EXPLORING AN INTEGRAL APPROACH TO GENERATIVE DIALOGUE AS A MEANS FOR BRINGING ABOUT TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN GROUPS

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to integrate Scharmer's model of generative dialogue with transformative learning theory and with Wilber's integral theory to show how generative dialogue can support and engage transformative learning in groups. The three chapters of the body of the thesis each explore specific facets of generative dialogue with an overarching interest in how generative dialogue can serve educators within adult and higher learning settings—particularly those who are invested in supporting the conditions for transformative learning in the classroom. In addition, elements of Wilber's integral theory are introduced both to open up new conceptual and experiential frontiers within the field of transformative learning and to improve generative dialogue theory and practice.
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1. Introduction

Discussion and debate, though well-suited to serving the myriad interests of previous cultural-historical periods, are prone to generating fragmentation, incoherence and breakdowns in human communication across different contexts of collective learning in our time (Bohm, 1996; Senge et al., 2004). Partly in response to this, within the past decade there has been an increasing interest in collective ways of thinking and learning together as evidenced by the rapid growth of dialogue across disciplines (Stewart, Zediker and Black, 2004).

As a dialogue educator and facilitator in different post secondary settings, I have grown to appreciate the importance of Scharmer’s account of generative dialogue¹ (2000, 2003; Isaacs, 1999) as an andragogical practice for supporting transformative learning experiences in groups. I have found that, although Scharmer’s generative dialogue model has been applied within organizational settings to serve collective learning processes, it can be effective in shedding light upon the problematic dynamics of communication and learning that typify post secondary classroom interactions, as well as revealing the deeper creative potential of group conversation.

When students or I are strongly identified with our thoughts, feelings, beliefs and opinions, there is a tendency to engage in disembodied modes of reactive thinking and critical listening from our past memories and associations. Such habits are commonplace, inadvertently establishing a field of conversation that obstructs the possibility of unfolding new meaning or knowledge. Other common obstacles include the ingrained tendency to advocate for and defend our views and perspectives, which leads to overlooking the subtleties, nuances or complexities of the points being explored. Such habits of classroom discourse, in my experience, tend to foster

¹Throughout this thesis I make reference to generative dialogue theory. In other instances, I refer to generative dialogue practice. As generative dialogue is both a theoretical framework and a set of practices, depending on the context I will highlight one or the other as a point of emphasis.
Partly in response to the above tendencies of group conversation, generative dialogue cultivates forms of knowing, learning and being that are driven primarily by awareness-based practices and distinctions. In teaching generative dialogue, I have found that, with practice, students tend to develop a more inquiring and discerning stance in their conversations over the term. That is not to say that there are no disagreements or conflicts. Rather, I have found that generative dialogue helps develop capacities to explore our differences with a clearer eye or heart on the underlying wholeness that in a way helps contain and respect the differences. It has been my experience that, instead of engaging in modes of conversation that lead to either suppressing one’s views or bringing one into vehement disagreement with others, generative dialogue processes give rise to heightened levels of individual energy and shared commitment, heightened qualities of presence within the group conversation and noticeable shifts in students learning and development. For instance, alongside my former students and colleagues at Holma College of Integral Studies in Sweden, we developed the Holma Dialogue Project, which focused on subjects from various disciplines and issues within our learning community. During the course of the project, Scharmer’s model provided a language and set of experiential distinctions that helped catalyze a number of transformative changes.\textsuperscript{2} From such experiences, I have grown to appreciate how Scharmer’s theory and process map of conversation can offer students ways to evoke the deeper potentials of knowing and learning within collective contexts.

\textsuperscript{2} Such changes included deep shifts in students self and group identity, ways of being in conversation, ways of knowing in conversation and student’s overall learning disposition (i.e. learning to learn from the emerging future, present as well as the conditioned past).
1.1 Objectives

The broad purpose of this manuscript-based thesis is to explore generative dialogue (GD) theory within the context of transformative learning (TL) theory (Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 1978, 2003; Kasl and Yorks, 2002; Gunnlaugson, 2005) and integral theory (Wilber, 1995, 2003a, 2003b). The main body of the thesis will consist of three distinct yet interrelated chapters, each using conceptual inquiry to explore questions and themes that I have been living as a student, theorist and practitioner of generative dialogue.

The first chapter will begin with a brief review of existing traditions of dialogue theory within adult and higher education. A core purpose of this chapter is to explore how the social learning practice of generative dialogue, which followed from Bohmian dialogue in the eighties and the MIT Dialogue Project in the early nineties, can offer a theory and means for supporting and facilitating transformative learning processes within adult and higher education group settings. Advocating for the contributions of generative dialogue theory to the literature of adult and higher education, this chapter will introduce four critical distinctions that distinguish generative dialogue from eclectic applications of dialogue. Building upon these distinctions, I will explore different theoretical perspectives as a means for illustrating the respective merits of generative dialogue.

The second chapter explores possibilities for expanding Mezirow (1978) and Kegan's (2000) conceptions of transformative learning, with the intent of raising awareness of the respective dimensions of consciousness that undergo transformation in adult learners. I present a case for generative dialogue as an integral communication ideal that supports transformative shifts in at least three distinct categorical forms of consciousness. Building upon Mezirow and Kegan's contributions, this chapter uses Wilber's work to shed light upon the deeper elements of
transformative learning theory. Derived from Wilber’s integral framework (2003b), I introduce three categorical forms which describe how transformative learning processes shift the forms of the learners’ consciousness in terms of the stages of both the capacity-related and self-related lines of development, as well as states of consciousness. Introducing this preliminary integral framework is intended to help validate a broader range of transformative shifts of consciousness that can unfold for learners, in addition to filling out new theoretical terrain that remains largely unaccounted for by TL theorists in the field.

Inspired by recent insights and developments within the field of integral studies, the purpose of the third chapter is to introduce a series of exploratory “integrally-informed” (Wilber, 2003a) perspectives and frameworks to build upon existing generative dialogue theory. The broad aim of the third chapter is to expand upon the paradigmatical assumptions informing Scharmer’s theory and inquire at greater length than previous chapters into how generative dialogue theory can be improved by the interpretative framework of Wilber’s (1995, 2003b) integral approach.

1.2 Rationale

As alluded to in the introduction, the practice of dialogue ranges considerably in its expression and form. From the middle of the twentieth century until now, dialogue has become broadly identified with relational forms of meeting and knowing (Buber, 1958), therapeutic means for facilitating healing through encounter groups (Rogers, 1970), a discourse ethics of communication (Habermas, 1990), a way for community-building through transformation and resolution of conflict (Peck, 1997), and a process ideal for pedagogical methods of teaching that

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3 For further background on Wilber’s integral framework, visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AQAL
4 I employ Wilber’s term integrally informed as a theoretical and practical method for introducing a more encompassing awareness of the perspectives and dimensions of human experience that follow from an understanding of his AQAL (the short form of “all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, and all types”) frameworks.
involve open, inclusive participation (Freire, 1970; Burbles, 1993), among other forms. During the nineties, primarily inspired by David Bohm’s conception of dialogue⁵, scholar-practitioners of the MIT Dialogue Project developed a rigorous theory of dialogue more suited to bring about change in the context of leadership development and organizational learning (Isaacs, 1999; Scharmer, 2000; Senge, 1994). Isaacs (1996, 1999) research and Scharmer’s subsequent work inspired the stage-based model of generative dialogue (Scharmer, 2000, 2003).

