of justice, or is there a journey towards a deepening understanding that continues to build on experiences and the choices we make? Buber's (1965) view of dialogue would suggest that we continue to be shaped within each encounter we experience. Gadamer's (1982) notion of horizons to our understanding suggests there is always something that lies beyond what we currently see. Bakhtin's (1986) perspective on language directs us toward fluidity, as meanings, echoed in subsequent utterances, reveal their unfinalizable character. In the following stories from

Kerri, Jeff, and Kathy we hear, sense, and see a foundation of beliefs being built over time, which strengthen them in their journey to seek out what is just.

Kerri brings with her a vulnerability and openness that shows up in the stories she shared with us and in her willingness to say “I don’t get what you are asking!” Growing up in a working class home in urban Saskatchewan, Kerri recalled for us an early awareness of class, of the poverty others were experiencing, of a sense of wanting more from life than what she saw in the lives of the adults around her. Filled with a desire to study acting after high school, she left the prairies of Saskatchewan for the urban and multicultural city of Montreal to attend the National Theatre School of Canada. “Kicked out after a year” (Kerri Call #2), Kerri speaks with us from her own experience of living in poverty while in Montreal and of being alone in that city until, through the kindness and generosity of a man who owned a natural health food store, she was able to find a job and the beginnings of a sense of community.

One story that was shared by Kerri gave me insight and respect for her willingness to be vulnerable. Currently working to foster community health, she had recently attended a meeting with a group of physicians in a small community in British Columbia. At this meeting there was a conversation about looking at poverty as a risk factor for disease. One physician made a statement similar to, “I don’t know about talking to poor people. I know I have clients who I know for sure are poor but I don’t want to stigmatize them, I don’t know about... how to ask them about it. I don’t want to make them feel uncomfortable.” Kerri’s reflections on this were that,

it looked to me like all these doctors were scratching their heads about ‘what to do’—you know—‘what do we do with these poor people’ and I put up my hand and I said ‘I...I have been a poor person...I have been on welfare, I have used the food bank. I...I’m that person.’ So I gave my two cents. And it seemed really useful. And I thought well—they wouldn’t be able to have poor people in that meeting giving their two cents but, because I am there wearing my middleclass government hat now, they are able to listen to me. Maybe. I don’t know. I am not trying to say anything bad about them but, it is just funny like, you can’t actually have poor people in the conversation... (Teleconference #1)

Choosing to be the voice of 'other' in a room filled with the voices of those who hold societal privilege, speaks to me of her courage and of her comfort with being authentic about herself regardless of the setting.

Kerri recalls that in her twenties, her awareness of (in)justice developed and became clearer over time.

PENNY: So if you think of what you thought justice looked like when you were in your twenties...

KERRI: [*sounds of agreement*]

PENNY: What did it look like?

KERRI: [*silence*] Wow, it is a good question. I think... I was pretty involved in this movement—I was in a group—I was on the board of directors for this group in Vancouver. This Violence Against Women group and I thought about that a lot. That was a big thing for me for a while. ...when I was 21 I was working at a store in Montreal—I was working at a natural foods store and I [was] held up by gunpoint. And then I was in Vancouver a year and a half or two years later or something...and I got in this other gun thing. Oh! And also in Montreal I had an abusive boyfriend who I lived with who beat me up. [*chuckles*] Yeah. So then I got involved in this whole thing and that, I think, that was kind of my introduction to this idea of justice, because I don't know ... I didn't really think about it in my twenties at all... really... It wasn't really until my late twenties that I really started to think about it.

PENNY: Did you recognize that there was injustice? Or did you not think 'what might be just here?'

KERRI: [*sigh*] Yeah—I think. I don't know, it seems that, in my head, it was all very vague. It was mostly based on feelings and intuition and I did not feel qualified to think about it or to talk about it. I didn't feel like I had a voice or even the thoughts.

PENNY: I find that so interesting, because there is something in the social reality that is telling you that you don't have a voice.

KERRI: Yeah! Absolutely.

PENNY: So what was telling you that? What in the culture, society, that time, or historical time, or even the language that people were using (KERRI: *sounds of agreement*) would tell you that you didn't have a voice?

KERRI: [*silence*] You know the movie *Thelma and Louise* [*laughs*]? (PENNY: Yeah). I remember that came out when I was 19. And I remember watching that in the cinema. And I remember thinking there are these two women and they have this experience around this whole rape murder thing and they wanted to be treated fairly and justly and they knew damn well they never would be. So they were like, 'we might as well kill ourselves cuz it will be hell the other way, too.' And I remember

thinking 'Yup. That is right you know.' Some working class white chick—there is...there is nothing there. There is no power whatsoever.

PENNY: [*silence*] Wow that is a pretty powerful message.

KERRI: That is awful, hey! [*laughs*]. Yeah, it is pretty powerful hey. But, I remember that movie and thinking 'Oh, yup. Uhummm. That rings true. That is about right.'

PENNY: So what happened to change that way of thinking for you? I don't know if it was in your twenties or your late twenties you were saying you had more of an awareness?

KERRI: Well a lot of it had to do with my involvement with co-counselling. And there was all sorts of talk about social justice and leadership within co-counselling. And these ideas that everyone can be a leader, everyone is a leader—those were ideas in co-counselling. And I was like 'oh, hmmm, really.' Like I had *never* heard that before—that was all new and interesting and I wasn't sure what to make of that...[*laughs*]. When I became a parent, one of the local leaders within the co-counselling community urged me to start a parent support group. Like, 'you could lead a parent support group!' And I was like, 'what me? What do I know? What does that even mean? Who am I? I am just some [*laughs*] young white chick with no money [*laughs*]. But then I did! I did start a ... and people enjoyed it and people came and I led a parents' group for years and years. And then I led a women's group for years and years. And ... yes ... over time, over the years, and I was encouraged to do this MALT (Masters of Arts in Leadership) program, this leadership program. And I was doing more leadership work in my paid work and then it all sort of evolved and I just found myself with having something to say. And then MALT really gave me this theoretical idea and gave me the language for it. I felt more grounded in the ideas and bigger thinkers, and then I thought 'I can move in that world and I can say things and people would listen.' I could write about it with some authority.

PENNY: So Kerri, was it being a young woman who was experiencing poverty ... that ... told you that you didn't have a voice?

KERRI: I think so. But I think I learned younger than that. I am pretty sure that when I was a kid, I didn't grow up thinking I had any kind of a voice. But, when I was little I had lots of ideas about what was right and wrong and about justice and stuff like that. I totally had the thoughts. But by the time I was a young woman, I just—they were like tucked away—cause I didn't feel any kind of power to do anything with them. (Kerri Call #7)

When I re-visit Kerri's words, I am struck by the beliefs that she absorbed as a young woman about her own sense of her (lack of) value in Canadian society. This belief, that she did not have a voice, was reinforced in stories (i.e., movies) and in the language and experiences of abuse and violence she encountered in some of the relationships in which she found herself. Freire (2011) uses the strong language of oppressed and oppressor.

When a person's voice is taken from them, their humanity is taken from them and they become the oppressed. It is in the regaining of their humanity that the oppressed struggle against their oppressors and, "for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity ... become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both" (44). In the lived experiences Kerri shares with us here, I sense the shift for her from a belief of having no voice and no power to regaining belief in her own value. This restoration took place in relational understanding and over time and, significantly, did not come with an exchange of her humanity for the de-humanization of 'others.'

In writing this introduction to Jeff, the next participant whose story(ies) I tell, I hear in my mind the cadence of our conversations—the measured pauses as questions, articles or quotes were introduced—the quiet waiting, as Jeff would consider and weigh his responses from a place of experience with complexity and diversity. The slow 'yes' or the slow 'no' in response to a question or perspective being offered in the conversation and his gift of a reframed question that would introduce a different perspective on the thoughts being spoken. Some of the great questions offered up by Jeff through the research process were,

How do you as a leader and individual—how do you respond when someone holds values that [are] really—repugnant might be too strong a word—that really ... you know, that you can't find common ground on? (Jeff Call #3)

I have been thinking about this question and in some ways turning the question on its head and thinking about an interaction with someone who was 'other' and yet that I found that I related to surprising well or easily ... So I have been thinking about this question in the reverse. What is it about those situations that—that allow me to relate to 'others'...where, you know, given appearances or context, one might think—one might think well—jeez you would have nothing in common with? (Teleconference #2)

Is leadership in the area of social justice different and unique in some ways than leadership generically? (Teleconference #3)

Jeff brought to these conversations thoughtfulness honed in the corporate world of communications and social responsibility; yet his experiences were also tempered by both his personal values and his experiences working with Amnesty International Canada.

Having worked for a few decades in the Canadian oil and gas sector—specifically in developing countries where human rights records were questionable—Jeff’s views of leadership and social justice have been influenced and shaped in part by the pragmatic language of business, the idealism of an international agency dedicated to the eradication of human rights violations, and his roles as a translator of social and environmental justice into the language of social and reputational risk.

Jeff grew up in what he refers to as a ‘solid middle class home’ in Hamilton, Ontario. This is the place where he acknowledges his own personal values were shaped. In reflecting on early memories of social injustice, he recalls,

looking back, I am certain there was ample injustice under my nose, but I grew up in a comfortable family in a comfortable town—so local issues rarely came to mind. Born in 1956, I was too young for the 1960s civil rights and protest movements. In the early 1970s, I was aware of, but not engaged in, issues relating to Vietnam, feminism, the environment and nuclear proliferation. It wasn't until I hit first year university that my field of vision really broadened. I was a music fanatic (still am) and came across an album (The Secret Policeman’s Ball) featuring Pete Townsend of The Who, members of Monty Python and others. It was a benefit album for Amnesty International. In my case, celebrity endorsement worked!

As I learned more about Amnesty, I learned about torture, prisoners of conscience, and human rights abuses in Tibet, South Africa and Latin America. And I came to realize that ordinary people were working on major, global issues—and making a difference. Ever since, that knowledge has empowered me to do my own small part on social justice. My ongoing challenge is to see injustice as something that occurs close to home—not just ‘out there.’ (Jeff Journal Post, March 4th, 2014)

Jeff further explores his early memories of awareness of social justice, acknowledging a process made up of moments of incremental insights rather than significant moments of deep understanding.

JEFF: I was reflecting a bit on that, because I certainly don’t consider myself a graduate on that path of seeing the ‘other’ and not just seeing the self. I was reflecting on that a bit this morning ... and I couldn’t really ... because I kind of anticipated your questions because that has been a common thread through this around you are looking for... were there moments or drivers. And I really couldn’t finger it. I don’t know if it was—I think I may have touched on this in an earlier conversation about growing up in the late 1960s early 1970s. Was there something in that? There was something in the air!! You know, other than marijuana smoke [laughs] around that time that encouraged people to look beyond the self and at more social and environmental and global issues. Certainly having an upper middle

class childhood, I mean it gives you the freedom to raise your line of sight or your vision...to other things. My day-to-day comforts were covered, and covered perfectly comfortably. So I didn't have three part-time jobs going through high school. So, I don't know. And obviously [there was] the influence of my parents and my peer group. Yeah, I really don't know. And then you get to, as I did, to a university setting and once again in the liberal arts and being encouraged to take a wide spectrum approach to education as opposed to a trade. Yeah, I really can't think of a moment. I think it was all those things, kind of combined. My home environment, the decades in which I was a teenager and early twenties, I think it was... my socio-economic comfort. I think all those things kind of ... I had a religious upbringing but it wasn't... once I turned, in my later teens, my parents relaxed on that and left me to my own devices. So there certainly was some moral teaching that came with that as well ... to see beyond yourself. Yeah that is a big basket and it is all in there somewhere.

CHRISTINE: So I love that summary actually Jeff, because I think, culturally we rely so heavily on the epi-phonetic—you know that whole idea that something comes to us in an epiphany. In most peoples lives I think it is complex, multilayered, it's a gradual shifting of how we see things. I think you did a really nice job there of peeling back the layers. So part of it that was for you a coming of age in the late 1960s early 1970s when there was a kind of a heightened consciousness around war, probably for the first time, around the social plight and equality for women, for cultural diversity. All of those kinds of things. And also your socioeconomic circumstance, your moral formation, all those things come together and I think of myself, too, there have been for me, I think, pivotal events that have happened where I have thought about how I lined up with my espoused beliefs and sometimes that was favourably and sometimes it wasn't. (JEFF: *sounds of agreement*) So, when I think about myself, there have been moments in my life where I made choices. And I was aware of consciously choosing. But like you I don't, you know, so much of it is the formation of who we are in an ongoing way and hard to extrapolate one thing or one event that shifted us. You did a nice job of summarizing that.

JEFF: Yeah, no again as you use the word epiphany—there wasn't a particular epiphany or pivotal moment. It was more cumulative. And, like you say, you could point to more particular moments and say 'oh yeah, I really remember this.' But I can't point to any sort of on the road to Damascus kind of moments.

CHRISTINE: Yeah [*laugh*] exactly. Exactly what I was thinking. Those very specific and very dramatic moments are certainly there for some people. But for lots of us they are not.

JEFF: Yeah! (Jeff Call #6)

Growing up in central Ontario, Jeff's early life experiences seem marked by stability and comfort. Yet there was exposure while taking liberal arts studies at university, and through music, education, and the work of Amnesty International to significant ideas about rights and justice. These ideas sparked curiosity and awareness for him about injustices elsewhere in the world. Jeff's journey of awareness seems to be characterized by his open

stance to encountering ideas, an openness that is perhaps best described by the idea of indeterminacy. Indeterminacy speaks of one's openness to external ideas, to other people's ideas, and allows for the process of de-constructing existing meanings and the co-constructing of new meanings and understandings. For Jeff, this openness to the re-shaping of meanings for social justice gives him permission to become part of a process in which his understandings of social justice are re-shaped in response to this "pull from the outside" (Deetz and Simpson 2004:143).

The next story is from Kathy. Kathy exudes confidence and energy. Her passion for the issues of social justice and the environment inspires her to speak out, to act, to 'just do it.' As she describes her character and passion, she shares a story with us from her twenties when she was working on contract for a large financial company in Quebec. It was 1994 and Quebec was holding a referendum on sovereignty. Kathy, because she felt strongly that Quebec should stay in Canada, paid for, but used her company's fax machine to send almost 300 faxes to different companies across the province saying that she hoped they would vote to stay in Canada. In recalling the events she reflected that,

Yeah, I don't really shy away from that kind of thing, you know, if I needed to. Obviously that is not something I would do today because I understand that if my company's name is on something, I can't even look to represent my own things, I have to be representing the company. But there are lots of examples from my life where I have stood up for something or just it was going to impact things, but I really felt a sense that what I was doing was the right path to go, so therefore just do it sort of thing and whatever the consequences are—oh well! (Kathy Call #3)

A pragmatic realist, Kathy's choices in life have led her into relationships and experiences reflective of the diversity within our world. A mapping of her relationships and her travels would touch the majority of countries in the world! Deeply committed to caring and acting, she rejects feeling overwhelmed by the issues of our world and remains open to "deeply caring to the point that it hurts...you can't feel real joy if you can't feel real pain." (Kathy Call, #2)

Yet from her experiences working in the corporate world, Kathy acknowledges the need to build a business case for the work she does in her corporate citizenship role, often chastising senior executives for being soft on projects that do not serve the corporate mandate. I always left our calls with Kathy feeling more informed about social justice and environmental issues of the day. In the midst of our research process, Kathy left for a work related trip to Uzbekistan. The stories shared from her trip and her understanding of the oppression of the Uzbekistanis as labourers/slaves in the production of the national crop of cotton heightened my awareness of the deep connection between the goods that I buy and injustice.

Kathy recalls always having a strong response to injustice. As a young child she would always jump in to defend someone who was being bullied—a trait she sees as shaped in a significant way by the example set by her mother in her growing up years. In exploring her memories of early awareness of social justice, Kathy shares some of her journey that contributes to her sense, today, of what is (in)just.

KATHY: Well, I think for sure the First Nations and I know I have told you guys my story around that. That was probably the most profound situation that happened. [pause] You know even one of my friends, at university, he was gay. He ended up dying of AIDS and this was back at the very beginning of the AIDS crisis. So seeing what someone...going home to die at 21 years old—back when [what] it was to be gay—you were the most ostracized person possible. It was just the beginning of people being more accepting. But back then, definitely not. I think that had a really big effect.

PENNY: So, what I am hearing is that in your early twenties, which would have been around the time when sexual orientation was really becoming addressed as an area of discrimination,

KATHY: [*sounds of agreement*]

PENNY: ... and that awareness that people were being discriminated or had to hide a significant part of who they were...

KATHY: Yes.

PENNY: ... because of stigma, prejudice, hatred... in some ways.

KATHY: Yeah! And it was funny, because this one friend of mine, we were just super close and really great friends at university, and I remember him sitting me down at the cafeteria and he goes 'I have something to tell you.' And I said 'oh what is it?' And he said 'I am gay.' And I was like, 'yeah I know.' [laughs] Even though I hadn't known, like really known anyone gay prior to C, I said 'of course you are gay'. And he said 'what? You know!' and I said of course I knew you were gay. He was so shocked but it wasn't like—it was nothing to me, like I had no prejudice over that. It just was, right? And then to see that definitely people were...

And I had a really bad experience too, just personally. This was in Montreal In my early twenties. I had to waitress to pay for my university in Montreal. My options were limited for where I could work because I didn't speak French very well. My French was really bad. I was pretty desperate for a job so I ended up working in this pub, which I called the 'sexist hellhole of Montreal.' It wasn't a strip club but they required the women to wear short skirts, high heeled shoes, red lipstick and we weren't allowed to eat French fries or drink pop because we would get fat and the shifts were 12 hours. So, I started at 4 p.m. and I worked till 4 a.m., five, sometimes six days a week. And when I was there, I was sexually harassed by the owner of the pub. And it was really scary. It was scary! And I remember like, 'what do I do?' how do I get help?' And I asked friends and I went to the university and one of my friend's said go to this 'feminist' professor and they said, well—basically, what I was told was, 'well what do you expect for working in a place like that?' And there was no-one that helped me until I ended up just desperate to get out of there but I didn't really have any money so I just suffered through it. And then basically it culminated in him assaulting me. And I went into the financial officer at the time and it was a guy, and by that time it was really scary to be in a room with a male who was a lot older than me and I went into him and burst out crying and I told him what had happened. I just—and he looked at me and shook his head and said, 'you are not the first person that [sic] has told me this.' He said 'I am giving you \$1000 and you don't have to pay it back and we are forgiving you the \$500 you owe the university. He was the only person who helped me out! And there were lots of women that we went to that did not help me out.

And since that time, anytime there has been—like, I really feel for any person that comes from—say a new immigrant, or a single mom or anyone like that—they are vulnerable people. They are vulnerable people. And you know I think that really impacted me as well. Just recognizing—a lot of people on this planet are unbelievably vulnerable to the whims of people in power and you can't judge people for—like Anita Hill for example—Anita Hill to me is one of my long time heroes. For her to have brought those charges forward twenty years ago. I have never charged that guy in Montreal for what he did to me. You know to do that is a Big Deal. You are putting yourself out on a limb and look at poor Anita Hill. Obviously she is a strong woman and has been able to, you know, really do well in her life. But I just have to feel a lot of respect for anyone that can fight back in a situation where they are being personally affected and secondly, when I hear of someone in a situation where they really have the lower hand, I feel a lot of empathy and compassion towards them. Absolutely. (Kathy Call #7)

Kathy's reflections on her experiences and her own deep commitment to social justice illuminates the breadth of experiences, the almost "random chance events" (Deetz

2003:197) that she draws on in the moment of making meaning of social justice. Her stance is open to friends who are non-conforming with social norms of the time. She holds empathy for the difficult and courageous life journey of 'others.' Her experiences have fostered in her a deep connection for 'others' who have been vulnerable and without power. Kathy's reflections become entwined, at times, with her own deeply personal experience of profound vulnerability, a vulnerability that arose from her own socio-economic and gendered position. Kathy's experiences and stories, in the re-telling to us, are filled with the struggles, the tensions, the fragmentation, the searching for ways to bring meaning to the events and relationships that make up our lives.

These experiences shared by Kerri, Jeff, and Kathy foreground the challenge of ordering our social reality and our sense of 'what is just here,' and open us up to reconsider "the most basic and certain experiences of everyday life" (Deetz's 1996:198). Within these stories, language is giving voice to deeper understandings of lived experiences. Even in the re-telling, new connections of meaning are being created. For Kerri and Kathy their experiences as women in Canadian society have confronted them with injustices that are deeply personal. Both of them were re-confronted in the memory of these experiences, with a sense of the value that others place on them and with the value they place on themselves. Yet they also recount situations and times that offered places of relationship to construct other ways of seeing themselves. In Kerri's stories, there are experiences of violence but also of deep caring, including by John, the man who she worked for in Montreal and who became a significant mentor and role model for her, as well as from within her co-counselling community. In Kathy's experience, she found caring and justice, surprisingly to her, from the man who worked at the university who heard and responded to her story. Jeff's story reminds me of the waves of social justice issues that we have seen over the past decades and the means by which these stories of injustice have come to us through lived

experiences of our own and of others, through music, literature and movies, through media, and through education.

Kerri, Jeff, and Kathy's stories serve to reveal our own historical, cultural, and societal eras of social justice. All of the experiences shared take place post UDHR, and post World War II Canada. The growing broader societal awareness of injustices and systemic biases based on gender and sexual orientation are refracted in personal events, and increasingly give 'permission' for stories of difference to be told. Understanding these experiences both historically and in the context of current events in the broader world, serve to open our sense of what is right to indeterminacy, raising our awareness and enabling us to see ordinary people shifting the circumstances around them to make a difference for themselves and 'others.'

### **Landscape One Summary**

From this landscape of early awareness and awakenings to (in)justice the storytellers hold what I would call strong memories. From these strong memories, foundational understandings of our social world are laid down and continue to be drawn on into our present times. These understandings can be deeply connected to feelings. The language that is used and the relationships that are experienced in these stories describe (in)justices in terms that are neither neutral nor solely intellectualized. The words from past eras are often as harsh and unfamiliar to our ears as they are evocative of times in which the terms used to describe 'others' and the treatment of 'others' have lost their normative value and have ceased to be socially acceptable. The language and the stories hold emotional memory and they reignite the emotions that were experienced at the time and continue to telegraph into our emotions and our meaning making today.

The experiences shared also lend understanding to how one's social world is constituted in the language of similarity and difference. Beliefs about 'other' and about ourselves become embedded in language, holding together and making visible our social

world when 'others' are encountered. These beliefs when evaluated against other beliefs encountered within a social world that is dynamic and changing can create a jarring. In these stories there is a glimpse of the opportunities we each might encounter where we are faced with a choice to hold open to an 'other's' understanding of the social world we inhabit and to entertain their experience of the world in a manner that re-shapes the beliefs that we hold of 'who is like me.'

## **Landscape Two: Socially Just Experiences and Choices**

Where does awakening and awareness to social justice lead? The stories told thus far provide a glimpse into experiences that have created a heightened awareness of (in)justice for each of the storytellers. For me, the stories prompt questions around how these experiences influence and 'show up' in language and relationships in the moments of choosing to live in just ways. In the third set of conversations held with the participants, I invited them to tell a story of a time in their life of acting justly, when what they did and the decisions they made impacted significantly or made a difference in the lives of 'others.' The following stories illuminate moments in the living of life, in which meanings of acting justly occur. In each story, if we listen carefully, we may hear echoes of the journey each of the storytellers has been on, as they interact with the world around them and bring into the moment a way of being that reflects the meaning they hold of being just.

I have given some thought to the order in which I present these stories and have determined that I will draw randomly with the exception of beginning with Lex (who has not yet been fully introduced). The decision for using a random order is to subdue my own tendency to be drawn to certain stories because of their alignment with my own meanings and understanding of justice. I am, reflexively, trying to avoid the inherent valuing that can be placed on meanings and perspectives by even subversively communicating a 'winning' or 'better' way of understanding because of the order in which they appear.

## **Lex**

Lex thinks deeply about life and this becomes clear as he shares the life paths he has taken, paths that in many ways run counter to North American middle class social norms. While teaching in a small community in the interior of British Columbia, Lex lived in a remote cabin on a river, a place that offered him the opportunity to paddle home at the end of the day. Looking back at this time in his life, Lex shared that he can see the 'sacredness' of those moments and the awe he felt of the stunning beauty that surrounded him and the exhilaration of being in its presence. Similar experiences followed when, fulfilling a dream from his teen years, he cycled South America (solo). Being alone on a high plain in the mountains of Bolivia looking up at a billion stars, Lex recalls asking himself: Who am I?, Where am I? and, What does it mean in the context of this space?" These experiences remain with him today, continuing to influence how he sees himself and the world around him.

LEX: When I traveled South America alone, which at the time nobody was doing, my apparent vulnerability opened so many doors...I was invited into spaces and conversations I would not have experienced...This was a very significant experience for me to really explore assumptions about how we live, what poverty is, what resistance means and how to commit. The levels of openness, caring, and warmth I experienced from complete strangers were remarkable. This trip really helped me get into a head space where I began exploring my values, actions, beliefs in a more conscious manner. (Lex Journal Post, March 16th)

Returning from South America, Lex worked for a community based non-profit organization in the downtown eastside of Vancouver, a neighbourhood known across Canada for the poverty, pervasive homelessness, and addictions of the people who live there. Following a stint in graduate studies Lex spent a year in India working with the dying and destitute.

As I listened to Lex throughout our research process, I often found myself stirred by his wisdom and insights, leaving the conversations stretched and challenged to examine my own beliefs about 'others' and myself. Deeply reflective and willing to examine his own

thought patterns and assumptions for what is triggering his reactions, Lex holds himself open to examining the impact of 'how he shows up' on 'others' and on the circumstances he encounters. Offering up the observation of "now isn't that interesting" as a starting place for reflection, he challenges himself to explore that "maybe they are right!" and to let go of the weight of judging 'others.' He intentionally holds a core belief that the world is a kind and generous place and in every person there lies the capacity to do great harm and the capacity to love and be kind. Choosing love and its possibility is the choice he wants to be making.

When asked to recall a story of acting in a just way, Lex responded,

LEX: ... that when I looked at the questions... I was actually stumped. And I thought 'what the hell' I can't think of anything. And I think that, part of that notion... So, I actually talked with [my wife] and partner of years about that. I said 'help me with this' because I honestly can't think of where I have made decisions that have been impactful and aligned. I don't think about that. And so, I was drawing a blank and so [my wife] went right away to, "well, you can talk about your experience at Carnegie or talk about Hospice. That was a huge impact and certainly a family decision. (Lex Call #3)

Lex expands about his time at Hospice.

LEX: I was working in [Community Name] Community Services. That is where I started when we came to the Kootneys. So, whatever, eighteen years ago or something like, that is where I started working. And then an opportunity ... after about four years with Community Services, this position came up for the Executive Director at [Hospice Name] Hospice Society. And so, initially, I thought well 'what do I know about hospice?' And [my wife] and I talked about that and she reminded me that I had in fact spent quite a bit of time volunteering with the Hope for the Destitute and Dying in India [chuckles] and had worked in the downtown eastside, while I worked there, we had numerous memorials for youth who had died of various causes and had supported both staff and clients through some pieces where, as appropriate and certainly... in intense kinds of places. And plus a bunch of other stuff. So the decision to, one, to apply [to Hospice Society] and then move [communities] was actually pretty significant.

One [reason] is because I am going from a community services organization where there were fifteen or so counsellors and mostly contracts with Children and Families and various other agencies and some victim assistance programs and those kinds of things. So a whole array of counselling. And then to go into a very small organization and so from... a financial perspective the salary was about half of what I was making at community services which, as you know, for a community services organization wasn't very much to begin with. And then the opportunity to work with all volunteers, I think there were two part-time staff, and the rest all volunteers in a whole area of

supporting people through those last stages [of life], and their families. That was a big chapter in my life I would say. So there was, one, the support from [wife], and we had two little kids at that time... to actually follow the interest... a calling is probably too strong a word but certainly it was more than a passing interest and, to look at that opportunity and to start engaging.

So I worked with that organization and there were costs, financial pressures and so on associated with that as well. Right? And I would say that is one of the beauties of the relationships I have with [my wife] is that we have both had opportunities to be supportive like that and not let—we have never ever let money get in the way of where we feel that we need to be and how we work and how that fits with our values. I worked with that organization for five years. That first year was like massive learning and then we really developed or strengthened, I would say, the volunteer program, the volunteer training became very rich. I had great volunteers that got attracted to the organization and engaged and very deep relationships established with many of those volunteers and many deep relationships with the people that we worked with. It was a complete mixed bag and I certainly did some of that visiting in the home and making those connections with family and the people that were dying.

And it was interesting that through that process, my dad was—after the first year and we were in the middle of a second training session—my dad was dying in Edmonton. I was in the middle of the training session that I organized—I led one session but then we had all these great people come in and do part of those... And so, I would go back to Edmonton to support my mom and dad. And then he died over that time, while I was doing the training, so then I would come back to the group and talk about my experience and it was interesting that what I was leading with the help of those great support people with the volunteers, was that all of that went out the window pretty much when I was actually confronted with my own dad dying. So that whole emotional side and everything else kind of kicked in. So then, to be able to come back to the training group and actually talk about that and talk about that experience was really rich. That was probably the richest training session, both for the participants and [for me] because I was able to relay the story that carried on over time.

So I worked there for four years. And it was I would say, very strong, very thriving, [with] very dedicated volunteers. There were people who had made significant commitment and the organization was really well viewed (and still is now)... great turnouts for events that we hosted.

So that is the shift, I would say, it was an interesting exploration in terms of looking at a switch in roles which impacted, one it impacted our family and for the better I would say though not financially. And being able to, again, that support for following a path that you are drawn to and want to engage in. And certainly the people that were involved with the work from a volunteer and a couple of the staff that were there. And certainly over time that organization and those relationships were strengthened a whole lot. I mean, I guess the way for me to think about this is that those experiences perhaps more flow through [me] than holding accountability [for]. So I think of those experiences that I was a part of that—but also those opportunities and those experiences kind of flow through me too so—because I get messed up with like ‘what is my role in that?’—So I look back and I can identify some of those roles, but it is so interwoven and the experiences are so complex that the notion of flowing through

and that you are a part of that when you start to observe that. Which I thought was really interesting to observe it that way.

So really, I would say significantly [my time with Hospice was] impactful. Being able to talk with lots of folks about how we are treated, as we get older. Most of the people we dealt with were older—many weren't but at least two thirds were. So, all of those things around age and value and the different ways people start looking at life and nonlife and what that means in terms of that transition. And how do you actually experience that or prepare for that or the values around that, which was great. And my experiences in India really helped because in India, the place where I worked—it was Hope for the Destitute and Dying—but it was an interesting mix because there were people dying. But, there were also people there, for example there were some younger kids there who, in our society, would be classified as mildly handicapped mentally—like really mildly—like a couple of them where deaf so they were a part of that group [*chuckling*] because there was no other place for them. So, it was interesting having that mix of people ... lumped together and it was interesting how those folks dealt with that as a community within that setting. And for me, to get my head around and my heart around what does that mean? And try to imagine what is possible in different settings where humans happen to be and how in so many ways it is so foreign and yet not at all far away from how we have to approach those same issues over here. ... So that experience particularly, and a whole bunch of others, those threads really wove together in a very strong and impactful way on many. I still look at that as a very rich time....

PENNY: You just described a beautiful array of, almost a season, it sounded like to me: like a season that was really rich and rewarding for you. And it sounded like you were in a place that was really aligned with who you are and I have some questions that came to me as I listened to you.

LEX: Yup.

PENNY: And I am curious Lex, because what I have come to know about you is that you have quite a fascinating background and you have lots and lots of experiences, and yet when asked this question, this is the experience you chose to share. I am wondering can you talk a little about what brought this story to the top?

LEX: I think part of that notion... [my wife] said to me that, if you think more of the experiences are flowing through you, then you don't get into that dilemma of saying "well, ok, honestly, 'What did I do?'" I am not the one that created this or, the one who is responsible for all the wonderful things that happened, right? And that is where I get stuck because I know that in the work that I am doing now or that community work—that from an organizational perspective it is [Organization] working with local government to do this work—it is that we should take no credit. Internally [to the organization] we take credit that we are doing our part but everything is about the community making decisions in what they want to do. And that is where it needs to be. And I think that for this work, because it is at a personal level that I struggled with [finding the story]. So what came to mind is that... the flowing through me.

PENNY: Thanks for sharing that. Understanding how you came to tell that story raises a question for me a little bit about who you are. And I like the idea that it is a flow through and that brings to my mind that there was something about your role

when you were working with hospice that allowed you to really create a space where things could happen. And although you don't necessarily take ownership for that, you played a role in creating a space.

LEX: Yeah, and I do take credit for doing that in my work generally. I think that one of the things that is my responsibility, is to help to create those spaces where voices, all the voices, can be heard and things can be explored and what happens in that space is what is honoured and is where the possibilities are... And I feel good about that, because it is not in terms of—and maybe it is the whole Catholic upbringing or something—where... to actually take credit for stuff, I don't know, to me it doesn't seem right ... I mean I think that in terms of ... and that is something I may need to explore more deeply ... why do I have a problem with that! But in terms of creating that space, I know that is a role that I have and that often I do it well. Not always but certainly there are places where it has worked well. (Lex Call #3)

Lex's story communicates to me a series of experience in which there is, consistently, an intentionality to a way of being that is open, vulnerable, and present to the space and the people he is with. Lex's moments of paddling a river, biking through South America, and sleeping under a billion stars speaks to a sense of wonder at the world in which he finds himself and a perspective to who he is in that space. In his recollections of being invited into spaces and relationships that challenged his ideas and taught him the value of re-examining his assumptions about poverty and resistance, there is the whisper of his developing skill in holding space for 'others.'

Lex's story of taking on the role as Executive Director of the hospice is characterized by moments over time, by processes of engagement and deep conversation, and of relationships. There is a sense of holism within his relationships, as he integrates significant life decisions with his wife and family, and the integration of his own experience of his father's death into the work he is doing at Hospice. The story takes place over several years, defying in some ways my assumption that acting and deciding justly occurs in the moment. It is rather a series of moments in which relationships are built and ground is laid, creating relational space in which he co-exists with 'others.' There is an egalitarianism to his actions as a leader and a sense that he continues to develop his own understanding of how to work in a way that permits an unfolding rather than the confining of the work to a fixed

way of doing. Of interest to me are his reflections on his own experiences in India and his openness to bring those experiences into his way of seeing the work in another context. I become aware when I ponder his story, of his comfort with ambiguity, with unknowing, with the complexities of life.

Another pattern I hear in Lex's story is his resistance to the North American narrative of material wealth as an objective to pursue. He connects what he learned about poverty while in South America and made decisions subsequently in his life, and collaboratively with his wife and family, that set aside financial benefit as the criteria for choosing work related roles. Bakhtin (1986) speaks of 'outsidedness,' as "a most powerful factor in understanding" (7). There are two movements in this concept. The first is to step into another culture,

as it is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself.... A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings. (7)

The second movement is to return "to the perspective provided by our native self or our native culture" (Holquist 1986, xiii). In completing this second movement, the horizons of understanding have been dialogically encountered and "mutually enriched" (Bakhtin 1986, 7). As a listener and elicitor of the story, I am touched by Lex's story of his father's death and the back and forth movement between spending time with his father and his mother and returning to his work at the hospice and training volunteers in the work of supporting people through dying and death. This movement between a very personal and emotional part of his life and the vulnerability he lives out with the people with whom he works resonates deeply for me of responsiveness in relationships, of a holding of tension between 'what I thought I knew of death' and 'what I am now experiencing,' of the mutuality and symmetry he demonstrates with his team in his place of work. This boundary between one's personal world and one's work world is one that, in my experience, can be difficult to cross. Lex's understanding of poverty, of death and dying, and most likely other meanings that he has

held and currently holds, have been enriched by his lived experiences and they become visible in his openness to draw on these understandings in his decision-making.

### **Jessica**

The next story of a time of acting justly comes from Jessica.

JESSICA: For me, the decision making to choose deliberately the jobs that I have had in the past, is one that strikes me as [making] a significant impact on myself and on the lives of 'others,' both personally and professionally...The decision to work for or volunteer with AmeriCorps as a Vista was completely against my academic background within our business school and also something that I had to rely on a lot of external guidance for, but not always external validation, that it was the right thing. Largely because it wasn't what anybody would have anticipated me, the study hard, student athlete, honour student to be [doing]—volunteering her time in poverty as her first job. But at the same time, in 2009, I had applied for over 200 jobs and still didn't have one that kind of hit the sweet spot for me. But for me, there were pieces of me that I knew I wanted to speak for 'others' who couldn't be spoken for. And I thought that the AmeriCorps position would really enlighten me in regards to what are some of the strategies and tactics about going and building things that matter for people who don't have the opportunity to do so. It wasn't a very clear and straightforward path by any means ...