Transformative learning theory within adult and higher education has yet to address the significance of the social learning process of generative dialogue. Many critics have labeled Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning as overly rational and analytic (Clark and Wilson, 1991; Taylor, 1998). Although Mezirow has responded by acknowledging the importance of multiple ways of knowing, he continues to endorse the analytic force of reflection and critical discourse as the central catalyst for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978). However, in positing a basis for critical reflection to be interdependent and therefore contingent upon other ways of knowing, TL theorists such as Taylor (1998) suggest that affect or emotional intelligence plays a key role in TL processes:

Based on the research it seems quite clear that both critical reflection and affective learning play a significant role in the transformative process ... Mezirow as well as most other studies looked at these two concepts ... separately and did not give enough attention to their interrelationship in the transformative process. (p. 303)

Kasl and Yorks (2002) echo Taylor in their claim that there is a need to “provide a theoretical perspective on the interdependence of multiple ways of knowing and the primacy of affect that

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⁵ As a multi-faceted, process-oriented praxis, Bohmian dialogue allows a group of people to inquire into and move beyond the individual and collective presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, and feelings that ordinarily inhibit communication. Unlike conventional dialogue, Bohmian dialogue is not concerned with winning arguments, coming to conclusions, solving problems, resolving conflicts, or achieving consensus. Rather, participants partly attend to the dialogue content and the dialogue process. Bohm’s conception addresses both the assumptions that support underlying thoughts and feelings as well as the psychological pressures behind these assumptions. In this sense, Bohm is proposing that his conception of dialogue contains the means to create “a new kind of culture where opinions and assumptions are not defended incoherently and people think together” (Bohm, 1996).
can usefully be pursued in the discourse about transformative learning” (p. 5).

For the purposes of this thesis, I intend on questioning existing arguments that make TL theory contingent upon either critical reason or affect, and will instead advance the view that affirms the primacy of meta-awareness in supporting the process of TL. In this way, by foregrounding the significance of present-moment centered awareness in learning, I hope to recontextualize grounds for integrating discursive reason, affect and other multiple intelligences within a more inclusive and comprehensive theoretical context where students experiences of TL can germinate. Once again, I intend to address how this is significant within the context of generative dialogue theory, which plays a role in sensing the emergence of heretofore marginalized ways of knowing and being within both individual and collective contexts of learning.

1.3 Methodology

Early on in my masters studies, I was drawn to the methodology of conceptual inquiry. I wanted to pursue more philosophical approaches of inquiry that, unlike many of the qualitative methods of inquiry and action research that go through a cycle of expanding theory through interactions with phenomenon unveiled in practice, would indirectly draw upon previous contexts of practice and learning. I have been particularly interested in conceptual approaches that could help me develop, critique and modify existing generative dialogue theory and transformative learning theory on theoretical, rather than empirical grounds. Again, this is not to say that I am drawing a strong distinction between theory and practice here or that I would not consider present and past experiences facilitating and teaching generative dialogue in my theoretical reflections. Rather, I am interested in drawing from insights that have developed from different contexts of practice through theoretical means first, and then in subsequent
graduate work (PhD), I intend to apply and extend these discoveries through further conceptual,
qualitative and empirical research projects. For this thesis, I will aspire to form a critical and
creative relationship with GD, TL and Integral theory as my “subject” (Shapiro and Bentz,
1998), which will in turn generate “data” and inform directions for consideration and future
empirical research. Relying on inductive and deductive reasoning, I also envision the outcomes
of this work being extensions of abductive inferences (i.e., particularly the last chapter), which
through the logic of discovery and intuition, attempt to supply new synthesis and evaluation of
the creative possibilities of this work.

As mentioned above, the existing generative dialogue literature has been written
primarily for business and organizational settings. For this reason, perhaps existing theory on
transformative learning within group contexts has overlooked Scharmer’s theory of generative
dialogue and been concerned only with reflective discourse and critical reason (Mezirow, 1978)
and affect (Kasl and Yorks, 2002). My intention is to continue advancing an integrally-informed
theory of transformative learning by addressing both the knowledge gaps and shortcomings of
existing partial TL theories. Shapiro and Bentz (1998) describe this role of theoretical inquiry
very succinctly in *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*:

Theoretical inquiry attempts to generate new knowledge through the analysis,
critique, extension and integration of existing theories and empirical research. After
identifying limitations of, contradictions within and among theories or between theories
and empirical research, the research attempts to eliminate these and arrive at a more
consistent, comprehensive and powerful theories. (p. 141)

From my existing reflections, I envision the three chapters being broadly informed by processes
of conceptual inquiry that address a host of theoretical considerations including a) limitations of
existing ideas and explanations of both TL and GD theory; b) ways of improving existing TL and
GD theories to better serve the interests of educators and students; c) revealing points of view

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within TL and GD theory that prove inadequate to fulfilling core intentions within adult and higher learning contexts and d) venture perspectives concerning how my proposed modifications will increase the value of TL and GD theory in adult and higher learning settings.

1.4 Closing

Intent upon contributing to generative dialogue theory and transformative learning theory, this work is motivated by my desire to improve the broader culture of existing social learning processes within adult and higher learning contexts. Each chapter represents a specific intersection of generative dialogue theory, transformative learning theory and integral theory, in turn proceeding with different purposes (i.e., as outlined in section 1.1 Objectives above) and different audiences\(^6\). Occasionally there is overlapping\(^7\) of theoretical content between these three chapters, for like streams—each flows from the same underground spring. Regarded as a whole, I envision the three chapters serving the function of generating new recommendations, directions and inspiration for future research in these domains.

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\(^6\) The intended audiences of this thesis include an eclectic mix of members of the university engaged in academic scholarship, practitioners of generative dialogue, students, as well as the general public. As this work is transdisciplinary in nature, these audiences are also drawn from across the fields of adult and higher education (chapter one), transformative learning (chapter two) and integral studies (chapter three).

\(^7\) Overlap of content between the chapters is also due to the manuscript thesis design where each chapter is written for independent publication with three different peer-reviewed academic journals.
1.5 Works Cited


http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentID=10878


Vocational Education.


http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/psych_model/psych_model1.cfm
2. Generative Dialogue as a Transformative Learning Practice within Adult and Higher Education Settings

2.1 Introduction

Between the middle of the twentieth century and the 1990s, dialogue became associated with relational forms of meeting and knowing (Buber, 1958; Eisler, 1990), textual means of hermeneutical interpretation (Gadamer, 1976), linguistic theories of language (Bakhtin, 1981), community building (Peck, 1987), conflict resolution (Mindell, 1994), and a process ideal for pedagogical methods of teaching that involve open, inclusive participation (Freire, 1970; Burbles, 1993). More recently, there has been an even greater proliferation of uses of the term across disciplines (Stewart, Zediker and Black, 2004), further obscuring its meaning and significance. This trend has resulted in a broad and eclectic set of interpretations of dialogue ranging from abstract and rhetorical notions to technical prescriptive models across disciplines.

Partly in response to the proliferation and ensuing fragmentation of dialogue theory and practice, in this chapter I will present “generative dialogue” (GD) (Scharmer, 2000, 2003; Isaacs, 1999) as a more comprehensive and integrated practice of conversation that cultivates ways of knowing and ways of being that serve the development of new knowledge and transformation of adult learners. To begin, I describe dialogue and transformative learning (TL) as they have been taken up within the contexts of adult and higher education. Following this, I introduce Bohm’s conception of dialogue, then explore the subsequent research that took place with the MIT Dialogue Project in the early nineties and, finally, Scharmer’s later developments. For the final section of this chapter, I will show how generative dialogue theory can offer four important

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8 This chapter has been accepted for publication by the Journal of Adult and Continuing Education (Scotland). It was written with the financial support of a Masters SSRHC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) Canadian Graduate Scholarship.
contributions to adult and higher education, particularly as a practice that supports and catalyzes transformative learning.

2.2 Dialogue and Transformative Learning within Adult and Higher Education

The growing breadth of eclectic interpretations and applications of dialogue across disciplines is similarly reflected within the field of adult and higher education, including emancipatory education (Freire, 1970), cohort education (Lawrence, 2002), learning communities (Mitchell and Sackney, 2001) teacher training (Darling, 2001), workplace learning (Laiken, 1997), university and college teaching (Arnett, 1992), adult education projects in the apartheid eras in South Africa (Rule, 2004), consciousness development in learning communities (Watts, J., Miller, P., & Kloepfer, J., 1999) and dialogue pedagogy (Burbules, 1993) among others.9

As a field of study, transformative learning has grown to include multiple and diverse areas of educational concern; thus, as a field of practice, transformative learning ranges across a wide diversity of practice settings, including adult and continuing professional education, higher education, workplace learning, and education for social change. Similarly, as Duerr, Zajone and Dana (2003) point out, more progressive contexts of higher education reflect this view:

Although most of the initiatives to bring spirituality and transformative learning into higher education are carried out by individual academics working in their classes, evidence of networks developing in this area is becoming increasingly apparent: for example, in the Five Colleges of Western Massachusetts with its network of 60 professors, and at the University of Michigan with a network of 50. Occasionally, entire departments and institutions have committed themselves to transformative and spiritual learning, such as the psychology department at the State University of West Georgia, the California Institute of Integral Studies, the California Institute of Integral Studies, the California Institute of Integral Studies,

9Distinct from these dialogue applications, the dialogue theorists outlined in the introduction, and the more popularized notions of dialogue, Scharmer's theory of generative dialogue has yet to explicitly inform dialogical practices within existing adult and higher learning literature. In part, I believe this is a result of the theory being used outside adult and higher education contexts and in turn, a lack of exposure to how generative dialogue theory can serve as a collective learning practice that supports and engages transformative learning processes.
and Naropa University. Equally important initiatives are afoot in the areas of student life and higher education administration. (p. 178)

Regarded as the most researched theory of adult learning (Taylor, 2000), the first wave of transformative learning theory was largely inspired by the contributions of Jack Mezirow (1978), who identified TL with critically examining our adopted beliefs, values, and frames of reference—a process that leads to developing more open, coherent, and comprehensive ways of thinking and acting.

A second wave of more integrative, holistic and integral theories (Gunnlaugsson, 2005) has emerged within the recent decade, attempting to give voice to the varied perspectives on TL that have been overshadowed by Mezirow’s seminal contribution. This chapter undertakes to show how generative dialogue illuminates various dimensions and processes of TL identified by different theorists within the field of transformative education (i.e., Mezirow and Kegan) and outside it (i.e., Wilber). To better understand the phenomena of transformative learning in our practices, it becomes important to consider what “forms” are transforming and what “capacities” are developing for learners within collective context of learning. Additionally, more attention needs to be given to how forms of spoken discourse (e.g., debate and dialogue) support or hinder the processes of transformative learning. Additionally, research is needed to better understand the practices and pedagogical methods that support these endeavors in group learning contexts. In response to these latter challenges, this chapter will consider how generative dialogue theory can open up new possibilities for transformative learning broadly informed by Mezirow, Kegan and Wilber’s contributions.

2.3 Overview of Bohmian Dialogue

Beginning over twenty years ago, David Bohm put forward a series of propositions for a new vision of dialogue. Bohm’s conception offers a unique contribution in that it invites
individuals and groups not only to inquire into the presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, and feelings that we ordinarily identify with and defend, but also to suspend them. Participants give their attention to the dialogue content, and the subtle moment-to-moment unfolding process of thought itself. In this way, Bohm’s conception of dialogue attempts to illuminate the deeper tacit assumptions underlying our thoughts, feelings and the psychological pressures behind these assumptions for the purposes of realizing greater insight and change. By attending to these assumptions and processes through a form of collective mindfulness, Bohmian dialogue cultivates an awareness of the distorting factors of memory and disembodied communication (i.e., when the thinking process is divorced from the senses and moment to moment attention). Bohmian dialogue also invites inquiry into our pasts and our positions with an overarching interest in redirecting attention away from exploring established knowledge towards the cultivation of new shared meaning or clarified awareness of existing shared meaning. Overall, Bohm proposed a generative conversational means to create “a new kind of culture where opinions and assumptions are not defended incoherently and people think together” (Bohm, 1996).

In revisiting the fundamentals of Bohmian dialogue (1996), the process draws on two core attentional practices of suspension and proprioception of thought (i.e., awareness of thought processes). Bohm remarked that “the point of suspension is to help make proprioception possible” (1996, p. 25). By slowing down the inquiry and more carefully observing our thought processes, Bohm’s notion of suspension invites us to listen differently to both ourselves and to other dialogue participants by temporarily loosening our habitual hold and identification with our

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10 As Bohm (1996, p. 3) elaborates, “we are using the word “thought” to signify not only the products of our conscious intellect but also our feelings, emotions, intentions, and desires… In essence thought is the active response of memory in every phase of life and virtually all of our knowledge is produced, displayed, communicated transformed and applied in thought.”
views and beliefs. As the field of inquiry opens, this creates a shared willingness to be tentative, curious and ultimately less invested in either asserting our perspectives or refuting others' perspectives.

Suspension is similar to reflective thinking, which is the capacity to take a perspective on our views retrospectively. However, suspension is different from reflective thinking insofar as it involves doing this in the present moment. With practice, suspension changes our relationship to the thinking process and the underlying habits of mind and points of view in which we are imbedded. By interrupting our tendency to become reified in our ideas and beliefs, suspension facilitates a less attached, yet poised and attentive relationship with our knowledge, beliefs and perspectives. In learning how to suspend our views in dialogue, we create the conditions for proprioception of thought. Bohm borrowed the term *proprioception* from neurophysiology to convey the significance of giving sustained attention to the movement of our intellectual, emotional and kinesthetic process as these unfold in real-time. Bohm’s (1996) following example conveys an analogy of the failure of proprioception of the body:

We know of a woman who had a stroke in the middle of the night. She woke up and was hitting herself. People came in and turned on the light and that’s what they found. What happened was that her motor nerves were working, but her sensory nerves were no longer working. So she probably touched herself, but she didn’t know that she’d touched herself, and therefore she assumed that somebody else was touching her and interpreted this as an attack. The more she defended, the worse the attack got. The proprioception had broken down. She no longer saw the relation between the intention to move and the result. When the light was turned on, proprioception was established in a new way, by sight. (p. 25)

Bohm’s conception of dialogue helps develop our capacity for proprioception of thought, which he claims is needed to offset the fact that most human problems can be traced back to this lack of fundamental awareness (Bohm et al., 1991). Proprioception helps avoid slipping into an abstract version of our experience by allowing the physiological correlates of our thoughts to enter more
clearly into felt awareness. Lee Nichol (2005) elaborates, “it is something more like a figure-ground reversal, in which our typical structure of our awareness—with thoughts far more dominant than our physiology—is reversed, with the physiological responses now coming to the foreground” (p. 23). Given that our bodies live within the spatial-temporal horizons of the present moment, developing the capacity for proprioception of thought helps learners experience a more integrated sense of self and expanded horizons of personal identity. Furthermore, within the dialogue context, this modality of sensing one’s body helps bring about the conditions for creative insight to take root, which also helps bring about the conditions to support transformative shifts in individual and collective consciousness.

2.3.1 Limitations of Bohmian Dialogue

In spite of the key advances of Bohmian dialogue, Bohm’s conception falls short in supporting other dimensions of collective and transformative learning. First, Bohm’s emphasis on creating an “impersonal fellowship” (1996) often led to diminishing the significance of personal experience within the dialogue circles. While this may not have been intended, Bohm’s fascination with observing and learning about the process of thought itself left Bohmian dialogue groups prone to abstract and idiosyncratic forms of contemplation. Bohm was invested in the notion that thought functions much like a system and that it needs continual contact with awareness to see the larger whole of reality out of which thought makes abstractions. As such, his dialogue process tends to focus a lot more on this exploration of the nature and process of thought, often leading groups into a reflective condition where individuals become more invested in teasing out nuanced distinctions and abstractions of meaning. As I have observed, this can amount to obscure philosophizing as individuals get tangled up in their meta-processes. Secondly, Bohm’s definition of thought encompasses all the different personal dimensions of our
experience (e.g., physical, emotional, intellectual and intuitional). However, labeling the expression of these domains as “thought” overlooks important distinctions, regardless of what Bohm intended, thus limiting the expression and validity of these respective dimensions and ways of knowing. Thirdly, Bohm’s (1996) conception supports a restricted form of initial facilitation in the interests of helping participants distinguish between dialogue and other modalities of conversation. However, preliminary facilitation could also be extended into later stages to address the periods of confusion and disorientation that arise during different stages of dialogue. Finally, Bohm refrained from “proposing means, methodologies to help the vast majority of people understand and make sense of the experience of dialogue” (Cayer, 2005, p. 168). According to Cayer (2005), this led others to misunderstanding and diluting Bohm’s original vision of dialogue within different settings of practice.