PENNY: What were you paying attention to that led you that way into a role that was non-traditional?

JESSICA: I have always had a strong belief that everything I am doing is a step toward building a better me, and for me to be a better person in whatever it is that I am supposed to be doing. It is not meant to say that I am not meant to be present every step of the way, but to be present and continuing to build into a more just, a more right, a more positive person. And so that said, my experience as a student getting involved in the [community name] was certainly one piece of it. Like, how do I pay attention to my local community and understand what that is and understand my strengths in building that community? So that was a big piece of [it]. And I ended up starting a non-profit in the area with some Latino business owners and so I felt some deep roots there and was curious about how the rest of the community was functioning. And that was obviously an appeal.

The second inside appeal [was] towards this issue of global poverty. I had applied for Peace Corp in early February and was accepted to a position in West Africa and I remember thinking to myself I could do this, but I am not sure that I feel like I belong or that I feel that I have the right skill sets there. Although Africa is one of the places that is on my list of places to go and things to explore and I am incredibly curious about racial tensions stemming from a lot of African roots. That is something I am passionate about but not something I felt like I had strengths in. So that kind of led me to, 'okay, if global poverty isn't the thing' maybe I need to focus on domestic poverty and that kind of opened up my eyes to thinking about—I don't need to travel anywhere. Everything is in my own backyard in terms of how I think about and change the way that underserved populations can be served.

So it was all of these different things that built me up and guided me to say, don't settle. Don't settle. Don't settle. Don't worry, don't worry, don't worry. Stay patient, things will work out. And then when I heard about the AmeriCorps position I was struck by it ... and finally made my decision that if I could work this out for a year, if I could just give myself a year. Little did I know it would take me on a different path.  
[laughs]

PENNY: You said earlier that when you were with AmeriCorps and paying attention to how that experience would shape you to become a more just Jessica, a more aware person—did it do that for you? Were you a more just person coming out of that experience?

JESSICA: That is a hard question to answer. I think, [*hesitantly*] yes. Largely because—I am not sure—and I hesitate because I think in my entire study as a student I became more and more just, because of the people that I was around and I was forced to go back to the identity conversation. I was forced to identify myself as an athlete, who did positive work in the classroom; I was forced to identify myself as a business student in the community, doing positive work for the community. So, by all of the people I was surrounded by who were not—who were not similar to my own identity—I had to force myself to become more just and hold myself accountable to de-stigmatize those stereotypes. As part of AmeriCorps, it is the opposite right? I am around everybody who believes they are doing just work, but I had to really sift out what—let's really think through what is just and what isn't. Are these decision that we are making important to the overall bottom line or is it just going to be something that has short-term impact [for] a few people. And as a result I do think that I made some different adjustments to make things happen. And, one of them is just thinking through what justice really looks like and how humbled I became in that position. So in AmeriCorps you volunteer to live in poverty. And I mean, I saw *poverty* and I understood it but I didn't really understand it, until I was working side-by-side with all these other individuals. So for me it did become—I was exposed to a lot of the different challenges at the grass roots level and from that sense it did force me to become and think through what social justice truly looks like and what it doesn't look like.

PENNY: So, part of AmeriCorps, and I want to make sure I understand you correctly—is a requirement that you were expected to live in poverty as well.

JESSICA: [*sounds of agreeing*] So, I lived ... where we were ... the university ... in that area about seventy-five percent of the people in this specific city live a life below the poverty line. And largely because of it being one of those post industrial rust belts, Midwest towns, where all of the jobs have been depleted. All of the people who have become educated have left and the people who are remaining are either the elderly who used to work there and no longer do and don't have any of the services that they need, and/or individuals who are uneducated or without the right sets of skills to continue to provide something positive or develop something positive that is job producing and economic and community developing.

PENNY: What do you think shifted for you when you started into that process and when you came out? I guess my question would be were there some times when you felt what you were seeing was affecting how you were thinking about what is just?

JESSICA: Yes, entirely. So the whole concept of higher education and access to [higher education] was a big part of it and incredibly humbling. Once you miss the 18 and 22 year old mark, you become a non-traditional student. And makes it incredibly, incredibly difficult to lift yourself out of the cycle of poverty... I reflect on two specific students. One who was forty years old and she took care of her aging mother and she had never been on a computer before. I remember her coming to her classroom so confused because she couldn't figure out her schedule and because she couldn't figure out how to get on the computer. It was very humbling—what in the world—how has the world come to this where we can leave a lot of these people behind and continue to move forward? That is not fair! Second, another [student], who would work through a third shift and she would sleep in her car for an hour and then come to class. And she had two kids and she was managing these two kids. And despite these life circumstances, their passion for getting an education and their determination for breaking out of the cycle of poverty was the most persevering that I have ever met. And these two individuals stand out in my mind every time I think about the stigmas around people in poverty being lazy or apathetic or etc.

PENNY: I am also wondering, as I listen to you, you were a young woman just finished university, and I know university can be a very deep and challenging time. What you are taught in university can be idealistic, it can be objective knowledge, and then you go out and face what the lived reality is for people. And I was wondering if there is anything you started off with in your role in terms of how you thought about society or place that you discarded as a result of your time with AmeriCorps?

JESSICA: I think the first thing that it reaffirmed was that access was one of the most important things towards improving the lives of others. And that could be domestically, internationally etc. And in order to provide access, one already had to have access to ... it kind of reaffirms that (a) there is a group of 'have' and 'have not's' and I used to...well I don't think that I ever had the belief that anybody can grab themselves up by the bootstraps and can kinda of figure [things out]. This typical American dream. If anything, it reaffirmed that as a false notion and one that wasn't helping or providing access or serving others who didn't have access and there is no way that you could climb your way up by the bootstraps—it was more of a mutual experience. So, I think if anything it reaffirms, that there is a mutuality piece of it and I... given my circumstances, given whatever faith perspective, I had been provided access to a lot of things that I was able to see at such a young age. That then kind of stimulated or catalyzed this idea that you must have to give back.

PENNY: There have been a couple of things I have been reading as I have been exploring theory and preparing to do this research. There is a perspective that—have you read Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed?

JESSICA: Yes. Or excerpts of it, yes.

PENNY: Ok, so there is a place in there where he talks about the difference between oppressors and oppressed and that, until you actually stand with and in communion with and in community with those who are oppressed, to walk with them as they gain a critical consciousness in the structures that are oppressing them, that we won't see change. And there is another theorist who talks about 'outsidedness,' how when you step into a different culture, you see your culture differently but you also have to

come back out of that culture to your own culture to really make sense of things. It seems to me that this experience that you had of being required to actually live in a way that was similar to the people that you were there to support, to serve, to be working with. Would that experience have been different if you hadn't been required to do that? Do you think that the year would have been as impactful on you in growing you and changing you?

JESSICA: No definitely not. And I notice this particularly with the way the AmeriCorps position specifically was set up for one sub-group of AmeriCorps. This Vista group ... is one that works specifically with educational institutions and universities. The other Vistas that I worked with around Ohio, all lived on campus and many of their campuses were much more traditional in nature and they were able to "hide from the oppressed," meaning they would live in dorms and have a meal plan etc. etc. My specific experience of living in a downtown neighbourhood in an apartment that is pretty beat down, in a place where I didn't necessarily feel comfortable to walk around by myself. And there were a lot of those heightened risks, forced me to think about what it would be like to truly live in this area and what it would look like if I didn't have a car and couldn't drive to work everyday. How would I truly function? And so, I think those specific practices encouraged me to really think about what it *felt* like and I do really believe that—you know—that it is not seeing that is believing, it is feeling that is believing and that sparked this interest in planning a lot of programs where you did have these more immersion experiences. Similarly, knowing that I am never going to belong to this class or this place in the same way that people born and raised in this area are. (Jessica Call #3)

Jessica's story heightens my awareness of her courage to make life choices and to stand apart from and resist the expectations she feels the world has of her. The decision to both consider and then choose to volunteer with AmeriCorps and to live and work with people in poverty builds, as she expresses, on her desire to understand more deeply the experiences of 'others.' As she talks about her own decision making process, one can hear both an intellectual curiosity of the issues, tactics, and strategies for addressing poverty arise, and a desire to help those who are without the means or the voice to be heard.

There is also, in Jessica's story, a demonstrable willingness to cross boundaries and to encounter and enter into the experiences of 'others.' Again, Jessica's story resonates with the idea of 'outsidedness' that I heard in Lex's story. Her story also brings to mind Freire's (2011) word of communion: the standing along side those who are oppressed knowing that the structures of oppression are evident in their ways of behaving and living. She acknowledges that this can never be a true experience for her of what poverty feels like

because, in the end, she knows that she can leave and return to her own place in society—a place to which she has access while others do not. What resonates for me in listening to Jessica, as she tells her story, is her openness to step into a world that is foreign to her and her willingness to take the risks of experiencing the visceral feelings of poverty.

As she re-tells her experience of choosing to volunteer to work in poverty, Jessica's words reflect a deep level of self-awareness. She is aware of her identities, she is aware of who she wants to become. Her words speak of an awareness of her own desire to develop as a just person and of the inherent tension for her as her culture draws her to aspire to different characteristics. Jessica's own words capture this when she describes, "the decision to work for or volunteer with AmeriCorps as a Vista was completely against my academic background within our business school, and also something that I had to rely on a lot of external guidance for, but not external validation that it was the right thing." There is courage in her choice to hear the diversity in the utterances and language forces she is experiencing, and to deeply understand her need to connect with people who experience different lives from her own, as a way to overcome her own boundedness as defined by her social, cultural, and historical context.

### **Kerri**

As I introduce Kerri's story of acting justly, I discover I am framing it in my mind as a place of contrast to the stories of Lex and Jessica. As I consider these very words, I realize that her story is really not that different. Kerri's story also reveals how acting and deciding in just ways appears in the events of life as we encounter them. I include in this transcription of our conversation the question Kerri asked in response to the frame I provided for the call. What her responding question makes visible to me is an unspoken and therefore unexamined notion of the cultural and societal separation we carry between one's professional and personal worlds, within the context of acting justly. In the moment of Kerri asking the question, I had a choice to hold to a socially constructed separation between our personal

and professional lives, and to direct her to a work related experience. I became aware that, in my own assumptions, embedded as they were in my research question, lay a primary concern with how leaders act justly in the world of work. Yet in the moment of answering Kerri's question on the call and in re-listening to the story as I began to place it into this paper, I realized a moment of clarity. In the making meaning of and acting and deciding in just ways, there is a holism and integrity that transcends the societal and cultural expectation that we keep our personal and public lives separated.

KERRI: Are you looking for professional anecdotes?

PENNY: No! I think it is just in your life because I think what we want to explore is what, from your experience, has brought you to a way of making sense of how to act in situations that aren't always clear.

KERRI: My first thought is the example of deciding to move to [community name]. Really not knowing what to do. ... My son was born in North Vancouver. I lived in North Vancouver—I had lived in the lower mainland for a while. His dad wanted to live in [community name], and so his dad moved to [community name]. And we were co-parenting at this great distance. When [our son] was small—well, I guess it was never perfect, but—as he grew bigger and bigger, it just got harder and harder and I felt so torn about what to do about this situation of trying to parent from such a far distance. We both wanted [our son] to live with us. We were basically in a tug of war over the kid. And neither one of us wanted to move. We both had “good reasons” for wanting to be where we were. We both had networks and jobs and community and roots down. I felt so strongly, as a woman, that it was so sexist for me to have to move for those two males. I really felt that society and sexism expects it. That the woman will do those things. She will move for the benefit of the men. She will put the men first. ... I had such an ideological conflict in my head about how to do it. You know, I had gone to grad school and had a job and a career and I was really building my life and trying to put myself first in a lot of ways that I thought would be progressive and fight against the status quo.

But then there was my son, who clearly needed me. Whether he was male or not [laughs], he was a young person, he was at a disadvantage, he was the one without resources. He was the one being done to. In a great way he did not have the power in these situations to dictate how his life should go. He didn't have the power the way the adults had the power.

And so after years of torment [laughs] I decided that I just had to move. And I just didn't know. It was so ... I feel like it was the toughest decision in my life. I got one piece of advice that helped shape my view of the whole thing and really helped me to think that I should move. A short time after I got that piece of advice, I got really, really sick with the flu. Probably the sickest I have ever been. And I was lying there and I thought this is not just a physical crisis—this is my crisis! I need to friggling

decide what I am frigging doing because my kid is just getting older! No one is winning.

So, during the sickness, I decided 'I have to move to [community name].' The great impact was on all of us. The three of us, now lived in the same community and our son had his mom and dad in the same place. And I could get on with my life knowing that this core piece was taken care of. Does that answer the question? *[laughing]*

PENNY: I am listening to your story and there are a lot of things that I really notice as you are talking. I really hear your care for your son and that recognition that he didn't have power in this situation but he was definitely being impacted by decisions others were making.

KERRI: Right. Yup.

PENNY: And I am also interested in your own dilemma. And you framed it up very succinctly in terms of whether it be from a feminist or a taking a stance against what could be perceived as a sexist expectation that, because of your gender, you are the one who should give for these men.

KERRI: Right.

PENNY: And I am curious about... Where does where does that come from, where did that recognizing that there is a social norm there and that you are wanting to resist it?

KERRI: *[pause]* I just want things to be fair! *[laughs]* It seems to me parenting is... there are lots of things in the world that are unfair. All kinds of things. In parenting and family life and then in the work world we know that women don't quite see the advantages that males do. We don't quite get paid what males do. And fairness is so important to me. I was really having this whole fairness thing going on; I have thought a lot about fairness between me and [son's father] but then also what is fair to [our son]. And it just sort of weighed out that I thought what is fair to this young person who is just trying to grow up *[laughs]*. What is fair to him is just way more important than these other things, even though for a time I felt that if I do this I am going to be giving in. I need to take a stand. Yeah those are tough. That was a dilemma... This went on for 4 years.

PENNY: What was the piece of advice that you got?

KERRI: A woman just impressed upon me that ... you know, I had my whole life to figure out what was good for me and make things go the way I wanted them to go. I had things ahead of me, but my son was only going to be a kid this one time and for a few more years ... there was a sense of urgency around time ... like 'I know that fairness is important to you and that your career and your this and your that, but your kid is only a kid now and he needs you now.'

PENNY: Was that hard to hear?

KERRI: I remember it wasn't and maybe I had thought that myself, I probably had and maybe other people had said the same thing. Maybe they had. But I think

maybe the context... part of it was that she was not a parent. She was not a parent the woman who told me this. What I kept hearing from parents was 'I could never live apart from my kid the way you are.' Like he was living with [his dad], while I was going to grad school. Other moms made me feel like I was this crazy monster for not living with my kid or they thought 'I don't understand you,' or they just thought 'I don't understand you!' what are you doing? I don't know. I didn't know what to make of the moms and their advice and I didn't find it useful [*laughs*]. But this non-mom who was speaking to me, she also worked with young people. And so she just seemed to be not biased. I was more open to hear what she had to say in a different way because, she expressed the urgency, but without the urgency of being a mom.

PENNY: So other moms might be saying the same thing, [but it was] harder to hear. But you could hear it from her. Was there something in the way she was relating to you that you could hear her differently?

KERRI: She seemed to really listen and could understand that I was in this place of heartbreak over the whole thing. She knew I was in a place of heartbreak. There was another mom who I did speak to who actually helped. She had moved away. Her kids were older. They were in their twenties. But, when they were younger she moved away from Vancouver to live in Vernon. And the older girl was going to stay with the dad, because they were divorced. And the younger kid was going to come with her. But it ended up that neither one of her kids moved with her. She ended up moving by herself. And she lived away from her kids as they finished their school years. And she had a lot of regret about this. She was looking back on it and was thinking 'why did I move?' Why did I think that was so important to go after 'my thing?' Why was it a competition between my life and the lives of my kids?' And I thought, 'yeah, didn't want to be like [her]. I don't want to have this regret.' And that was a big guiding—I didn't want to have any regret. (Kerri Call #3)

Kerri's story resonates strongly with the echo of the choices encountered in life and how these choices are understood and weighed in the desire to be just: a desire to be just, not just for ourselves, but also for the people who are impacted by our decisions. The decision is deeply personal, it confronts values of fairness, both to oneself and to 'others,' and it also confronts beliefs that Kerri's social and cultural context 'tells' her about the meanings that are seen in her decisions. She confronts what it means to be a mother, what it means to have a career, what it speaks to of male-female roles and expectations, and it is grounded deeply in her sense of what is right and wrong. Resolving the deep tensions inherent in these beliefs takes time, it takes heartache, and it also speaks to the voices of 'others' that we hear, both the ones we are open to and the ones that we censor out.

Kerri in the end holds her son and his well-being central in her decision. She acknowledged his lack of voice and lack of power in these decisions that directly impacted him. She evaluated the narratives that were important to her own identity and her beliefs, and contested with the voices of the people who spoke with her on this decision, wrestling in many ways to find the narrative and the meanings that would align to compel her forward into the action she would take. Dialogue theorists speak of 'responsiveness in relationship' One can hear Kerri's responsiveness to her son and her movement away from the boundedness of her self, letting her son 'happen to me.' There is a stance of openness towards him that, in the end, propels her to a decision that demonstrates and makes visible in the act, her decision of what being just in that relationship means.

In Kerri's story I also hear the deep listening that she responded to in her relationship with the woman 'who was not a mom.' This woman's ability to listen to Kerri created a space in which she felt heard and, in my listening to the story, also created a space in which Kerri did not feel judged. There seemed to exist, in that moment, a genuine turning towards one another that allowed the creation of the 'in between' where new understandings could emerge. In this space, Kerri could hold the tension of the utterances and carry this woman's words as an utterance forward with her as she, over time, considered what she needed to do.

### **Dorrie**

From Kerri's story we move to Dorrie's story of exploring a time when she was attentive to what was just in a situation. A little context will help us enter into this story. Dorrie is the Manager of a residential care site, where both the innovative building design and the program delivered within it, have been created specifically as a place of excellence for people living with dementia and who require residential care. The first phase of the building was developed approximately seven years previously and her story is centred at the time of

opening the second phase of the building in which the size of the Centre was essentially doubled.

DORRIE: I guess, probably, I mean always, throughout life [I] have made decisions and learn[ed] how to navigate, how to live with them and reflect on them. Learn from them and move forward. But I think the biggest...the biggest piece for me most recently in the last two years was that amazing period of this building. Phase two [was] being built and knowing that when the day came to operationalize it, our staffing level would be greatly reduced. And our staffing mix would change. And the struggle for me was well—it goes back to our discussion a couple of weeks ago of the time of the autocratic leadership—and for me, the struggle around what was not just during that time was that it wasn't just that I was not able, number one, to do what my leadership instinctually does, which is to engage the team and in some cases our families and partners in the discussion around what had to take place and to seek ideas in that partnership on how to move forward. And that was probably one of the most difficult times for me because number one, this was a secret! It had talking points attached to it! I would have ideally have liked to partner with the [union] as well in terms of having that opportunity to...to me that is when you are genuine. When you seek ideas and you know that there are better ideas sometimes than your own or even just the most beautiful part of engaging people, which helps you along the way.

So I had to almost, it was like, rain on a parade! You know the furniture was moving in, the fireplaces were lit and it was time to call these very formal meetings with Human Resource oversight to announce fairly significant staffing changes. And knowing that the risk there for this very, very, very, wonderful team was to perceive deception! And deception from myself! Who they trusted and that was one of the questions afterwards was—'Well, why didn't you come to us? 'Why weren't we a part of this discussion?', or 'I think it could have worked it better this way.' So [a] fascinating period of time. You can imagine, I mean we can look at change and we know all about the storming, norming, and all of that stuff and you know that this too shall pass. But it was a really, really difficult time for me because it was like swimming against the current of what I would normally, or how I would have liked to have dealt with those realities. And those realities were a reduction in staffing costs and the introduction of a different care model. So you know that you are going to introduce it and you know you are going to have the job fairs and you know that all of these things are going to happen. And so, as I approached all of that, all I had on my side was long standing, supportive relationships with the team and I kept reinforcing my commitment to be beside them through this time of change—and families for that matter.

So yeah, it was just that inability to be transparent or to engage them in the change, or have that dialogue—because you know it is that deep belief I have that the wisdom lies within the team. Yeah, it seems... Silly talking points; it was so terrible [*chuckles*]! So the staff, of course, were just reeling. Because really what it meant was, not just disrupting really well honed teams and communities, you were splitting your direct care staff right down the middle and saying okay half of you are going over to phase two and working with the [Licensed Practical Nurses] (LPNs) and the rest of you will be staying in phase one and working with LPNs. So they had all of these new partnerships to anticipate and many of them had experience working in

the past with LPNs that had not been positive. So there was all of that structuring and work that I had to do in terms of looking at the LPN orientation, laying down that vision and those expectations, and ensuring that they at least had a chance. [Laughs] Imagine! You know your first day coming together when there is that ... that lack of trust and that suspicion.

And of course the other piece was my concern around safety. We were, at that time, supporting the lives of many residents who had significant, or could have, significant behavioural responses—during care particularly. And we were going down in staffing hours and so I had that to think about, as well in terms of 'is it safe?' 'Can I go home at night and not worry about staff being safe, residents being safe, the whole building.' And so one of the things is that I made a real commitment to each and every one of them that myself and of course, [name of] the [Residential Care Coordinator] (RCC), would be working alongside all of them intensely for the first period of time. And so that is where, I guess, it is that leading by example and being really actively involved in the cottages and the developing of the work and the care and the flow, and the planning of the day. Really we were in the cottages, particularly the cottages when we first started out that had a lot of complexity, people that required a lot of care, people who were still really very, very responsive during care. So in the morning we would get here right at 6:30 in the morning and we (Dorrie and the RCC) would plan where we were going to, sort of, pour in our support and be with the team during that time.

The other thing that occurred during that time was, you know, we cast people up in the air ... the people who had been here for six to seven years were now looking for positions—and of course there are always some. We never had to say a word, sometimes the phone would ring and [the person would] say 'I want to exercise my 'less than 90 days away and come back immediately,' [because they were] missing that leadership commitment and relational leadership and the working together. Sort of the real formal being engaged, supporting them with care but also being engaged around the planning of the day, working with the LPNs and helping them see the day as a whole care rather than task. You know, 'oh my god it is 8 o'clock and I need to get my meds out.' So working directly with them. Working with conflict, I guess that was another big thing [laughs]. There were some days when some of our care staff would have it out ... and the conflict! But, walking right in among it.

So, what resonates for me in terms of, I mean, I was terrified. I thought Holy Christ you know, we are going to lose, we are at risk here of becoming ordinary. Losing that wonderful, wonderful way of being. And so, I think, other than the fact that it was long hours and there were times when I was absolutely terrified, there were times when I was absolutely angry! And I thought, 'Christ, how can they put us in this situation?' But when I look back now what resonates for me is, I guess it is about leading by what I do and what I say—is what resonates for me. And I think once you establish that deep trust with people, even though there are bumps in the road and there is bureaucracy, I mean everybody has been in that leadership conflict where the organization has come down with stuff that you don't necessarily agree but you have to share the song sheet. And so, yeah. And then the other thing for me was the ability, learning to let go and trust that the team here knew, you know. And that is what I would say if they [staff] came to me and said 'I am going to go over to [another site in the organization], it is closer to home and it is not the same here anymore.'

[laughs] And just to sit with them and support their decision and trust, that they would likely return.

PENNY: How long was this time? What time elapsed for this change?

DORRIE: In terms of the enormity of what we had done and then how it started to reform? Probably a year.

PENNY: Was there a time in that year, when there was a moment where you started to breathe again, and say, 'it is going to work. We are going to make it through?' What were they?

DORRIE: There were lots of moments there. Because, you know, my style is so open door, so having people come in or going into the cottages and finding those moments where it is just eureka! Where I would say 'how is it today?' and having two faces light up and say 'oh we have this plan in place and it is just awesome.' Or having, we always seem to have visitors and sometimes you hear it through a visitor who asks a question. In one situation, they asked a direct care staff 'what keeps you here?' And she said 'oh my god, we know that we can always count on [name of RCC] and Dorrie. They are always there for us. Yeah. And that is not a needy 'they are there for us' ... They just know that at any time we recognize [them], that we know. So yeah, that first year; oh my god was it intense. (Dorrie Call #3)

As I listened to Dorrie tell of this experience, it resonated deeply for me, in large part, because of my own experience of working in a similar organization. The personal investment in creating, with others, a place of caring and trust is significant because it is deeply relational. In Dorrie's voice, as she tells the story, there are still remnants of anguish as she recalls the position she was placed in by organizational decisions, knowing she would be betraying the trust the staff and families had placed in her.

This is for me a story of restoration and rebuilding. Dorrie's story speaks of the challenges of being a leader who leads in and through relationship, who knows the incredible value of trust and who believes in the wisdom and knowledge that the team holds. Yet in these circumstances where organizational decision making by others significantly compromises and throws into chaos what she has worked with her team to create, she chooses to step into the work of re-building relationships, personally dedicating her time and walking out her convictions in each encounter. Through persistence and steadfastness, by

being present and caring to the staff, the residents and their families, and with time, she and her team began to see a return to what they had lost.

As Dorrie tells the story, one senses her deep commitment to people. Her partnership with the RCC and their shared commitment to articulate the expectations for all staff and the personal investment both of them made of their time, their energy, and their emotions to restore the relationships that made it possible for caring to take place for the residents. It is a story that seeps with deep listening and the willingness to be open, and letting what is happening for all of the people involved, the staff and the residents, 'happen to me.' It elicits, for me, a sense of making meaning of social justice that transcends a solely cognitive meaning and offers, in praxis, the integral relationship between reflection and action in relationship with 'others,' that the doing of justice emerges. There is a glimpse in all of these stories, that one does not just arrive at a place able to act in just ways, it is a learning, growing, reflecting, and acting engagement with the world that prepares one for the places of tension where the choice to be just is truly a choice. A choice that becomes so clear and personal that it hardly can be seen any longer as a choice to act in any other way.

### **Jeff**

This next story of a time of acting justly is from Jeff.

JEFF: I am tempted to think of this either in my corporate experience or in my time working with Amnesty International. I think in the... in some of the work experiences. My tendency is leading me to think more of an ethical stand, because there are some grey areas, if you will, in business life. Generally, my thoughts are straying to an ethical stand. I am thinking in terms of a... so here is the example that comes to mind.

There was a community investment project that my former employer was sponsoring to provide improved water availability and sanitation for a community adjacent to our operations. That project had been, really, sponsored by the United Nations through the United Nations Development Program. The UNDP was going to be the executing agency and [my firm] was strictly a funder. We would give cash and they would execute the project. And the situation in Yemen worsened and so the UN declared they would have to cease delivering the project, because they were not confident in sending their people out into the field. It was very tempting for [my firm] at that time, to wash their hands of the project, to say well this is not our project, this is a UN project and they have decided not to proceed with it. So, there were certain voices

within the company—not one hundred percent, but there were voices within the company—that said okay, fine, ‘let’s just wash our hands of it. This is a UN issue and the fact that they are not going out and completing this project is their issue and not ours.’

And so the stance that I took was, ‘no, as far as the community was concerned we live there, we operate there and, because we have been connected with this as a funder, we can’t just walk away from it.’ So, I think that was a ... and I think that I did have some support within the organization ... it did take advocacy and again some firm stances that ‘we cannot abandon this project,’ that we have to find other ways to complete the project. So then, with others, I worked to recruit external contractors, and we did provide security for them to carry out their roles ... but to find external and local contractors that could continue the work so that the promise, if you will, that had been made to the community would be fulfilled. And that is what happened. The project was not completed perfectly but it was not abandoned in midstream. It was completed to a degree that brought some satisfaction to the community and sort of kept, to my view, the corporate reputation open and maintained our... what we would call, our social license to operate. That is the example that comes to mind when I think of a [time or where] the way to go wasn’t clear or straightforward. There could have been a number of rationalizations, where we could have rationalized to ourselves, ‘yeah, it is fine to let this project slide.’

So what guided me in the experience? Well, I think what guided me, quite simply, is you keep your promises to local stakeholders and you don’t slide into the rationalizations. There may be a technical argument that says ‘well, I don’t have to live up to this promise or this condition’ because really it was somebody else’s—it is not mine. So I ... knew that maintaining our commitment was actually in the corporate interest. I think that you can poison a relationship with a local community; you may be technically correct in saying ‘well, we don’t have an obligation to see this project through’ and technically that is correct. But not to hide behind that technicality of you will ...to stand behind your ... your commitment.

And how did I feel about the outcome for myself and for others that were involved? I think the same thing. The outcome to maintain good relations with the local community—that was maintained. I know there were several community meetings that I attended with the local stakeholders ... concerns from the local community. I think they were remarkably, surprisingly, flexible in understanding the situation. I think there were some voices within [my firm] that said, ‘oh, they are never satisfied; so, if we let this project slide, it really doesn’t matter because they are never satisfied anyways.’

So how did I feel about it? I felt satisfied. I felt, and I did feel supported by some of the leadership so that was gratifying. And I did feel satisfied that, if you will, it was a case study, internally, a live case study for people internally to think about what some people think of as a vague concept—a social license to operate—and it actually brought it to life. Here is an example of ‘how we maintain that social license.’ You step into challenging situations and you don’t let things slide, even though you have an “excuse” for doing so.

PENNY: Jeff, I am really, again, the stories you share and that the other participants are sharing... I find really interesting to listen to. And, I am wondering, as you share

that story, the question that is coming into my mind is, 'what made it important to you that the project go forward?'

JEFF: The immediate thought that comes to me is my personal values. My personal values around being true to your word. That struck me first. And second, you start with it personally and then you tie it back ... and you know so many corporations have value statements or vision statements and those are, to a greater and lesser degree, truly a part of the culture. I think it started with my personal values around being true to your word and then, secondarily speaking to people inside [the firm] in terms of business results. If you have a negative relationship with a local community, 'here are the potential outcomes.' And certainly [the firm] had been in Yemen for twenty years. They know, the local operations people know and have experienced very vividly the negative consequence when the local community is unhappy with the company. Whether it is local hiring, local spending, operational impacts, the [local] operations folks saw those consequences first hand. So again, it began with personal values and then secondarily, back to speaking in terms of business impacts, 'why this is a solid business decision to support this particular community investment project.'

PENNY: Jeff, in your role then, you had been to Yemen and you had met with local leaders? So when you say that personal value of 'you keep your word.' So you had personally sat down with people and had made a commitment to people?

JEFF: That is true, but I also knew what the limits of my authority were. So it is not my budget. It is not my cash that is going to this, so there are protocols to follow. But it was in terms of engaging with the community to say, 'look' ... they had heard that the United Nations people were backing away from the project... So the initial engagement was to say 'we know this too, and just so you know, we are exploring options' ... so then you have to back into the internal protocols before you can go back to the community. The worst thing you can do is over promise and under deliver.

PENNY: As you were telling that story, I wonder ... when you are personally invested, and have shown up, and you have met with people who are not part of the organization, but are being impacted, do you have a different perspective on the project and its importance than somebody who hasn't been there and hasn't been a part of the conversations? Is it easier with geographic distance, relationship distance, to let a project go than when you have been personally a part of the project.

JEFF: Absolutely. Absolutely! We had issues within the law department in head office with an individual who says, 'well, if we take over the leadership of this project, if anything goes wrong from a corruption point of view...' So, if we put some money into the project and money goes astray, even that is a corruption risk and regulatory authorities in Canada and the US are increasingly strict, and increasingly paying attention to community investment projects. So the cliché example is that you have a great ribbon cutting [ceremony] and that company X says, 'we are donating two million dollars to build a new university hospital in the capital city of X.' And there is a big ribbon cutting, and there is a big cheque signed, and the cheque goes over to the President's office and then it disappears. And regulatory authorities are increasingly looking at that and saying 'this is a payoff and you guys knew this was a payoff to the President to grease the wheels for you guys inside the country.' So, the lawyer, yes,

has justifiable risks, but with him not having sat with the community leaders and realize that they are ... that the corruption risk, that these people do not have a connection to the President... He just couldn't see the grassroots nature of the project because he had not set foot in the village!

PENNY: As you describe this, I have noticed, on some of the bulletins I subscribe to ... these increased regulations, so trying to put into these structures accountability to minimize corruption and to hold accountability, and yet in some ways those could prevent some good projects from moving forward because now there is a fear of contravening a regulation.

JEFF: Yes.

PENNY: Is it helpful, these regulatory attempts to manage relationships between corporations and countries?

JEFF: At a high level, yes; because corruption is real and it is in the trillions of dollars. At a high level, yes. What it does though, and in the case of the particular case I am talking about, our lawyers said, 'well, Jeff, just get a third party to do this, and hire a contractor, hire a consulting firm to deliver this for us. And then as long as we do due diligence on them at the front end, we can hand the risk over to a third party.' So that handles the corruption risk, technically, but it puts a layer between the company and the community.

PENNY: And so you are minimizing the company's exposure to the risk of corruption but you are not necessarily preventing the risk of corruption as the third party can get caught up in something.

JEFF: Yes.

PENNY: It is so complex isn't it, and when you are in the situation, you are in Yemen and you think of that project, and you are working with local folks. How do you stand assured that the work you are doing will have a good outcome for the community you are working with?

JEFF: Part of it is ... I have to have a broad enough field of vision that I don't get on a single minded path that says, 'well, this is just all about having good relationships with the community and the corruption risks be damned.' I needed to demonstrate a broad enough field of vision that I could sit down with the lawyers and say 'great.' 'Please help me understand this, help me understand where you are coming from, the risks that you see and let's talk together about how we can continue with this project that satisfies the risks that you see,' and also from time-to-time have the courage to call bullshit. I had a lawyer taking this stand, and I said 'please provide me with examples of prosecutions that securities exchange commission in the US has brought against companies for corruption related to community investment.' And it went silent... and then he said 'well, no, but the SEC is talking about it at all the conferences.' And I said, 'well great, could you get me a transcripts or a copy of the conference presentation so that I can see what the SEC has specifically said on this.' So there are times when you have to call bullshit or say prove it... You have to help me specify the risk. (Jeff Call #3)

The context of Jeff's story is clearly at the nexus of large and complex constructs that include the North American corporate business world of oil and gas, the international work of the UNDP, and an Arab community in Yemen. His story provides a window into the dynamic and abruptly changing environment in which development projects exist, giving us insights into the vagaries at play that can derail projects, and also into the role that one individual can play. I am struck by how Jeff chooses a stance grounded in his own personal values, from which he interacts with 'others' to influence for the project. Jeff acknowledges that there are organizational values, but as significant to him, and possibly even more significant, is his own personal value that "you keep your word" and you honour the relationship that the organization has with the community.

It is also evident in this story the role that language plays in one's understanding. The argument Jeff creates for the project, as he interacts with his organizational colleagues, is carefully crafted to reflect language that makes sense within the organization. Jeff is intentional in his language. In telling the story, he attributes his stance to a personal value; however, he navigates the terrain by being able to translate between the world of development, social responsibility, and business. He holds on to what he refers to as a 'broad enough field of vision,' a vision that can hold the conversational space for the language of social risk, social license to operate, and the challenging or oppositional narrative of the risk of corruption and the risk of contravening regulatory frameworks, and not get lost in the rationalizations that would see the project get dropped.

In Jeff's story I am reminded of Mark Goodale (2006) and Sally Engle Merry's (2006) work on the role of translators between the boundaries of local situations and global power structures. Jeff's voice in his corporation is in many ways a marginalized voice. His work and his role is to bring into context for senior decision makers the importance of reputational and social risk that arise from oil and gas operations that impact local communities. It is not, however, just geographical boundaries or geopolitical boundaries that Jeff spans; it is also

the boundaries of normative and marginalized meanings. Within the context of business, Jeff knows that he must lean into the language that will resonate and influence. The language of rights and social justice is marginalized in his context, holding minimum weight or value. The language of business and risks to business, however, is heard and it is the use of concepts such as reputational and social risk that convey a perspective that is heard and understood.

### **Gary**

This next story is Gary's, and it is a story that in many ways echoes the sense of situated complexity that is heard in Jeff's story.