2.4 MIT Dialogue Project

Following Bohm’s work, the two year MIT Dialogue Project overseen by William Isaacs and colleagues attempted to build a new actionable theory of dialogue with strategies for practice and educational materials to assist these processes. This project eventually resulted in Isaacs’ seminal work *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, in addition to a number of other related books and articles. During the mid nineties, disagreements of interpretation between advocates of Bohmian Dialogue and scholar-practitioners applying the expanded theory of the MIT Dialogue Project arose from differing assumptions about the purpose and intent of Bohm’s conception. Could Bohm’s vision be brought to organizational contexts? Or, in questioning the very foundational assumptions of participants’ lives and identity, was the practice too subversive? Disagreements stemmed from the view that revising certain core assumptions about how Bohmian dialogue is practiced might lead to a dilution or distortion of the original practice.
(Nichol, 2005). Such tensions gave birth to a number of different developments. Among these include Scharmer’s generative dialogue theory, which advances Isaacs’ and Bohm’s contributions by bringing forth new distinctions that clarify the creative and transformative potential of conversation in various settings.

Of particular relevance to adult and higher learning educators is the dialogue literature that arose from the MIT Dialogue project. Isaacs addresses the potentially subversive processes of group conversation by introducing theoretical scaffolding to support learners in bringing about the conditions for dialogue. For example, argumentative discussion and rational discourse have a long history within the academy. Isaacs’ theory addresses its strengths and limitations, and then recontextualizes this traditional mode of discourse within a broader series of conversation stages. With practice, groups begin to unfreeze and access the deeper levels of learning and change available at each stage as depicted in Figure 2.1 below:

![Diagram of dialogue stages](image)

**Figure 2.1: Evolution of Dialogue (Isaacs, 1996)**

With the MIT dialogue project grew a new set of distinctions and corresponding language. Isaacs outlines four basic conversational stages depicted in Figure 2.1, each with a characteristic “container” that establishes special practices and norms of exchange. “Container” functions as a metaphor for the group’s capacity to hold a supportive space for whatever arises in the inquiry, particularly in the early stages where it becomes important to address more
controversial perceptions and sensitive beliefs in a manner that leads to their transformation. Stage one is marked by “instability of the container” where participants are not quite saying what they are thinking, in part because the climate of safety and trust have not been established. This brings about an initiatory crisis\(^{11}\) of suspension that leads the group conversation either into dialogue or a breakdown phase into discussion. According to Isaacs (1999), there is a need for suspension in order to help direct the conversation towards inquiry (i.e., stage three). The final stage, “creativity in the container” occurs when new understandings and insights emerge. Isaacs (1996) initially described the fourth stage of conversation as metalogue or “meaning flowing with” (p. 38) where groups learn to think, listen and speak together in a fashion that expands beyond the initial purposes of Bohm’s conception of dialogue.

2.5 Generative Dialogue Theory

Informed by Isaacs’ model (Figure 2.1), Scharmer’s model of generative dialogue (Scharmer, 2000, 2003) outlines the movement of conversation from conventional discussion (talking nice) to debate (talking tough), through reflective dialogue, and finally into sensing and unfolding new knowledge in the group with the generative stage:

\(^{11}\) At each transition is a threshold “crisis” that is a turning point that requires navigation and a need for an intervention to help bring the group to the next stage. Failing such interventions, according to Isaacs (1999) breakdowns into discussion and debate tend to result.
Enacting Emerging Futures

**generative dialogue**
- presencing, flow
- time: slowing down
- space: boundaries collapse
- listening from one's future Self
- rule-generating

**reflective dialogue**
- Inquiry
- I can change my view
- empathic listening (from within the other self)
- other = you
- rule - reflecting

**talking nice**
- Downloading
- polite, cautious
- listening = projecting
- rule-reenacting

**talking tough**
- debate, clash
- I am my point of view
- Listening = reloading
- other = target
- rule-revealing

Primacy of the Whole

Primacy of the Parts

Reenacting Patterns of the Past

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Figure 2.2: Four Fields of Generative Dialogue (Scharmer, 2003)

In the above figure\(^\text{12}\), Scharmer depicts how individuals and collectives move counter-clockwise from closed and inauthentic forms of conversation in the lower left-hand field (i.e., talking nice) through the lower right hand field of talking tough towards more open, reflective dialogue in the upper right and finally creative forms of engagement in the upper left field\(^\text{13}\) (i.e., generative dialogue). Scharmer’s process map also provides an overview of the different fields of conversation, and in this way, integrates traditional academic discourse with the relational and creative dimensions of dialogue, resulting in a more comprehensive model. Within each stage or

\(^{12}\) Rather than eliminate distinctions in Scharmer’s model of generative dialogue that are not explored within the context of this chapter, I have decided to leave his figure in its original condition. For further information on terminology of the above model that is not discussed here, I welcome readers to read further on generative dialogue (Scharmer, 2000, 2003; Isaacs, 1999).

\(^{13}\) Experiences within the fourth field of generative dialogue are reflected in O’Hara’s (2003) description of Integral Groups, in addition to other intersubjective methodologies within the emerging field of collective intelligence (Hamilton, 2004).
field of conversation, Scharmer charts a cluster of characteristic ways of listening, orientation to learning in relation to time, habits of attention and speech acts (Scharmer, 2000; Isaacs, 1999). Each of these field clusters offer practices and distinctions that can serve as an andragogical framework to help learners develop the capacities to think and learn together as they navigate through the four fields in classroom and cohort settings.

2.6 Contributions of Generative Dialogue Theory

The following section will address four points of emphasis that distinguish generative dialogue from eclectic applications of dialogue within and outside the fields of adult and higher education. In turn, each section will illustrate the merits of these characteristics of generative dialogue in terms of supporting transformative learning processes and outcomes. The four distinguishing characteristics are as follows:

#1 GD is a discipline of life long learning and practice
#2 GD is informed by three sources of learning (past, present and future)
#3 GD theory takes into account conversation as a developmental process
#4 GD relies on the primacy of meta-awareness versus thought or feeling

2.6.1 Generative Dialogue is a Discipline of Life Long Learning and Practice

No one expects to become an athlete or violinist over a weekend. Yet, dialogue is commonly regarded as a form of conversation that can be learned with a minimum investment of effort, practice and time, if not a familiar form of conversation in which everyone already knows how to participate. Following from this prevalent view, it is typically presumed that a set of “ground rules”, “guidelines” or a “charter of inquiry” are sufficient for dialogue. Given the unpredictability and messiness of dialogue process, such popularized approaches tend to only go as far as enforcing or adhering to a series of enlightened principles in the face of breakdowns that
occur in dialogue. While it may be much simpler for dialogue educators to introduce or collaboratively establish such guides, the strategy of “narrowing dialogue by focusing on one or two of its dimensions” (Cayer, 2005) overlooks the significance of ongoing practice to develop the skills and capacities for doing dialogue.

Distinct from views of dialogue which do not address or downplay the importance of practice, generative dialogue draws upon multiple practices within each of Scharmer’s four fields of conversation as described above (i.e., Figure 2.2). As a facilitator of generative dialogue, I have found it helpful to introduce “in-the-moment” and “foundational” practices within each respective field of conversation. In-the-moment practices can be formulated as guidelines and become particularly relevant within specific fields of conversation (e.g., suspension in reflective dialogue). Foundational practices are meta-practices that cultivate the intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities required for all fields of conversation (e.g., meditation practice outside the context of dialogue helps learners develop the capacity for suspension). Additionally, Wilber’s distinction between translative and transformative practices (Wilber, 2003) is helpful in taking care not to make claims that surpass what a given practice, theory or injunction is actually capable of performing—in other words confusing translative practices with transformative ones.

In generative dialogue, translative in-the-moment practices help individuals or a group access the potentials of a given field, while transformative in-the-moment practices help the group move to a deeper or more inclusive conversational field (i.e., from talking tough to reflective dialogue). With this later set of distinctions in place, the connections between the conversational practices of learners and the emergent fields of conversation should be more self-evident as Pearce and Pearce (2000) elaborate:
Those whose practice is grounded in the MIT Dialogue Project often describe abilities for dialogue in ways that involve “a combination of skill, craft, and art” rather than a set of techniques. The application of this technology produces “artful conversation crafted through the focusing of attention, attitudes, and behaviors that support open authentic inquiry.” (p. 174)

Similarly, from his work on the learning organization, Peter Senge (1990) presents dialogue as a “discipline” or series of principles and practices that we study, master and integrate into our lives. For Senge (1994), discipline can be approached at one of three levels: “Practices: what you do. Principles: guiding ideas and insights. Essences: the state of being of those with high levels of mastery in the discipline” (p. 373).