GARY: I was working in Sudan for the International Red Cross. I was the second person in a big delegation of expatriates and 500 Sudanese staff. This is a long time ago, but it actually takes place in Darfur. At that time, that area was suffering from three years of severe drought. So there was a lot, a lot of death and loss. A lot of international agencies were trying to help people, including the Red Cross. And what happened was, some grand plans to build a railway out there to bring food to people had failed. They were American plans. Failed miserably. So what was happening was a huge number of people were really facing death or starvation, and there was not enough food in the area to address the needs. Really from [a collective] failure, in a way.

The person who was in charge of the Red Cross in Sudan, got sick, so he sent me in his place—in a small plane—to a meeting in Darfur with the UN and with Oxfam and all the other groups and some people from the Sudanese-Darfur government. And I went there with a real challenge [in] that almost the only food that was out there and stored was ours. Because we didn't believe the train thing would work and had been shipping by old World War Two trucks for about two months. So we had, I think, probably only 20,000 tons, which is not a lot in that setting, of warehoused food. So, here is the dilemma. The Red Cross, because of its principles of neutrality, independence, and transparency does not transfer any of its relief supplies or its work to others or other organizations—and holds true to accountability from the donor of a dollar or 10,000 tons of grain all the way through to the recipient. That it can be tracked, audited, and it will do what we said it would do. And then there is also the principle of neutrality and independence. The Red Cross doesn't have other organizations do anything under its flag so to speak. Ever. And in Darfur at that time, these were not just principles, there was conflict developing with Chad, there was a civil war in the south. There were all kinds of reasons people would use things for benefits other than just helping people. Including the UN, that had failed at coordinating this.

So basically I was sent there and told, 'Go out and help solve the problem with that food but you can't let anyone else decide where it goes and you can't give it away!' [*chuckles*] So, I arrived there and was really, really unpopular from the minute I

walked into the room. It was a two-day meeting with maybe thirty people from all these agencies. Because everyone knew the Red Cross position would not be 'We will give five thousand tons to Oxfam and a thousand here...' and we also were the only agency with trucks out there—because we had used trucks to move it. I think we had twenty to thirty big trucks that could operate in the desert. So basically, we were the only agency that was in a position to do much. And what other people wanted was, to get access to those goods and trucks. And honestly they cared about the people and I don't mean to imply they didn't. But they were also very concerned about their areas or how it looked. And that their area was worse than another area. And I think—and the other thing that happened was that ... I was really, really sick. ... It was actually pretty awful. And I was getting really pressured.

And, it wasn't just that my boss told me this, and this is the interesting part, I really did and still do understand the principles of how the Red Cross works. Humanitarianism is the core one, but, [also] the reason[s] why it stays separate from all political and other engagements... At the end of the second day we reached an agreement that didn't make everyone happy, but worked. And we had agreed to work with a committee, to determine the priorities—like which areas needed the most attention to save the most lives first—and then we [the International Red Cross] would bring out as many drivers as we needed and workers from the Red Cross and we would deliver the food ourselves in our trucks with our organizers allowing other people to help. And that was perceived to be grandstanding and as being elite ... but it actually was a solution that allowed the Red Cross to maintain its integrity but target this food to, they say, the most in need, but it was really horrible triaging going on. Most places out there had no children under two or no elderly people alive already from starvation. But that was the situation that I had to work with and I think it is a good [example] because it is based on written principles that I also believed in as 'the guide.'

PENNY: I think I am just going to sit and try to process that example, because I am trying to think as you are describing what is a tense situation, and not feeling well, and being the face of the organization that you were representing and that you had absolutes that you could not go beyond. Was there a time when you were tugged to step outside of the bounds that the Red Cross held?

GARY: Well, you know... yes, I think so. There were times that I was pretty confused and I also am not used to being the unpopular person: the person who is being attacked. And that is actually how the meeting started. The head of the UN for that area, we are all in a circle, and he turned and lambasted me with that kind of language about the Red Cross and its elitism and not co-operating and people dying because we are not willing to give away our supplies. So at the same time, Penny, it was actually pretty clear that we had to find a solution that would, I am simplifying—that would not meet the needs of the Red Cross—but not compromise those principles. It could have been a complex solution. We could have gone back to the donors and got permission to donate or sell that material to someone else. There were things that could have taken time. That just seemed bureaucratic. So in the end, the solution didn't make everybody happy, but it actually did allow the goal of getting that material to the people who needed it as quickly as possible. Pretty well, even though it made it look very elite to other people.

I am trying to remember, but I think I felt insulted, I felt browbeat, I felt confused at different times. There were no cell phones so no contact with my boss, except by short wave radio. So yeah, it was difficult. And I was pretty sick.

PENNY: So, from the start of the meeting ... and if you think of the outcome at the end of two days, were there any key moments or interactions that shifted and helped you see possibilities of where things could go?

GARY: It was interesting because I am not used to being the assertive unpopular person, but really sticking to what I had to keep repeating—it was other people who made that change. So I think the goal of the room was to get the Red Cross to—there were other things going on in addition to this topic—was to get me to do something I couldn't do. And when that became apparent that wasn't going to happen, it wasn't until the second day when people started to look at alternatives for how we could do it. I don't remember it blow-by-blow right now but I do remember there was a shift to solving the problem [and away] from choosing who was right or wrong. It was very intense time. [Others] needed to shift their positions when I wouldn't shift [and] then we shifted to solving the problem rather than focus on who was right or wrong.

PENNY: It sounds almost like one of those—I am sure there is a word for it—but it seems like an impossible paradox. There is actually no 'good' solution here to be found. So how did the people in that room, and even yourself, what ended up grounding the decision?

GARY: I spent a year there working with different things like that and there were a number of times where [pause] there was no win. People were dying, people were going to die, or people couldn't be accessed. Or the help and the organization things we were doing were the wrong things. ...It was a really difficult time and I think in that meeting I think people really did individually and in themselves, have to let go of their view of their organization and what had to happen and how bad it was and really think, 'okay, this is the reality, this is what we have, what can we do?' I don't know if it happened very linearly or for everyone, but it did happen. It did turn into 'how can we solve the problem if this is what we have.' But it was a bad time.

PENNY: Gary, when you think of those kinds of experiences and you think of this phrase we use of social justice, or what is just... You are obviously working in a context where there are events, there is history, that all convened to create this crisis. And I know sometimes when we talk about social justice ... you can look at the bigger system or the bigger world and then, you are in this moment, this point in time, where you have to choose to do something. How do you reconcile 'what do I do now and how do I understand all of the factors that have come and conspired to create this situation?' Do you get frustrated? Do you get cynical?

GARY: That is a good question. And I think the other times that it happens [is] in our personal lives when personal crisis—families, relationships, tragedy, things like that. Where there is no thing that will fix it in a way. I won't attribute it all to spending ten years as a monastic, but I actually become calm in a crisis and more logical instead of more emotional or lost in it. So it is almost like things slow down, and I have to think 'what is happening, what do we need to do, what can we do, how can we get past what is here?' Because sometimes there are things that are not resolvable or

are not going to have a happy ending. But you still have to do your best with what you have and I think setting aside ego and fear and adrenalin as much as we can and look at those things. ...That year I spent in Sudan I discovered that, in tense situations, I come down into a calmer place.

PENNY: One of the things that I theorize when I think of those times when we are in a place where our decisions have impact, and when we feel that we have done well, as best we can, given the circumstances, that it is because we may have been open to hearing something, hearing a different perspective. And I am wondering if in those two days [in the Sudan] was there something that you opened up to hearing that helped you find a way through?

GARY: Maybe, you know, I was also pretty rigid, because I had been briefed and I understood it... pretty rigid in my view about what I couldn't do. But wasn't really thinking it before going there or with the people I worked with 'what else could we do?' So, yes for me, too, that the solution we had, in a sense the IRC was the visible lead and accountable for everything it is doing, but working with what their needs were. I think that was a thing to open up to for me, to listen and think. But I do recall a lot of the first part of it was antagonism all around.

It is interesting. The International Red Cross principles are not like [other organizations] where you wouldn't necessarily see them apply every minute. But the Red Cross's principles are, because it is only able to do what it does—meaning to help people and victims in conflict and disaster situations—only able to do their role because they have to really work this way. It [the Red Cross] is only able to do [the work] because [the principles] really work, and [the Red Cross] stands up and demonstrates and works with impartiality, neutrality, and independence. And there were places in Sudan where we were the only organization that could go because we would have agreements with all the parties... they will help all parties in the conflict. It is really practical. These principles met me and they really were practices.

PENNY: It sounds as though there was a great alignment between the International Red Cross principles and your own beliefs?

GARY: Those things do align with social justice. It did work for me, and the core value or principle is humanity. So, it is all driven by helping vulnerable people. So, it did fit me as a person as well.

PENNY: When you say those principles ... there is always a set of values in the way we are acting, and it seems to me that underlying as you say, humanity, that there is also a principle that all people have worth regardless of their ideology or faith or anything. So there is a real core principle of egalitarian, equality, all people...a belief that, all people have worth... so egalitarian...

GARY: Well, there really are seven principles and I haven't described them all and one of the last ones is universality. Which really is that we are one people and there can't be discrimination about what it means to assist vulnerable people or uplift people.

Gary's story is of one person, in a horrifically complex situation, grappling with what to do as he is confronted by the agendas of the people in front of him, the organization he represents, and the people who are dying in the midst of a famine. It strikes me that Gary has arrived in this situation because of his choices to be guided by his personal values, which have been developing in him over time. Earlier, he shared a realization that it is important for him to work in an organization where the work holds to the valuing of 'others.' He did not plan for this specific experience in the Sudan, but his lived experiences and choices brought him here. In the moment of confrontation, as uncomfortable as it is, he draws on a set of principles and a way of being that have been developing for him. There is an alignment he expresses that provides—and the words are not as important as the concept—a structure, a foundation, a scaffold, or a place to stand from which he can make some sense, in the midst of the complexity, of how to act and helps to answer the question of 'what do we do with what we have here and now?' This scaffold is comprised of his core beliefs and the principles set out by the organization he is working for.

Gary has earlier shared with us his deeply held belief in the inherent rights of all people. In this story, he is in the Sudan working for an organization that holds several principles or values developed over a century or more of serving people who are disadvantaged and at high risk of death through natural and human caused disasters. He articulates in this story how difficult it was to be in this situation where he and his organization seemed under attack. Yet a shift took place in the conversation that decentred the polarizing and conflictual conversation of trying 'to get what is held by one organization,' and moved towards the broader and more compelling problem of 'how do we collectively do what needs to be done within the constraints that we all face.' In the telling of the story, much of the specificity is lost. But what is brought into the present day telling of the story is a sense of the intensity of the situation and 'knowing what he could stand on' in that moment that contributed to shifting the conversation. As Gary tells the story, the utterances that I

hear are the core beliefs that he knows are firm for him and for the organization he is working for.

### **Kathy**

I want to bring into this section the story told earlier by Kathy. Her story came from a time when she was in her twenties and working for a financial organization in Quebec.

Historically, this was also the time of the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty. Kathy's self-acknowledged propensity for action led her to express her belief that Quebec should stay within Canada, by sending faxes to several hundred businesses hoping to encourage people to vote no.

KATHY: I was saying, 'you need to stay in Canada.' To me it is ridiculous these separatists. For me, I wish there were no countries. Ultimately there should be no borders; people should have freedom of movement. But for society to become so self focused, and to me that is what this is about, it is 'we are unique and individual and therefore we are going to be separating from everyone else.' It was ridiculous! And at that time the cost to Quebec and Canada was high. There was a lot of ignorance because a lot of people had left the province. I lived in that province; I went to university there for four years. It was really interesting to me to meet people and to realize how little they know about the rest of Canada, and I didn't know as much about Quebec either until I lived there. I really felt Canada is stronger and Quebec is stronger if they are together than if they are separated. (Kathy Call #3)

PENNY: You are motivated to encourage other people to act. [KATHY: *Yeah*] What grounds you in the moment? What is the real core value or principle or belief that reappears for you when you take on these causes for action?

KATHY: It is just something that I feel a burning desire to do, that I have to do it, and I have to follow through. Then once I have done it, I can at least say, 'I gave it my best and I tried.' That is the motivating factor; that I want to make sure that I can totally do something, I can feel that I have done something and that gives me a sense of release. I have done what I can do and that is what I need to do! ... You need to act and follow through!

PENNY: When you feel compelled to act, who are you accountable to? To Kathy?

KATHY: Yeah, my own conscience. I don't have to tell anyone that I have done anything. It is my conscience. I really think that if you live by your conscience then you act.

PENNY: Do you always see it clearly in terms of which action to take? I find that in current events and those situations out there in the world, there is complexity to them. And the right way is not really clear? How to you find your way through that, to say, 'this is the action to take?'

KATHY: I always do research ... always ... around different things. So, if something comes into my inbox and I say, 'oh my god that is really compelling.' I will take a minute to... you don't have to go deep to do a bit of research to realize, 'what is the situation here?' Like, I can't say right now that I have an opinion on the Ukraine. I know I don't like Vladimir Putin but I haven't done enough looking into it to really know the whole situation. On the surface it is east versus west and oil and a grab for Crimea. Is it a bunch of Russians supporting Russia in the Ukraine, or is it the population supporting Russia. The media has been shut down there. I am erring on the side of Ukraine? If a petition came I would have to look at it and find out more. I definitely do research on things. I make my best judgment on the research I have done. Right now my big concern is no one is talking about Syria anymore, Central African Republic, South Sudan, etc. They are not as easy to talk about [on the news] because they are much more complex. It can be easy to simplify the issues. (Kathy Call #3)

This emotional-volitional act for a cause she deeply believed in speaks of boldness and of deep convictions. A person needs to act, and see themselves with agency and choice. Kathy believes "every change starts with one person. If every person took one action, it would be incredible what could be achieved" (Kathy Call #3). There is also an aspect to Kathy's story that adds another layer to how people make meaning of what is just: Some issues can seem clear to us because of what we see within our horizons of understanding. With that clarity of understanding, our decisions to act also seem clear. For Kathy, there was no question in her mind about the importance of Quebec staying within Canada and therefore the actions she takes seem equally clear.

Kathy also recognizes that at times, the issues and dilemmas we confront in life can seem to be clearly defined. In the conversation with Kathy on world events, we touched briefly on the Ukraine. Kathy's thoughts reflect the layers of the lived experiences that time has brought to her. She sees the complexity that is there and stretches her horizons of understanding, knowing that there are other meanings and other perspectives to be heard.

### **Landscape Two Summary**

I am struck by the courage that is expressed in the stories told in this landscape of making choices for social justice. In looking for the dialogic in the processes of making meaning of what is just, I hear the 'knowing on what I stand' that is expressed in each person's core

values and in their relationships with ‘others.’ Core values of knowing the wisdom that lies in the experiences and voices of ‘others,’ the desire to construct with ‘others’ the understanding of context and the ways to act that are honouring and respectful, the personal and deep ownership of acting according to what we have made commitment to, and the belief that our lives are deeply connected and we each have a responsibility to act. In these stories, there is a decentring of self to see the ‘other’ that speaks of Buber’s first movement of dialogue as a turning toward ‘other.’ These values lead to humility and vulnerability—stances that hold elements of personal risk.

I also hear the interpretation of the language forces and the utterances that have come to each of the participants through their lived experiences. In these stories, the leaders often challenge boundaries. The historical, social, and cultural contexts in which each leader finds him- or herself are filled with normative boundaries used to hold a sense of order. Relational boundaries between organizations and groups and roles define who has ‘permission’ to act or decide. Idea boundaries, between what is commonly accepted about our social world and what lies outside it, define social norms. Boundaries that define our personal self from our public self compartmentalize our identities and the socially just stances that are permitted. Nation boundaries define who has rights in a geographic space and whose cultural norms define what those rights are. The willingness of these leaders to cross boundaries and their willingness to stretch their own horizons of understanding to hear and learn from diverse perspectives that challenge deeply held beliefs, become audible in this landscape of making choices for social justice.

### **Landscape Three: Dialogic Moments and Practices**

In this section I foreground the dialogic moments, the places of subtle shifts, the paying attention to what is catching our attention as we listen to and construct together understandings of social justice. It is in these moments that, with new or deeper understandings, we attempt to explore a turning towards seeing our own actions in new

ways. But what fosters the emergence of these dialogic moments for the research participants? In writing this section, I am struck by the visceral experience I had at different points when I tried to tease out from the conversations the context and ethos that created the dialogic moments and the moments of dialogue themselves. It feels as though I am trying to pull apart something that, in its very essence, is a whole—the parts are not really parts, they are an integral whole that resists reduction into components. The force of holism seems stronger than the force I can intellectually apply to hold them apart. Hopefully, we will catch glimpses of the dialogic as the words and conversations are shared here.

The research questions that I am holding for myself as I explore this landscape are:

What is the constituting nature of the dialogic moments between people who are in the process of co-creating an understanding of social justice; and,

What do the research participants, as the constituters of meaning, bring to the process and how do they see themselves and 'others' in the process of the dialogic experience?

I present this landscape in two parts. The first part foregrounds, in the participant's own words, the experiences within the research process that fostered their own reflexivity on leadership and social justice. In the second part, I foreground what seemed to stand out as dialogic moments within the research process.

In order to identify dialogic moments, I pay attention to the moments that elicited reflections as prompted by our question, throughout the process: "what has struck you from the conversations thus far?" It is in the 'what has lingered with me' moments that the jarring or trigger for deeper reflections raises up questions and, in sitting with the questions comes a deeper awareness. For the most part, these newly produced understandings cause an awareness of what has not been questioned before. Or, they cause a 'seeing in action' a concept or belief that now needs to be re-visited. These are personal moments that hold the potential for transformation and become utterances that are carried forward into future lived experiences, triggering or compelling us to just action in new ways. Dialogic moments are

those moments that linger with us after they have occurred, as transformed thinking is worked out against deeply held beliefs.

In his conversation with Carl Rogers in 1957, Martin Buber muses about dialogic moments. These are moments of openness and mutuality, a mutual turning towards, an attending to 'other' and the 'in between.' He also contemplates the ideas of limits, that the limit of awareness becomes a wall that cannot be ignored, a boundary that cannot be crossed. As I explore, here, the moments that occurred as part of the research, there is also an opportunity to explore boundedness—the point where self or 'other' is no longer open, keeping us from a fusing of horizons where new meanings are produced.

Bakhtin (1993), in *Towards a Philosophy of the Act*, distinguishes between the abstractness of knowing and the concrete realness of the act or the deed. It is in the act where we bring into reality, where we constitute the meaning and bring it to life. For Freire (2011), Buber (2004) and Bakhtin (1993), it is in the moment of being in the realization of the act where we are present to 'other,' and in that moment of mutuality, we are bound in love. In the constituting of the meaning of social justice in the unique moment of being and acting, each of us brings to the moments our unique sense of abstract understanding, our openness for relationship with 'other' and the co-creation of actions. Our response comes from our love of the person and our responses differ based on each person we encounter and the relationship that we have with them as the 'other'—the 'other' who we see.

### **Fostering Spaces for Dialogic Moments**

The comments and observations that I explore here, at times arose spontaneously from within the conversations and, at other times, they arose in response to specific questions we asked. The participants' own words, best express what drew them into experiencing deep moments of understanding throughout the research process and what, for them, contributed to the ethos that inspired those moments.

LEX: I found the whole process kind of like melds together. So what it did is that over this time, it certainly triggered my consciousness in terms of being really tuned into what I am doing and why I am doing it, and showing up, and my reactions, and all of that stuff which we talked about on the calls. But then, in between the calls, and just generally [by] living in this bit of a heightened state, which may calm down a bit with the calls not happening. So that has been, for me, really great because there is actually in some way from the two of you and the others in the group a call to be reflective, and then to see what that means as we move through the various themes you have raised. So I can't pick any one spot but, I would say that, just that heightened awareness in matters which, I think, are really fundamental to the way we need to, well, the way we act as leaders, and to reflect on that and be conscious of that and those themes you really nicely brought forward. (Lex Call #8)

Lex's reflections foreground the value of a process that took place over time thus allowing for the triggering of awareness and remembrances and holding those up to the moments of life and actively reflecting on one's actions.

JESSICA: I think what I really appreciate about what you guys have done is that this is similar to any kind of physical exercise. You can't just go gung ho right from the bat. There is this warm up and there is a cool down and then you really exert yourself in the middle. I think in our conversations, you were preparing us to—you know, I would think about the questions a day or two in advance and in different situations just kind of in some thinking modes. But then getting into the conversations and really having those moments where we were asked to re-affirm some of the insights we were providing. So if I were to say, 'this is social injustice' to me, and you were to respond back with 'let me re-affirm what that is or it sounds like you are saying 'this'.' And having to re-assess, that really brings out those ah ha's. Like, 'okay, that is my conviction, that is where I really stand.' And those moments, for me, were ones that I held true to and kind of reflected on after the conversation with other people and thinking through some of these concepts. Like, 'okay, that...that makes sense to me; I really understand where I was at.'

PENNY: What I am hearing is just the pondering of the questions, thinking more deeply about these things, and having a chance to speak thoughts out loud. And then to explore those in more detail either by us reflecting them back or digging around in them a bit helped sharpen your thinking and brought clarity to you of what you are thinking at this point in time and where those thoughts have come from.

JESSICA: Yes that is definitely the case. (Jessica Call #8)

Jessica's reflections and observations of the process and its meaningfulness for her, captures the essence of Wallas' quote, "how can I know what I think till I see what I say?" (Weick 1995:12). In the process of speaking and in a context that is fostering reflection and listening, 'I' can come to a place of greater clarity on what it is 'I' mean.

Gary's reflections on the process highlight a number of insights on the spaces the process created for the possibility of dialogue.

GARY: The thing that stuck with me the most was how open a group of people who don't really know each other too well became on that call. It struck me, and maybe it was Lex first, but it was a couple of people really exposing their inner selves a little bit about processes or things they had been through in trying to address the question of the 'other.' That was why, for me, there was a meaningful silence at the end. It wasn't because I was so overwhelmed with ideas or one thing was moving me, it really was just a feeling of almost—you know, people talk about what is sacred in a secular world [*laughs*—I do, anyways, talk about it. And it really is what happens at a space that people are in together, whether that is ritual, or a degree of openness, and that is what it felt like. And I think, really, again, people just being honest but digging in a little bit and that inspires and discombobulates the others in the group to move in the same directions—I think usually. Or to close up a bit! I felt that was good. In terms of the learning for me, it was probably Lex's story that left me thinking the most about... being aware of yourself to the degree where you really can, not just say I need to become open and curious and inquiring so that we can get further—but to actually get to, 'what is it that is all about me here'—and it could be ... my way of understanding it is just one way and not necessarily right. And the sort of freedom that I think that gave him. (Gary Call #5)

In his observations, Gary identifies the responsiveness that we draw from 'others' and that 'others' can draw from us. When there is a sensing of openness, as well as a degree of risk taking in exposing one's vulnerabilities, we are moved to respond in an authentic and, as Gary says, an almost sacred way. These constitute moves: they are moves that when made by even one person, can inspire and, perhaps, disrupt the norm enough to encourage 'other's to move in a similar direction. Buber (1984) in the opening quote at the beginning of chapter two speaks of the 'unreserved' where, "even wordlessly...the word of dialogue has happened sacramentally" (25-26). At the end of the call, in which the silence occurred that Gary refers to, there were seven of us remaining on the call. There had been such a level of deep sharing that it silenced us in a way that felt, not uncomfortable, but reverent. The reverence was for the people, the words, the experiences and beliefs shared and for the safety of the space created. Many of the stories that had been told in this space, returned to us as remembrances throughout the rest of the time we spent together. The sacredness of the experience stirred in us a deep awareness of being in relationship with 'others.'

Gary and I attempt to explore further this idea of how each of us contribute to drawing ourselves and 'others' into dialogic moments:

GARY: As you called it, sort of 'turning to,' 'genuine dialogue begins with turning to.' A couple of things I thought about were, and this may be more of a natural experience for some people where that is their nature, and it may be for most of us it takes some real intention at times. It is not really a twitter world experience. Although, honestly I think in writing it can happen too—that kind of meaningful or genuine dialogue. I guess it led me, not to thinking this is something I would ever challenge, I believe in the meaning behind [the quote], and also the second one that calls dialogue happening even if it is bad it is good, and if there isn't everything is missed. So I think what I jotted down beside that was, 'yes, but how?' Because it is, perhaps, one of those things that, for most of us, starts with understanding and the looking for the experience, and then practicing a bit. Because I don't think it is—I think it is an ideal. That is the kind of things those quotes stimulated in me. Maybe it [dialogue] is not all that common? On a personal level it made me think that some of my relationships I have, I could easily, pretty easily, pay more attention to this. Personal relationships I mean.

PENNY: I think in Buber's work, there is a sense of really, is it ideal? I think where he draws me to, where he stands is that when we are fully human when we are open...

GARY: Yup

PENNY: and available to that level of connection with another person. It kind of transcends what each of us holds and, in that moment there is the potential, what he talks about, to produce an understanding that wasn't possible if we are not both open to one another. So it is not just, 'I tell you what I think and you tell me what you think.' But, together we actually explore and generate something because we are open.

GARY: Do you think one person evokes that from an 'other?'

PENNY: That is a really good question. If you think of how you experienced the call on Thursday, in some ways, that is a bit of what is reflected in there. It took one person (Lex) to be open in a vulnerable way, which created a welcoming for the others also to go, perhaps, a bit deeper... if he hadn't taken that first step in.

GARY: Yeah. So it is very meaningful these quotes. But that is a question for me too. I certainly know it is not 'let's take turns asking each other questions,' but ... I think it is something that can be broken down a bit and that does have something to do with attention and an inquiring mind and feeling compassion and humanity for each other. And those things that are, if they are there and are cultivated, help with genuine dialogue. It is not just a turning to and listening or a turning to and thinking good thoughts.

PENNY: Yes, he also says it is not a place where we can always be. There are times just in life, when we are in monologue or what he would call 'I-It.' But, there are those moments and they are moments! And they can surprise you. You can be surprised by the moment.

GARY: That is good [*laughs*]. That would be a lot of pressure, to be in genuine dialogue all the time. And, also I actually think the other things and the other ways that we are, can enhance or inhibit the possibility of genuine dialogue. I think as a facilitator you see that too. It is not just creating the feeling with a group of people or creating the space for the group that everything is okay. You can be yourself, speak yourself. That is something that creates space, I think, for genuine dialogue.

PENNY: It is about showing up, being present, creating space, opening, seeing the other person. I have seen you do that when you facilitate. When we are in a room with people, I have seen you do that. You attend to the person who has something to speak. So I am wondering if, in doing that, are there practices that you find allow something to happen that might not have happened, if you hadn't attended to them?

GARY: Thanks! I guess that is what I am thinking out loud. There is the personal, and I think I was asking do you think a person can evoke it and on a one-to-one engagement or relationship. I think we can kind of help and coax each other into genuine dialogue, I suspect. With the kind of thing you are describing, what makes me feel open in a sort of visceral way, where I am there and really interested and finding meaning in what is going on and, I think it is, that I am respected. And I feel that [*means*], not just treated equally, but someone considers me a valued and valuable human being. (Gary Call #5)

Dorrie's reflection on what the process created for her, and what the processes were that held the space for her to think deeply, capture the reflexivity that happens after the dialogic moment has occurred.

DORRIE: You know ... I go away [from our calls] and [this process] has created for me, and every conversation we have had—group and two on one—has created for me that opportunity to take the space and to stop and think about the things we talk about. The privilege to have that door open and then to be able to give myself permission or have this process give me permission to take the time to ... to think! Reflect. So I think each time, and the last time we talked we laughed about how my thinking time is driving time. So I go home and, on my way home I reflect. Sometimes that reflection is that lump in the throat when you reflect back and you think about things that you didn't have those awareness's of, in my case, early on, possibly in my leadership, as readily at my fingertips. And then other times where it formalizes for me ... it has formalized for me a lot of things that were intuitive. Sort of that natural inclination around fairness, justice, dignity, respect, humanness, people and it has formalized it for me. (Dorrie Call #8)

DORRIE: I think ... the broad experience being those thoughtful, respectful, reflective questions that create a space for me to have more questions. I guess it is what I said when we started; it is and has been such a respectful process of awakening and encouraging that next step for me. It has been such a solid and awesome process with learning from [the two of you] but also that opportunity to be with other leaders in a more meaningful and purposeful way. Do you know, I think the other thing is being much more in tune with some things are not as I think they are, or as I have assumed they are. And so I have really been purposeful in not just putting things in the right slots in the wall and not rushing in or feeling that I need to fix things, or do or

act but having more permission to sit back and look at it a little more deeply and also engage people a little more deeply. (Call #8)

These reflections on what the conversations have stirred in Dorrie, sit with me at a visceral level. I am struck by how leaders, who from our conversations already demonstrate a level of awareness of 'others' and an awareness of self, can still find deeper ground to explore what it means to be just. The words that we are using are not abstract words; they are sensual words that stir the whole person. Dorrie is describing an experience where she feels a deeper level of understanding about what respect and fairness and dignity are and, from these conversations she is prompted to 'see' anew their meanings, within her own lived experiences. The 'thoughtful, respectful, reflective questions' that emerge in the conversation create an awakening space to a broadened horizon of meaning.

Kathy's reflections on how the process we created contributed to her own deeper awareness and understandings of leadership and social justice, draws attention to the importance of a space where the pace gives permission for and a valuing of, reflection.

PENNY: Through this process ... were there some triggers or questions or things in the process with us that heightened [your] awareness' [of your own thinking] more specifically?

KATHY: I don't think there were triggers, as much as just a deeper realization of something that I think I have known for a while, instinctively and intuitively, and so I think it was just really a pause for thought and going 'oh, yeah, that is how it works. That is how leaders of social justice who are effective, are effective.' It solidifies for me more, how my perspective [and] my beliefs haven't changed, my viewpoint hasn't changed. [But,] it has solidified things in a stronger way. So with each conversation, that has become more meaningful.

CHRISTINE: So, would you say that the process has affirmed your perspectives?

KATHY: Yeah. Definitely. It totally has affirmed my perspective, and I think that has been really great. No, it has been wonderful because [it has] helped me as a person grow personally and I think yeah ... it has been really positive.

PENNY: Kathy, it strikes me, as we have talked over the past few months, that you live in a fairly time pressured place. And you have come into these calls, that have been in some ways a change of pace from what [is normal for you], and that you go back to it once you leave these calls.

KATHY: Yeah, definitely.

PENNY: So, is it fair to say that just having that hour that we set aside and knowing that you are coming into a conversation where we are going to have some questions for you to reflect on—am I hearing that just that process itself has been helpful for you?

KATHY: Yeah, absolutely. It has just really been wonderful to just slow down and be introspective and think. *[laughs]* Not that I don't have to think in my work! But [at work] you are just trying to push things out quickly or make snap decisions, but having the time to be thoughtful and mindful about things, it is really great. (Kathy Call #8)

Kathy's experience in the process created a deeper clarity and awareness of her own thinking and understanding of how she had come to be a leader who thinks about social justice and how her thinking has shifted through her own lived experiences over time. The dialogic practices that supported her were primarily the stepping into a space where she knew she had permission to slow down and reflect. Her comments on the pace of her work and the expectation to 'push things out quickly or make snap decisions' can become an impediment or a limit to the reflective processes that seem to be so important to dialogue. Her words remind me of Freire's (2011) contention of the need for an authentic word that holds both reflection and action to be transformative. These words also suggest to me the notion that we can become disconnected from our own understandings in the absence of opportunities to reflect.

### **Dialogic Moments**

The inter-twining of context, words, meanings, relationships, lived experiences, and 'in-the-moment' experiences comprise the primordial constituting elements for making meaning of what is just in the 'here and now.' Bakhtin (1993) separates the event in which meaning is expressed into two parts: the experience from the remembering and the attributing of meaning. In this section, in which dialogic moments are explored, we catch glimpses of both parts of the act, the attribution of meaning, and the infusing of the lived experience of both past and future utterances. These moments have been extracted from the conversations

because they seemed, to me, to reflect an exploration of something deeper, something new for the participants themselves, as well as for the researcher-participants.

The questions posed at the beginning of each call were intended as a prompt or a spark to the participant(s). The responses the questions elicited are unique in the moment, and the conversation that ensues is situated uniquely in that time-space-relationship as we explore meanings and understandings. Each conversation, however, is not an isolated event. It is preceded by all of the conversations and lived experiences we each bring to that moment and it is followed by conversations and lived experiences yet to come.

This first dialogic moment, comes from the eighth and wrap up conversation with Lex. Lex responds to our questions (see Appendix 2):

LEX: Because there is so much happening, I would say, everywhere, and there is this huge onslaught of information and visuals and intensities and that, on the whole, social justice or injustice aside, globally ... the notion that was interesting, and it was triggered by a comment Gary made at some point fairly early on. He was reflecting on having spent a significant time in meditation and really explored, and it sounded like he embraced the notion of detachment. And so, I make NO claims of understanding what that means for Gary whatsoever, but for me, I really thought about that a lot...

In this opening reflection on his experience of the 'onslaught' of information the world presents to us, we begin to experience the connection he is making between the 'onslaught' and another participant's talk of detachment. There seems to be, in this reflection, two stances that Lex holds. The first is a stance of openness to the world around him and an understanding that he holds a choice in how to receive the 'onslaught'. He also holds himself in an open stance towards a thought presented by another participant and allows himself the opportunity to explore the ideas that this notion presents to him. There is an awareness on his part, that the word (in this case 'detachment') holds different meanings for people and, that this word itself, in the context of social justice, caught his attention.

LEX: I guess what I reflected on over time was that there is so much going on that it is more a notion of, for me, it works more as a notion of acceptance and openness. So the detachment part doesn't really resonate. And I think that if I look at, part of me is ... I want to detach, right! So I am going to detach from my Facebook, for example,

because I look at the nature of the posts, I want to detach from looking at news, and I want to detach because it is so UGLY!

And sometimes I will have a conversation with [my wife] and she will say 'I don't want to hear about that!' right! Because these are events and processes and often systemic [things] that are happening in the world [they] are just horrific and horrible. So I am trying to come to a balance of actually not detaching and to look at that, to accept the information and then to hold onto the notion that the universe is a kind and generous space. And so that has been a really interesting kind of exploration and I think that through our conversations over the last, however many months it has been, have provided both some turmoil and some opportunities to look at how events impact me.

And if I get impacted in a really negative or intense traumatic way, which I do with some events, particularly around the whole gender issues [of which] there have been lots of examples recently. For me to be in a place that builds a wall around myself so that I don't get that kind of information coming in is really missing an opportunity. So, in terms of reflecting and [in terms of] what does that mean for my practice [and how] I show up anywhere in my life and everywhere, and also from a leadership perspective, how do I hold that so that any decisions and influences that I might have, that they reflect the attempt to reflect the notion that the universe is a kind and generous place. So that I come, not from a position of anger, although I think anger is completely necessary as well in terms of generating action and so on, but that in those exchanges that they come from, knowing that there needs to be action and there needs to be change, and [knowing] that most of my interactions are in a very local level [and] that all of those interactions really need to reflect a broader understanding and a broader acceptance of what is happening globally and there is no perpetuation of that in the subtlest way in the conversations and the actions that I take locally.

So, that has been an interesting exploration over this time and to try and look at the beauty and love that exists right beside the horror and trauma that people are forced to [experience] and to not lose hope and faith and also to not be reduced to immobility or like—rather [to] embrace the possibility of love and openness and generosity and realizing that this is something that requires a very conscious kind of approach and a very conscious engagement and not detachment.

Lex's thoughts, in a very generative and respectful way, express his struggle and his desire to hold a tension within himself between openness to the injustices of the world while consciously being aware of his own actions and where his beliefs are centred. He articulates a set of beliefs that he is choosing to act from, knowing that action is needed, that emotions compel us to action and wanting his actions to come from a place of beauty and love, rather than violence and horror. In the seconds following Lex's words, I found myself searching for the words that articulated my experience of hearing what Lex has spoken out.

PENNY: Wow. I actually want to take what you just said and map it out. You just brought [out], in that flow of consciousness, how you want to show up, what you base that on, how you find that place, how you stay conscious of that, and how you reflect on how you are doing on all of those. It is a very dynamic process [of] thinking that you just shared.

A question. When you say the universe is a kind and generous place what do you mean by generous? I think I get kind, but [I] am not sure of generous?

LEX: Whatever we need is there.

PENNY: Ahhh. Holistically?

LEX: Yeah, completely. And at a very practical level, and on a very small micro level, and on a global level. Right!

CHRISTINE: I have to echo Penny and say that was beautifully and holistically put. It reminds me of your conscious choice [articulated in an earlier call] to see the universe as a kind and generous place, and to stay connected rather than detached. [This] really reminds me of the principles of appreciative, one of which is the heliotropism principle, ... the way in which living creatures and plants move to the light. And I can hear really clearly that you are saying very consciously that that is the place you are going to stay in where you relate to the world in that way.

That is pretty huge.

LEX: [*Sigh*] I think I just strained myself [*chuckles*].

PENNY: As I was listening, [I was thinking about] how words resonate differently with people. It is interesting [to me] how you took the word and the notion of detachment and processed that for yourself, Lex. I found when I heard Gary talk about that—I think he did a posting as well, of that discipline of ‘here are my thoughts’ and ‘here am I’ and ‘I am not necessarily my thoughts’—but what attracted me to that was sometimes my thoughts overwhelm me in the moment [and] I struggle to presence myself to see and hear the person. And so I have been pondering that, how do I hold my thoughts in abeyance, or my need to be right or to make my point, or to argue my case or positions—and really just presence myself to the person. So I took that as an internal process to help me really presence [myself] rather than detach from the hard things in the world.

LEX: As I said, I hold no judgment and, I would say no understanding on my part, in terms of what Gary actually means by that, it is just that I do see a lot of people kind of detach and ... that is what I am speaking about and essentially nothing to do with Gary or how he frames that. And for me, the point you raise is a really important one and I think what has been helpful is again, just the idea of exploring my beliefs. ... It has been useful to reflect on ‘okay, well what are my beliefs’ and if I am overwhelmed by something then I just note that with interest. Well, then ‘what is overwhelming in that?’ and typically, if I explore it, it is some belief or some kind of challenge in some way in terms of what I thought before—that ‘this is the way it is and then it turns out, well perhaps there is another way!’ Or, as [a way for] exploring anything, to take the notion that ‘perhaps’ or ‘it could be right.’ Right? So whatever

someone else said could be explored, so that the absoluteness of it is broken open so that there is an opportunity to explore and come to new places.

PENNY: It highlights for me how rich and helpful deep conversations are because each of us take away concepts of what has been shared and then we bring those into our own lived experience, and where we are, and the things we are thinking about, and it triggers our thinking but in different ways. It triggered you in a different way [than] it triggered me; yet it was still a trigger and it was really helpful.

LEX: Yeah, and I think that is the key. That we are open then to 'hmm isn't that interesting that I reacted that way to what Gary said.' And so what does that mean? Then looking at myself saying well, ok ...applying my own meaning to the concept of detachment and say well, why do I shut off these other pieces... so Facebook, for example, or I turn back from the news. So I am not saying, we do need to shelter at times and hold those moments of peace, but also, that we have a responsibility to really be informed (Lex Call #8)

As I reflect on the words and ideas expressed in this conversation, I find there are a number of levels to what is happening. We are listening deeply to one another. We are respectfully responding to what has been spoken with questions, reflections, and meanings. We are also co-constructing in this conversation, using the constituent elements of the meanings that have come to us through our history, our culture, our society and lived experiences, an understanding of the beliefs that we hold onto—while holding open to other meanings.

The next interaction that captures moments of dialogue begins with a reflection by Dorrie on a conversation from a previous call. Consistent with our practice throughout the process, we began the conversation asking about the reflections that stayed with her from previous calls.

DORRIE: I went away again on the drive home, and I thought about my personal relationship in other countries, particularly Mexico, and how I am [when I am there], and wondering sometimes whether I am in danger of imposing my values or my principles. I mean, sometimes you do it just quietly and when you are frustrated, or in judgment. Even in my actions. I went away and I thought about that because we are in business in Mexico and that has a whole other layer. So that was a really nice opportunity for me to reflect on [those] business relationships. But the very precious personal relationships we have... and the nature of the relationships with our families down there, you know, sort of appreciative, and supportive, and loving, and all of those things. But I was reflecting and thinking on the types of things that we celebrate with them in terms of successes or business and I felt myself feeling an awareness that we celebrate the things that we place value on! [*laughs*] ...doing well

in business, or expanding in business, sort of that business capital capitalism layering. And I thought, oh, 'is that not interesting!' Versus sharing with them and being that appreciative piece around what we learn and value from their world. So I think it is going to shape how I show up. I mean I don't show up there like a blazing ring of fire by any stretch of the imagination and say, 'let's do it this way and it must be done this way' and 'why aren't those coffee plants planted this way' and on and on. But it will certainly set me to pause and think about how we continue to inspire and appreciate the things that we learn from them. I do already in many, many ways but I want to be more focused on that. (Dorrie Call #6)

The conversation that Dorrie is reflecting on, arose from our fifth call, which was shaped by a set of quotes on dialogue by Martin Buber and by an excerpt from Paulo Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Dorrie had prompted me 'to speak about Freire's notion of false generosity.' In the moment, Dorrie and I openly exchange our thoughts and reflections, and draw on our lived experiences to see how his ideas might be evident in our understandings of social justice. These ideas provided us an opportunity to explore the horizons of understanding that we both brought into the conversation as the moments of dialogue created dialogic space between us for deeper understandings to emerge:

DORRIE: Talk about with me, the conversation in Freire's work around false generosity. I was curious about that.

PENNY: So, he speaks in another place in his book that it is only by coming into relationship and communion with the oppressed can one understand and come along side of them. So he sees—as I understand it, this is my interpretation—that the oppressed and oppressors that ...oppressors can act in ways that can seem to look generous but they only go so far as to maintain the structures [DORRIE: yeah] that serve them. So it is a false generosity. I think... I know when I read that passage I often think that each of us walks out in both being oppressors and being oppressed. [DORRIE: mmmhummm] As women in the workplace, I think we have experienced [oppression] not necessarily explicit, but it is there. And yet at the same time coming from our culture and our lifestyle, and our consumerism, we also play into being oppressors. So we want cheap clothes. We want to call companies to account but we still want cheap clothes. So I think that is what he highlights there for me. And that true generosity is where there is a building of communion with those who are oppressed, not to turn them into oppressors, but to find for themselves the structures that are oppressing them and to address those from where they are and actually change things. So he talks about critical consciousness. And when he talks in that last paragraph about the work, that true generosity 'wants to destroy that which nourishes the false charity' and the work 'that more and more they become human hands that work and working transform the world.' In another chapter he takes the word 'work' and he really talks about the word and authentic word and a word that is

both reflection and action. That if we only reflect, then we just 'blah blah blah,' and if we only act we become activism—and that it needs both. So he goes into some concepts, which I think are really interesting but it is always founded in relationship and he talks about it being grounded in love.

DORRIE: It is a delicate balance, isn't it?

PENNY: Yes. Because if we hold beliefs about a group of people and we see their oppression, and we want to address that but we don't actually believe that they can do it for themselves, then we will do what we think they need and in that we keep them oppressed. [DORRIE: yeah *softly*] So if you think of that, with different groups, and in residential care, if our beliefs about the people we are caring for are that we don't really believe that they can offer anything themselves; and when we do that we rob them of dignity, we rob them of voice, and we rob ourselves of what they know.

DORRIE: Yeah. There is an authenticity in it really, isn't it?

PENNY: There is an authenticity in it, yes. And I think you have captured it so nicely in that humility, that humbleness, that belief that there is more than one way of knowing here, that there are other ways of knowing that have value and to learn from those. And that giving of dignity. I am often struck Dorrie, that your language is so intentional and so giving of dignity and I think on our last call, you talked about a woman who wanted to sit down with you and to talk about some things. And your ability to just sit and to listen and to acknowledge and to hear and actually have your understanding changed because of what she was sharing with you. [DORRIE: *sounds of agreement*] And I think that is a lot of what Freire talks about. So there are these powerful forces around us, of this tendency to dehumanize and to take away the vocation of everybody to be human. Does that make sense?

DORRIE: Yes, that does make sense. And you know what came to me as you were talking... and you know I told you how I missed Lex telling about his experience of the Jesuits in Bolivia, and when you were talking about and explaining that piece around the oppressed and oppressor, it is sort of that classic example, isn't it, of what he learned!!

PENNY: Yup. And to let them lead out, you know? And we often come in as the white North Americans, and in so many situations where 'we have the expertise,' 'we have the knowledge,' 'we have the 'better' culture!' [*laugh*]

DORRIE: And, by the way, we have some money to throw into the pot!

PENNY: So for me, these writings cause me to re-think how we even think that we right these wrongs. And in residential care you can just see the way of the system ... 'Well we need to build more beds.' It is just about the bricks and mortar, right? And gee, 'should we be talking to the people who will living in those places or the people who will be working there?' So we silence by not asking, or so it seems to me.

DORRIE: Yup. That is right. And keep continually making the same errors over and over and over again. This is a lot like when you think of the 1960s and 1970s and like CUSO, and some of those organizations that went over to far reaching places to influence and to change the world. [*laughs*] And then once the well was dug and we

showed them how to do this and that and packed up our bags and left—yeah—really makes you reflect on all the NGO work in the world doesn't it?

PENNY: Yeah, it does. It is 'what are our underlying assumptions?' And one of the things I am hearing in these conversations, is that those of you who have thought quite deeply about this, really reflect this deep self-awareness, and this holding open to knowing, there is a need to understand the 'other' rather than just what I believe to be true.

DORRIE: Yup.

PENNY: And there is a practice and so it is interesting to me as you share those early years, and for many of us we have these commonalities in our upbringing, and yet there are differences in the way we have journeyed and allowed those experiences to change us. And I think of health care and I think of the number of good people in health care, those who go into health care because they care and because they want to make a difference. They want to help people. And yet in many ways are prevented from doing the work they want to do—in that caring—for the people.

DORRIE: It is really, when you look at the dialogue of Buber and the oppressed. It really is about a humbleness or humility that we should go into these dialogues or these relationships with, all of the time. Because it is like you talked about, maybe we are not more sophisticated or more cultured or maybe we don't always have the best answer. So as a leader, you have got to be in that place of great humility, because you have been anointed with that positional power. And as a leader, it does not necessarily mean that you have to be right or have all the answers or all of the solutions, and strictly drive in that direction. Like that whole paternalism...yeah ...fascinating.

PENNY: It is, because there is a narrative, I think about what we have learned about leadership. So often we have told people—so we started off with you telling us about the new director you are orienting—so she has been hired into a role and there is—whether it is said to her, or whether it is assumed for her through the culture she is a part of—'I need to know what is going on,' 'I need to be able to make decisions,' 'I need to...' So there is something in the culture of organizations that is contrary to being humble, to having humility, saying that you don't know, needing to hear [from 'others'].

DORRIE: Yeah.

PENNY: So it takes great courage to lead in a way that fosters dialogue and the humanizing of people. (Dorrie Call #5)

This excerpt reveals for me a deeper appreciation for the situatedness of dialogic moments. This conversation is nested within a rich fabric of ongoing conversations.

Conversations that have been taking place between Dorrie and myself, between Dorrie and Christine, and as part of the group. Even the research process itself is not a sterile

environment. Each of us brings into the conversation the reflections and contexts that we are experiencing with a heightened awareness of being present. Our understandings of social justice, of being just, and of 'others' is sharpening as we begin to see day-to-day events differently.

There is also clearly a trust that has been built up between us. The cadence of the conversation is comfortable. There is a sense of exploration, of listening deeply, of inviting the other to respond. Often as one of us is speaking the other is affirming quietly, encouraging the expression of more words. The silences are comfortable and there is a sense of paying deep attention to one another, a leaning in to hear deeply what is being said, and to let what is being said become generative.

Dorrie has opened up this part of our conversation by expressing 'curiosity' about my understanding of Freire's concept of false generosity. From that opening, we bring into the unfolding conversation Freire's ideas, specific lived experiences from each of our lives, and an understanding emerges that draws our attention to humility and humbleness. Curiosity is a stance that I notice is common among the participants. Dorrie uses the phrase, 'I was curious' several times throughout our calls. In conversation with Jessica, the notion of 'being curious' is used to describe how she comes from a place of 'deep curiosity' to try to understand the experiences of 'others.' For Jessica, curiosity allows her to "understand a little bit more where they were coming from and also just understanding that we are different" (Jessica Call #5). Jeff uses the phrase as he reflects on a conversation with a friend who held different views from his own: "I was curious to hear my friends point of view" (Teleconference Call #2). Being curious describes and communicates a stance of openness.

In our wrap up call with Kerri, she reflects and speaks out words that demonstrate the shifts that are happening for her as her own thinking becomes clearer. Echoing again the idea of "how do I know what I mean until I see what I say," it is in the turning towards seeing our actions in new ways that the 'evidence' of changed or transformational thinking

that dialogical moments create, are hinted at. The initiating question to this conversation portion, comes from me:

PENNY: So Kerri, I am curious ... the conversation triggers for me... what were the moments in the process that triggered these critical insights for you? [From] the conversations we have had, the three of us, and the three teleconferences we have had. What were some of those moments that stood out for you... that contributed to what you just articulated around leadership and social justice?

KERRI: Let me think here [*silence*]. Okay, and I just wanted to say too, in addition to the first question about being authentic, self, modeling, whatever. I feel I can't even say it, but you know the thing I said [*laughs*]. The other insight that I wanted to say is really big for me from the research process, was just more looking at the whole idea of the 'other.' And that we have to break down this concept that there is 'other,' otherwise you can't lead, and you can't inspire, and you can't connect, and there is no justice as long as there is an 'other.' We have to get rid of this 'us and them' thing. Or I feel I do. So I wanted to throw that in there. [re-reading the question] Hmmm 'moments in the process that triggered these insights?' [*silence*] Well, both of those insights are things I have been working on for years, before we started this research. So I don't feel that they were super new but they... I really got a chance to... contemplate them deeply in the conversations with the two of you. And in the coaching calls when, with your questioning, and your interest, and your curiosity, and the deeper we would get in conversation about these things, the more sure I became of my thinking, and the more solid the concepts came to be in my mind. And so, no I don't have a memory of a moment—but, for sure the coaching calls were hugely useful in allowing the opportunity to explore those concepts more deeply.

CHRISTINE: Did it feel more like an anchoring for you Kerri?

KERRI: Yeah, I would say that is a good word. Yes. [*pause*] Yeah, because when I am allowed to speak about it, and hear your words, and then our words are coming together, and we are sharing our ideas, then it just seems more true. More anchored and I have the words for it more; even though the words are escaping me today [*laughs*]. But definitely more anchored.

CHRISTINE: [*Pause*] Has there been for you a change in how you practice?

[*Pause*]

KERRI: I think so. I feel—something I have been contemplating but haven't spoken to you guys about—that first came to me right at the end of February. This idea of sort of weighing the urgency for change, the desire for change, with this other idea of allowing change to happen and just sort of... relaxing into change. So I was thinking about the different feelings of change. The one, there is more urgency involved and the other one you allow it to happen—you are relaxed. And, that is something I have been thinking about, as I think about this idea of modeling...social justice, modeling good communication, modeling good leadership, modeling integrity. I think to myself you just have to allow the process. You can't drive it. You can't approach it with any urgency [as] that is not really... a helpful attitude. So then I have been thinking, 'well, how do you get change to happen if you are not like driving the bus?' [*laughs*] I think

there is something to be said for this idea of just... allowing it. Because the other one, the urgency one, is a little more 'fear' based; like, 'you are scared about what is going to happen' and 'maybe there is a panic and you have to change now.' I don't think I want to be like that so much. It reminds me a little bit of leading in my family. Like with my teenager, just expecting he will make good choices, having really high expectations of him, being relaxed about what he does and if he screws up, not thinking it is the end of the world and he needs a lecture. And that has been working really well.

PENNY: It sounds like that is a little bit freeing?

KERRI: It is yeah! I feel there is this trust component. And it is partly based on getting rid of this 'us and them' idea, because it is not a battle, it is not a fight. You can't make the other person be like you. You just notice the similarity, you notice whether you are on track together, you notice how we are the same, and allow for stuff. I feel I am not using good words today but you get what I am saying.

CHRISTINE: I think it is like you are describing being rather than doing.

KERRI: [Laughs] Yeah, there you go. Thank you! Being rather than doing. That is something that has been new for me! (Kerrie Call #8)

A number of elements that comprise dialogic experiences became evident for me from Kerri's reflections, and the conversation that ensued. First, experiences and conversations meld over time and do not stand in isolation from one another. The exploration with 'others' of ideas and understandings become 'testable' for us in other parts of our lives. In this exchange, Kerri has drawn on our many conversations and on other 'work' she has done in thinking about how she thinks about things, and draws these ideas in this moment, into her thinking on change, on raising her son, on how she conceives of and thinks of those who are 'others.' Secondly, there is also in this exchange, a process of 'helping one another with the words.' When Kerri's words fail her, Christine is able to offer some to her and in the offering Kerri can take them in as her own or clarify more explicitly a difference in meaning.

In the constituting practices that are evident in this exchange, a third element is the comfort with silence and pauses. There is patience in giving space for the words to be found, there is safety to be vulnerable in not being able to respond to the question or to have the words one wants readily in hand. Woven throughout is also the holding of ideas,

examining them more deeply and choosing in the moment to see differently. The dialogue on change demonstrates how Kerri is understanding differently the dominant views on leading change and 'how it is done,' and in her emergent understanding is becoming comfortable with 'standing differently.' Interesting how standing is a root word in understanding—what lies underneath my stance!

The next dialogic interaction brings with it processual elements that became a part of this group's interactions with one another; both on the group calls and in the one-on-two calls. Discursive moves became evident: bringing into the conversation the words 'others' spoke, exploring the meaningfulness of words between the listener and the re-teller, sparking subsequent conversation based on what the words elicited for 'others,' and sitting with the words over time to let them be mulled and then brought back out for further reflection. This dialogic interaction arose in the second teleconference call when we introduced into our conversations the idea of 'other.' The prompt for the conversation was an invitation for one of the participants to begin by sharing a story of 'a time when you had an interaction with someone who was 'other' or different to you and you were surprised by what happened in the interaction.' One story, shared by Lex, became significant in that others referenced it over the course of the research. Gary recalls what Lex's story sparked for him:

GARY: ...in terms of the learning for me, it was probably Lex's story that left me thinking most about... being aware of yourself to the degree, where you really can, not just say I need to become open and curious and inquiring so that we can get further, but to actually sort of get to what is it that is all about me here. And, it could be 'my way of understanding it is just one way and not necessarily right.' And the sort of freedom that, I think, that gave him. (Gary Call #5)

Lex's engagement on the second call followed a conversation with us on how he experienced the first group call. Lex had made a comment to me and Christine, that he was aware of being in an odd space on the first teleconference and it caused him to reflect on what it means to 'show up,' because "how we show up is we behave!" (Lex Call #4). His story followed responsively from one shared by Dorrie and the sequence of arriving at it

provides some insight to the discursive moves that can take place in dialogic spaces. This interaction takes place well into the second group call and there have been experiences of storytelling along with moments of silence when people 'sat with' what had been heard, allowing time to consider what it elicited for them from their own memories. Finding the boundaries for this interaction is challenging and raises an awareness of the connectedness of our utterances. I have chosen to begin this excerpt with a question I had in response to a story by Dorrie:

PENNY: Dorrie, could you give an example of where you have seen a shift in someone, so, where you have taken that tack of choosing to interact one-on-one with a person. Where they have actually begun to shift and been open to what you are saying. Do you have an example?

DORRIE: A really good example was just the other day. When there was great ...you know there [are] a lot of my conversations often with this vision that I have around caring for older people. [It] is this whole belief around person centred care and how do we get there with all [the] components of our system, and yet that resistance coming in the form of all of a sudden seeing policies being developed that don't represent choice or dignity. There is not that congruence. And so a really good example the other day, was at a meeting, and an individual at the meeting, said 'but no, we have to do this because we just can't allow,' say for example, 'all of these people to have personal belongings in their room and fridges.' So, I stay there quietly and kept restating around dignity, choice, home and then she said 'well, we have no control... there are rules and policies even greater than the ones that we make, there is regulation.' And it was at that moment where all of a sudden, that individual looked at me and she smiled, and said 'but rules can be interpreted.' And so that was for me a sign of shifting.

[*silence*] There are lots of 'others.' Sometimes there is, around the use of language as well in care, and I am seeing people you know use the typical institutional language that we have so often, for years, been comfortable with. And now in meetings, changing the way they speak and the language that they use. So that is another sign of a little bit of influence. So that is my story!

PENNY: Is there something of what Dorrie has shared that has resonated or prompted for the rest of you? [*silence*]

LEX: Certainly it prompts that whole thinking about the working in institutions and in bureaucracies. I have this very clear, very vivid memory of one of my first encounters with a [senior executive] where I felt about a quarter inch tall. And I felt that I was treated really dismissively and even disrespectfully. I left that meeting with anger and some pretty strong thoughts about what a disrespectful asshole he was and that this wasn't going to be cool because eventually I was going to end up working for him. And it bothered me for, oh months. And then, to really start examining it, because from the outside I had no problems finding all sorts of people who would agree with

me in terms of my analysis and my judgments around that. And then, in the exploration of it, because for me it was a classic 'other,' realizing that [my thoughts and reactions] were my creations. They were absolutely my creations. And in terms of how I reacted and the kinds of projections that I made, and how he was disrespectful, and how he kind of pushed me aside and out of the way. I found specific examples where I actually had done that or where I hold those kinds of thoughts as well. So that said, well look, hold on now, if I am capable of that then I am also capable of the full range of reactions and emotions and behaviours, and so that was really interesting. And so, in the trying to make sense out of that and get into a less judgmental space... I was home and my partner said, 'well, he is just such an idiot for doing x, y, and z.' And my response, which surprised me was, 'well, no I don't think he is an idiot.' So, we had this conversation that really, neither one of us would know if he is an idiot or not and that the only thing we were reflecting on is how we were reacting to it! And that completely changed how I showed up subsequently, and [changed my] interactions with him. And then, I would look at 'well, what other judgments am I making about the folks that I work with, right?' And so, when a decision is made and I criticize the decision, and there has been all kinds of decision within organizations that I work for, and I could be very critical about and say, 'that was stupid.' And well, okay, 'is it?' And, to really start to explore that, not to say 'yeah okay, I agree' or just accept everything just the way it is, but, to explore to see where that sits. And then, from where I am and what I have control over—which really is only myself—then, how do I show up in these situations and how do I engage them in a way that is, in the moment, honest with me and that maintains or strengthens the integrity that I approach it with. And looking again at what the difference is—the difference in the interaction is I don't get angry, I don't feel frustrated, and I don't feel intimidated; and these are experiences, then, that just I feel good about. Not that I am gloating about it, but it just feels right. And from, I would say his perspective, I am showing up in a way that is not defensive, and so perhaps there is a change there, but, I am not responsible for that, right—that is up to him. It has certainly put my work and my engagements on a different plane. And I don't want to go back to the judgmental piece. And that is an ongoing piece of work, it is an ongoing struggle, I am challenged with it all the time and as soon as I actually bother to reflect on it, I realize that any time that I am upset it always triggers something just in me. (Teleconference #2)

This story, as told by Lex and, as Gary identifies, stayed with people. In fact, both Kerri and Christine would refer back to 'the story Lex shared' because of its significance for them. Lex's story telling was sparked by Dorrie's story of working in a bureaucracy in which she is seeking to influence the alignment of broader organizational decisions through the use of language that reflects her vision and philosophy of dignity and respect for residents. Lex has shared an experience that most of us could relate to as it reflects a common pattern within organizations of judging others because of the impact their actions have on us. However, Lex illuminates an alternative path, one that chooses to honour the 'other' and to

examine, instead, his own thoughts and behaviours against his own beliefs. The transformation for Lex, in choosing to guard against judgement, creates a space for the possibility that ‘he might be right!’ This is a powerful moment at a number of levels. First, Lex is articulating his own ‘work-in-progress’ of understanding how he creates ‘other.’ In the telling of the story, there is a deepening of his own understanding of his choices and how he makes them—the ‘making real what I am thinking.’ Second, the vulnerability Lex demonstrates by telling this story creates an opening for others to examine (perhaps internally first) how they have acted in similar circumstances. His vulnerability also created openness for others to step in and share more deeply their own experiences with ‘other.’ Third, this story stays with people, carried forward as an utterance and, through reflection, creates a heightened awareness of one’s own judgement and the opportunity to step out of judgement and into listening. This was an utterance that carried into future time-space-relationships and broadened horizons of understanding for others.

### **Landscape Three Summary**

At times the dialogic feels amorphous to me and in this third landscape the glimpses I catch are fleeting. I have attempted to draw out from the conversations and stories moments of dialogue in order to explore the constituting nature of dialogic moments for the people involved. In this landscape, we see the dialogic moments through the experience of being struck by what is happening in the moment and what lingers with us afterwards. I hear in the conversations the role that deep questioning—a questioning that calls us to pause and reflect—plays in triggering a deeper level of understanding the meanings we are drawing on and the beliefs that lie beneath them. I also hear how our own vulnerability can foster openness in the ‘other’ who is listening, an opening that creates relational space and invites others in.

There is an intricate movement at work as we move between beliefs about our self, beliefs about others; as we consciously hold open to meanings that may jar one’s current

sense and understanding of one's world. As these ideas overcome my guards of certitude of my own meanings, I allow in some chaos and discomfort. Curiosity, humility, and deep valuing of 'others' are the stances being held, allowing judgement to be kept in abeyance while meanings are free to be spoken in the moment. As those of us involved in these moments choose to explore these meanings, we open up to horizons of understanding beyond the horizons we entered in with. The co-creating becomes visible as we help one another with the words being sought after, as we test and affirm them in a spirit of bringing them to life as ideas that can be more fully explored in language, as we let them lie for awhile to be sacredly considered. These are the linguistic turns and discursive moves that are becoming visible as we create and hold relational space for the multiplicity of meanings waiting to be heard and explored both in the moment and as it is drawn forward in time from our memories.

## **Landscape Four: Language, Utterances, and Meanings**

### **Contesting for Meanings of Social Justice**

As we journey through life and live the experiences that come our way, we encounter different perspectives of what might be seen as just. Some theorists suggest that, before we encounter them, dominant or normative meanings of the 'stuff of life' exist, already constituted. For example, the normative meanings of what *just* is can be presented to us as already set through the social, cultural, historical and language of our times. However, there are times when we are open to experiences that suggest other meanings or interpretations, and there are times when the times we are living in disrupt these already constituted meanings.

We live life in moments and, in the moment we can be open to or closed to hearing and seeing injustices, we can be open to or closed to the disruptive language forces, and at times we can be kept from acting justly because of the social, cultural, relational, and historical contexts that we inhabit. These contexts are not abstract; they are our lived

realities, whether with friends, at work, with family, with community, and in the places where we are outsiders. As we pick up cues from the behaviour and language of 'others' and our own sense of safety in the context, we experience the emotional-volitional compelling in the moment to be just or to be silent. In this section I explore the facilitating and impeding contexts and language for acting justly as they are encountered in the stories that the participants' share with us.

Theorists such as Stanley Deetz and Mikhail Bakhtin would suggest that in life contested meanings for what is just or socially just are there as indeterminate meanings being produced, formed, or re-shaped. Sometimes we stand in a moment where the dominant meaning, the one that won out in the contesting, is the meaning we take, unaware of what lies contentious within it. When some experiences come to us, the meanings involved can appear to us as being natural and we unquestioningly accept them as is. Deetz (2003) describes this as, "most objects and experience [i.e., social justice] comes to us as a sedimentation from their formative conditions: they appear self-evident and natural rather than as an outcome of conflictual processes; we see the winner, not the latent conflict process in formation" (423). What can get missed in these 'constituting' processes are the competing perspectives on what else a concept, object, or experience might mean. A simple example to illustrate:

In kindergarten a group of students are given pictures of four objects: a cat, a tree, a dog and a squirrel. The children are asked to pick the item that does not belong. Those who pick the tree are rewarded for they have applied the preferred categorization (plant/ animal). However, other perceptions are possible but not rewarded because they do not align with the dominant and valued way of seeing. (Deetz 2000:734)

In the stories of the key moments the participants explored with us, we would talk about or touch upon openness and indeterminacy. Times of choice, where they held open to what else social justice might look like in a situation or with a person. For Bakhtin, these are the utterances or units of communication that presuppose the use of language to give

meaning and “always presupposes the potential response of an *other*” (Holquist 1983:312). Our utterances dwell in a world of language meanings, a place where, “human being is acted out in a *logosphere*, a space where meaning occurs as a function of the constant struggle between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart and in motion, that increase difference and tend toward the extreme of life and consciousness, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere, to stay in place, and which tend toward the extreme of death and brute matter” (Holquist 1983:309).

The utterances we draw from this logosphere influence the meanings we make of social justice, and become evident in the processes of speaking, listening, and reflexivity as we hold deep and exploratory conversations with each other. Bakhtin’s (1990) concept of utterances suggests that all meaning bears the presence of other utterances and the words and meanings generated become reflected in future utterances. The exploration of the landscape of social justice utterances that emerged in this research is truly a process of heightening our awareness of the swirling currents of language in which we live. These currents exist, whether we are consciously aware of them or not, and they emerge in our sense making, our story telling, our relationships, and narratives and, ultimately, in our actions and decisions. Deep listening is necessary to hear them and to hear the contending for dominance of meaning of social justice within our times.

In this fourth landscape I draw upon a number of theoretical concepts that are built on an ontology of being in understanding and being in relationship. In the conversations that form the ‘data’ of this research we engaged in a dynamic and flowing use of language to connect lived experiences and the meanings we have encountered to an understanding of social justice. Our lived experiences are contextualized by the times and places and relationships in which we live them and they leave their fingerprints on our words and our meanings to be carried into future contexts, times, and relationships. Their significance, not in a systematic linguistic meaning but, in our understanding of their meanings, create

significance to our actions and become apparent when we act—they propel us in a direction of acting and in the acting meaning is taken and given by ourselves and those around us. We act in our beliefs and our beliefs come from the meanings we give to our lived experiences. Language, in a dynamic and unfinalizable way, is the means by which we create meaning within ourselves and with ‘others.’ In Bakhtin’s (1981) words, “we are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a worldview...”(271).

In the utterances that formed the research conversations, I listened for what Deetz (2003) suggests is the processual making of meaning, in this case of social justice: The contesting, the unifying and dis-unifying of meanings for what is just. What is important in this analysis, however, is not to extract an abstract concept of meaning for social justice as that would risk severing the meaning from the action, rather it is to see, in context, the meaning that is propelling towards action. Freire (2011) brings us to a recognition that a word, a meaning has two parts—the reflection and the action—and that both parts are needed to bring liberation to the oppressed, the marginalized, and to create a social reality that liberates. This is the work our words do to bring about social justice.

I also listened for the contexts and utterances that impede the person from being just. As Bakhtin (1981) states, “every utterance participates in the ‘unitary language’ (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)” (272). These language forces are present in the conversations the research process elicited as we explored together being just. My research problem was articulated as the historical-social-cultural-intersubjective context that contributes to an individual’s capacity to understand and act in ways that are socially just. In this section, I explore where this knowing of human rights and social justice arises for this group of people. Do we intrinsically know as humans, or does the knowing pre-exist an

individual's subjective understanding by its presence in our language, cultural, social and historical context and utterances?

This exploration is of course limited by my lived experiences and worldview. What I see in the data and the excerpts that I use, will be what resonates for me. What is important, therefore, is to see and to hear the contesting for meanings, not for the purposes of establishing a truth, but to open up the possibilities of understanding the processes of making meaning from the logosphere in which we live.

The participants' stories include a selection of memories, moments, and understandings from an almost unlimited storehouse of the encounters that fill their lives. These stories and thoughts are obviously not drawn from an exhaustive excavation of their lives, however, they are the ones that our process elicited and even then, these are only a sample of the stories shared with us throughout the research process. These excerpts simply serve to illuminate the choices made by a small group of people who seek to make meaning of what is just. I begin with Lex.

### **Lex**

LEX: It is interesting and, for me, it is certainly an ongoing practice [how meanings of justice are shaped]. As I mentioned before, there were points where little bits twiggled me and it clicked or grated. If I look way back in my family growing up, I remember my father being really conscious of right and wrong but within the context of clear society rules and law. And also, embedded with that was this kindness. I mean he would be upset a number of times but I could not imagine him doing something that was set out to purposely hurt. I remember one time we had a dog, and the dog did something and I saw my dad hit the dog. That was such a giant moment for me. So that was such an 'out of context' thing with my father and all it did was reinforce for me that his norm was so kind. So I think that was part of growing up.

So with my mom, and I still remember very, very clearly—she grew up in Southern Holland during the war. When we were in Canada, a couple of times I would hear her say things that were quite racist regarding Jews, and using language, which at the time I was a little bit 'well, whatever.' And then exploring that much later [to try to understand] what is the context? What actually happened during the war in Holland? Things got pretty complex there and there was lots of collusion and all the complexity that is associated with that. So, again, there is a jarring piece that helped me because, it clearly has an impact in that I still remember that from when I was a kid. I would say 'what does that mean to me,' and just in terms of my consciousness in terms of both what is just, and also looking at it in terms of how we look at others.

So, in terms of race or whatever, those things [were there] to challenge me and as a process, it started then. I still reflect on it.

And those early to late teens and early twenties for me, I think there was a lot of 'unconsciousness.' Just kind of wandering in a bit of a daze and slowly having conversations and becoming more aware of what is happening in the world, and then particularly there was a time where I started to explore issues of gender and of justice and all of those things that continued to develop and frame how I view the world now.

One of my first girlfriends, a woman I travelled with in Europe, [was] really, really strong in terms of this whole introduction to gender politics and gender issues, which up to that time had been pretty much absent in my frame. My dad was a kind person and he certainly never expressed anything but kindness to my mom as well, but roles were very traditional. At the same time, having only two brothers, whatever happened in the house was pretty equal. We all engaged in housecleaning and dishes and that kind of thing and preparing meals later on. So, I think those pieces come together and then [I was] really blasted into another world with that trip to South America and then to the downtown eastside Vancouver where you question everything. Where you think you are not racist and then exploring what happens within the context of a community center in that setting, and then having conversations with First Nation individuals that volunteer or work there who say 'yeah, this is totally a racist setup.' People are becoming more aware and really trying to work with that, but from a systemic point of view, and then from an individual point of view a lot of people really haven't explored this. So, you can assume that 'I am good' or 'I recognize what is good and just' and yet there were lots of times when you miss those pieces in terms of the understanding and what it actually takes to get there.

Lex's reflections on the early life experiences that have contributed to his thinking and acting justly, highlight the places where a 'jarring' occurs and of the role of 'being jarred.' Lex, in his reflections, demonstrates an ability to hold the tension that is created by the jarring. Holding the tension of his dad's kindness and the 'out-of-character' behaviour with the dog, and seeing the tension between his mother's views of Jewish people and his placing this in context based on her life experiences growing up in Holland, speaks to Lex's ability to hold open to difference while staying in relationship, and to resist judgment. Holding onto his view of his dad as kind, placing in perspective his mother's prejudices, being confronted with issues of gender to which he was previously unaware, became ways of understanding that he made choices around. The competing language forces seem to be

kept in balance. These moments, while miniscule in some ways, became reflection points later in life. We go on to explore these openings:

PENNY: It seems to me that, even as you are saying gender was something you might have been oblivious to as an issue, as a man growing up with brothers, and living in a world that is fairly privileging of white males, [LEX: *sounds of agreement*] but that there was something that came across your horizon, in conversation with your girlfriend, that opened you up to seeing something you hadn't seen before.

LEX: Yup! That was huge, in some ways. Particularly, I think, for men in that whole hippy era—I saw an interview with Joni Mitchell that I thought was really well done. And she said, and many have said it, that the whole hippy 1960s and 1970s thing was essentially built for men, and disparagingly in terms of what that meant, not in terms of any women's liberation but, a lot of the really strong looks at feminism and looking at what are the gender issues and the gender politics, they came to light as that movement took hold. I was in that moment in that whole era, and then to start to reflect on what does that mean and what was the context of it.

PENNY: You have set aside some meanings such as 'because the world is just for me it is just for everybody,' and I am thinking of this in terms of 'because as a white male in my culture things seem to be working for me so I assume they are working for everybody else.' You have let go of that. [LEX: Oh yeah] Are there other meanings of what is just that you consciously laid down or set aside.