In my experience as a generative dialogue facilitator, I have found that translative and transformative in-the-moment practices can open up emergent dimensions of group learning that otherwise may not be available to learners in everyday discussion or debate based formats. For example, in the third field of reflective dialogue, individuals will often begin to experience an expanded sense of self and identity that includes the entire group. A transformative in-the-moment practice within the field of reflective dialogue might involve inviting participants to focus more on the emerging source of shared meaning to strengthen this naturally occurring experience. While this may not always lead to shifting the group into the generative field, such practices increase the probability of this occurring. In this way, transformative in-the-moment practices (at the reflective stage) invite participants beyond their previous self-sense as a separate autonomous thinker by connecting them with the emergent possibilities of a distributed self-sense that includes the group. Such an example is illustrative of how generative dialogue can support the emergence of transformative learning as groups learn to navigate between these fields of conversation.
Viewed in this light, generative dialogue is not simply a new conception or “map” of forms of conversation including distinct forms of dialogue. It is also a set of conversational practices, a set of “liberating disciplines” (Torbert, 1991) with methods that generate, enact, bring forth and illuminate new forms of experiential territory for learners in collective contexts. Approached in this way, generative dialogue becomes a social methodology for enacting new phenomena (Wilber, 2003), a yoga of conversation with four distinct stages that disclose new experiential realities to learners as they develop their mastery and understanding of learning in these fields. Wilber (2003) elaborates:

Put simply, a theory is a map of a territory, while a paradigm is a practice that brings forth a territory in the first place. The paradigm or social practice itself is called an “exemplar” or “injunction,” and the theory is called, well, the theory. The point is that knowledge revolutions are generally combinations of new paradigm-practices that bring forth a new phenomenological territory plus new theories and maps that attempt to offer some sort of abstract or contoured guidance to the new territories thus disclosed and brought forth. But a new theory without a new practice is simply a new map with no real territory, or what is generally called “ideology.” (p. 2)

Supporting personal and social transformation from within different disciplines14, Scharmer’s model identifies key practices, behaviors and collective skills that help traverse these four conversational fields. Where individual and group development are central aims, contexts of collaborative learning in adult and higher education (i.e., cohorts) provide optimal long term settings for practicing generative dialogue.

2.6.2 Three Fundamental Sources of Learning (Past, Present and Future)

Existing views on reflective inquiry and dialogue tend to assume the source of learning stems primarily from our memory or the past. For Kolb (1984), learning occurs when one reflects upon previous experience. Within existing adult learning literature, this notion of

14 The Generative Dialogue Project is a community building and action research project of the Global Leadership Initiative. It is focused on global projects that bring generative dialogue processes into mainstream use for personal and social transformation, particularly within contexts of global governance institutions, including business, government, and civil society.
past-based learning is further embedded in the work of Mezirow, Schön and Illeris among others. Scharmer (2000) describes this conventional learning cycle: “it is a sequence of action, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and action again.” From the MIT Dialogue Project, Isaacs (1996) distinguishes “proprioceptive awareness” to be a form of attention that informs learning in the present moment. Proprioceptive awareness is not memory based, but follows from Bohm’s proprioception of thought. Isaacs (1996) elaborates:

Typically we simply see our thoughts as emerging "from nowhere" and do not detect our own fingerprints on them. In dialogue we seek to cultivate both levels of awareness -- reflective awareness and proprioceptive awareness -- which could also be stated as awareness of what one is doing as one is doing it. Typically our thinking processes move too quickly, or we do not have the luxury of time, to perceive these forces at work. We have argued that organizations and institutions have a genuine need now to expand their repertoires -- make room for inquiry of this sort. (p. 24)

By cultivating proprioceptive awareness, we learn how to break out of the solipsistic representational world of images, meaning and thought which originate from past experience.

As a way of differentiating this representational world from the unfolding territory of everyday experience, Bohm distinguished *thoughts* from thinking and *felts* from feeling (1996). For Bohm (1996), thoughts and felts are an active response of memory and the past. In learning to be attentive to these “programs” through proprioceptive awareness, within the later stages of generative dialogue learners can begin to experience the transformative possibilities of in-the-moment reflection. For example, by examining the tacit assumptions underlying our views, such processes often trigger disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1978), which are central to Mezirow’s paradigm of transformative learning. Such dilemmas arise in generative dialogue when our unconscious assumptions about ourselves as self-directed learners run contrary to our experiences within generative fields of collective conversation. Proprioceptive awareness enables individuals to explore unfamiliar ways of knowing (epistemology), being (ontology) and
learning, in turn offering learners a practice to reconsider previously held views in the present, enabling new perspectives to emerge.

Distinct from proprioceptive awareness, Scharmer coined the term “presencing” (2000) in reference to a mode of learning that is based on sensing and embodying emerging futures rather than re-enacting the past through projection. Bortoft (1996) points out that the source of presencing is based on a fundamentally different mode of cognition, which revolves around sensing into what is emerging through the present rather than reflecting on present realities. Scharmer (2000) notes the basic sequence of the emergent learning cycle of presencing is “1. observe, observe, observe; 2. become still: recognize the emptiness of ideas about past or future; 3. allow inner knowing to emerge (presencing), 4. act in an instant, and observe again” (p. 16). As Scharmer points out, the key difference between learning from the past and learning from emerging futures lies in learning how to still our minds and to enter a state of receptiveness to what is not yet known through intuitive contact with what is emerging versus memory or “stored representations” (Rosch and Scharmer, 1999).

Within the context of generative dialogue, Scharmer (2000) mentions that presencing emerges within the final stage or field of conversation, where learners begin to connect with the “sources of one’s highest creativity” (p. 27) as a vehicle for sensing, embodying, and enacting various potentials within themselves and the group. To the extent that we are invested in enlarging the space of the possible, contrasted with the popular conviction that education is about replicating (or critiquing) the existing possible, presencing can be of great value for young adult and adult learners. As a contemplative practice, presencing builds from suspension, which helps learners access the present moment. By interfacing with the present, learners develop the capacity to engage their awareness with what one intuitively senses wants to emerge—whether
in the form of new knowledge or meaning about a given subject, or an insight into the group
process of learning itself. By opening a creative space for learners to make direct contact with
new insights or threads of ideas that are experienced as wanting to emerge through us,
presencing invites a way of knowing and collective learning from what is not yet manifested
(i.e., the future).

2.6.3 The Developmental Process of Generative Dialogue

In my experience facilitating and teaching generative dialogue groups, dialogue is
commonly taken to be an unpredictable and even perplexing process of conversation that has no
goal or preconceived outcome. Because I find this assumption to be widely shared, I am not
surprised that conceptions of dialogue within the fields of adult and higher education tend to
overlook how the dialogue process unfolds in a developmental fashion. In spite of the
meandering process of dialogue, research from the MIT Dialogue Project suggests that groups
gradually develop their capacity to move through different stages of conversation. A common
tendency among popular conceptions of dialogue is to differentiate dialogue from non-dialogical
modes of conversation, but then offer little to no scaffolding for learners to establish the
conditions for dialogue to emerge. Downplaying or ignoring the transitions between polite
discussion and adversarial debate; adversarial debate and reflective dialogue and finally
reflective to generative dialogue invariably underestimates the experiential challenges of
dialogue. More often than not, such attempts to do dialogue can be mistaken for congenial
interactions within the first stage “instability of the container” (Isaacs, 1996) or the first field
“talking nice.”

Following Isaacs’ work from the MIT Dialogue Project, there has been a brief follow up
on developmental talk in organizations (Dixon 1994), team learning (Senge, 1994) and
generative dialogue applications (Kahane, 2004; Matoba, 2003). In Scharmer’s account of generative dialogue, the process unfolds through a series of tangible, self-organizing environments or “fields” of conversation. As learners gain theoretical and practical understanding of these social fields, capacities for creating new knowledge develop. This process becomes significant for adult and higher educators who are interested in generative forms of learning insofar as proprioceptive awareness, suspension and presencing help develop the capacities for creativity in the context of conversation.