LEX: Again, I think I need to do some more serious exploration around it, but certainly things around money and the distribution of resources. But in terms of looking at resources globally, it is completely ridiculous. So my context here is, I have just turned sixty-five and of course every second person asks me when I am going to retire. And the notion that this is a norm or that now I am 65 and healthier than I have ever been, that I can kind of go and play and collect money to live in a comfortable life style until I die, strikes me as kind of bizarre. So part of that is probably that I don't have much of a pension so it maybe justifying to myself, but it just provides the opportunity to reflect on that. So how do we actually structure how we live? And then the massiveness of the forces that rail against that! So this is a good one for, again, a matter of privilege that for those of us who are at the top of the heap globally, whatever struggles we might think we have, we are still at the top of the heap so how do we deal with that? So that just causes tension in me and I don't know if I set it aside, I certainly have set aside the notion that I am entitled to a hefty retirement. (Lex Call #7)

In these reflections Lex provides insight to a number of beliefs that his historical-social-cultural contexts have presented to him. His parents' history and relationship with one another, the impact of the social changes taking place in the 1960s and 1970s, his travels and work in settings that have exposed systemic prejudices, all provide the frame upon which he understands social justice. Understanding the privilege accorded to him because

of his gender, ethnicity, and social standing influences Lex toward a tension from which he examines his choices carefully. A clear influence in Lex's thinking also comes from music and film. The documentary *Deadman Walking* strongly illustrates for him the belief that we, as human beings, have the responsibility to love 'others.'

LEX: Honesty, integrity, love is foundational and that the wealth that we have as a human being. Every single person every other human being has that same wealth as well.

PENNY: One of the things you have said, and it comes out of Freire's and Buber's work is that notion of love. Freire...talks about love and he talks about...being in communion. The notion that relationships with the oppressed, that only from that stance can you be a part of understanding the consciousness of the structures that oppress. He talks about love and so does Buber in his book *Between Man and Man*. And when I read it [I think] 'oh yeah, I get that,' but it is actually not something that is overly permissible to talk about in our culture.

LEX: Of course not. Did you ever see that show *Deadman Walking*, the documentary about the woman who [visits inmates] on death row and about the actual events [surrounding the one inmate]? What struck me there, again, is that with the woman who is actually visiting these folks, she is absolutely able to share love, right! And I think that in those places, then, if people do horrible things then absolutely we need to protect them from themselves and others but then why would we hate them? I mean I have done, as we all have, some horrible things. So, does that mean I should be hated for the rest of my life? Or, should that particular event or, in that case, [we should] hold accountable [that person] for that event but, the person is not hated. So to be human then, to that whole notion of love, if that is our true nature, which I believe it is, then there is a responsibility and accountability. But hatred doesn't fit into the equation. Lex Call #5)

What is telling in these excerpts is the complexity involved as we each work out how to make sense of the world and how we want to think about ourselves in that world. As Lex interacts with me through the questions we are exploring, he draws on events that have been significant to him and we begin to see more explicitly the meanings he has drawn from them. It is in relationships, experiences, and language that he becomes aware of social justice issues. He acknowledges that love is foundational, yet not part of our normative culture to speak about, specifically love that can overcome hatred. And yet through all of this heteroglossia, these swirling forces of language, he has chosen to hold a view of human beings that inherently values each and every person's worth.

## Jessica

Jessica, in her opening reflection on our final call with her, notes that,

JESSICA: It has been so interesting to see the development [throughout this process], and we will touch on [more] today, but the development really of how faith has played a pretty big role in my life and I think that is one of the realizations I am coming to conclude in a lot of the things we are discussing and going through together, but also individually. And it is just interesting how that piece of my life has been something that, not necessarily under the radar as it has always been a part of who I am and what I have done but, just truly thinking about that as integral in terms of my actual decision-making. So, that is where I am at right now in terms of where my thoughts are.

PENNY: I appreciate, as I look back on our conversations, how [faith] has shone out from you and, that it became more explicit as we continued to have conversations. I personally think that is very cool and affirming for me as well, because I think it is a part of us—I think in Canada, it is almost—that is your private world and you don't bring it out into the public world. Yet it is such a key part of who we are.

JESSICA: Agreed. Agreed. (Jessica Call #8)

In this exchange with Jessica there is a tension she is highlighting in what is permissible to share about one's beliefs and what is not. In the language of our historical-social-cultural context we acquire a sense of what is permissible to speak about and what is to be silenced or partitioned into corners of our lives. For her, what has not been permissible to speak about in parts of her life is her faith. On an earlier call, Jessica articulated more extensively the work that she does to align who she is in the moment and how, she feels, parts of her are silenced:

PENNY: When you encounter a situation that you see as unjust how do you make meaning of what would be just?

JESSICA: I think underlying a lot of this is faith, and for me spirituality plays a role in most, if not all of what I do and think about. So, for me I am just one small little ant and understanding that there is a world and place larger than myself, brings me out of that judgment space. And to look to my moral compass of where to go and what to do when I see an injustice, often times I think that—and going back to the oppressor excerpts—when we react in violence, immediate kind of emotional ways, and we often act in the same way the oppressor has oppressed, that doesn't allow for any sustainable solution. Because all that does I think, is narrow our scope of understanding what the issue is at hand. So for me, when I witness something that is unjust, I begin to think about, 'is this just an example of something larger?' If so what would that be? How can I take action to think about what the immediate real need is and or if there is something longer term. I do think there is a piece of just trying to

understand that there is so much more to the situation than just what is happening in the framework of the verbal or the non verbal or the specific situation.

PENNY: I want to go back to ...you started off saying that you come from a place of faith and it is spiritual. Can you walk me through how you lean into that to make sense of what is happening from a perspective of justice?

JESSICA: Sure. I have an interesting perspective in that I am incredibly, incredibly, religious. I do believe that everything has to do with faith and that is a big part of my life. At the same time, I have always hesitated to talk about it publicly, in some ways, for fear of, not necessarily being oppressed, but being judged or placing particular assumptions around not just me but my work. I don't really care about me but just what I was doing. So particularly in Guatemala, there is a huge dichotomy between missionaries or people who are associated with faith and development workers. And, this is a generalization, but I found it to be fairly true that many of the 'true development workers' were either agnostic or atheist or did not speak publicly about faith or were anti. And then, there were missionaries who were there, and this is stereotyping, but to 'build an orphanage, build a home' but do something that is not necessarily sustainable for long term impact but more spreading God in ways that I did not feel were as productive for the community. So I am stuck in between how do you solve problems and how to be a person of faith. It has always been a struggle for me. And talking about it with others has also been a struggle because I... see the folks that I know, who are more faithful than others, don't understand how to solve problems without having some sort of missionary component that comes with a-'thinking heart more than head' in a lot of ways. And that has been a struggle for me. So how I have leaned into it has been an independent journey in some ways. So, my purpose and intention is to try to understand and realize that I am not on my own time, I have no control over everything that I do and, in that sense it is a little bit liberating and I re-frame the question: Instead of 'okay, I am in control of this--this is what I am going to do,' I ask the question, 'I am here right now, where should I go with this and how do I be the most intentional and meaningful and beneficial in this time and place?' And so that is kind of how I have learned to think about this. (Jessica Call #5)

The territory of making meaning of social justice is complex terrain to navigate. How do 'I' understand who I am, what I believe, and what the language of my historical-social-cultural context is telling me is acceptable to think of in terms of social justice? In Jessica's explanation, we sense again a complex interplay of meaning making, further contextualized by experiences in a different culture and holding a sensitivity towards the question 'who best understands what is just here?' She has come, at this point in time, to articulate her response from a position of thinking less about the 'what needs to be done here' and instead asking herself a more reflexive question about who she needs 'to be.' These questions that she asks herself become a practice for holding open space for possibilities, ambiguity,

indeterminacy and difference. They also serve to keep in abeyance certitude, closure and silencing.

Jessica goes on to explore how our work roles can create a context for how meaning is made of the places where we can act justly. The work culture tends to compartmentalize individuals into the roles they fill and, in many ways, stands against being holistic and integrated and being 'who I am' in all parts of my life. Socially, we can experience narratives that encourage us to partition off parts of our self and our life into separate roles and identities. Jessica speaks about her intentionality to stay whole:

JESSICA: This is a theme that we have talked about together but one of the things for me that has been important is that, when my job roles specifically don't say social justice in the title, how do I think about my life as one where my values instill that. So by that I mean, the job that I have now is focused on experiential learning and programming around something that is not specifically around social justice. So social entrepreneurship in my job title in Guatemala was explicit and I was well known and that was what I woke up every day to tell people about. And here where I live now, I live in the United States in the midst of commerce and a lot of things I don't necessarily like to spend a lot of my time around. So thinking deliberately about how my role, although it doesn't explicitly state I am focused on social justice, how I can continue to think through some of the injustices that exist in my identity or my own specific circumstance, as well as those around me, and how I can daily continually work towards that. So I think that has been a progressive 'ah ha' moment in our conversations that has been incredibly timely for me. (Jessica Call #8)

In this next excerpt, I explore with Jessica the cultural and societal aspects of her North American world and it's affect on relationships and the possibility or the deterrent for dialogue.

JESSICA: When it comes to dialogue, part of what I feel now, is that we become so inundated with surface level, in some ways, there is not a lot of depth to the [information] we are receiving, but there is so much more that we are receiving daily and that has allowed for a lot of different complexities to arise. And I think that is an impediment to the really deep and authentic relationships that can happen. What I mean by that is, all of sudden the technology and the ways we communicate allow people to send and do things in a faster way but, often faster doesn't always mean better. So, I revert back to, and lately I have been thinking a lot about my role in Guatemala, and the ways I would approach relationships, and how that has changed as a result of societal and cultural values. And, here [in Ohio], I don't feel like I am acting in accordance to how I did there. By that I mean, the expectation that I am just more at a capacity [here] of 'getting things done,' rather than understanding, and building a relationship, before moving on to the next thing. I mean, workplace values are different, but still very real and true. So, when it comes to social justice, it is really

hard and it depends on context and the nature of where you are, and where those work and cultural and societal values are, and how they impact the dialogue that is there.

PENNY: So, that contrast you hold between your experiences in Guatemala, where in a lot of ways the pace of life offers opportunity for relationship building. Where there is a pace of life in North America that almost precludes, in some ways, the relationships in which dialogic moments might happen. Is that what you are saying?

JESSICA: Yeah. And I think ...so, I have studied Ruby Payne's *Bridges out of Poverty*, and I often revert back to her circles of what someone in poverty values ... What is concentric to their values is relationship and central to middle class individual's, their value is achievement. And that is very much the case. When in Guatemala I couldn't use achievement as incentive, largely because it is not something that is spoken of, or valued, as centric to their existence. But, I think there are parts of *Bridges out of Poverty* that really do resonate when it comes to thinking about what the societal and cultural value of achievement has played, positive or negative, on the dialogue that we have with one another.

PENNY: So those cultural realities that we live and breath have an impact, with or without our awareness.

JESSICA: Yes... (Jessica Call #5)

Based on her experiences in different cultures, Jessica has articulated a discourse or narrative that holds hidden, and for her, contested meanings of what are socially and culturally valued. Her experiences of outsideness, having lived in Guatemala and now standing back in Midwest American space, help her distinguish with greater clarity the differences that are created between a valuing of relationship and a valuing of busyness and achievement. It is in the culture and society that values busyness and achievement that she finds it hard to act in alignment with her understanding of being socially just, because of the ease with which relationships are discarded.

As I explore these stories with Jessica and listen for the insights they provide into understanding how she makes meaning for what is just, two things strike me. One is the complexity of our lived experiences and the abundance of sources there are to draw on for sense making of social justice—for making the world a better place. I am also struck by the contrariness of experiences and the interpretations that can be made of whether or not the action being taken is leading to creating a better world for everyone. I am becoming more

committed to the un-answerability of the question ‘what is just here?’ with a definitive true answer. Whether one is standing outside the moment as an observer or whether one is immersed in the moment and seeking to make sense, we draw on what is available to us in that moment.

## **Gary**

The moments shared by Gary throughout the research process provide a rich kaleidoscope of experiences, which he continues to sort through in his search to understand how to be and act justly. We have already explored a significant early experience that Gary shared about growing up in the 1960s and the era of the civil rights movement in the northern United States. Gary recalls how this era challenged dominant cultural and societal values and awakened people to systemic injustices,

I think, along with being moved to do the right thing or automatically feeling something that is more universal and wanting fairness and humanity for people, there is also a reaction to systems that seem so wrong. And, my recollection as a teenager and into my early 20s [was that] my political awakening was not just me. Because, as you say, it was a time, and the music and the culture and the writing and the activity and the social change, and the way people were dropping out and trying to do different things... A lot of it was a reaction to a system that seemed wrong in a lot of ways, and, of course, a big enough generation and a big enough reaction and enough things converging that it had some impact. It was huge then and it felt huge. (Gary Call #7)

In Gary’s recollections I hear two influencing utterances. The first utterance echoes in Gary’s stated desire for ‘fairness and humanity of people’ and is a reflection of the human rights language that emerged post World War II. Injustices that previously were not spoken about were now visible, and an awareness of ‘to whom’ these rights were owed was broadening, very much in accord with the observations of Richard Rorty (1993) and others who have written about the era of human rights. The second utterance is the awareness that the social systems themselves were perpetuating injustice and the opening created, at that time in history, to see the systemic changes that were needed. These understandings reflect Freire’s (2011) ideas of communion and the true generosity that

comes from standing with those who are oppressed and from that place seeing with clarity the structures of oppression. There is a sense, in this movement towards communion, of horizons being broadened and new understandings of social justice emerging.

Yet there are contexts that can overcome our ability and desire to act justly. Even with awareness and values that had been developing in Gary and with his experiences working in disaster relief locations such as Sudan and Darfur, he encountered situations where the context overwhelmed his ability to be and act justly. Gary tells us of a time, while he was still working with the Red Cross, when Hurricane Andrew devastated the southern States:

I was a disaster specialist...and one of the first people in after the hurricane. I was working in logistics and warehousing. To my shock, a lot of the people who I worked with were Americans from the south, and there was really awful racism, covertly, just in the fear of the black people we were helping, and overtly! Horrible language and bad behaviour—with people I worked with. And other things that were shocking, like a guy I was doing assessments of neighbourhoods with, and he showed me the two guns he was wearing, 'in case any of those \_\_\_\_ come up to the window with any bad ideas I can get them before they get us.' So, you can see these were counter to the principles [of the Red Cross]. I tried to work with it, and spoke to it sometimes, and with the people that I was managing I raised some of these things. I tried to, not change peoples' views but, have this work not be loaded with all these judgments and racism. But, near the end of the time I was there a new person came in whom I was reporting to...who was also clearly racist. And, he began to ask me to do things. One of them, for example, was we had hired paid people to work in the warehouse. All of them were African American. So, one of the first things he asked me to do was talk to all those people and tell them they could no longer come into the coffee room, lunch room, or use the facilities. They had to stay outside when they weren't working. So, at first I was concerned about telling them this because we were all working together without any distinction. And, I went to talk to the first guy, who I had gotten to know pretty well, and he almost teared up and said, 'I can't believe you would be willing to tell me this!' 'I can't believe you would pass this message on and believe this!' And it almost became a violent uprising from some of the workers. So I am not sure what I could have done differently, but what I did do was, I went into the files [at night as I was working the night shift] and I changed my departure date to about a week earlier. I was pretty traumatized by this at the time. (Gary Call #3)

This story stayed with me long after the conversation, as it aroused a visceral sense of finding oneself in circumstances that can lead to a feeling of being trapped. Gary's solution, to cut short his time there, seemed the best way out of a context where he could not act in alignment with his own values and, where he could not change the context. Gary's

description of the language of 'otherness' and the dominant behaviours toward 'others' that he experienced, created a situation in which the conflict between beliefs and actions became too dissonant. Gary speaks of trying to address it, but the dominant discourse is strongly in place and his voice became marginalized and ultimately silenced. The centripetal forces of the language of racism that lead to "death and brute matter" (Holquist 1983:309) leave no room for the centripetal forces of human rights and social justice that Gary brought.

In the following reflections, Gary's words hold examples of the thinking he has done over the years on what being just means to him. Here, he draws on utterances from his lived experiences and demonstrates his intent to hold a stance of being open to learn from 'others,' becoming increasingly self-aware of his values and his presence in the moments of life and relationships. I prompted Gary with the following question:

PENNY: When you think of your lived experiences, have you let go of or reshaped your thinking of social justice or have you come to understand it in a deeper way with time?

GARY: I will try to think more specifically, but, a lot of what we have talked about around things being, not ambiguous, but uncertain in a lot of ways and to try to understand them and see them and see people being affected [by them]. [I think I have come to understand] more by what we talked about as the genuine dialogue or a real seeking to understand one another, or looking for ways to address things in common rather than polarity. A lot of those things changed [my] reaction to events or systems to be more temperate, I guess. It is funny, in my life too, when I lived those years as a monastic and focused on sort of a spiritual life, I disengaged entirely from politics, and political action, and issues around human rights. I don't think I changed fundamentally as a person, but I didn't direct my attention there. But I think during that time a lot of the values were there, but not the actual focus on the world as it is, and what should change. I had more of a philosophy or belief at that time that the real change that matters is in you. If more people would do that, then that may have a bigger impact than fighting over ideas and values and positions and historical kind of change.

PENNY: When you think of [your] realization that there is inner work to understand one's own thinking and values...there is still a way of thinking that the answer 'is out there.' If we change our structures, if we get the right tribunals in place, if we get etc., if we change the system, then there will be more justice in the world. So there are many people who go down that path as well. It doesn't mean they have excluded the fact that they need to examine themselves more.

GARY: People are not going to, and shouldn't, see things the same way. But when people think it is pretty bleak to work on human rights as I have done—because you

are looking at so much of inhumanity to do that—I think for me it is pretty clear that it is both things. I don't project this on everyone, [but] I feel compelled to do something and I think doing those things are not at all in vain. So, having a universal declaration of human rights is kind of like saying 'is there any value in saying murder is illegal because people murder each other anyways.' Well clearly, there is a value that we all know it is illegal and shouldn't be done and it would be worth working for that, if there was no law. At the same time I do understand that fundamentally if people see each other in common and have less greed, and fear, and self-interest, and strength in seeing themselves as different from others, all those interior things that there is more of a change of heart. So, we can have the laws and regulations and criminal court and The Hague—all these things are really important, I think, because they say this is the standard [that], we as human beings, have agreed to. Even if lots of people haven't [agreed] or think they are exceptional. To actually change it so people would care about that and care more about each other more—all of us—that is the inner shift. For me, I do feel comfortable and I do talk to people about this sometimes, saying that I feel I am called to do both things: To be aware of myself and to find what makes me a contented, less fearful, happy, giving human being. What we have been calling in these conversations 'living a good life' (or I call it that), and it is worth acting for things that we care about.

So engaging is important even if what really matters is that we would like to see people care more. I think that has been, not intentionally, just the way my life has wandered along, strengthened over the last ten or fifteen years. But you know, it is messy isn't it? I had this discussion recently with an old friend who is still involved in that spiritual movement that I was in. He was basically saying this one extreme, which is, there really is no point in engaging in the world because the only thing that matters is that I find 'the right inner state' myself. And I challenged him on that saying, 'how do you deal with your wife? how do you deal with your daughter? how do you go to work every day?' Because we actually are engaged in the world and how you are inside yourself is important, but you are not perfect, so you have to see how you are going to behave too. (Gary Call #7)

Gary's reflection on where his thinking is now, demonstrates his openness and his willingness to let go of some of his ways of thinking about what might be right and what might be wrong in a situation and, instead, wanting to simply understand.

PENNY: I think what we have explored as part of this process are questions of 'how do I show up' and 'how do I act' and 'what beliefs am I aware of that I am operating under' and 'what are the beliefs that I hold because they are what I have been taught but I haven't really explored another way of thinking about them.'

GARY: You know it is perhaps more in recent years, but I do actually think about those things and I end up in discussions quite often. Discussions, for example, of what are things that are lines you believe can never be crossed around how humans behave or how laws work and, what are lines that situationally could be crossed, or need to be crossed, and where are we in our own morality and justice and that doesn't always match the legal structure? So I think I am reflective on that level. I am not sure I have spent a lot of time thinking about how the beliefs that I stand on, how solid they are, or what are the alternatives, or what could I have believed. I haven't

spent a lot of time thinking about that. It has really been in the last few years that it has really interested me more about the difference between being right and understanding others. Because my default position is to be right, even if I am not combative or I am polite, or even if I can draw people in, in nice ways, to get them to believe what I believe. But, it has been pretty interesting to try a little bit harder to just simply want to understand. And I have gotten closer to a few people who really challenge me pretty regularly with what I believe. I have got closer to them by getting to know them, as who they are, rather than different points of view. That is sort of new for me. (Gary Call #7)

As Gary speaks out his interest in reflecting on ‘the difference between being right and understanding others,’ his words convey a way of acting that is built on a core belief of the inherent dignity and worth of each human being. This belief becomes real, not just in working to ensure ‘others’ have their human rights upheld, but also in the valuing of and holding space for each persons way of seeing and understanding the world, without imposing judgment and without needing to prove that ‘my’ understanding is ‘The Truth.’

### **Jeff**

Jeff’s reflections on his lived experiences and the context within which he has worked, brought into the process a perspective to the situated making of meaning for what is just within the oil and gas industry. On our initial call with Jeff, we travelled into the world of corporate social responsibility. In this context the dominant language force is business. Words such as profit, productivity, efficiency, hierarchy, authority, and risk are revered. Those involved in bringing to that world the language of social responsibility become influencers and translators. In our first call, Jeff explains:

JEFF: When I think of social justice and leadership, [I think of the role] I have had, as an influencer within the company that I worked for, around social justice issues and around ‘how can the company that I work for be a responsible player in the oil and gas industry, do appropriate risk assessment of what are the social impacts and environmental impacts of a planned operation and ongoing operations on host communities?’

So it was around the business imperatives of an oil and gas company but also taking a long view, which is, if a company pays careful attention to environmental and social factors related to oil and gas development, it is actually good for business. You want to find the sweet spot where it is good for business and for host communities. And also, helping a company understand there will be situations where you don’t want to do business. So when I think about the topic of social justice and leadership, it is

around 'how can I be an influencer within a work context to bring some of that?' Because the company looks at risk, the company understands risk really well. They look at technical risk, they look at financial risk, but there is still an emerging discipline to look at reputational risk. (Jeff Call #1)

This opening conversation brings to my mind Bakhtin's (1981) observation that language is stratified into socio-ideological meanings. The language of business is distinguished by the unifying social-ideological meanings that have become dominant. The language of social responsibility is bringing a dis-unifying language force to open up the dominant language in order to bring in new meanings to business. New language—such as 'social risk' and 'reputational risk'—is being introduced to seek legitimacy for social responsibility within the business context. In this conversation, Jeff makes an observation about the role a crisis can play to create an opening for an organization to change their practices and their language:

JEFF: ...It does seem that companies need to experience a crisis before they really begin to internalize some of this.

PENNY: ...interesting that there is a crisis that is needed. One of the things I am curious about is... how do we as individuals come to a place where we have a heightened awareness of 'there is a justice issues here' or 'there is something about how I need to act in this.' I am wondering if, as individuals, is it a crisis or is it an awareness? Then how does that work for business? Because businesses are collections of people with their own understandings and language and how they come to the place of what our purpose is and what we think of and what we don't think of when we make decisions. It is interesting that there is a heightened awareness for people [of social responsibility], but it is sad that it takes a crisis for a corporation to think differently.

CHRISTINE: I find that really interesting because I think it is fairly consistent with leadership theory that it often takes a trigger or break or disruption for people to grow to another level of awareness around something and so, in some ways, it doesn't surprise me that an organization needs to do that in order to really see where they need to change.

JEFF: Yes that makes sense. I mean you look in a Canadian context or a global context. For example a company like Talisman Energy that was operating in Sudan, and in the midst of a terrible civil strife, and depending on who you talk to, to some degree they got caught up in a civil war in Sudan. So, then you get into a debate about what is their complicity, if their operations are generating a lot of revenue for a government that is committing human rights. So Talisman went through that crisis and ultimately ended up divesting their operations in Sudan, and then went on from

that crisis to be a real leader in the field of corporate social responsibility in Canada, because they had the trial by fire. (Jeff Call #1)

This excerpt resonates with parallels to Lex's earlier comments about 'jarring' experiences and the shift they can cause in our understanding and serve to bring us to a different perspective. An organizational crisis, as Jeff identifies, possibly serves a similar role to open up the organization to the possibility that what is believed needs to be re-examined. When the beliefs that underlie business practices are challenged an opportunity opens up for centrifugal language forces to bring in new meanings: in this example a need to re-consider how to act justly.

In the following account, Jeff describes the tension he experienced in trying to find the language to bridge social justice and business practice. In this account his words powerfully describe the currents of personal, social, cultural, and business values when business priorities are confronted with competing values:.

JEFF: My group that I led had generic accountability for aboriginal relations, but that was executed on the ground by the operational units, regionally. So, the oil sands people had their own relationships with the local first nation and there was a shale gas outfit that had their relationship locally. Again, we had generic accountability around policy and direction, but the specifics belonged with operations.

So, shale gas development requires water. This is in the news and there are lots of questions around the use of water, the use of chemical additives, and the potential impacts locally of creating mini earthquakes underground. So, the local First Nation had a centre, and we provided funding support for the tradition of Powwows. Our operations needed water to carry out their operations. Well, the local First Nation community launched an appeal to the federal and provincial governments, saying they are not satisfied with industry's demand for water, they didn't think their First Nation rights were being respected, and so they wanted an injunction against industries' operations.

And this did not affect our company exclusively, but our local operations took it personally. They said, 'well, if they are going to file an injunction against industry, then we are going to withdraw the funding for the powwow.' My group didn't have the jurisdiction, so to speak, to oppose that, (and this is around \$10,000, which is not a lot). This was a situation where I did not have the 'hammer,' so to speak, to say 'this is not your call. We are responsible at a high level for positive relationships with First Nations. You are engaging in what we see as a 'tit for tat' action that is knee jerk and is, in the long run, more harmful than any satisfaction that you think you may get from sending a message.' That was the language the local operations would use. 'We want to send a message to First Nations that we are not happy.' In the end, this

could have had significant impact. It could have shut down operations at a very high cost, and in my mind this was knee jerk and would have exactly the opposite effect [they were looking for]. [To me] this was not about [company]. This was about the rights of the First Nations, about clarity of their right to be engaged in review processes and so on.

This is an area where I look back and I don't feel comfortable that I... that it was a situation that I didn't escalate, that I 'allowed' that decision to go forward. It was not my jurisdiction to overturn that decision, it was a decision I was highly uncomfortable with and also, if you want to step it back to social justice, I actually understood where the First Nations were coming from. That their need for greater clarity around what their rights are with respect to water, what their rights are to be engaged in environmental review approvals. I respected where they were coming from. And operations had different drivers—they get rewarded for moving projects forward on schedule, on budget and those are their drivers. [Not proceeding] would actually affect the year-end bonus that the operations manager gets, because he gets rewarded for moving projects ahead on schedule, on budget. So his time frame and his drivers were short term. They were not about the long-term relationship with the First Nation. They were about the drilling schedules for that year.

So [this] is a situation where I feel that, if I had it to do over again, I would have escalated beyond the operations leadership. Instead, I kind of swallowed hard and said, 'well okay, this is your jurisdiction.' I have given you my counsel but I am going to step back and deal with the consequences as best I can.

PENNY: In that moment you are making a decision about do I act or do I not act. What were you telling yourself about the situation that held you from escalating it?

JEFF: Probability of success of escalating it. What did I see internally within the company, if I escalated it. I did sort of a mental assessment of it and said to myself, 'well, what's the probability of success?' Of course, this is all hindsight, but I think it was more of, as the expression goes, 'not a hill to die on,' or 'save your ammunition for another day and another issue.' If I escalate a \$10,000 decision to a VP or senior VP, I think in the grand scheme of a multi-billion dollar company, I think the reaction would have been, 'Jeff! really!! This is what you want to occupy our time with?' So I did an internal assessment of where is the best use of, ... I guess a belief that, I have a finite amount of currency to use on these issues.

PENNY: It seems that we come into these situations with our personal values and in the first story you spoke of your value of keeping your word and in the second story you reflect a value of the rights of others and how those rights of others meet business imperatives. And yet we find ourselves in situations where the context impedes our ability to move things forward according to our values.

JEFF: I am reflecting, in particular, on the later example and I think it is something [we explored] in our group teleconference. 'How do you as a leader and individual, how do you respond when someone holds values that you really can't find common ground on?' In the later example, where the operations manager... there is definitely a view among a number of Canadians that First Nation and aboriginal rights have gone out of control, and so that is a point of view that is out there, and that point of view doesn't align with my personal views. And so, I guess in reflection on the

second story, how do I find common ground, how do I acknowledge that, 'I hear where you are coming from, now let's look for common ground.' And [the common ground] can be business risk, which is fine, but I do find there is a gut or visceral reaction that I have [when the views others hold] are really counter to some that are deeply held for ourselves. I think of one of our community relations people in Yemen, a staff person, and he has personal views on child marriage that I find repugnant. Now his views on child marriage don't influence the way he does community relations on our behalf and his views are common locally. This is what I reflect on when I give you [this] example. How do you manage social justice? How do you make progress when the context is so viscerally opposite to the place where you are standing? (Jeff Call #3)

On a later call, Jeff reflects on how his work with Amnesty International Canada was a refresher course for him in that, it allowed him to be in an environment that was idealistically values driven. His journey back and forth between working in industry and Amnesty gives him an outsider perspective from which he can see the culture he inhabits more clearly. He understands that there are different views held of the rights of First Nations peoples. He also articulates the competing organizational views and values on which decisions rest. The incentives in business are direct, real, and measureable. The project is on time or it is not and the people seen as directly responsible feel the consequences of missing organizational targets. "In oil and gas you see people driven by money, power, status, material wellbeing" (Jeff Call #7).

In the re-telling of the events, Jeff gives us insight into his internal processing of the decision to address the withdrawal of funding to the First Nation Powwow or not. Jeff weighs his own values, he considers his ability to influence the organization to re-visit the decision, and he assesses his own 'currency' within the organization. To use his influence on this issue might compromise his credibility and ability to influence future decisions. There is a weighing of the prevalence in the language he encounters, of different beliefs on the rights of First Nations peoples to object to or support oil and gas projects. Similar to Gary's experience in the southern United States, the dominant language forces are too strong to overcome.

There is a heteroglossia of meanings and understandings that Jeff's story makes visible including the language of rights, the historicity of prejudices, the hierarchy of business, the imperatives of business, and the boundedness of personal influence in situations of competing language forces. Bakhtin's (1981) description of unitary language forces "that serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world" (270) offers us a way to understand what Jeff is describing. The language of business works toward a "concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization" (271). The language of social justice is the centrifugal language force that is attempting to disrupt the language of business.

In reflecting on Jeff's story, I am struck by the sense of the 'I-it' quality to the relationships. People in the organization are defined by their roles and their mandates. The use of titles such as 'the operational manager' and 'the senior VP' brings a sense of relational distance. In Jeff's language, he speaks of assessing 'the currency' that he holds—a commodification of the relationships held within the organization. In the absence of relationship and in the absence of opportunity for dialogue, the business imperative is given preferential value and dominance at the expense of human rights and social justice. Without relational ground upon which the differences can be explored, the dominant language opposes the heteroglossia of human rights and social justice.

### **Kerri**

Kerri stands out for me as someone who inherently believes in the value of every human being. It was not uncommon in our conversations that the questions I asked were difficult for her to answer. It is possible that in my questions, I was trying to access her conscious thinking about what is just, when it is, for her, an unconscious way of being. We explore this on the third call:

PENNY: In reflecting on our conversation, I am realizing that my questions may not be eliciting examples for you. Because what I heard you just say is, that 'when I am looking for what is fair, it comes out in conversation, it comes out by asking questions, it comes out by wanting to know what other people are thinking.'

KERRI: Yes, I always want to know what others are thinking and feeling.

PENNY: Do you ever encounter someone who is thinking something really contrary [to your perspectives]? Or are you able to find value in everybody's perspective?

KERRI: I think everybody's perspective is valuable. There is nobody's perspective that isn't valuable! *[laughs]* To me that is a no brainer!

PENNY: *[laughs]* I think that is a brainer!

KERRI: You think?

PENNY: I do. I do. Truly, I think ...you say that and I think this is just a part of who you are, it is like the air you breath. [Your belief] that 'there are different perspectives and that is okay, and I listen to them, and I am open to them.' I would have to say that not everybody is like that. I am curious about what it is in your lived experiences that have brought you to this place where you do hold such open ground for different perspectives and ...you can hold it without becoming defensive about making 'your way' the way to go. How did you come to be like that?

KERRI: *[Laughs]* That is a good question! *[pause]* Well, a lot of it is working with young people and parenting, because children can have just a wild array of feelings within such a short span of time. They can be devastated by something and then they can be gleeful about something a few minutes later. And I think that one doesn't erase the other. You know, 'oh, you are happy now so obviously you couldn't have been that upset a few moments ago.' No! They are both equally valued and true; that experience is completely one hundred per cent real, authentic, and it counts. I think this is true for people all the time. I have done a lot of counselling. When I started with [name of organization], I was doing a lot of mental health counselling and working with a lot of people who were suicidal. And, people would try to talk suicidal people out of it. 'Oh, you have so much to live for,' or 'what are you so upset about,' or 'well in my life this...' To me, they are just all ways that invalidate the personal feelings or experiences. They are in great, great, great, suffering pain and that is what is real and they are people who have a beating heart and their experiences are just as real and just as valid as anyone else's. I just think people are equal. Whether they are young or old or, there are no throw away people.

PENNY: I am realizing as we spend more time with you, that you live and breathe a way of being. And so, when I am asking you these questions and they don't connect because you have this way of just listening and valuing who the person is, you give them dignity of who they are and what they have experienced. You seem to have transferred a way of seeing people and holding them, into just who you are. Was that modeled for you when you were growing up or what were the influences that brought you to this point of just valuing each person for who they are?

KERRI: I don't think I got it in my family. But I remember being really young and going to Sunday school and really internalizing this idea that Jesus loves everybody. And I remember thinking—and I am not a Jesus freak now but, when I was young it was influential—and, I remember thinking a lot about this idea that Jesus loves the children. And I would remember when I didn't get along with my parents, or was being punished ... I remembered thinking well Jesus loves me because he loves the

children. And I remember that even if I am alone and unlovable, I remember I would tell myself 'well, Jesus loves me.' And then as I grew older, I had this idea that Jesus loves everybody and that makes sense. They are all human beings. There is no superior, there is no better than, there is no one more deserving. That was an influence when I was young, for sure.

PENNY: There is an egalitarianism with which you view the world and you give value and dignity to everyone. This comes in your ability to say what you are thinking, too. You give that space to other people and so you step out, trusting that you have that space to be who you are too. (Kerri Call #3)

Kerri lives and breathes a way of making sense of the world that is reflected in her language. She has a clear way of seeing people that is grounded in love, empathy, and a deep understanding that what people experience is real to them. Her early years in Sunday school, her work as a counsellor, and her experiences as a parent have all contributed to her genuine valuing of 'others.' In my response to her, I speak of the egalitarianism with which she views the world. It seems to me that her core belief and inclusivity of giving value to each person runs counter to a world that wants to create hierarchies and to marginalize the voices of many 'others.'

Kerri's understanding, at a deep level, of the importance of human connection and the giving of dignity also heightens her awareness of the impediments to this way of being. The idea of productivity arose in our conversation and, as Kerri held it in contrast to dialogue she thoughtfully articulated the idea of 'between' that is central to Buber's conceptualizing of dialogue. This conversation was prompted on our fifth call by the introduction of excerpts and quotes by Martin Buber and Paulo Freire:

PENNY: As you read [the excerpts], what stood out for you?

KERRI: I think they are truisms. I think others would agree they are true and it would be easy to nod your head and agree with them... in theory...but so different to put into practice.

PENNY: I think the first quote, In terms of genuine dialogue, he speaks of dialogue not just that we speak with one another, 'other,' but sometimes we can sit in silence and find a deep connection. It doesn't always need words but where you actually have in mind the 'other' in their presence and in their being. And so, there is a... we talked before of leaders who inspired and there was a sense of their being present, of being

open, of being turned towards one another. Can you think of people you have encountered who are not choosing to turn to or hold the 'other' present?

KERRI: Yeah I can think of people like that, that I have encountered. It makes me think, again, about this idea of productivity that we just mentioned because [pause] if you really turn to someone and you are really interested in what is in their mind and in their heart, and you are open to them and their experiences and their being, and if you want to dialogue with them, it means being open to them and you are open to yourself. And then you are creating this third entity between you. You are creating the 'us'—you are creating the relationship. You know, you are both focused on the relationship as you are dialoguing... it just seems to me [to be] so counter-productive towards productivity and as leaders working in work places, we have this whole productivity culture that is antithetical to the dialogue idea that Buber is talking about—that I think of as a truism. I do come into contact with people who seem more productivity oriented. (Kerri Call #5)

The creation of the third space, what Kerri calls the relationships or the 'us,' is the essence of what Buber calls the 'between.' This is the place where new understandings emerge that did not exist prior to the movement of turning to one another. Her contrasting of the dialogic with the strong organizational discourse that values productivity—the doing—opens up in the conversation a space to wonder what it might be like if, in our life and in our organization and in our work, we actually valued producing a new understanding rather than just the doing of actions.

Kerri goes on to describe the work she is doing now as being very much about relationships. Kerri's work is a place where her values can flourish. Her reflections give insight into how she understands the context and its alignment with her beliefs,

PENNY: In your work [of fostering] healthy communities, you are trying to create something new between two organizations and also between the people you are working with. Something new that isn't there now.

KERRI: Yes, exactly. I really like that my work is about relationships and not about productivity, because I can't buy into the productivity model. As I said in an earlier call about 'we are just too much of the doing, all this doing is undoing us!' It is not helping. We need to really slow down or stop with the doing and work on the dialoguing.

PENNY: Where do you think that overbearing belief, that it is in the doing, in the productivity, in the 'getting stuff done' comes from?

KERRI: I think it is a cultural, social learning, because I don't think we are born with that and I don't think you see it the same in all cultures, certainly not in the more

traditional indigenous type cultures. I haven't really travelled the world but from my reading I know that it is different. I think a lot of it could be put to Protestantism in North America and Europe. This idea that productivity is Godly.

PENNY: The protestant work ethic. I have pondered that at times. Yet a lot of faith is about relationships too.

KERRI: Yeah, because both can be true! It depends on how we view productivity. I think building relationship is very productive, but breaking down that word productivity. What does it mean? What are we trying to produce? Are we trying to produce wealth for shareholders? I don't know why we would want that. *[laughs]*

PENNY: So what I am curious about is that, 'here I have Kerri,' who really gets that relationships are important, who chooses to lead from that place, who values relationship, and yet we have other people who grew up in the same place, grew up in the same country, but who aren't seen to be acting in that way in certain settings. What do you think is different there?

KERRI: I think some of it is a lack of information or misinformation in some ways. I think if you don't have information about a bigger picture then—it is a real hindrance for people to really choose consciously [how] to live life if they don't have information. I think, and this is very general, we get information sometimes from our parents when we are little. Then we also we get media all around us that gives a certain skew on the information. I think you really have to dig around and talk to people who are 'other' and seek out alternative media sources. Because if you don't have the idea that not all cultures value productivity the way ours does, it is easier to think that this is just the way it is to be human. But, when you bump up against other cultures and you can say 'oh, there are other options,' 'there are other ways.' So part of it is the information we have because when we have information, we can make more conscious choices.

And, I would say another thing is the emotional aspect because we want to fit in, we want to please the people who are important to us and we want to provide for our families. Those are all emotional and heartfelt things. Wanting to belong. Wanting to provide. I think, sometimes, our emotions can pull us along a certain path when we are driven by this need to provide or to please. I am not saying emotions are bad, but it needs to be looked at. Who am I trying to please and why, and what is the bigger picture here. If you are in a workplace leadership role and you are supposed to produce something, and make people happy, and make shareholders happy, and put food on the table for your family. That stuff is all real and you have all those feelings about how you want to make it all work, and keep all the balls in the air, and keep it moving forward. People are not to be judged or criticized for having those feelings, because I think we are all driven by those feelings. (Kerri Call #5)

Kerri's words in these excerpts contrast alternative ways of seeing and being in the world. She both sees and understands these alternative ways and can hold for herself the tension in the meanings and be aware of the choices she is making. As I reflect on these

conversations with her, I find myself wondering if she has found a way to hold open indeterminacy because she understands the co-constructed nature of our social reality.

### **Kathy**

The conversations with Kathy bring us back into the world of business and further explore the ideas and the contexts that are emerging from these conversations where productivity or producing is highly valued. These ideas emerge across the different conversations with the research participants and, for me, characterize the terrain that people who are compelled to act justly, must navigate. This first utterance is from a later conversation in which Kathy is reflecting on a friend whom she highly admires. The conversation begins with an exploration of the quiet ways some people show up and care for other people.

KATHY: The unsung heroes amongst us. You know how they have the man of the year and the woman of the year? There are so many people who show up every single day and are slogging it out in a huge way, without any fanfare, without any looking for accolades. They are not getting the money or a lot of things but they do it, because it is the right thing to do and those are, to me, my real heroes in everything. Because they are the ones who just do and they are the ones that really move the needle in making a difference. They create the environment for people who are strong leaders, I think, to stand up and say something.

KATHY: I have a whole collection of people whom I would like to write their stories out. One of my really dear friends, 'J,' I wanted to nominate him for one of the CNN hero awards, because he basically grew up on a subsistence farm in rural Ethiopia. He works tirelessly for the poor, he got himself to university, he has a Masters in Urban Planning from UVIC [University of Victoria]. Whenever I go to Ethiopia, I travel with him. And he literally is up at six a.m. and isn't done till ten p.m. at night, day in and day out— tireless. He is just unbelievable. I wanted to nominate him for the CNN 'unsung hero award' a few years ago and I knew he would not easily accept a nomination like that, and so I wrote about how it would really helped his organization, and how he is really good and why I wanted to nominate him. He wrote me back this letter that was so poignant because he said, 'I really feel, Kathy, that I have already won an award by you thinking of me. But I cannot accept, because for me the real heroes are the people I serve every day.' It was just beautiful. I try to keep those people in mind as I go through my day, each day and every day and, if my ego gets out of check or I get all in a big tiff about something, I always have to bring it down to that and say to myself: 'You know what? Your problems are not that great!'

CHRISTINE: That is a really interesting story and it makes me wonder about polarities I guess. You are telling the story and we are listening to the story and I think each of us is thinking that it is a very powerful example of both personal and professional leadership. Yet if we were to take that young man and put him into a corporate structure, how would that be received?

KATHY: [pause] Well, he is hard working, so that would be good. But in the corporate structure you have to toot your own horn. And even for someone like myself, who is really outspoken, and you know, I fail at that a lot of times. I just don't always think, 'oh, I should loop that person in and let them know what I am doing.' [I just gave advice to a friend of mine to not] 'take it personally' [if people don't know what you do here]. You work in a corporation and you have to let people know what you do. You have to be the one [to tell people because], you cannot rely on the person you directly report to. You have to step out and say, 'hey, I want to give you an update on what I have been working on.' And not to say, 'hey, look at me,' but because people are too busy, and they don't know, and so when the next line of cuts come, which inevitably they will, if people don't know what you do, you won't be around. And so, that is the reality in a corporate structure and it is not ideal by any stretch. Because people don't have time to be really thoughtful about things, and introspective about things, because [the workplace] is such a fast paced environment.

CRISTINE: So what I am hearing you say is that humility is actually not a part of the leadership narrative in many corporations. And so the practice that comes from valuing humility, and that comes from really tirelessly working for something you believe in, without necessarily feeling like the rest of the world needs to hold me up, is actually in opposition to, and I am generalizing here, the corporate narrative around leadership.

KATHY: Absolutely. You can have humility as a piece of who you are, but I don't think that you can have humility and survive in a corporate environment. It is really interesting. I always try to use 'we,' and I have people [who will] tell me, 'you need to accept accolades that come your way'. [And really they are saying] don't share the accolades because then you won't get recognized for them and then you know...

CHRISTINE: And how do you balance that?

KATHY: Well, I had an email this week from someone thanking me for something that happened, and I really had to think how I would answer that email because I needed to make sure—because there is a balance for me to thank everyone who was key [in the work]—what I ended up doing in that case was I said, 'oh, you are welcome, I am so thrilled that it worked out.' And then I sent a separate email c.c.'ing everyone and thanking the volunteers and everyone who helped organize the event. I had to literally think about making sure that I get recognition and my natural inclination is to thank everyone and say—it wasn't a big deal on my part. But you have to do that in these corporate environments. It is something I have learned recently.

CHRISTINE: So it is survival. (Kathy Call #8)

Kathy draws our attention to the competing narratives of how 'to be' in the North American culture. She identifies the humbleness and humility in her friend who, in her eyes, is doing amazing work serving others and making a difference for the people in his country. At the same time, she articulates the challenges to being humble within the corporate

environment where success is garnered by drawing attention to your own accomplishments. These stories take us back to the conversations with Jessica and the challenges that she expressed in bringing your whole self into all of the roles that comprise our lives—including the culture of the workplace.

There is a second narrative that is captured in Kathy's language and that is the discourse on measurement. As a leader who seeks to act justly, her language reflects the productivity discourse that is prevalent in the language of business. The idea of 'moving the needle' in social justice is, to me, a language sign of the entry into the socio-ideological language of human rights and social justice by the socio-ideological business language that 'what can be measured is real.' In this next conversation, the dissonance between social justice and business language is further illuminated. Christine and Kathy are exploring the quote, "the basic practical-moral problem in life is not what *to do*, but instead *what kind of person to be*" (Shotter and Cunliffe 2002:20). The quote elicits an exploration of the contesting for meaning of what is just, contrasted by Kathy's experience with the organizational discourse on leadership.

CHRISTINE: In my own evolution or transformation as a leader, I came out of environments where what you do, what you produce, is what is rewarded, reinforced, and re-affirmed, not who you are. In fact, who you are, is not who the organization or the culture wants you to be!

KATHY: It is true! You put it in that perspective, and thinking about work, absolutely. You can be the nicest person; in fact, I would argue that business does not reward nice people at all. It really doesn't. It rewards people on what they actually produce. If you look at all the ancillary benefit of having someone there who is just a really good person, and I have just noticed that, if I look who is laid off in the corporation, it is typically the people who are the nicest. The ones who really care are the ones shown the door. I know who volunteers in our organization, I know who cares about the corporate citizenship, I know who those people are, and consistently those are the people who are more likely to get laid off.

CHRISTINE: Let me ask you a question, because [what you have said] rings true to my own experience and speaks about survival in organizations. So, it is often people who bring their whole heart, in some senses, to what they do, who are not valued for that gifting. What is valued is getting it done.

KATHY: Any way, any how, it doesn't matter.

CHRISTINE: That notion, the ends justify the means, is a bit strong but still the expectation is to be productive and efficient—in a way that probably doesn't allow for the time that it takes to build and create and further refine relationships.

KATHY: Absolutely.

CHRISTINE: So I want to go back to a comment you made I think in our first call. You said, 'you know, you can't be nice all the time. I am a bit of a bitch.'

KATHY: *[laughter]* Yeah, honestly, I am! I am pretty hard core. You get me on a phone call with someone in a position of power and they are trying to bulldoze, it just doesn't fly with me. *[laughs]* I don't mind, I don't get intimidated by that. But in the business world you have to be—I will own stuff, if I have made a mistake—but, if you try to bulldoze me, forget it! It is not going to happen *[laughter]*.

CHRISTINE: So for you the trigger would be someone is trying to put forward their own agenda and...

KATHY: I can't stand that!

CHRISTINE: What is up with you there? What is going on in your thinking?

KATHY: Well it is just wrong. I just don't think it is right. I will own my stuff, and if I need to own something, I will be the first person to admit it. But if someone is trying to suggest I didn't do something, I will defend myself. I don't tolerate that. It is not right. Nice people aren't comfortable making sure that doesn't happen to them.

KATHY: I have learned to be clear about what I am doing but not in a way that is bragging... You can't rely on other people to *[promote]* you. Others won't do it for you. It can be uncomfortable for people who are super nice, they are not comfortable tooting their own horn. That is how they get into trouble in corporate setting. Others who look out for themselves, they are better at saying, 'look what I did' etc. I definitely share what I am doing but I make sure it is inclusive to say this is what the team did, and I think there is power in recognizing other people, and it says you are secure in who you are.

KATHY: The corporation doesn't nurture nice people. (Kathy Call #4)

Kathy's description of who she needs to be, in order to survive and succeed within an organization creates a contrast between being 'nice' and being 'a bitch.' In the words that are spoken, there lies an explicit belief that people, who care and are nice and therefore inclined towards being just, are faced with significant challenges in the corporate setting. The dominant and normative socio-ideological language compels us to act in alignment with the corporate culture that values doing, productivity, being seen to be important, self-promotion, and individuality. The dominant historical-social-cultural language in which we

find ourselves can create a counter force to our ability to act based on core beliefs of what is just: beliefs that are often expressed in egalitarianism, collectivism, and humility.

### **Dorrie**

The opportunity to reflect on the narratives that surround leaders and people who think about what is just, arose unpredictably in the research process. The triggering of a memory or a way of seeing things, in many ways demonstrates the diversity that exists, because each of us, while swimming in similar currents of our social-cultural-historical-intersubjective contexts, have spent time in micro-contexts that also shape how we make meaning. Bakhtin (1981) acknowledges this when he speaks of the domains in which specific meanings of language are brought to us. In Dorrie's reflection below, it is clear to me that she is drawing on her experiences as a nurse and on her awareness and ability to observe the culture she dwells in with the eyes of an outsider. She is both in the culture but chooses to step back from it as well, to see the narratives that can impede, for her, being just. The Shotter and Cunliffe (2002) introductory quote used by Christine on our fourth call prompts the following reflection,

DORRIE: The first thought, when I looked [at this quote], and thought about 'it is not what to do,' I reflected on something that came to me a few years ago. And that is the desire to fix, to do, to complete and I think that is, for my awareness, a nursing culture. That wanting to move in and do something! Make it work. Make it right. Versus stepping back from it and thinking [about] what the quote says, 'what kind of a person to be.' It rang for me around my development as a leader, my maturing and being able to step back and be very reflective, looking at the situation comprehensively and, sometimes, giving myself permission to wait. To lean in and wait versus rushing in and, sometimes, making situations or issues worse. Allowing [my]self that sensemaking time.

And then to reflect on... for me now, I look at [a situation or problem] and think about all the people who may be involved. When I do sit down [and think about] how to approach it, and it is usually through dialogue, and that is when that willingness to stay open, and to stay present, and that shared understanding comes forward. 'What kind of a person do I want to be?' I want to be a leader who listens, who facilitates conversation, and who takes time to finding some meaning. And if I don't rush in to do that other part in life, which is 'to do it,' then I have much greater rewards for myself as a human being and much better outcomes for work related problems. And I think, that is that congruency, as leaders, I believe people who work with us are so in tune and so watching to make sure that what I say as a leader has to match all

those other things. The meanings that they actually feel cared for, and cared about, and that takes place in actions and words. And in the past when I have just acted, that has not been great. (Dorrie Call #4)

Dorrie continues on to describe how she has learned to pay attention to being reflective, to taking the time to think about the situation she is in before acting,

DORRIE: I think I learned that, through observing people whom I admired, through all the 'go out there and trial' and then measuring response and outcome. And, I think, just naturally being a relational leader and thinking about how I would like to be led, or how I would like to be responded to. Over the years, that leads me to the tensions. That has been one of the hardest tensions for me that I experienced, particularly in organizations and bureaucracies... is wishing that I could be treated that way at times, by people who are senior to myself. I often reflect on that.

DORRIE: There are lots of 'doers,' [those who say, there] 'that is looked after,' or 'done that,' and the boxes are all ticked and lined up.

That is because that is what is rewarded and what is measured. It is how quickly have you acted, or responded, and how few problems get left on the table [*laughs*] for the next person or the next day. That is operative conditioning at its best eh?

DORRIE: Yes, it is really a culture and you have to know when you have 'to do' quickly, as I said, but you have to sit back and look at the situation and determine the level of risk if you don't act immediately. [But] especially related to leadership, human resources and people, you have that time. You know how often you say... I mean one of the wisdoms I have learned around that 'to do' is to resist the need to get it off my plate and looked after. Just last week I did that. I had a situation that I felt very frustrated with and I thought, 'no, it is Friday afternoon' and it wasn't procrastinating. It was just a wisdom that knew I would have a better perspective and a better way to approach it on Monday or even Tuesday. Even though I wanted to get it looked after and iron out that tension. But I left it and I had that conversation today and the outcome was, from my perspective and—I checked in with the person too—and it was great. If I had that conversation on the Friday, it would not likely have been as great. So that is the holding the tension piece. (Dorrie Call #4)

Dorrie articulates the language and cultural terrain she navigates and the tensions she holds as she makes decisions moment by moment in order to respond justly to the situations that arise. She is highly aware of the relationships she is in and knows that people are watching to see if the actions she takes line up with the language she uses. She is also aware of what is valued in the different cultures she navigates; the nursing culture that values 'fixing things,' the organizational culture that values 'getting it done quickly,' and the culture that she is a part of creating that values thoughtfulness, reflection and relationships.

There is also a self-awareness of the internal desire to relieve the tension she feels when an issue is left unresolved. She has learned the value of giving herself time to sit with the tension, knowing the reflection time will improve the outcome for her and the other person involved.

Dorrie is attuned to language and what she calls 'the scripts' that contribute to the oppression and dehumanization of 'others.' In her community where she grew up, she recalls the dominant narrative was to see community problems as the 'fault' of the residential school children. Dorrie shares what she remembers hearing, and her response captures Freire's (2011) notion of being in communion with the oppressed.

DORRIE: One of the things [the quotes from Freire and Buber] sparked for me, was a little bit of sadness. I reflected on the years that I have been so sensitive and aware of oppression and how dehumanizing that is. And how I, as an individual and as a young person, was very sparked by my curiosity and my need to understand. When I thought about Freire, and having read some of his work before, and the whole humanization and dehumanization piece, [it took me] back to that time in my life and my experience in a small town on Vancouver Island, and the residential school there.

And of course I was shaped at home as well. If there was a lice outbreak then it was from this group of people. Any community problems were related to 'our native people.' And there were all sorts of themes around hanging out or participating in sports, and being friends with these people was often discouraged. As I read these quotes and articles, I remembered that was one of the really important learnings for me, was to demystify that script by reaching out and getting to know these kids. And, realizing that, through [my] discussions with them, I learned about their alienation.

When I look back, [it was] those scripts, those scripts that so defined their futures, in many cases. Those scripts of not being worthy, of not being as intelligent, of not graduating: All of those types of things. The scripts around how they maintain their property and how they lived as human beings. And so, it is that whole thing we talked about with older people and the aged in our system and that whole piece around the importance of words. How much those words can predetermine peoples' roles in society. It almost pre-determines that. It is almost as if we keep saying that script over and over and over again that is exactly what will be. So, that opportunity to have the privilege of becoming friends with those kids at school, although never learning about what the possible horrific moments were for them living in those situations, and in those schools. But, certainly seeing their experience of the discrimination. It was absolutely discriminatory. (Dorrie Call #5)

This awareness of the scripts that surround us, becomes visible when an opportunity arises to reflect on what we are hearing, from within a different context. In our group's

conversations of 'otherness,' Dorrie found her awareness of 'other' in the language in her workplace to be heightened. Her reflection on this captures what it means to make meaning in relationships and through language,

DORRIE: I have been considering the word 'other' for a few days and realized that it is the 'other' that has inspired my work over the past few years. It has been my discomfort with the traditional and institutional bound medical model that drives the way we have distanced ourselves from people in our society, and [the] need for residential living or supportive environments. This is not necessarily solely the aged, but persons who have had alterations in their ability to live independently.

The 'other' has given rise to environments and the development of language that is demeaning and depersonalizing. The designs of the traditional [residential care] building have visual and actual physical separations, that infer a separation or 'inferior[ness to clients]' or an 'our work is private and important' [valuation by] imposing titanic-like 'nursing stations' that physically tower over [the resident]. Language powerfully conveys the supporting attitudes of 'you are other,' 'Private,' 'keep out, staff only' and on, and on, it goes!

Language shapes our meaning and attitudes over time. I think about the need to name, label or diagnose something or a behaviour that we do not understand. In my world you can be a 'hoarder,' 'a wanderer,' or even worse... [you] require a therapeutic intervention. How about 'I am off to somewhere to explore and find some interesting things to bring back?' My favourite tee shirt says something to the effect of 'I am not a wanderer, I just don't necessarily know where I am going.'

'Other' is, in many cases, the people who are working in these environments. [This is] another revelation. Just think about the attitudes conveyed of 'just being an RN in residential care' or being a 'care aide.'

I invited a woman (resident) to join me for coffee the other morning. I said, 'would you like cream or sugar?' She said, 'I used to like both but now that I am here I take what I get.' (Dorrie Journal Post, March 30, 2014)

As I read Dorrie's reflection on the use of language in residential care, I experience a shift in awareness of my own language. Our words are laden and they often come to us with a normalcy in the context in which we stand. Dorrie's openness to hear the language and what it conveys to 'others' who are marginalized, silenced, or without power deepens an understanding within her of oppression and creates greater clarity of the stance she wants to take as she responds.

I feel that there are cyclical layers of language as I bring forward these utterances. There is the language that comes with us from our lived experiences and there is the

language that we encounter in relationships and situated moments. These layers contain, in many ways, a working out and expression for the person of their core beliefs and belief structures that guide them as they attempt to live their lives from a place of justice. As I present these excerpts, I am left wondering about the relationship between utterances and beliefs. Is there a deeper and increasingly immutable connection that we begin to build in our own language, of the core beliefs that underlie the emotional-volitional nature of our just actions?

### **Making Meanings of Social Justice**

Over the six months of conversations the fluidity, the indeterminacy, the situatedness, and the co-construction of meanings for social justice became more evident. Each of us came into the process with a way of thinking about social justice. The conversations, the reflections, and the relationships that formed created grounds for exploring these meanings and to come away with re-shaped understandings of being and acting justly. In this final section I visit the meanings that were spoken by each of the participants over the course of the research.

In our opening call we asked each person to reflect upon and share with us, what meanings of leadership and social justice they were holding. On the final call, we revisited this question. In this section of my findings, I capture in their words, these opening and closing meanings not in the sense of finding closure, but through the elucidation of the deepening awareness that emerged through language and in relationship. There were also times along the journey when a reflection or a prompt or words spoken by someone else would sharpen, deepen, or reshape their perspective. These give us insight into the processual nature of making meaning of what is just and helps to make visible the co-constituting of language and meaning that is always at play.

## Lex

Lex opens with his reflections on the increasing opportunities he experiences, to be aware of inequity and injustices that exist in the world. Through music, through media, through film, and in conversation with people in his life, the issues of injustice and inequality are evident. It is evident in poverty, in gender inequality, in wars, and in the impacts of transnational corporations on local communities. What Lex also acknowledges is his responsibility to act, each day, from a place of seeking to be just. In the stories he shares with us, I hear clearly a belief in the value of holding open to 'others,' of withholding judgment, and of creating space for those he is present with to, perhaps, be right. Lex's language throughout our conversations captures the beliefs and values that guide him in moments where he creates this space.

One of the things that is my responsibility is to help to create those spaces where all those voices can be heard, where things can be explored and that what happens in that space is what is honoured and where the possibilities are. (Lex Call #3)

The more I reflect on this, how do you actually... what is the action? So, showing up. In terms of the most fundamental roles that I have, then what does it mean to be an activist or to really show up completely? And I think in terms of showing up, if I can do that openly and honestly, then there is a way to not have to take on the suffering that is around us in a way that is emotionally laden but actually allows for clarity and acceptance that this is what it is right now. How do we actually show up to do our part then; for all of us, what does that mean? And it can only happen at an individual level. What I choose to do can only be based on how I show up and deal with it. (Lex Call #4)

I didn't feel good about being in that judgmental [place]. I really believe that if I am triggered, it is in me that the issue is. It has nothing to do with [the other] person. ... I need those triggers, so I can explore what am I doing... what is going on.

PENNY: So, in these situations what do you let go of and what do you hold on to?

LEX: Well, I let go of the judgment and then to hold on to, well, 'he could be right!' (Teleconference #2)

In these reflections it becomes clear that, for Lex, acting justly is not about being right, it is about creating relational and conversational space for 'others' to be heard, for all perspectives to be respected, and for holding open the possibilities of 'what might be.' In

dialogue theory, there lies a principle of knowing what you stand on and being open to be changed. The stance Lex is articulating comes from that place of knowing what he stands on: not just a deep awareness of the issues of social (in)justice but the beliefs that have become his guides. This belief and awareness that he has an inclination towards judgment, an inclination that is in all of us, he knows can lead to a diminishing of the 'other' and an elevating of our self. In judgment, we close off the possibility that what is seen and known by the 'other' has value and could 'be right.' In a place of judgment, the person we are with may speak but our judgment silences them and removes the opportunity we have to be changed.

This awareness of a tendency towards judgment has arisen before in these findings. It is important, I think, to make explicit that a stance of withholding judgment is not a lack of engagement or a lack of presence in relationships. Lex identifies the work that it takes to manage the emotions of caring deeply about what is happening. Having 'clarity and acceptance that this is what it is right now,' speaks to a deep and authentic connection to what is happening in the moment.

A revealing story about what being and acting justly can mean, comes from Lex's story of a time where he felt he contravened these beliefs and values.

I resigned from the Hospice organization ... [and] there were outstanding volunteers with the organization when I left. The Board went through a process, and they hired someone with not, I thought, the necessary talent. I was disappointed. I had a number of volunteers phone me about the way [sic] the Hospice was going, so I talked to a Board member about it. Over [the course of] a year some volunteers weren't getting called. So in terms of reflection... I [had] engaged so much with that organization, I lost sight of who I was and that I was there for a time. When I made the decision to leave it was no longer my business. ... It was a huge learning about a huge mistake. I got engaged and had conversations in a process I had no business in, and when I reflect back on that it was a great learning. One, I got really angry ...on reflection it was fine for me to observe but inappropriate to comment. From a values or ethical perspective, I reflect on that... I really let my emotions take me down a path...[and recognize] that I needed to go back to that role of creating space...even if what happens in that space I don't agree with. [My deeper value that was contravened was] to honour the people who are closest to the work... as a manager, I would certainly give people the opportunity to engage in the process. (Lex Call #3)

This reflection gives insight to the times and experiences that crowd out acting justly. In this experience, he felt compelled to act on behalf of those he felt had been disrespected and treated unfairly. He cared deeply that the work he had done seemed to be becoming undone and the people whom he valued were not being honoured. In re-counting the events, he sees in his own action a conflict with his own beliefs and the injustice shows up when he did not honour those who are acting in ways that he disagreed with. Lex's learning is to not 'let go of my role to create space to listen and let 'others' be heard' even when 'I may not agree with what happens in that space.'

This story brings two observations to my mind. The first is that, the world around us, in its norms and expectations, can draw us out of relationship with others, to choose a side, and to cast those who do not agree with us as different and as 'other.' There is also a hint in Lex's story, of Freire's notion of false generosity. Lex has been drawn into acting on behalf of those he saw as being wronged, rather than 'standing' with them to explore the structures and relationships that are causing them to be 'oppressed,' and at some level has taken away from them their ability to free themselves.

Lex's final explorations with us on social justice and how we see 'others' left us with the following reflection:

I can look back on things that I have done, that others and I may have considered, that it would be easy to judge me as not a good person. And so, to look at that, within the context of my life and if I look at the things that people have done, which by any measure are horrendous, that within those folks there is a massive disconnect and confusion... reflected in the beliefs they hold and the actions they have taken. But, there is still, I believe, a foundational piece there that is kind and generous and I need to hold on to that. I think there have been lots of examples where people who have done horrible things both from a genocide perspective or from death row. [The kindness may be] so solidly hidden that it is almost impossible to arrive at, but for many folks that piece is there. So, we need to take action, people need to be protected... so whatever that means in terms of jails and punishment, but it is not about [them being] evil people, but that they are in a space that, as a society or community, that we need to protect us and them. So, I think that it is not at all saying, in any way, or condoning any kind of behaviour that is oppressive or discriminatory or cruel or unjust or whatever. We have a responsibility there, absolutely; but in terms of looking at that individual, there still is that human element based in love. And it just might be very deeply buried. (Lex Call #8)

Generosity and kindness towards 'others' and believing that, in each person there exists the capacity for love. A lifetime of lived experiences have deepened in Lex this understanding, this belief in humanity and it is on this understanding that he stands and is compelled to act.

## **Jessica**

In our opening call with Jessica, the complexity of thinking about what social justice and leadership means becomes evident in the fragments of thoughts and ideas that are spoken out loud in the conversation.

How do I see social justice play out? I always try to think about how my 'ah ha' moment [about social justice] has been much more a progression of understanding my own self, by understanding pieces of my identity that I 'was not' or that I 'was,' a minority in a majority. (Jessica, Call #1)

I have never had an 'ah ha' [about social justice] moment and that has encouraged me to think about how I can seek to understand how components of social justice and components of leadership can play a role in what I do every day. (Jessica Call #1)

My fight for social justice means I am working with populations or people who or in which, their injustice is very explicit. So, be it women in rural areas who have very little education or sex trafficking or people who don't have access to proper water filtration systems... (Jessica Call #1)

...this conundrum of how frustrating it is ...folks who have positions of power, they have a disconnect with the ground of what really is happening. When you become disconnected you lose grasp of what the true needs are. Also, this is a generalization, but I notice that you start losing, not just understanding what the needs are, but the feel of it. (Jessica Call #1)

In these opening reflections three perspectives that Jessica is articulating speak to me. The first is that, (in)justice has many faces and it incorporates our own identities as we see and understand the world around us on a daily basis. Her comment of 'am I or am I not a minority or a majority here' speaks of a process of assessing her positionality in relationship to 'how I am seeing myself and how I am seeing 'others.'" The second perspective is that injustice is something we can feel, even when it may not be our full experience, and in the feeling of injustice comes a sense of connection to 'others,' which brings to us understandings that may be different from the ones we are holding. The third

perspective is that, regardless of our place in the world, we make our own choices each day in how we act in the face of the injustices that we see.

Midway through the research, our questions elicited for Jessica reflections that seemed, to me, to highlight the processual work she was doing to understand social justice from the place of her assumptions about difference.

One of the biggest things I realized about working with others, particularly people whom I seemingly have very little in common, was to understand where they are coming from and their own story. (Jessica, Call #5)

So through the curiosity, I think, allowed me to understand a little bit more about where they were coming from and also just understanding that we are different. There are inherent differences and, too often, I don't necessarily agree with the concept that, 'we are all the same people' so we should all have the same circumstances and understand each other in the same way. (Jessica Call #5)

As we continued to explore meanings of social justice, Jessica took us through a journey of how she could see her views developing over time. She recalled from a very young age holding the notion that things should be fair as in 'it should be fair and I deserve to be treated fairly.' These notions of fairness evolved into an understanding that there are people who 'have' and others who are seen to 'have not,' and there seems to be a social and cultural belief that 'having' leads to happiness. Justice must, therefore, have something to do with equitability. From her travels, and time spent working in other cultures, she now understands that other cultures value the things of life differently. There are cultures where the shared experience is valued, cultures where there is a meritocracy or belief about 'I deserve,' and there are other cultures beliefs where social justice is grounded in the redistribution of material goods. She admits to grappling with this:

What for me has shifted, [is] my understanding through so many examples and seeing the cycle continuing to perpetuate, has led me to believe and thinking about justice or empowerment or owning the opportunity to live your life the way that you intended to. And obviously we can get into morals and what that really means, but I think, generally speaking, intending and owning the self you have... to live your life in a way that is healthy and in a way you are not continually fighting against just being a normal human being from a health, physical, emotional, spiritual perspective. (Jessica Call #7)

Jessica's reflection demonstrates to me, her resistance to a dominant narrative that links social justice to cultural and social values of economics or individual entitlement. Her lived experiences have brought her to a place of being open to seeing the world and social justice from the perspectives of others and without necessarily valuing one 'solution' over another. What is grounding her, at this point in her life journey, is an understanding of the idea of choice and freedom for each person to live as a healthy and whole human being.

In our wrap up call with Jessica, we further explored with her, these meanings of social justice.

CHRISTINE: If you were to look at social justice as a concept and were to break that down a bit, what are the words that come to you?

JESSICA: For me it is something that is actionable. This concept in the world, and from last week's conversation, there are so many things that we consider subjective, but there are a lot of things when it comes to humanity, I think the humanity conversation, the equality conversation, the awareness and mindfulness of how the world works and operates and, in general, opportunity and access, and the empowerment piece. Those are the words that come to mind with that. So if I were to say all of those words and take 'social justice' out of it, this is what is interesting to me. If I were to take all of those descriptions and social justice and say 'what am I describing when I say equality and opportunity and empowerment.' You could easily say entrepreneurship, which is really interesting to me. But without the social justice piece, there are a lot of values that are not the same. So I have been trying to merge those concepts of what I think of when I think of social justice with this entrepreneurial role and skill set that I have. (Jessica Call #8)

Jessica is making meaning throughout these conversations by drawing on her lived experiences, her relationships, the knowledge, language and understandings acquired and a set of principles and values that are becoming foundational to her. She is actively working to integrate them based on how they feel and fit in her life and the world she is experiencing. There is a use of processes in her thinking; processes of comparing and contrasting and of holding concepts up against others to better see what is there, or not there. Jessica is holding concepts of social entrepreneurship, itself an emerging idea that attempts to meld the language of business with the language of justice, with her own concepts of social justice. In the process she creates for herself a reconciliation of what social justice is to her.

## **Gary**

On our opening call with Gary, I was struck by his knowledge of social justice and injustice, his experiences in many parts of the world, and his openness to considering different ways of determining whether or not progress is being made. At the time of our first call, the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation had just released an update on their work and Gary acknowledged, while not agreeing necessarily with the 'how' to fix the world, that he was more open-minded to the ideas being suggested. In the past, he admits, he may have let philosophical issues become polarizing; however, he is choosing, at this stage, to intentionally step back from the polarities and ask question of himself.

This discussion we have been having reflects so many of the things I have been thinking about. What is the value of openness? The value of, 'what is it that I really want to see different' and 'is it that different from the person I might be in polarity with?' And, what is the benefit of setting each other up as adversaries, what is the benefit of always seeing the negative? I find myself more often trying to work with, 'if I set aside my way, and just listen and try to understand,' ... I know inherently that is what brings about change, but I am [still] learning about that. (Gary Call #1)

Gary is highlighting the nature of and tendency towards polarity that is a reflection of our historical-social-cultural context. Tullio Maranhão (1990) describes this as "traditional epistemology. The clash between two ideas and the triumph of one over another explained as a consequence of the prevailing idea's being more right or true...." (1). This shift in stance towards being open and turning away from polarity is deeply reflective of a shift towards dialogic understanding. Understanding the value of being open and listening deeply to 'others' was reiterated again by Gary, prompted this time in a reflection from an exchange of thoughts on the third teleconference.

GARY: I have a feeling that my experience is that aging adds some things that youth doesn't add as well. And it is not necessarily maturity, but maybe a place in life where we can reflect on what we have learned or how we can take advantage of the self-awareness and learning experiences we have had. So maybe it is both, a lot of things get set and put into a pattern fairly early [in life], but it takes some work to grow with it.

JEFF: Interesting. And just reflecting on what you just said Gary, in my earlier years, or my teens or early 20s issues of social justice, to me, seemed very black and

white. There were the oppressors and there were the oppressed. As I moved into my adult life, [I] began to see things more in shades of grey, and if this is a third stage of life that I am entering, then I am now asking myself if I put everything in shades of grey, and if I need to revisit some of the passion of my younger years to come back to reignite more action. And so, that is what I was reflecting on Gary, I guess the sequence of the formative years, what do the adult years and later years provide, and now I am wondering if I have worn off all my sharp edges and maybe I need some of those back.

LEX: I really like that kind of thinking and I think I find myself in that space where maybe, you are sharpening the edges or breaking some pieces to end up with some of those sharp edges and that is actually exciting. I think on my last call I mentioned being in that joyous turmoil—the notion that if things get jarred and upside down when we are, or speak for myself, well beyond 50s—not that the age is so important but, anything that shakes our habits and jars us a bit, then I think it provides that great opportunity.