Distinct from developmental models of psychology that focus on how the structures of individuals’ consciousness develop, Isaacs depicts a developmental series of four tacit archetypal stages of conversation that not all groups experience. While these stages do not always unfold in a linear process, each previous stage relies to a certain extent on the collective experience of the previous one. Moreover, a group may pass through one stage and then return to a previous stage upon meeting a different type of individual or collective crisis. However, Isaacs (1993) underlying premise is that “the effect of people’s shared attention can alter the quality and level of inquiry possible at any particular time” (p. 35). Similarly, Scharmer’s four fields introduce a set of guiding distinctions that can help adult and higher educators bring awareness to the quality of the conversational fields they are participating in within their learning communities.

As Scharmer (2001) point out, the significance of the container changes at different stages of conversation, with its primary value being in the fields of Politeness and Talking tough. In his MIT Dialogue Project writings, Isaacs (1999) clarifies “the idea behind a container is that human beings need a setting in which to hold the intensities of their lives. Dialogue sets out to clarify and expand the container in which a conversation might take place, evolving and deepening over time” (p. 244). While a container of high quality can support the emergence of
polarized or controversial perspectives and sensitive topics in a way that does not threaten learners, it is important to note such examples originated out of higher stakes meetings between organizations and other business contexts.

I believe, based on my experiences of facilitating generative dialogue in adult and higher learning settings, that it is helpful to regard the development of the dialogue container as a “holding environment” (Winnicott, 1965) that supports learners’ experiences of transformative learning. The notion of a holding environment is derived from the reference to the psychosocial surround that needs to be in place in order to support the healthy development of children. Kegan et al. (2001) notes that there are holding environments at each stage of development throughout one’s lifespan, with three crucial functions:

First, a good holding environment must “hold well”—i.e., it must understand, accept, and acknowledge the way the person understands; it must take the person where he or she is, without disappointment or impatience. Secondly, it must, when the time is right, “let go”—i.e., it must support the person’s need for a gradual psychological separation from, and dis-identification with, the holding environment with which it is, for a time, inevitably fused. Third, if possible, it should “stick around”—i.e., it should be available, after differentiation, to be re-known, or newly connected with according to new terms consistent with the ways the developing person has grown and changed. (p. 7)

In my experience there is value in teaching and modeling these three functions as a key set of foundational practices of generative dialogue. When these functions are enacted alongside participants’ knowledge of the four fields of generative dialogue, I have found this helps everyone feel safer to both support and challenge one another through the field transitions of the GD model. As groups move through the fields of GD, the roles of the instructor/facilitator will change and to some extent diminish as the group becomes more adept with their learning and communicative processes. In my experience, regarding the fields of generative dialogue as a series of holding environments helps foster intrapersonal and interpersonal development, as well as the qualities of being that help catalyze transformative learning in groups.
2.6.4 Primacy of Meta-Awareness (versus thought and feeling) in Generative Dialogue

Our initial findings suggest that the process of dialogue seems to enable shifts in the very ground on which people stand, transforming and expanding their sense of self, and deepening their capacity to hear and inquire into perspectives vastly different than their own. (Isaacs, 1996, p. 21)

With practice, generative dialogue develops the ability to witness our processes of knowing through forms of meta-awareness.\textsuperscript{15} In learning to observe our tendencies to be compulsively enmeshed within our thinking or our feelings, learners discover a release from their accustomed epistemological and ontological horizons of learning. Conventional formats of dialogue within adult and higher education settings tend to emphasize the relational dimensions of inquiry (Kasl and Yorks, 2002) or framing dialogic education as a conversation about ideas (Arnett, 1992). On the other hand, generative dialogue theory attempts to focus on bringing about changes, not only in how we proceed with the inquiry, but also in the “habits of being” (Kasl and Yorks, 2002) of the one who inquires.

Performing the practices of suspension and proprioceptive awareness in the third field of reflective dialogue helps learners undergo a transformation in how they hold perspectives. In many ways generative dialogue contributes to the project of deconstructing rational knowing as the highest faculty of knowing by giving learners the experience of witnessing their knowing through meta-awareness. This is not to say that rationality is marginalized. Rather, one of Bohm’s key interests was to explore a fundamentally different way of relating to thinking in order to understand its limited nature along with its important functions. In part, this process involves cultivating awareness of one’s discursive mind in such a manner that prevents our intellect from being the chief epistemological faculty in command. Adopting an embodied meta-

\textsuperscript{15} Thomas Jordan (2000, p. 33) offers a definition of meta-awareness “Meta-awareness means awareness of the sensorimotor schematas, emotions, desires and thoughts that tumble through our being. Instead of being had by one’s habitual behavioral patterns, emotions, desires and thoughts, meta-awareness means that there is a locus of witnessing in consciousness that can make the behaviors, emotions, desires and thoughts objects of attention.”
aware position facilitates ways of holding our personal perspectives lightly, in turn developing receptivity to difference, which in the context of multicultural diversity and our complex world is increasingly needed. By advancing a form of collective knowing which fosters a personal and collective awareness of its own processes, Bohmian dialogue (a form of reflective dialogue) offers an experiential taste of different ways of knowing. In turn, this expands traditional and conventional categories of “valid” knowledge as well as one’s personal identity. Through meta-awareness of our knowing, which is distinct from being merely self-conscious, the learner is subtly changed by this process. Isaacs elaborates, “the experience of dialogue can bring people to the realization that their traditional self-concepts can be limiting. Participants are compelled to confront the paradoxical possibility that the center of their identity is ‘no-thing’” (Isaacs, 1996, p. 29). Put in another way, the later fields of generative dialogue move from a mental-reflective mode to contemplative modes of knowing and being that help participants better understand their social and cultural identities as constructs. Associated with this experience is the freedom from egoic self-identification and a distinctive shift to collective mindfulness and conversations structured primarily by intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness. On a related tangent, adult educator Daloz (1986) elaborates:

The discovery that “in your mind you can think about anything you want to think about” is such a moment. Able now to think about thinking, Dave realizes perhaps for the first time that what he thinks can be separate from who he is—that he can have his ideas rather than simply being them. This new capacity is both liberating and frightening. (p. 59)

In pointing to meta-cognition or the capacity for thinking about our thinking, Daloz is touching upon a derivative function of thought. Though the discovery of who we are as being distinct from what we think can inspire liberation and anxiety, generative dialogue theory takes this a step further and introduces a practice akin to “social meditation” (Senge and wheatley, 2001;
Cayer, 2005) where learners can explore the transition from being an “identified being” to a “creative being” (Reams, 2003). In this sense, generative dialogue practices help learners discover how their habituated mental process of being identified with their thoughts and feelings tends to block creativity and insight. In developing the capacity not only to dis-identify with polarized positions (Isaacs, 1996), but also to witness the process of learning, participants shift from the subject matter being the common center of the dialogue (Arnett, 1992) to exploring ideas and the subject matter in the common center of collective awareness. Informing Scharmer’s practice of presencing, meta-awareness invites a spaciousness of awareness in the conversation that helps move from the temporal horizons of past, present to future sources of knowing. In this way suspension, proprioceptive awareness and presencing are each awareness-based practices that help learners rediscover a different order of relationship with their capacities of knowing, being and learning in conversation.

As a map and compass for navigating through the archetypal fields of conversation in learning communities, the cultivation of meta-awareness facilitates a process that is central to Kegan’s (1994, 2000) model of transformative learning and development. That is, making the shift from experiencing one’s self as subject (e.g., socialized mind) to being able to take perspectives on one’s self as object (e.g., self-authoring mind). Given Kegan’s (1994) proposition that healthy adulthood involves being capable of meeting the complex demands of modern society, and that one’s capacity is contingent upon the stable development of “fourth order consciousness” (1994) or the “self-authoring mind” (2000), in this regard generative dialogue practice offers an important contribution. Particularly as Kegan (1994, pp. 188-197) claims that well over fifty percent of Americans are “in over their heads” in terms of their incapacity to meet the developmental demands involved with negotiating parenting, partnering,
working, dealing with difference, learning and other matters. Anderson (1997) takes a stronger position than Kegan and argues that anyone without fifth order ways of making meaning or the "self-transforming mind" (2000) lacks the capacities needed to meet the challenges of our time. Because meeting the demands of our complex world involves being able to take perspectives and act upon these domains of modern life that otherwise overwhelm the socialized mind, (or in Anderson’s case, the self-authoring mind) generative dialogue offers an important contribution by developing the meta-aware position in conversation, which helps the self-transforming mind to flourish.