GARY: I am struck by [one] of the things that, I think is going to niggle in my mind, is something Jeff brought up early on. It is that seeing things quite strongly [as] right or wrong and then getting to a point, you said grey areas and I might say is seeing it as more complex, and then where do you get to—to recognize complexity and what we talked about on the last call, including listening and joining with the ‘other.’ But also taking a stand, being clear on certain things. And also a fundamental question: ‘when you learn more about leadership and social justice, what can be fostered?’  
(Teleconference #3)

Gary’s words about the “listening and joining with the ‘other,’ but also taking a stand”

capture a core element of dialogue that has been explored and highlighted in theory and in this paper. These words are affirming a concept that is forming in my own mind; that the dialogic is, in its essence, about being just.

In wrapping up our conversations with Gary, he left us with both thoughts and a story that reflects the meanings he is speaking:

I think when I came into this, I did think of who are the leaders who do things in social justice and what kind of leaders are they—and if I can claim myself to be working in that field, what kind of leader am I. I think, in thinking about it now, I am thinking a lot more about the personal responsibility of where a person is coming from. Where I am coming from, how I understand myself, how I need to struggle with these questions of what is good and right, and what is the best way to move something forward that I am clear in those ways. I don’t think I have changed my view that leadership is...there are different forms of leadership...but at their heart [they are about] things that include and respect people [and these] are the deepest or most meaningful. (Gary Call #8)

...listening to Lex and Jeff and in my own experience, it is so clear that, in any situation, whether it is a relationship discussion or a person where there are really

clearly different values, beliefs, and opinions, there is an advantage to suspending judgment and engaging as a human being and trying to understand each other. And it is not easy; it is not easy to be in the state of mind to do that and it is particularly not easy to do that when those emotional rights and wrongs are at stake.

I found myself in a complicated yet interesting thing last year. [There is a controversial development in the province], that was approved by the government. In order to expedite the development they created, through the government, a [local government] for that that area... allowing for the appointment of a mayor and council to expedite development. So, when the person who was appointed mayor ... as it turns out, is a person I have done some work with and have known for some years, and [with whom I] have a very respectful, and humorous, and sort of warm relationship with. And when we were together on that day, it really forced me to try and understand him in a way, that, because I respected and liked him so much and that human connection was there already, that I didn't have to say, 'how can I see this person as another person with their own world and understanding.' And that was a really difficult and interesting conversation. And I did find myself really wanting to know why he could do this, how he could do this, what he could believe about the economics, what he believed about the unhappiness of many of the First Nation people in the area, when I know that he is quite in tune with some of their work etc. And it left me very troubled at the end, for two reasons. One, because it is troubling. But also because, I really did listen and [try to] understand where he was coming from—enough to appreciate it (and I would say not change my views much at all). But, it [also] left me sort of disoriented, and wondering what had just happened...because I REALLY needed to understand him. I thought of that as a recent story for me where I am not trying to approach the enemy but approach a friend. But to understand such a big gulf. (Teleconference #2)

In this story the struggle Gary experienced comes through in his words, in his speech, and in the tension that he is describing. Holding dialogic space to listen creates uncertainty both in meaning and in relationship. Gary is actively resisting his own certitude of what is 'the truth' in this situation and holding open the possibility of stretching his horizon of understanding to see differently. This is an uncomfortable space to be in and yet it seems to be where the growth and emergence of new understanding is waiting for us.

### **Kerri**

Kerri's opening response to how she sees social justice and leadership in the world elicited, for her, thoughts about social justice and leadership taking place hand-in-hand.

Social justice is the goal of fairness or reducing oppression or reducing inequalities or inequity. And I think that work takes a lot of leadership: leadership with integrity; brave leadership. (Kerrie Call #1)

This idea of integrity and courage is a thread that has woven its way through these conversations. To act justly and to address issues of injustice takes courage. As I think about this statement, I am struck by its resonance within me. But then I wonder, 'why?' Why does being fair, reducing oppression and inequality require courage—are the normative discourses that seek to hold the status quo so strong?

Kerri demonstrates this courageous way of being. She brings, consistently through out our conversations, a perspective of social justice richly informed by her own experiences, including experiences of feeling without power and voice. Having walked in oppression, these experiences and relationships have shifted her understanding of the structures and language of oppression and also have brought her into a place of knowing the value of her own voice.

Well [there was] this idea that no one knows you better than you know yourself. And no one is as focused on your own self-interest than you. So, there is this idea that if you want to set goals or if you want to go somewhere in your life or you want to explore something or overcome something that, that, *that* is your job! And your co-counsellor is there to support you and listen and encourage but, they are not there to give you advice. They are a peer, they don't know any better than you. I did, for a time, go for counselling that I paid for but in that relationship, they know more, they are smarter, they are more qualified, you pay them... But peer to peer relationship is, 'hey, I am smart enough and powerful enough that, look, I can help this other person. Just the way they helped me.'

PENNY: Is there an egalitarianism in [the peer to peer counselling] that appealed to you?

KERRI: There was, there really was! At the time, though, it was really this idea that I wasn't helpless or powerless. I could give back the way the person gave to me. I could be as helpful to them as they were to me. And it wasn't just the egalitarianism; it was about the sense of power. I am not just coming to this person with all my problems and drama and misery. I am coming with that, and I am coming with the ability to listen to their problems, and to be clear about their strengths and encourage them where they are strong. I just didn't feel so much like the victim. So, there was something about the empowerment.

PENNY: So, how do you think that influenced your beliefs about social justice and how you saw that?

KERRI: [*pause*] There is another idea in co-counselling that we throw around a lot; this idea of, 'trust your own thinking.' I just find that useful, because I might have thought in the past, 'well, that is not fair' or 'that doesn't look right' or 'I don't think that

should be happening.’ But maybe I would be too afraid to really even notice I thought that, and I certainly wouldn’t think it out loud. But more and more with co-counselling, I felt strong enough to say that if I saw something I thought needed attention or wasn’t right or needed to be changed or was unfair I felt, ‘I can trust my own thinking and my thinking is good and it doesn’t matter that I don’t have any money, or I am not a man.’ (Kerri Call #7)

Kerri’s perspective and experience captures a view of understanding that arises within relationships that are safe, egalitarian, and non-judgmental. In this space, being treated fairly and justly provides a lived experience that becomes a place of to know and feel justice: A justice that is relational, is centred in looking after one another, is egalitarian, and believes each person has voice and their voice needs to be heard.

KERRI: I think justice and social justice is something we co-create. It happens with other people and, when you are open and clear and acting with integrity, you are more able to connect with others. I think we need joint decisions; we need to share our information, and we need to move forward together. When you are able to say ‘what are you interested in?’ ‘this is what am I interested in,’ what are your concerns?’ ‘these are my concerns,’ then you are clearer on where you are coming from, and then all of that co-creation is easier.

PENNY: It seems, as you are speaking, that in your own authenticity you are actually celebrating and seeking the humanity in the people you are with. So it is a humanizing.

KERRI: Yes that is nicely said. That is nicely said. Yes. (Kerri Call #8)

In this utterance, Kerri and I are co-creating an understanding of social justice and leadership that resonates for both of us. From conversations outside of our time together, from our deep listening to one another, and from our exploration through language the meaning of abstract ideas we come to a moment of agreement. ‘Seeking the humanity in the people you are with’ echoes with the words of Freire (2011), of our true vocation being to seek humanization. Kerri has articulated the stance from where this humanization of people occurs—an authentic, genuine, and deep care of ‘other.’

### **Kathy**

In our opening conversation with Kathy, her knowledge of social justice and the meanings she was holding were evident in the ease with which she spoke to a broad survey of the

social justice issues taking place in the world, and the underlying interconnections between them. She spoke of the work that Bill and Melinda Gates are doing as leaders to address poverty and health issues in Africa. She touched on current environmental issues such as the Northern Gateway pipeline in Canada. She explored the challenges faced by First Nation peoples in Canada. She queried the global measures of poverty, the differences in the ability of African and some European countries to address their internal challenges, and the responsibility of governments to be accountable for the social justice issues within their nations. She reflected on the role of leadership in many of the social movements such as the LGBTQ rights movement. Kathy believes in the need for leaders in social justice to be bold and outspoken.

As we explored together the making of meaning of what is justice, Kathy reflected on some of what has shifted for her over the years,

One thing that jumped out for me about [what is] just, is actually [how] it has changed for me over time. Which sounds surprising, I think. Because, I think when you start out when you are younger, everything is black or white. There isn't anything that is grey. It is either right or wrong. You are going to be indignant if it is one way or the other. You are going to be very, 'my way or the highway,' type of thinking. I think when I was much younger that was how I was. And, I have talked with you about my mom, how great I think she is in many ways. [It is] interesting seeing how I have continued to morph in what is just and my belief system. And it is interesting to see how my mom has remained the same. I think it has a lot to do with what has happened in her own life experience. Her view of what is just and what is right and what is socially justice, is very different from mine at this point. I find that interesting. It is almost like you need to work on yourself internally in order to move forward with not a superior view of what is just, but with a more complex view maybe. (Kathy Call #7)

Kathy touches on how one's life journey can bring an ability to see the complexity of social justice, rather than issues of stark contrasts. This reflection resonates with the observations of the other participants. With life experiences that have broadened understandings of difference an openness can develop to hear and to listen that reveal other ways of understanding situations. There is an echo in her words of the development of a way of

being built on beliefs that can be a bridge for both holding open and standing on 'my' ground.

Kathy further reflects that life experiences can disrupt beliefs or understanding. If 'my beliefs and understandings' can't hold the new information 'I' can shut out the new information or 'I' can hold it in a way that contains the chaos until 'I' can re-consider. Kathy continues,

KATHY: My life experiences, and having an open mind to accept new experiences, and to really think about it afterwards... to think about it instead of being closed to new experiences, being very open to that. And then, giving myself a chance to re-consider a position that I might have held.

PENNY: There is one theorist whom I have read and he talks about how we make sense of things and how we take events and we construct a story around them, and to some degrees, a narrative. And, we test that and then we use that to help us make sense. We are always trying to make sense.

KATHY: Yes!

PENNY: You are saying then, that we do that 'story making' almost as a coping or survival mechanism, because, if we let all the chaos in that can be in our lives, then you can't even function, really. And for you, you have this ability to hold open and experience more things and in some way you have a place for [these things] to sit without disrupting your whole life?

KATHY: Yes. (Kathy Call #7)

The effect of this research process on Kathy's thinking and understanding of social justice is a helpful reflection on the processes of meaning making. On our wrap up call

Kathy explains:

KATHY: For me, this process has been a great exercise in taking time to be more mindful about these topics. It has given me a sharper image of what it means as far as being a leader who leads with social justice in mind. Definitely it has given me a moment to pause, just to be introspective about how I developed into the person who I am today. I think to be a leader, you definitely need to lead with an empathetic view, a compassionate view of the world and of other people to understand that there is another side to every story, that people are carrying their own stuff and to be really aware of that. But, at the same time, to hold onto your convictions and to win people over, through what you believe to be the right path. So, it is looking at things through an empathetic lens.

PENNY: [In] this process then, did that become clearer to you or were there some triggers or questions in the process with us, that heightened that awareness more specifically?

KATHY: I don't think there were triggers as much as just deeper realizations of something that I think I have known for a while instinctively and intuitively. And so, I think it was just really a pause for thought and going, 'oh yeah,' that is how it works, that is how leaders of social justice who are effective are effective. It solidifies for me how, from my perspective, my beliefs haven't changed, my viewpoint hasn't changed, it has solidified things in a stronger way. So with each conversation, that has become more meaningful. (Kathy Call #8)

Kathy's comments highlight three learnings for me. The first is her affirmation of the connectedness and interplay between listening and understanding 'other,' while holding your own convictions. This dialogic principle has emerged as a learning for other participants as well. The second is the awareness of the mediating role played by empathy. Lynn Hunt (2008) identified empathy as a factor in the in the 1700's in the emergence of the attribution of human rights to 'others,' and Richard Johannesen (2000) identifies a connection between Martin Buber's 'I-Thou' and Nel Noddings's feminist 'ethic of care.' Social justice involves empathy, caring, and relationship.

The third learning is the value of being in relational conversation with 'others.' Kathy articulates the connection between understanding more deeply a concept or meaning, something she feels she instinctively or intuitively understands, with being in relationship through language. Her words 'deeper realizations' capture my attention. In dialogue theory there is the possibility of new meanings and understandings. In this research, I see this newness in a different way. It seems to be more a discovery of the nuances and contours of a concept that helps us to see it with more clarity, to hold it more closely, and to recognize it when we encounter it or live it out.

### **Dorrie**

Our first call with Dorrie captured, in her own words, the inherent belief she holds that social justice is present when we are in relationship with 'others' and when our interactions with people are dialogic. She thoughtfully expresses this with the following:

DORRIE: When I talk with people, I sit there and think about what they are saying, and I am hearing things where people are expressing fear, exasperation, and mistrust. [Those] themes of mistrust! And how often do we hear people say and reminisce about: 'where are those great leaders? where are the Trudeau's?' where are the Kennedy's?' Those kinds of reflections, of people searching and wanting somebody to rise up in that greatness, leading relationally through dialogue...all of that. So it is so broad.

So, how do I see social justice and leadership playing out in the world? All I have control over, I think, is what I do. In the little piece that I can manage, and hope that it leaves an impression.

We do a lot of talking. The world does a lot of talking. But, I think it is *how* we talk and *how* we listen. This world is so fast and the way we communicate through email and third party. And I think that is what is different, that sitting down and truly listening, truly being present with people when there is friction and tension. I think dialogue is... we have too many options for dialogue and it affects the quality of dialogue. You look at the use of email and it is avoidance when you send off a nasty undertone in an email. So, if you caught yourself, would you speak like that or listen like that if you were present one-on-one. So [we are] doing a lot of talking, and then the media magnifies it.

I know that I practice in terms of dialogue and leadership in my small sphere. I place a lot of importance and a lot of weight on that dialogue and on that relationship, I will stop all that I am doing if I get an email that I don't understand or the communication is conflictual or negative. I will stop what I am doing and pick up the phone or go and see the person.

CHRISTINE: So there is something about the voice to voice or the face-to-face?

DORRIE: Yes. The social justice piece for me is all of those purposeful things, the respect, the listening, the appreciating, the questioning, and the fairness.

So my leadership is around that very powerful belief I have, that, as leaders, this is the most important thing we do as leaders is not only serve others, but I think we need to nourish them as well. (Dorrie Call #1)

Dorrie begins her time with us from a place of clarity around the desire of people for great leadership and she quickly articulates that in the midst of people's need for this leadership, she sees her role to act in a way that, in her sphere of influence, honours, respects, and nourishes the people she lives life with. In her words we can hear the value she places on not just hearing the words that are being spoken but also the emotional tones that are being expressed. She is intentional in seeking out opportunities to more fully hear all that is being conveyed, beyond just the words being spoken or written. Dorrie has an ability to step over

the boundaries created by language, social, and cultural norms that have disconnect us from the people behind the words. She picks up the phone for voice-to-voice contact, she seeks out face-to-face opportunity, and by choosing to 'behold' the person, in the process gives them their humanity.

On our fourth call, she speaks of creating a space for everyone on her team to have voice, capturing, in my mind, a significant aspect of Dorrie's processual ways of engaging with others in creating justice.

I think I have established myself with respect, credibility, they [my staff] know, [I am] steadfast. So, that is the piece about 'all my actions match my meaning' and that gives tremendous credibility and I think, from that, and that relationship and that trust, they know and understand fairness, They know that they have voice. All the teams here have voice. If there is an experience where there is [a question of] fairness or justice, they know that they can come forward, they have the courage to come forward [and speak about it]. (Dorrie Call #4)

In this utterance, I hear language that speaks of self-awareness, an awareness of the beliefs and values that she holds herself accountable to, as well as a principle of fairness and giving of voice. From this stance Dorrie holds open space for people to come forward to speak and, in a subtle way is acknowledging the silencing that happens within our social settings, in this case, within an organization. She acts justly as she stands in contrast to the dominant narrative of hierarchy and power.

Part way through our research, a news media organization came to her place of work to explore the culture that Dorrie had created for person-centred care for people living with dementia. We explored with her, at the time, how she conveyed to them, her own leadership and social justice. Again, I hear in Dorrie's words how deeply she has developed her belief in the value of every person,

I don't think it was hard [to convey social justice], it was [evident] in just the walking about and the appreciative-ness for this [place] that we all dwell in and work in and live. I think the social justice piece was talked about around the value that is placed on everyone in this building. For me, that is a huge part of the social justice piece, it is not just about the residents, it is not just about the staff, it is not just about the families but, it is about thinking about everyone in the community and supporting everyone in the community. So we conveyed a strong social justice piece around

talking—[the interviewer] was asking about the various ways we attend to and respond to the staff—about taking care of the staff. So that whole piece around conditions of work. You know the conditions of work being the conditions of care. And also we talked about that reciprocity or that way we are able to tell stories about how—[the interviewer] loves narrative, so she wanted stories. So some of the stories and the ways we as a team work together to solve certain issues that affect everyone in the building. (Dorrie Call #6)

Our time reflecting on Buber and Freire's quotes, on our fifth call, sparked further reflection from Dorrie on the meanings she makes of social justice.

DORRIE: But I think that when I look at Buber's work and the piece of genuine dialogue 'no matter whether spoken'...I consciously try to do that, and that is the whole practice as a leader to listen to understand. That constant checking in, clarifying, and being careful of that monologue, that silent stuff that doesn't come out of your mouth but goes on in your head, the power of assumptions. And I am by no stretch of the imagination a saint, but I have learned and been humbled so many times by that danger they talk about, informing yourself through your own stuff and your own monologue and not entering that place of dialogue.

PENNY: Dorrie where do you think you started to learn that?

DORRIE: I think going back to what I talked to you about hearing the dialogue, listening to the dialogue at home and questioning it. I read a lot as a kid, and then that sensitivity and compassion, and curiosity, and then learning by trial and error. And I still do that, like everyone else, I form an opinion or I form a conclusion or an assumption and I have to work really hard and stand accountable and reflect when that starts chiming and carrying on in my head to help me understand the 'other.' And then to be so humbled when I have the opportunity to hear the other voice, or enter dialogue with people. You know that dialogue, we have such control over that dialogue as well, or our own self-dialogue and our dialogue with others. Again, around the power of language. If, you know, we continue to practice, and it is a practice, it is an art to use language that honours, and is inclusive, and expresses the willingness to partner, then I believe that it starts to inform your attitude and your way of being. (Dorrie Call #5)

Finally, in our wrap up call with Dorrie, I hear, in her words, a deepening of her awareness of where her meanings of social justice come from and the values that her emotional-volitional lived experiences rest upon.

[These] conversations have created for me, an opportunity to take the space, to stop and think about the things we talk about. [This process has given me] the privilege to have that door opened and it has given me permission to take the time to think and reflect. It has formalized for me a lot of things that were intuitive, that natural inclination around fairness, justice, dignity, respect, humanness, people. It has formalized it for me. Sort of a more wide-awake and, I think with that theme of [being] more awake, I hopefully will be more influential. [...] And I think braver. (Dorrie Call #8)

This utterance and reflection is wonderfully reflective of the words spoken by all of the research participants. The value of having the time and space created within the research process to explore more deeply their understandings of social justice and leadership and, to co-construct a broader horizon of understanding and meaning that comes from deep listening and reflection in relationship with ‘others.’

### **Jeff**

In our opening call Jeff reflects that the topic of leadership and social justice has been, for him a work focus over the past eight to nine years, rather than a personal focus. Working for an oil and gas company with operations in countries with poor human rights and environmental histories, he thinks of his role as being an influencer within the organization.

The work of social justice in this context means:

When I think of social justice and leadership, I have had a role where I was an influencer... in ‘how can the company I work for be a responsible player in the oil and gas industry? [Where we] do appropriate risk assessment [that ask] what are the social impacts and environmental impacts of planned operations and ongoing operations on host communities.’ So, it was around understanding the business imperatives of an oil and gas company, but also taking a long view, which is, ‘if a company pays close attention to environmental and social factors related to oil and gas development, it is also good for business.’ You want to find the sweet spot where it is good for business and good for host communities.

And also, helping the company understand that there will be situations where you don’t want to do business. There will be situations—pick a country, say Myanmar—where there may be fabulous opportunities in terms of, ‘really good rocks,’ as the geologist would say, but if you go back in time five to ten years ago in Myanmar, that would open you to all kinds of reputations risks that, in the long run, would not be beneficial to the company and its shareholders. (Jeff Call #1)

Jeff introduces us to the tensions that exist within the business narrative of doing business and understanding the risks involved in conducting business. As a leader who comes from a place of understanding social justice and human rights, Jeff seeks out language that translates and creates openings in the discourse and to influence decision-making. Jeff brings a centrifugal language force by finding words that bridge, in an acceptable way,

business and social justice. Words such as ‘the long view,’ and ‘reputational risk’ open up discourse space to understand the negative impacts for the company and its shareholders.

As we came into the middle of the research process, Jeff explored with us his reflections on the process thus far. We are on our fifth call with Jeff and the second group teleconference call had taken place shortly before this. Jeff admitted to us that he had been struggling on the last call and with our process.

When I agreed to participate in this process, and the conversation was around leadership and social justice, [I thought] each of us would have had our own mindset around what that is inside that box. What is inside that topic. And I guess my presumption was that it would be somewhat a more macro level. So when we talk about social justice, I think more around what are state responsibilities. And this stems from my experience with Amnesty. What, on a global basis, is happening around human rights, gender equality, any number of issues of inequality, maybe environmental issues. And the last call, in particular, and this process, in general, seems to be very much at a micro level, at an individual level. How do individuals approach—almost issues of right and wrong, of ethics, and of individual behaviour. And I am struggling at the micro level. I am feeling like this conversation and this process is around behaviour psychology. How do people make decisions? If you have an opportunity to make a decision that is ‘ethical,’ why is it that sometimes we make certain decisions and not others? Or why is it that we as individuals will sometimes stand up for what we believe in and sometimes won’t? I was struggling on the last call. I felt trapped in the micro, at the person... I wondered if I was in the right room. (Jeff Call #5)

Both Christine and I appreciated Jeff’s honesty with us. There was clearly a dissonance and discomfort for Jeff that our conversations, and the questions we were asking were creating. In this dissonance, the reflection by Jeff captures a significant difference in the ways we can conceptualize social justice and leadership. Does it lie ‘out there’ in the world where we can observe and make comments about it or does it lie in us and in our own story, informed by our lived experiences? Or is it both? As we experience the world, we make sense of the world, and then act into the time and space in which we find ourselves. There is, in Jeff’s comments, the presence of language forces within the social justice discourse that I encountered in the political science literature on social justice: issues of social justice are to be described, analyzed, and understood within the context of the structures of nation states and global governance structures.

On our final call, Jeff further reflects on how this process has impacted him and his thinking on social justice and leadership.

I think one of the insights or reflections was around social justice being closer to home rather than it being 'out there'. Particularly being 'outside Canada' and outside 'my world' or 'my circles.' So I think with my exposure to Amnesty International, that was very much an outward looking [perspective]. Amnesty does pay attention to issues in Canada: native women, indigenous peoples, rights of refugees in Canada and so on, but generally the greater part of their focus is external. So I think something this process led me to think about and reflect on, was the fact that one doesn't need to look far to find social justice issues, [they are] close at hand. So, you can interpret the news differently, a little bit differently than I might have three or four months ago. So that was one reflection.

Another was, I guess, around my own actions. While I was an employee of a corporation, there were times when I needed to 'keep my mouth shut.' I needed to separate my... for example my presence on social media. There might be some issue such as climate change or oil sands or indigenous peoples or human rights that I feel strongly about, but for those years I was also a company representative. And, so I was quite mindful of keeping a modest profile on social media and things like that, so that I wouldn't compromise my employer or myself. And that is really about working inside the system, rather than outside the system. So, through this process, it led me to reflect on, 'so what, if anything, do I do differently now that I am outside, I don't have a specific employer.' So, it has been to think a bit about that. Should I kick up my activism somewhat, where I have had some brakes on my activism in the past ten years or so? (Jeff Call #8)

Jeff's reflections make real for me the experience of segregating one's self into parts, a process that our organizational and social environments ask of us in some subtle and some not so subtle ways. We are asked to censor what we share or what we think when employed by an organization that guards its public presence carefully. This is an overt closing down of conversational space and intersubjective interactions in which ideas and meaning about justice can be explored openly. In his reflections, however, Jeff also highlights the role of deep conversation, in relationship with 'others,' that permits an opening up in our discourses the exploration of other meanings that are present but that have been silenced.

### **Landscape Four Summary**

The meanings we hold can come to us already shaped by our historical, social, cultural, and relational contexts. These meanings carry within them contestations and the circumstances

of our lives bring opportunities for us to hold these meanings as fixed or to hold them open to other possibilities that have become obscured. This fourth landscape of language, utterances, and meanings of social justice exposes the contestations encountered by the research participants and co-researchers and draws out from the conversations meanings of social justice that became visible through the research process.

There is an underlying complexity to our meaning making of social justice as the breadth and depth of our lived experiences accumulate over the years. We hear in these stories, echoes from earlier years and the impact of important 'others,' including our parents, on our thinking. In our travels we encounter people who have spoken into and influenced our belief structures. Our places of school and work have confronted our beliefs about what holds social value. The popular culture of music, film and media presents us with sets of beliefs. In our faith communities, we reconcile understandings that can seem, at times, to be discrepant understandings about the world and our place in that world.

The ideas the participants have encountered and the beliefs that they have developed over time, draw my attention to their ability to hold certitude within the ambiguity, and ambiguity within the certitude of 'what is just here.' The conversation of 'when I was younger, I saw black and white' and 'now I see grey,' captures a way of being that articulates this well. In these conversations I hear strong beliefs about honesty, love, integrity, fairness, diversity, dignity, the value of all perspectives, egalitarianism, human connection, and humility. Simultaneously, I hear a desire to remain open to understanding the perspectives of 'others' and to hear the expression of other meanings of what justice might mean in 'this' circumstance and at 'this' time.

The conversations that comprise this landscape also demonstrate the strength of language forces, which can impede one's ability to act justly. Societal and cultural norms show up in socio-ideological language or 'scripts,' that express a higher valuation of self-promotion, individualism, action, hierarchy, measurement, productivity, and objectification of

'other' that overpower language that values relationship, holism, and the humanization of 'other.' Contexts where these impeding language forces hold dominance, the ability to act based on strong core beliefs can be oppressed and silenced. The propelling emotional-volitional forces of one's beliefs seem insufficient within the circumstances of these dominant language forces.

The meanings of social justice that emerge in these conversations demonstrate the nuances and subtle shifts in understanding that occur when thoughtful and reflexive opportunities are provided to explore a concept deeply and openly. We hear a working out of meanings throughout the conversations; an unfinalizability of meaning that in part seems derived from holding many examples in one's mind as an understanding is articulated. Lex and Kerri both speak of holding a belief that every person holds elements of humanity, regardless of the acts of inhumanity they may have committed. Jessica holds a mindfulness of how the world works in balance with conversations about humanity and equality and entrepreneurship. Kerri reminds us of the courage required to address injustices. Both Dorrie and Lex articulate their role as leaders who lead justly, through creating the space for the voice of 'others' to be spoken and heard.

Gary arrives at a place of questioning the creation of polarities as a way forward on social justice issues, speaking to processes of reflection, of drawing on lived experiences, of deep commitment to the good for all people, and of an open stance towards relationships, understanding, and learning. Kathy's reflections on the conversations, and the meanings of social justice she has come to hold, reflect similar understandings and highlight how holding openness in relationships with 'others' allows deeper understandings of social justice to develop in her.

In these meanings for social justice, subtle shifts or openings in understanding become clearer. This is a group of people who hold significant amounts of knowledge on the many issues of social justice that are present in the world today. Their understanding of the

systemic structures and processes that exist nationally and globally to oppress and create inequality holds great value in a knowledge world. Jeff's conversations with us, as he reflects on his work environments, brings into our conversations this understanding of social justice as residing in the responsibility of nation states, and as being culturally situated. In these conversations, however, there is an expression of an understanding that 'who I am' and 'how I act' personally, is my responsibility. In suspending judgment, in letting go of wanting to be right 'we' can interact as human beings with one another. In this stance there lies uncertainty and ambiguity, and a stretching of horizons: all of which bring discomfort in a culture that promotes certitude.

### **Stories and Meanings Summary**

This chapter is a carefully curated collection of the conversations and the stories that emerged as we explored together with the research participants, the meanings that we make of social justice. The research was designed to create spaces for deep and thoughtful conversation in which the experiences that have shaped the understandings each person holds for what is socially just could be elicited, shared, explored, and reflexively considered. Dialogue theory provided the lens for both creating the space for relational conversations and the means by which to understand, to hear, and to experience the processual ways in which meaning of what is just is made.

My research questions guided me in both the research process and in the creation of these findings. The four landscapes provide alternative ways of listening to the stories and the conversations, while the research questions provide the viewfinder. My research questions also express my curiosity about the notion of a self-evident knowing of human rights and social justice and the stories and narratives that emerge as these leaders make meaning of what is socially just. The questions I hold carry an assumption that dialogic moments occur in the co-constituting of meanings. As I experience the conversations and the stories, in their re-telling as findings, I listen for the constituting language being drawn on

to create meanings of social justice, I watch for the constituting nature of the dialogic moments, and I attend to what the leaders bring that creates the possibility for these moments and the contexts in which these moments occur.

The first landscape tells the stories of early experiences and understanding of the presence of (in)justice in our world. These stories hold strong memories for the storyteller and in their re-telling evoke emotions and memories for both the teller and the listener. For some participants the early stories they shared were familiar to them—these were stories that had been told and remembered in other contexts. For other participants the stories were collections of memories attached to different situations, contexts, and relationships and not always attached definitively, prior to these conversations, to their awareness of social (in)justice.

In the early stories, we hear historical, social, and cultural contextualized times in which the dominant norms that define ‘other’ are challenged at a personal level and, for this group of leaders, ‘other’ begins to become ‘more like me.’ In re-visiting the stories, the contestation in language about the beliefs being held about one’s self and ‘others,’ about notions of similarity and differences become clearer. Ideas about who has voice and opportunity and who does not, and the jarring one feels when one’s beliefs became more explicit and are challenged by the circumstances being experienced, help to reveal these as processual currents in the making of meaning for what is socially just. Everyday events can re-order our sense of our social reality.

In the stories of making choices for acting and deciding in ways that are socially just, as told in the second landscape, the dynamic nature of meaning making in moments of lived experiences becomes apparent. Core values and beliefs about ‘other’ and about one’s relationships with ‘other’ become foundational in the moments of acting and deciding. In the midst of the language forces and utterances that are a part of our experiences, the just way forward becomes forged in the personal beliefs that provide the ground upon which one

stands: Ground that is firmly held yet responsive to the perspectives of 'other' to whom great value is given as a fellow human being. These core beliefs speak of a deep valuing of 'other' and of lives that are integrally whole and they contribute to a courageous capacity to cross boundaries and build bridges. These boundaries are not just the hard boundaries of nation states, they are also the boundaries that give a feeling of structure to our social worlds: Boundaries created by ideas, by socio-economics, by roles, by social norms, and by organizations and social institutions.

As hoped, moments of dialogue arose in the relational spaces created in the research process between the participants and the co-researchers. These relational spaces are seen in the third landscape, as those who are involved in the conversation open up to ideas and meanings that are striking them in the conversations and linger with them afterwards. Constituting moves for dialogic moments come in the vulnerability that each person brought, in the triggering of reflexive ideas by deeply curious questions, and in the openness and willingness to explore one's own beliefs. Words used to describe these moments include responsiveness, sensing of openness, visceral, respectful, turning to, deeper realization, choosing, listening deeply, humility, and curiosity. Linguistic turns and discursive moves come in the willingness to explore what is jarring in the ideas we are hearing, in the willingness to actively be a part of drawing out the ideas being spoken while holding them in a spirit of possibility rather than judgment, and in being open to the unfinalizableness of our meanings as we see the free flow of ideas between conversations over time.

In the fourth landscape, the language, utterances, and meanings that have been drawn from lived experiences are shared and explored. The underlying complexity to our meanings of social justice can be heard in the language and ideas spoken out by the research participants. Processually, there is a deepening understanding of all that lies within our meaning making of social justice. The idea that 'when I was younger, I saw black and

white' and 'now I see grey' captures the evolving and indeterminate nature of our understandings. The words the participants use, speak to the interplay of the beliefs about others, of understanding oneself, of the issues of social justice in the world today, of lived experiences, of what the language of my world is telling me, and of the personal responsibility each of them holds for carrying a sense of justice into their relationships on a daily basis. The conversations in this landscape also demonstrate the strength of societal and cultural norms, which lie within the language forces we encounter. There exists in our logosphere beliefs and understandings that can impede our ability to act in ways that are just, leading to experiences of oppression and silencing.

In the next chapter I draw conclusions based on the findings presented in this chapter and in response to the research questions that prompted me on this journey. I also offer ideas on the contribution this research makes to the fields of social justice and dialogue theory, and make suggestions for further research.

## Chapter Five Conclusion

I began my doctoral journey with a deep curiosity about how leaders make meaning of what is socially just when engaged in processes of making decisions. Through the lens of dialogue theory, this research demonstrates how our meanings of social justice evolve and how they arise in relationship and through our lived experiences. In both the relationships we form and in the language of our historical, social, and cultural contexts, meanings come to us, and we draw on them in the moments of acting. In engaging with this small group of leaders who think about social justice in the world and in their own actions and decisions, we see how their stories, narratives, and lived experiences contribute to their understandings and meanings of what is just.

The research questions posed in chapter one focused my attention on the processual movements through which meanings of social justice are made. The research design made these processes visible; how we draw from our lived experience and how we co-create meanings for social justice as we are in relationship with 'others.' In chapter four, I present the findings through four landscapes. All four landscapes encircle the research questions. By foregrounding the stories, choices, dialogic moments, and the language and utterances these leaders have encountered in their journeys, we hear the contestations and the foundational beliefs upon which their meanings for social justice stand. Through their stories, each leader's understandings of 'other' and 'self' became evident. The opportunities for deep conversations serve to make visible the constituting moves and practices that foster dialogic encounters. Through the stories, the contexts and language that foster and constrain dialogic moments and acting justly, become evident.

The leaders who participated in the research demonstrate four processual patterns or practices as they make meaning of what is socially just. The first pattern is the capacity and intent to create relational space. The research process was designed around a set of

practices that invites others to engage in meaningful conversation and provide a space where one feels trust. Creating this space requires personal connection and an overcoming of the social and cultural ways of being that can, at times, create relational distance. As the researchers and hosts for the conversations, Christine and I consciously attended to our own self-awareness, remaining sensitive to how we held ourselves open in the midst of the conversations. As we modeled this way of being, the research participants responded by sharing personal and intimate stories with us. The pattern of openness that we brought into the process fostered the possibility of an open stance for each of the participants. To be clear, our stance held an invitation. Each person held his or her own capacity to be open. Together, however, we responded to one another's openness and a space of possibility opened up for being in relationship as 'I' to the 'others' 'Thou.'

What did the leaders, as the constituters of meaning in this research, bring to the creation of this relational space? Several words come to mind for me as I reflect on the stories that were shared, the people I came to know in this research, and the relational practices that I saw and experienced. They brought a curiosity about others, about the world, and about themselves. Each leader brought a willingness to reflect, to examine and re-examine their own thoughts and actions and, in the process, heightened their awareness of 'others' and of themselves. This willingness to reflect and to be reflexive included being open to the turmoil that often accompanied the process. Changing one's understandings discombobulates, bringing with it an uncomfortable and disorienting chaos.

The appreciative inquiry practice of asking questions to elicit stories revealed a second processual pattern the leaders demonstrate: we have stories to tell and in the telling of our stories the strong memories, which have contributed to our beliefs about our 'self' and about 'others,' are made visible. Our stories, as we tell them to others, re-connect us in the present with the beliefs we have acted on in the past. They remind us of what we have learned, re-familiarize us with the feeling of acting in socially just ways, propel us forward to

reflect upon and learn in new ways what social justice means in our present context, and re-invite us to respond as listeners to the stories of 'others.' In the telling of and listening to stories, lies the possibility of encountering understandings of our own beliefs that exist beyond our current horizons.

Deep listening and responsiveness to 'other' and the stories they tell draw us deeper into a process of co-constructing understanding for what is just in the present. The co-construction of understanding is not, however, held only to a moment. It is reflected upon openly, deeply, and reflexively over time; stretching, deepening, and challenging our understanding of our self and of what is socially just. There is a personal capacity the leaders involved in this research demonstrate in their ability to hold both the tension and ambiguity in understanding the perspectives of 'others.' In this processual making of meaning, horizons of understanding change, they broaden, deepen, and in Gadamer's words, they become fused with other understandings and the understandings of 'others.'