2.7 Closing Remarks

In this chapter, I have proposed that generative dialogue can be helpful within adult and higher education settings insofar as it offers a more comprehensive theory and practice of conversation that supports the emergence of transformative learning. As a method for unfolding new knowledge and new ways of being together in conversation, generative dialogue may prove to be particularly useful in classroom and cohort contexts by bringing about transformative shifts in “the very ground on which people stand, transforming and expanding their sense of self, and deepening their capacity to hear and inquire into perspectives vastly different from their own” (Isaacs, 1996, p. 21). For these reasons, it is my hope that educators will consider the merits of generative dialogue as a method for facilitating coherence between our perspectives, conversations, our actions and our capacity to co-create (i.e., aligning what we think, what we say, what we do and what we see), in turn developing young adult and adult learners’ capacities to sense, presence and enact emerging ways of knowing, being and learning that are needed to flourish in our complex age.
2.8 Works Cited


3. Shedding Light upon the Underlying Elements of Transformative Learning Theory: *Introducing Three Distinct Forms of Consciousness*  

3.1 Introduction

The form that is undergoing transformation needs to be better understood; if there is no form there is no transformation. (Kegan, 2000, p. 48)

Since its inception three decades ago, Transformative Learning (TL) theory has continued to evolve from Jack Mezirow's initial conception (1978), which provided adult educators with a theoretical framework and a corresponding phase-based process for facilitating transformative learning. Mezirow's theory has also developed in response to a growing number of divergent discussions and critical reinterpretations of his work (Taylor, 1998). More recent criticisms raise concerns that Mezirow's theory leans towards being a-contextual (Cunningham, 1992), overemphasizes rationality (Clark and Wilson, 1991; Cranton, 1994) does not adequately account for other ways of knowing (Kasl and Yorks, 2002) and privileges individual change over social change (Welton, 1995) among other limitations. In his responses to each of these criticisms over the years, Mezirow (1997) has maintained that a theory of rationality is central to transformative learning, which is reflected in his position that there is "an inherent logic, ideal, and purpose in the process of transformative learning" (p. 11). Nevertheless, relying on conventional forms of reason to oversee the logic, ideals and purposes of TL risks marginalizing and devaluing other ways of knowing (Gunnlaugson, 2005), in addition to failing to take into account the limitations of conventional reason.

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16 An abridged version of this chapter was published in the proceedings for the 6th international conference on Transformative Learning at Michigan State University with the financial support of a SSRHC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) Canadian Graduate Scholarship. The present version of this chapter has been submitted to the *Journal of Transformative Education* (Sage Press).

17 It is important to note that Mezirow's theory of rationality does not take developmental accounts of cognition into account and therefore does not distinguish between mid or higher orders of reason. In a recent article (Gunnlaugson, 2005), I raise the distinction that post conventional cognition takes the form of vision-logic, in contrast to conventional forms of cognition, which tend to be associated with discursive reason.
In response to these limitations, there is a need for more comprehensive transformative learning theories that honor the rich diversity of existing theories of transformative learning. Within the recent decade, there has emerged a second wave of more "integrative" (Illeris, 2004; Miles, 2002; etc.), "holistic" (Cranton and Roy, 2003; Dirkx, 1997; etc.) and "integral" (Ferrer et al., 2005; Gunnlaugsson, 2004, 2005; O'Sullivan, 1999, 2002, etc.) perspectives attempting to bring together varied perspectives on TL, expand Mezirow's seminal contribution and weave together a broader theory to honor the diversity of visions, theories and practices of TL educators and adult learners. Within the first section of this chapter, I build upon this second wave of contributions by advocating for the continued development of TL theory that explicitly recognizes both the strengths and limitations of conventional reason. I make my case by way of a brief analysis of Robert Kegan's framework of transformative learning and development, with further unpacking of his question, "What form is transforming?" Within the second section of this chapter I explore the limitations of guiding transformative learning processes by "critical reflection" (Mezirow, 1997), which remains the linchpin of Mezirow's ideal of discourse. Partly in support of Mezirow's (1997) view that "transformative learning is rooted in the way human beings communicate" (p. 10), I will introduce "generative dialogue" (Scharmer, 2000, 2003; Isaacs, 1999) as a collective learning practice for supporting and catalyzing transformative learning, which draws upon a broader spectrum of ways of knowing, that instead of being overseen by reason, are mediated by "meta-awareness" (Jordan, 2000). Leading into the final section, informed by Wilber's integral paradigm, I will explore three categories of "forms" of

18 Thomas Jordan (2000, p. 33) offers a definition of meta-awareness "Meta-awareness means awareness of the sensorimotor schematas, emotions, desires and thoughts that tumble through our being. Instead of being had by one's habitual behavioral patterns, emotions, desires and thoughts, meta-awareness means that there is a locus of witnessing in consciousness that can make the behaviors, emotions, desires and thoughts objects of attention."
consciousness (e.g., stages, lines and states) that generative dialogue practice engages as an integral communication ideal.

3.2 Broadening the Scope of Mezirow and Kegan’s Frameworks of TL

Transformative learning was initially identified as a dramatic or gradual shift in a person’s frame of reference (Mezirow, 1978). Transformative learning theorists have since attempted to broaden the scope of TL theory to include the dimensions of learning that are missing from Mezirow’s work (as noted above). To adequately account for the respective gifts of multiple ways of knowing (Kasl and Yorks, 2002; Taylor, 1998), and multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983; Kallenbach, 2005; Wilber, 2003a) there is a need to consider how Mezirow’s and Kegan’s frameworks can more effectively honor these diverse modes of apprehension.

In Mezirow’s (2003, p. 59) more recent research, he employs frames of reference as a kind of universal construct to account for a broader array of ways of knowing, multiple intelligences, in addition to an eclectic assortment of mixed categories:

Frames of reference include fixed interpersonal relationships, political orientations, cultural bias, ideologies, schemata, stereotyped attitudes and practices, occupational habits of mind, religious doctrine, moral-ethical norms, psychological preferences and schema, paradigms in science and mathematics, frames in linguistics and social sciences, and aesthetic values and standards. (p. 59)

Mezirow unpacks his frame of reference into two basic parts “habits of mind and a point of view” (1997). In his terms, habits of mind are deeply embedded assumptions held by learners and point of view is an outward perspective we take in response to a given life-world situation or set of circumstances. For Mezirow, our point of view emerges from our habits of mind, which are more deeply woven into our character, worldview and habitual ways of interpretation.

Adult learning scholar-practitioner Robert Kegan draws attention to the source of Mezirow’s conception of “frames of reference” in pointing out that, “at its root, a frame of
reference is a way of knowing” (Kegan, 2000, p. 52). Within Kegan’s framework of transformative learning, he goes a step further than Mezirow and maps out the epistemologies of adult learners in five stages of development up from the socialized mind (i.e., third order) to self-authoring mind (i.e., fourth order) and finally self-transforming mind (i.e., fifth order). In this way, Kegan addresses the subject of adult transformative learning in terms of the cognitive form of the learners’ consciousness or mind. Kegan does not make distinctions concerning different stages of multiple ways of knowing, but instead remarks that our frames of reference have affective, cognitive, moral, interpersonal and intrapersonal colorings (2000, p. 52). However, his metaphor of “coloring” does not adequately honor Wilber’s insight (Wilber, 2003b) that different ways of knowing develop both independently of and interdependently to one another.

In light of Wilber’s more recent insight, there is a need to reframe the learners’ frames of reference in such a way that honors the respective terms of truth or validity of different ways of knowing. For example, kinesthetic or body knowing, which develops along different stages of kinesthetic intelligence, can now be assessed on terms internal to its own form of knowing (Ferrer et al., 2005). Kegan is on the mark with his insight that learners will need to evolve their “orders” of mind to meet the different challenges of an increasingly complex and hidden curriculum of adult life. However, to account for multiple ways of knowing as colorings upon a more primary “cognitive” epistemology ignores the significance of distinct epistemological frameworks that correspond with each way of knowing.