Boundary crossing is the third pattern reflected in the lived experiences of the leaders. Crossing boundaries has fostered in these leaders a deep awareness of difference, diversity, and the presence of many perspectives. What once seemed black and white in terms of the right way to understand issues of social justice have become greyer with time and experience. The socially just way forward begins to be less about holding certitude of 'a' truth; it becomes, instead, a capacity to hold ambiguity and uncertainty grounded in understandings that other perspectives need to be heard.

Lived experiences in different social and cultural settings contribute to an ability to see different worlds. Experiences of boundary crossing can be as simple as moving from one part of a country to another; however, they can also include gender, socioeconomic, socio-ideological, organizational, and national boundaries. In subtle ways, boundary crossings help us see how our social worlds are co-constituted and we understand the attribution of values to certain beliefs and ways of being in relationship with others. There is

a humbleness that the leaders, as boundary crossers, have developed. They bring openness to 'others,' seeing 'others' as holders of understandings and, in humility they level any personal and positional power gradients, creating instead, a sense of egalitarianism.

The leaders participating in our research, who think about acting justly, act with courage as they take stances that are at odds with the normative discourses of their context. As leaders who act justly, they step across boundaries established by normative discourses about 'other' and about what is held as 'truth.' These experiences deepen their belief in the inherent value of every human being: a belief that has been stretched, tested, and challenged many times by the social, cultural, and language contexts in which they find themselves.

The fourth pattern evident from this research is the ability of the leaders to hold ambiguity. The contexts in which they have found themselves are revealed in language. It is in language that meanings are contested. We live in a world of many meanings and understandings. Throughout the conversations there always seemed to be hovering nearby the cacophony of words describing acts of justice and injustice and the 'truths' of what is right and what is wrong in the world. These meanings can feel like an onslaught—it takes effort to sift through it and to fight against feeling overwhelmed. As a result there is often a temptation to close one's self off to the understandings about what is just and unjust that swirl around us.

In initially framing my research, I posed a philosophical question regarding where the knowing of human rights and their expression in social justice arise? Is it an intrinsic condition of being human to know this truth of social justice, or does the knowing pre-exist an individual's subjective understanding by its presence in our language, cultural, social and historical context and utterances? This research does not directly answer this question; however, I hear in the conversations a 'yes' and a 'yes.' There are beliefs expressed, in the conversations, of the capacity for love and generosity that exists in each person.

Opportunities come to us where we can choose to act from a place of love. There were also, in the stories told, encounters with beliefs and understandings that are ‘taken in’ from our lived experiences, suggesting this knowing of human rights and social justice pre-exist one’s understanding of it. Lex’s story of the influence a girlfriend had on his understanding of gender inequality, Dorrie’s community’s script about the children from the residential school, and Kerri’s story of learning that Jesus loved everyone, reflect understandings that existed before they encountered them.

The influence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, written in the late 1940s, is heard in the stories told in this research: the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the ongoing women’s and gender rights movement, the rights presently being fought for those who identify as lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgendered, the increased awareness of the rights of First Nations and Indigenous peoples, environmental and cultural rights, and the rights of migrant people, are all made reference to throughout the research conversations. All of the participants and both of the researchers grew up in a world and in cultures that have been continually redefined by human rights activism and the resulting waves of rights movements. This era of human rights ushered in by the UDHR has strongly shaped the historical, social, and cultural context in which these leaders live and their beliefs in the inherent value of each human being.

What becomes clear, is that our understandings of social justice continue to be shaped and these understandings become co-constructed in our relationships with ‘others.’ We draw on our lived experiences to make meaning and to make sense. The stories we tell one another contain the meanings we are making from our lived experiences and they carry on into lived experiences that are yet to come: not in a static or fixed sense but in an enriched and more deeply connected way as ‘I’ fuse my understandings and meaning with others. We are jarred by our encounters with ‘others’ and the meanings and understandings they bear of ‘what is just’ and, in the jarring we see ‘other’ and we see ourselves, we see

their world, thus we see our world in a different way. Our stories expand, our horizons of understandings fuse, and our understandings are stretched. We act on those deepened understandings in new ways and in our acting we are transformed and we, in turn, transform our world.

My research brings dialogue theory alongside understandings of social justice and demonstrates how the elements of dialogue theory can be applied to illuminate processual meaning making in the movements of understanding that take place in language and in relationships. Stanley Deetz speaks of the linguistic turn in social theory and the contesting for meanings, of the importance of recovering in our meanings the conflict and indeterminacy from which they have arisen. This research contributes to the uncovering of contestations in our meanings of social justice, attuning our ears to listen for the utterances in which these meanings are expressed. Mikhail Bakhtin speaks of the traces of meanings that are present in the words we speak, carried with us from previous utterances and carried forward into future utterances. In this research, we see how storytelling can reveal moments where dominant social and cultural understandings are contested, and where the underlying beliefs about the world and about 'others' are re-shaped and carried into future utterances.

Early in my own process of preparing to undertake the research, I faced a decision of choosing a theoretical frame. In choosing dialogue theory, I was able to draw on the work of a number of theorists and their work provided an abundance of concepts for me to illuminate the experiences shared by the research participants. As I journeyed through the landscapes elicited through this research process and came to know my fellow travellers and their stories, a realization came to me: Dialogue is ontologically and epistemologically socially just. 'Being' in relationship with 'other' and language as understanding is a theoretical stance declarative of valuing 'other' and 'other' understandings. In dialogue, 'other' is human and has voice: dialogue humanizes. The dialogic movements of openness, of turning towards, of withholding judgment, of being curious, of deep listening, of being self aware, of using

language to constitute meaning and understanding, all contribute to the creation of relational space and time in which all voices are heard and none are silenced. This brings to my mind more clearly one of the hopes of dialogue theory; that in the process, new meanings are produced and new possibilities of understanding social justice are reached for.

In reflecting on the opening questions that held my research frame and from which I listened, explored, and thought about the meanings leaders make of what is socially just, I return to my starting point: The meanings we hold of social justice are made visible in the acts and decisions we make within our social settings. In the praxis and in the moments of acting, these meanings continue to deepen, to broaden, and to be challenged through our lived experiences. Taking a dialogic approach to the research held me in a stance of readiness to see diversity in the journeys each person has taken, and to hold open to the possibilities of the understandings in all that lay before me. It would be contrary to the ontology of dialogue to attempt to conclude with a meaning for what is socially just, and it is this tendency towards reductionism and domination that I wish to resist. Our meanings of what is socially just are processually created in context through language and relationships and by drawing on lived experiences. The understandings that a person draws from their historical-social-cultural-intersubjective context are the understandings that contribute to their capacity to understand and act in ways that are socially just.

A final observation that the research highlights for me is the unfinished nature of a person's journey to be socially just. Each person who participated in this research did not experience an arrival at a destination called 'being just.' Their understandings of 'what is just' continue to come out of their lived experiences and their deepening understandings of 'being just' carries on into future lived experiences. It is a journey; a journey made up of experiencing diverse contexts and in those contexts, seeing the moments in which choices are made to see, to hear, and to be in relationship with 'other.' The small choices we make each day are the ones that develop our capacity to make meaning with 'other,' and build a

capacity to be socially just. Social justice is not about being right or wrong, it is about being aware and being open to what 'others' hold. And most fundamentally it is a sacred act of love for 'other.'

## **Applications of the Research**

This research offers a perspective for leaders who are curious about leading from a place of social justice and for individuals who are invited into coaching or mentoring other leaders. For leaders who are curious about leading in socially just ways, the research suggests that there is value in exploring the stories you hold from your lived experiences. Reflexively considering your moments of being jarred, contemplating the beliefs that you hold and are developing about 'others,' becoming attuned to the utterances that exist in the language in your world will serve to re-open the indeterminacy of meanings. Stories from lived experiences make visible the dynamic struggle that a stance of knowing what 'I' stand upon while holding open to 'others' entails—it is not a position that is held perfectly. There are stumbles, yet the capacity for the possibility of this stance gives hope for social justice in our choices as we act and make decisions.

For individuals who coach and mentor others in thinking about how to be socially just, the process of inquiry applied in this research provides a number of approaches that may be helpful. First, this research would suggest that there is value in helping others reflect upon the nature of the relational spaces they create. Attending to the relational space you, as coach and mentor, create is an important part of building a foundation from which understandings can be explored. Your own stance can model trust and vulnerability and be an invitation to others to join the conversation.

Secondly, eliciting stories of acting justly illuminates the currents of social and cultural narratives that permeate our lived experiences. Becoming attuned to the moments of being jarred can awaken realizations that the world is no longer 'how I thought it was.' The jarring may elicit strong memories and emotions in the present and establish practices

for acting in socially just ways in the future—these strong memories become carriers of meaning making. The memories and emotions we gather from our lived experience replay in the re-telling and become ‘what I know’ and ‘what I stand on.’ As a coach or mentor, the fundamental questions that continue to arise about ‘who is human like me,’ ‘why are they treated differently,’ and ‘why do those who are close to me or ‘like me’ think that this is okay?’ can be more deeply explored.

For leaders, coaches, and mentors, reflexive processes can elicit connections between lived experiences and deeply held beliefs. Conversations over time create an ethos of reflexivity and become a place to examine decisions and choices as they are taking place in real time and in between the conversations, creating action-learning opportunities. In our situatedness, there are language forces in play that are working to hold dominant and fixed notions of how to be. These centripetal language forces can constrain and impede acting justly. In this research these centripetal forces appeared in the valuing of being busy, a high valuation of action over reflection that severs the authentic word, institutionalized notions of ‘other,’ hierarchy, silencing of voices, and the absence of opportunity to foster relationships. The inquiry approach used in this research incorporated reflexivity as a way to open up space in which choices being made could be explicitly explored. Further work could be done to explore how leaders resist the language forces that impede acting justly.

The language forces and the masked contestations that exist in our natural environments can be further explored and broadened by seeking opportunities to step out of one’s own social and cultural settings. The stories told in this research reveal how boundary crossings become an important process of making sense of what is socially just. Crossing boundaries can seed different understandings of what is just and reveal the understanding of those around me in my own social and cultural situatedness. Specifically, beliefs about the value and humanity of ‘other’ become clearer, more grounded, and firmer. ‘I’ see others in a different way and ‘I’ am now different, perhaps, even transformed. The dialogic stance

of knowing on what I stand (or believe) while remaining open to 'other' and exploring this over time in a coaching or mentoring relationship can help hold open the dissonance in meanings, thereby giving opportunity to see, hear, and understand what is being contested.

The inquiry approach used in this research also makes a contribution to methodologies and methods that support dialogue research. Dialogue theory, in the expectations it holds of moments, 'I-thou' relationships, and the possibility of meaning creation, is well theorized. Creating processes for holding relational space and taking the time to foster dialogue that allows for the opportunity to hear the heteroglossia of meanings a diverse group of people bring with them is challenging. Researchers and other practitioners who bring dialogue theory into their work, may benefit from drawing on the processes used in this research: processes that incorporate invitation, engagement, storytelling, reflexivity, and creating relational spaces. It is in these processes that dialogue theory comes to life, making more explicit the processes of meaning making that can remain hidden in our internal, and often disjointed, fractured, and isolated or 'I-It' understandings.

## **Future Research**

This journey in understanding how we make meaning of 'what is socially just' in the moment of acting and deciding offers a number of possible directions for future research. The principles of participatory action research would point me towards re-connecting with the participants in this research and inviting them to explore what has been written in this dissertation, as well as engaging with them in understanding how their own thinking and actions have shifted in the time since they were a part of this research. The questions to explore might include: What moments have they encountered since? How have they made meaning of what is socially just? What do they understand now about social justice and leadership, and how have these experiences changed 'what they stand on?' Being a

participant in this research process has hopefully laid a foundation for iterative loops of exploration that builds on the trust established in our time together.

Replicating the processes in this research, it would be illuminating to work with a second group of leaders to explore their lived experiences and meaning makings, not to work toward creating a construct for what is social justice, but to invite greater diversity into how our understandings of social justice are constituted, and to refine the process itself. I am curious about the use of different opening questions to the conversations and how we might convene more group conversations. Several of the participants in this research process expressed an interest in being able to have in-person time with the other members of the group. Conversations generated in a face-to-face and group format would multiply the opportunity to co-create meanings significantly.

Applying this research within an organization that is seeking to encourage their leaders to act and decide in socially just ways would be another possible direction. Exploring the dominant discourses and the competing value systems, creating space for hearing diverse perspectives, and sharing learning experiences through boundary crossing might deepen the capacity to make just decisions together. Building relational space that is safe within an organization could create greater capacity to make meaning of what is socially just collectively, both internally and with the communities impacted by the work.

And finally a hope... I am hopeful that this research will foster courage in all who encounter it, courage to stand with the oppressed and to see humanity in every person they encounter.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Documents Supporting the Invitation to Participate in the Research Process

### Letter of Invitation to the Research



a place of mind  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences  
Okanagan Campus  
Community, Culture and Global Studies  
Arts Building, 270 – 3333 University Way  
Kelowna, BC Canada V1V 1V7

Date: January 6<sup>th</sup> 2014

Dear

#### **Re: Research on Relational Leadership and Leaders and Social Justice**

This letter is an invitation to you to participate in a research process on the relationship between leadership practices and socially just outcomes. As a leader in these two arenas, your name came to mind and I thought you may be interested in learning more about this opportunity. The research will explore two questions:

- To explore the meaning that leaders construct for leadership and social justice when they are engaged with others as part of their work. For the purposes of this research, participants will be asked to explore their leadership with the researchers and the other research participants and their experiences in seeking socially just outcomes for their decisions and actions
- To explore how each participant sees themselves in relationship to their intention to engage in socially aware and responsible leadership practices.

The research is being conducted by myself and my colleague \_\_\_\_\_. We are both engaged in this research to complete the requirements for the degree of PhD. Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. The research will be the basis for two dissertations.

The expected duration of the research, for you as a participant, is 4 to 6 months. The initial 3 to 4 months will require your participation in the research process and months 5 and 6 will be focused on working with the researchers to better understand the stories and themes that arise throughout the research. On average you will contribute 6 - 7 hours a month during the first 3 – 4 months and 4 hours a month for the last 2 months. Your participation in the first 3 – 4 months will include:

- One hour interviews, averaging 2 times per month
- Group teleconference with the researchers and other research participants, no more than 2 sessions a month for 1.5 hours
- Online group forums with the researchers and the other participants (approximately 1 – 2 times per month approximately 30 minutes each time), and

- Writing in an online journal once per week (approximately 15 minutes an entry).  
Only the individual and the researchers would access this journal

In months 5 and 6 your participation would involve contributing to the work of the researchers as they summarize and write up the stories and narratives for the dissertation writing process (approximately 4 hours a month).

The research process includes gathering of stories and discussion through the mediums identified above. Group discussions and interviews will be audio recorded. The online entries will form part of the research data as well.

The benefits of participating include the opportunity to further develop your understanding of your own leadership and to explore your assumptions about both leadership and social justice. You have the opportunity to contribute your lived experience to inform the understanding of others and to be changed in your own understanding as you interact with each other.

**If you are interested in becoming a participant in this research on Relational Leadership and Leaders and Social Justice, please contact me directly:**

[Deleted]

You may also contact the members of our supervisory committee for further information on the study or to discuss possible ethical issues in the research:

[Deleted]

Your thoughtful consideration of this opportunity is appreciated.

Sincerely,

## Research Participation Overview



a place of mind  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences  
Okanagan Campus  
Community, Culture and Global Studies  
Arts Building, 270 – 3333 University Way  
Kelowna, BC Canada V1V 1V7

### **Relational Leadership and Leaders and Social Justice**

We are taking an interpretive and participatory research approach to our questions of the meanings for social justice that leaders construct in engagement with ‘other’ and the role of self in relationship to socially aware and responsible leadership practices and how identity is co-constructed.

The research addresses two questions and will be the basis for two dissertations:

- To explore the meaning that leaders construct for leadership and social justice when they are engaged with ‘others’ as part of their work. For the purposes of this research, participants will be asked to explore their leadership with the researchers and the other research participants and their experiences in seeking socially just outcomes for their decisions and actions
- To explore how each participant sees themselves in relationship to their intention to engage in socially aware and responsible leadership practices.

As discussed, your involvement in this research process will include the building of a relationship with us and with the other individuals who have agreed to participate. We recognize the demands on everyone’s time and will work with you to maintain boundaries around your participation. The expected duration of the research, for you, is 4 to 6 months. The initial 3 to 4 months will require your participation in the research process and the last 1 – 2 months will be focused on working with the researchers to better understand the stories and themes that arise throughout the research. On average you will be asked to contribute 6 - 7 hours a month during the first 3 – 4 months and approximately 4 hours a month for the last 2 months. Your participation will include:

- One hour interviews, averaging 2 times per month
- Group teleconference with the researchers and other research participants, no more than 2 sessions a month for 1.5 hours
- Online group forums with the researchers and the other participants (approximately 1 – 2 times per month approximately 30 minutes each time)
- Writing in an online journal once per week (approximately 15 minutes an entry). Only the individual and the researchers would access this journal
- Contributing to the work of the researchers as they summarize and write up the stories and narratives for the dissertation writing process (approximately 4 hours a month in month 5 and 6)

The following principles will provide a beginning foundation for our relationship throughout the research process:

- The research process is a short-term, interactive and professional relationship. It is

designed to emerge our understandings of social justice, leadership and leadership development

- The research process is a co-created and equal partnership between you, the researchers and the other research participants.
- You have free will. All of your participation is yours to determine. We will be available to support you and to foster dialogue through questions, listening and reflexivity. We hope that you will engage fully with us and the other participants throughout the research process.
- You are free to leave the research process at anytime. We ask that you make explicit your leaving to us and the other participants so that we can express to you the contribution you have made and the knowledge and understanding that you will be taking with you.
- You will be asked to keep confidential the information and the content of the discussions that would be attributable to an individual who is participating in the research process.

Some ground rules:

- If it is necessary to cancel a one on two session that has been scheduled, please give us as much advance warning as possible
- When you participate please try to minimize distractions in your environment (i.e., turn off emails, close doors).
- We commit to developing an open, honest and collaborative relationship with you and to creating an environment that supports exploration
- In each engagement of the research process, please listen carefully and ask questions to provoke awareness and understanding
- Give us feedback.

## Third Party Letter of Invitation



**a place of mind**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Erving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences  
Okanagan Campus  
Community, Culture and Global Studies  
Arts Building, 270 – 3333 University Way  
Kelowna, BC Canada V1V 1V7

Date: January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Dear

### **Re: Research on Relational Leadership and Leaders and Social Justice**

This letter is an invitation to you to participate in a research process on the relationship between leadership practices and socially just outcomes. As a leader in these two arenas, your name came to mind and I thought you may be interested in learning more about this opportunity. The research addresses two questions:

- To explore the meaning that leaders construct for leadership and social justice when they are engaged with 'others' as part of their work. For the purposes of this research, participants will be asked to explore their leadership with the researchers and the other research participants and their experiences in seeking socially just outcomes for their decisions and actions
- To explore how each participant sees themselves in relationship to their intention to engage in socially aware and responsible leadership practices.

The two student researchers, Christine Bonney and Penny Lane, are engaging in this research to complete the requirements for the degree of PhD. Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of British Columbia Okanagan.

The expected duration of the research, for the participant, is 4 to 6 months. The initial 3 to 4 months will require your participation in the research process and the last 1 – 2 months will be focused on working with the researchers to better understand the stories and themes that arise throughout the research. On average you will contribute 6 - 7 hours a month during the first 3 – 4 months and 4 hours a month for the last 2 months. Your participation will include:

- One hour interviews, averaging 2 times per month
- Group teleconference with the researchers and other research participants, no more than 2 sessions a month for 1.5 hours
- Online group forums with the researchers and the other participants (approximately 1 – 2 times per month approximately 30 minutes each time)
- Writing in an online journal once per week (approximately 15 minutes an entry). Only the individual and the researchers would access this journal
- Contributing to the work of the researchers as they summarize and write up the

stories and narratives for the dissertation writing process (approximately 4 hours a month in month 5 and 6)

The research process includes gathering of stories and discussion through the mediums identified above. Group discussions and interviews will be audio recorded. The online entries will form part of the research data as well. The website developed for this research will meet security, confidentiality and privacy requirements. Each participant will have a unique user name and an encrypted password. It will be on a Canadian based server and the researchers will administer the site.

The benefits of participating include the opportunity to further develop your understanding of your own leadership and to explore your assumptions about both leadership and social justice. You have the opportunity to contribute your lived experience to inform the understanding of others and to be changed in your own understanding as you interact with each other.

**If you are interested in becoming a participant in this research on Relational Leadership and Leaders and Social Justice, please contact directly:**

[Deleted]

You may also contact the members of their supervisory committee for further information on the study or to discuss possible ethical issues in the research:

[Deleted]

Your thoughtful consideration of this opportunity is appreciated.

Sincerely,

## **Appendix 2 Opening Questions for the Research Conversations**

### **Call #1 Introductory Email to Participants (Co-facilitated)**

On our first call we will walk through the website technology (i.e., personal profile, discussion forum, and journal entry) and begin our conversation on leadership and social justice. We are interested in knowing a little bit about how you see both leadership and social justice playing out in the world today. What are you noticing and what are you thinking about what you're seeing?

### **Call #2 Leaders Who Have Influenced (Christine Bonney Lead Facilitator)**

We have our individual coaching call in the early part of next week. To begin, I'll be chatting with you a bit about your journal post and then we'll move into to our next conversation. We'll be looking at influential leaders in your life. To that end we have the following questions. These are simply for reflection and so you know the focus of the conversation. No need to journal before the call unless you feel inspired...

Our experiences with other leaders have influenced our way of being as leaders. Tell me a story about a leader that you have been directly involved with whose leadership has held foremost social justice concerns and has been inspirational for you. What were/are the practices that were most meaningful to you? What was the impact on you? What was the impact on others?

Similarly, tell me a story about a leader that you have been directly involved with that has not demonstrated care for others. What were the practices that were challenging for you? How have you allowed that to influence your leadership practice? What was the impact of this kind of leadership on you and on others? How did these leadership practices fit with the social and cultural narratives at play?

### **Call #3 Exploring Experiences of Acting Justly (Facilitated by Penny Lane)**

We have our third call coming up and on this call I will be taking the lead and Christine will be listening in. To begin our call, we will talk a little bit about your journal post(s) and then

we will move into the next conversation. This time we will be talking about your own experience(s) in acting justly. To help you prepare for the call, we have a few questions for you to be thinking about. Again there is no need to journal in advance of the call, as we will be posting a follow-up question in your journal as a prompt for you.

Here is the question:

In the doing of our work and also in the doing of life, there are times when we find ourselves in situations and events where the outcome has significant impact for ourselves and for others. Often the 'way to go' is not clear or straightforward. Tell me a story of a time in your life where what you did and the decision(s) made or the influence you had impacted significantly or made a difference in the lives of others. What guided you in the experience? How do/ did you feel about the outcome for yourself and for the others who were involved?

Similarly, is there a situation that you were a part of, and in which you held some level of authority or influence, and you find yourself revisiting it and questioning if there was something different that you could have done for a more just outcome?

### **Teleconference Call #1 Plurality and Every Day Violence**

Next week we will be hosting our first group conversation as part of the research process. As we have mentioned in our individual conversations with you, we created a process for our research that would allow us to adapt to what emerges as we interact with one another. Your postings on the web site, our one-on-one (or two) conversations, and the group teleconferences are all important processes for us to hear from you and interact with you around the ideas that emerge. We are anticipating a great conversation.

To prepare the ground for the first teleconference we are sending you two articles. The first is a very short article from the Globe and Mail on the Aga Khan (2013) and the idea of plurality. It is a very easy read. The second is an article that we have found to be very thought provoking about the everyday violence that exists in societies. This article (by Nancy Scheper-Hughes 2002), while it touches on theoretical perspectives, also contains some

interesting concepts and case studies. Both articles will help set the container for our conversation next week. We will post these articles on the web site as well.

The outline of the call will be as follows:

1. Introductions and check-in question (what do you hope to get from your involvement in this process) (20 minutes). Christine Bonney Facilitator.
2. Principles or Commitments for the group conversation (10 minutes). Christine Bonney Facilitator.
3. Conversation on the articles - grounded by a question that will hold the space (45 minutes). Penny Lane Facilitator.

Discussion on Readings:

What was most meaningful to you in the two articles? What ideas or awareness did the articles raise for you?

What struck or unsettled you from the articles? (i.e., Scheper-Hughes uses some strong language in her article...what struck you about the concept she raises such as basic strangeness, bystander effect, everyday violence?)

In your own life situations, do you find yourself critically assessing the past, the organizational or contextualized narratives around you, the language you use, or the voices that are silenced or marginalized?

If we were to pay attention to the culture/ society/ organizations that we are a part of, what everyday violence might we see that is 'right before our eyes'?

How does your own journey, as a leader who seeks what is just, inform your perspective on the Aga Khan's call for protecting plurality?

4. Wrap up - what practices did you see yourself and others use that helped foster dialogue (15 minutes). Penny Lane Facilitator.

**Call #4 The Basic Practical-Moral Problem (Facilitated by Christine Bonney)**

I'm looking forward to our call tomorrow. In studying leadership over the past few years I have come to see it as a process of thinking about ourselves, our actions and reflecting on the situations that we find ourselves in. It seems to me to be about learning to deal with challenges, thinking critically, trying to see situations in new ways, dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity and learning from experiences and mistakes. Quite different, I think, from the more classical perspectives on leadership. The following quote seems to capture quite eloquently the centre of this kind of thinking...

"The basic practical-moral problem in life is not *what to do*, but instead *what kind of person to be*." (Shotter and Cunliffe 2002:20).

In preparation for our session could you reflect on this statement?

### **Teleconference Call #2 Exploring 'Other' (Facilitated by Penny Lane)**

Outline for the call...

#### 1. Opening Comments-

When we first talked with you we highlighted that we are taking an interpretive and participatory approach to our research. The interpretive approach reflects our belief that there are many ways to experience and understand what is happening both in us, in others and in the world around us, as we live. What we are listening for is the ways you bring meaning to your experiences and what you draw on to make those meanings.

The participatory approach is an invitation to you, as participants in this process, to be open to what is being said and elicit the meanings and understandings that are emerging for you. You will hear things differently than we do and we are interested in those differences as these will lead us to the production of meaning rather than the reproduction of what each of us carry.

#### 2. Introductions and Check in (What are the insights you have had to date in the research process and in what way has that influenced your being with others?)

#### 3. Responding to a prompting question –

"What encounter have you recently had with someone who sees things differently than you do, and those differences created a challenge for you in how you wanted to show up"?

4. Discussion - An invitation for someone to share a story...

We invite one of you to start the conversation by sharing a story of a time when you had an interaction with someone who was 'other' or different to you and you were surprised by what happened in the interaction. This may have been a situation where the person who was 'other' to you held values that conflicted with your own deeply held values...

In telling the story perhaps talk about:

What was the challenge for you in this interaction?

What tension was created for you by the difference?

Have you been able to resolve it to your satisfaction?

What did you learn from the experience? Were you able to listen to this person?

What did you let go of and what did you hold on to throughout the interaction?

What helped you make sense or held you back from making sense of what was happening for you?

For those of you listening to the story - What resonates? What thoughts and questions come to mind for you from your own experiences as you listen to the story? What is your story?

5. Checking out - What learning has occurred for you as you listened and participated in the conversation?

6. How can we foster more dialogue on the discussion board?

**Call #5 Exploring Quotes from Martin Buber and Paulo Freire (Facilitated by Penny Lane)**

Continuing on from our conversation about 'other', I invite you to read through the following excerpts/ quotes in preparation for our call on Monday. The first two quotes are by Martin

Buber whose writings on dialogue suggest a more profound experience between people than what is reflected in the common applications we see of this term today. The second excerpt is by Paulo Freire whose writing on oppression is both evocative and challenging. I look forward to hearing the thoughts that these words stir in you...

**Quoted from** *Martin Buber (2002). Between Man and Man (first published in 1947)*

There is genuine dialogue—no matter whether spoken or silent—where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. (42)

Being, lived in dialogue, receives even in extreme dereliction a harsh and strengthening sense of reciprocity; being, lived in monologue, will not, even in the tenderest intimacy, grope out over the outlines of the self. (45)

**Excerpt from** *Paulo Freire (2011) Pedagogy of the Oppressed (First published in 1970).*

**Note:** As you read through this excerpt, experiment with substituting the word *oppressed* with marginalized or silenced. Similarly, try substituting the word oppressor with marginalizer or silencer.

While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern. Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality. And as an individual perceives the extent of dehumanization, he or she may ask if humanization is a viable possibility. Within history, in concrete, objective contexts, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of their incompleteness.

But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet is affirmed by that very negation. It is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the *oppressors*; it is affirmed by the yearning of the *oppressed* for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity.

Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history; but it is not an historical vocation. Indeed, to admit of dehumanization as an historical vocation would lead to either cynicism or total despair. The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labour, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons would be meaningless. This struggle is possible only because dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a

given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the *oppressors*, which in turn dehumanizes the *oppressed*.

Because it is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later being less human leads the *oppressed* to struggle against those who made them so. In order for this struggle to have meaning, the *oppressed* must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn **oppressors** of the *oppressors*, but rather restorers of the humanity of both.

This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the *oppressed*: to liberate themselves and their *oppressors* as well. The *oppressors*, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the *oppressed* or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the *oppressed* will be sufficiently strong to free both. Any attempt to "soften" the power of the *oppressor* in deference to the weakness of the *oppressed* almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their "generosity," the *oppressors* must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this "generosity," which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source.

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that those hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. (43-45)

**Call #6 David Foster Wallace *This is Water*. (Facilitated by Christine Bonney)**

In prep for our call on Monday, I'm wondering if you would read the attached (transcribed) address to the 2005 graduating class at Kenyon College. David Foster Wallace's work (both fiction and non-fiction) calls us to examine what we unthinkingly consume and act on. In this speech, Foster Wallace reminds us that the most radical potentiality of our individual freedom is the ability to choose to perceive our interdependence with 'other.'

To begin our call we will talk a little bit about your recent journal post(s) and then move into our conversation. This time we will be talking about your own experience(s) with what Wallace calls our "natural default settings". Here are a couple of questions to prompt your reflections:

At this point in our research relationship, it seems pretty clear that you have made the choice to get free of the natural, hard-wired default-setting that Foster Wallace refers to...how did you become aware of it and what are the practices that help you to be free of it?

How did you learn to pay attention to what was "going on right in front of you and inside you"?

How does exercising this freedom of conscious choice have an impact on making socially just decisions?

As always, feel free to use your journal to help you deepen your reflections:)

### **Teleconference Call #3 Experiences that Have Shaped Us as Leaders**

Outline for the call...

1. Check-in question...

What questions are you holding as we move into the last part of this research?

2. Discussion –

Certain experiences have shaped us as leaders. Many of these experiences have emerged spontaneously as learning moments while others have been part of a more formal experience. Some of these experiences, both formal and informal, are wonderful and others are memorable because they have challenged our basic assumptions, values and beliefs about the world and ourselves. For this teleconference, we invite you to reflect on both the formal and informal experiences that you've had and to share what was most meaningful in those experiences.

An invitation for someone to share a story...

We invite you to share an experience about a developmental moment formal or informal that shaped and influenced you as a leader passionate about social justice.

In telling the story perhaps talk about:

Where you were in your life and career at the time this occurred?

What you learned about yourself during this experience?

How others contributed to the learning experience?

Why it was pivotal to your development as a leader who holds social justice concerns paramount?

For those of you listening to the story: What resonates? What thoughts and questions come to mind for you from your own experiences as you listen to the story? What is your story?

3. Checking out - What learning has occurred for you as you listened and participated in today's discussion
4. Where to from here? Where we are in the research process and setting a date for our last teleconference.

### **Call #7 Meaning of Social Justice Within the Historical, Social, Cultural, Language and Intersubjective Context of our Lived Experiences**

As you have journeyed through life and the many experiences you have had, you have encountered different perspectives of what might be seen as just. Some theorists suggest that before we encounter them, the meanings of the stuff of life exist already constituted. For example the meanings of what *just* is can be presented to us as already set through the social, cultural, historical and language of our times. However, there are times when we are open to experiences that suggest other meanings or interpretations of things. These theorists would suggest that in these experiences meanings such as what is *just/ socially just*, are still indeterminate and being produced, formed or re-shaped.

When some experiences come to us, the meanings involved can appear to us as natural and we unquestioningly accept them as is. When this happens we tend to see the dominant or winning meaning. One theorist describes this as:

Most objects and experience [i.e., social justice] comes to us as a sedimentation from their formative conditions: they appear self-evident and natural rather than as an outcome of conflictual processes; we see the winner, not the latent conflict process in formation.(Deetz, 2003:423)

What can get missed in this 'constituting' process are the competing perspectives on what else might a concept, object or experience mean.

A simple example to illustrate...

In kindergarten a group of students are given pictures of 4 objects: a cat, a tree, a dog and a squirrel. The children are asked to pick the item that does not belong. Those who pick the tree are rewarded for they have applied the preferred categorization (plant/ animal). However, other perceptions are possible but not rewarded because they do not align with the dominant and valued way of seeing. (Deetz 2000:734)

As I have listened to your stories and some of the key moments that you have explored with us we have talked about or touched upon openness and indeterminacy. Times of choice where you have held open to what else might social justice look like in this situation and with this person.

On our call next call, I would like to explore with you the meanings or constituting of social justice that your lived experiences has brought to you and the meanings that you have set aside.

Some of the times that you have shared or mentioned are:

What meanings of justice/ social justice were you choosing and what were you rejecting in those times? Based on what?

Where did those rejected and accepted meanings come from (i.e., historical context, cultural context, social context, language)?

How are/were the meanings of social justice you set aside embedded in cultural, society, language and who or what is served by their embedding. How are these meanings used to close off discursively (i.e., by reason or argument)?

### **Call #8 Reflection from the Process and Wrap Up**

From our conversations throughout this research process, what have been some of your personal insights, moments of critical questioning, and revelation/connection with the ideas on leadership and social justice that have been explored?

What were the moments in the process that triggered these insights, critical questions and revelations for you?

Why were these the important moments for you? What is the impact they are having and/or what dilemmas, questions, or possibilities are they raising? Have these resulted in order or chaos for you in your thinking of leadership and social justice? In what ways?

On our first call we asked you to reflect on leadership and social justice in the world today. Has anything changed for you in what you are aware of or how you are thinking about leadership and social justice now?

## **Appendix 3 Questions to Prompt On Line Reflections**

### **Introductory Question for the Journals**

We would like to invite you to start your journaling with a reflection on an early memory of social injustice. What was happening? What struck you about the situation? How did you respond to it? How might that experience have influenced and shaped you?

### **Introductory Question for the Discussion Board**

Each of us comes into this conversation with experience, passion and stories to tell about leadership and social justice. Take a moment and introduce yourself to each other sharing a bit about what you have been up to and what prompted you to accept our invitation to participate in this research

### **Group Discussion – Initial Thread**

One of the things we are hearing in our individual conversations with you is a reflection on what might be described as the head-heart tension for leaders who grapple with decisions that have justice impacts.

As a leader, how do/ have you held these tensions and still move forward?

How do you help yourself to stay open to different perspectives?

What helps you to consider viewpoints of others?

What experiences do you lean into when faced with decisions that seem to have a heart/ head perspective?

What story comes to mind for you as you consider these questions?

### **Second Prompt for the Journals**

Thank you for sharing your stories about the leaders that you have interacted with. Something to consider, as you continue to reflect on these leaders is...what were the dominant narratives about "the right way" to lead that each leader was operating within? In what ways were the leaders, themselves, similar to those narratives? In what ways might

they have felt different to the narrative? How have you been affected in your practice by the narratives about "the right way" to lead?

### **Group Question for Discussion Board**

On our call Thursday we talked about creating a question that you were interested in exploring with one another on the discussion board. Here is our attempt to capture and refine what we heard you say ...

Share a story of a time when you had an interaction with someone who was 'other' to you and you were surprised by what happened in the interaction. This may have been a situation where the person who was 'other' to you held values that conflicted with your own deeply held values...

What did you learn from the experience? How did you listen? How did you hold the tension created by the difference? What did you let go of and what did you hold on to throughout the interaction? What helped you make sense of what was happening?