Expanding upon the categories of Howard Gardner’s theory (1983) of multiple intelligences, Wilber introduces the framework of “lines of development” (2003b) as a way to better differentiate the different capacities of learners:

The exact number of developmental lines (and the number of levels in any of the lines) are issues that can only be decided by ongoing structural research. To date, there appears
to be at least two dozen relatively independent developmental lines ... : cognitive, musical, kinesthetic, linguistic, moral, mathematical, interpersonal, values, needs, defenses, self-identity, role-taking, ideas of the good, spatial temporal perception, creativity, among others—but again, this is a decision for ongoing structural research. (p. 85)

From Wilber's integral perspective, the drive to understand our overall level or measure of development is recontextualized within a broader meta-framework, which examines learners' capacities within the respective developmental line one is considering. Wilber also regards developmental lines as “streams” (2000), because, though most of these capacities develop in a relatively independent fashion, many draw from the intelligences of neighboring streams.

Overall, Wilber's category of developmental lines introduces a new set of distinctions to the discourse of existing TL theory by providing a more comprehensive theoretical framework within which to evaluate how learners' capacities and potentials unfold over time.19

Revisiting Mezirow and Kegan's models with this insight, again Mezirow employs his “frame of reference” construct in a general manner that does not specifically address other forms of knowing. As his vision is informed by the project of transforming our taken for granted frames of reference primarily through processes of critical reflection, Mezirow embeds his work within the horizons of discursive rationality. Consequently, he does not explicitly take into account the limits of rationality, instead advocating TL processes that reinforce its healthy development. Many adult and higher educators would agree that it is desirable to support the development of conventional reason, particularly in contexts where reason is marginalized. Yet, from an integrally-informed perspective (Gunnlaugson, 2005) healthy discursive reason does not take its perspective to be final. Rather through the advanced cognitive stages of vision-logic20

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19 Rather than devise external criteria to assess the validity of these individual lines, Wilber relies primarily on the pre-established criteria set by each independent researcher.

20 Wilber (1995) elaborates on vision-logic “As rationality continues its quest for a truly universal or global or planetary outlook, non-coercive in nature, it eventually gives way to a type of cognition I call vision-logic. Vision-
(Wilber, 1995) and meta-awareness (Jordan, 2000), learners can begin to experience first-hand knowledge of the limitations of reason.

As noted earlier, Kegan addresses this primary cognitive form within a set of five increasingly complex epistemologies (2000, p. 63) that learners grow into over the course of their lifetime, with many adults developing only as far as his third stage. In other words, Kegan’s model is focused primarily on the four major *epochal* transformations not all individual learners go through. This limits his perspective to the cognitive “forms” of transformative learning and helps regain definitional clarity. Yet, given the significance of multiple ways of knowing and multiple intelligences in contemporary adult education discourse, how might we honor these forms in ways that do not reject or devalue intellectual knowledge? In venturing beyond, yet respecting the categories of conventional reason, Ferrer et al. (2005) aptly point out the challenges of flowing between multiple ways of knowing in practice:

> In practical terms, this means that most students are at first incapable of elaborating intellectual knowledge from emotional/somatic experience and of remaining in mindful contact with their hearts and bodies while engaged in intellectual discussion. We interpret this difficulty as a sign of the prevalent state of dissociation between these worlds in the modern Western self... In our view, this predicament calls for the exploration of methodological structures that systematically bridge those different worlds, foster their collaborative epistemic competence, and lead to creative academic fruits and sound shared knowledge. (p. 324)

Once again as TL scholar-practitioners, we are faced with the challenge of expanding our existing vocabulary of different “forms” of transformative learning in order to better account for and guide the varied experiences of adult learners. By differentiating forms of transformative learning in terms of the multiple intelligences (and ways of knowing that arise from these distinct intelligences), we begin to cultivate a more refined understanding of the different potentials and capacities of learners. To serve future research, there is a need to refine how we *conceptualize* logic can hold in mind contradictions, it can unify opposites, it is dialectical and non-linear, and it weaves together what otherwise appear to be incompatible notions” (p. 185).
human development in terms of the differentiation, maturation and integration of distinct lines or streams (at least some of which are distinct forms of knowing) within the context of TL. In turn, this will help learners gain access to a wider range of experiences that accompany these forms of knowing. By refining our knowledge of how we learn and come to know our experiences of transformation, there is a corresponding call for expanding our existing frameworks of transformative learning to better represent the breadth and depth of learners’ experiences. In practice, working from more comprehensive frameworks will help learners identify other valid forms of transformative learning experiences.

3.3 Moving from Critical Discourse to Generative Dialogue

As Mezirow (2003), Schugurensky (2002) and other TL scholars have pointed out, transformative learning in part hinges upon critical reflection upon the unexamined assumptions and expectations that we and other people hold. In this way, transformative learning processes require participating in forms of spoken discourse where learners can reflect on their actions and uncover insights from the meaning, experiences, and opinions expressed by others. For Mezirow, spoken discourse becomes the chief vehicle by or context in which we transform our frames of reference through critical reflection upon our interpretations, beliefs and habits of mind. Following Habermas, Mezirow describes this process as “communicative learning” (2003) and maintains that forms of perspective transformation require critical reflection born out of social discourse. Yet, he also maintains that these processes are not exclusively group mediated.

As I noted above, criticisms have been raised that critical reflection is granted too much prominence by Mezirow and other TL theorists (Clark and Wilson, 1991; Cranton, 1994; Taylor, 1998). Yet, counterclaims that transformative learning is primarily an intuitive, creative,
emotional process (Kasl and Yorks, 2002) can also be problematic inasmuch as such notions tend to invert Mezirow’s initial position, which often results in eclipsing or marginalizing reason. This is not to suggest that intuition, creativity and emotion do not play vital roles in transformative learning. Rather, it is to raise the question, “How might we advance a discourse practice that draws upon a broader spectrum of multiple ways of knowing (including critical reflection where appropriate)?” While such practices tend to require more time and commitment than conventional pedagogical methods within regular adult and higher education classrooms, it is important to note that fostering transformative learning often requires much time, intensity of experience, risk, and personal exploration by both the students and the teacher (Moore, 2005).

Mezirow (1997) points out that our experiences of transformative learning are shaped by our methods of discourse. According to Mezirow (1997), educators who are committed to facilitating transformative learning need to adhere to “ideal conditions of discourse” as a goal and set of standards to evaluate their performance:

Educators must help learners be aware and critical of their own and others’ assumptions. Learners also need practice in recognizing frames of reference and using their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective. Finally, learners need to be assisted to participate effectively in discourse. Discourse is necessary to validate what and how one understands, or to arrive at a best judgment regarding a belief. In this sense, learning is a social process, and discourse becomes central to making meaning. (p. 10)

In advocating dispositions that support critical reflection, Mezirow’s description of the ideal conditions of discourse are well suited for maintaining social norms of public life within a liberal democratic system. However, within contexts of adult and higher education where transformative learning is an explicit intention and aim, there is a need to develop more comprehensive conceptions of communicative interactions that honor the contributions of conventional discourse practice and support practices that honor multiple ways of knowing, as well as bring forth other transformative learning objectives heretofore absent from Mezirow’s
ideal of a “rational learner” (2003). Echoing TL educator Maureen O’Hara’s view (2003), I am convinced there is a need to develop more integral forms of educational practice which cultivate a broader range of patterns of mind and consciousness in order to meet the increasingly complex demands of emerging 21st century learning and life contexts.

In response, this chapter presents a case for generative dialogue as a method and practice of conversation that can support and serve as a catalyst for transformative learning. Many adult and higher education contexts may not yet be ready to support transformative learning initiatives (Taylor, 1998; Moore, 2005) due to the time and level of commitment involved. Yet this is not an adequate argument for endorsing the “safer” and "less messy" forms of communicative interactions, which keep other ways of knowing either at bay or in a state of perpetual immaturity under parameters set by discursive reason (Ferrer et al., 2005).

Following Bohm’s (1996) conception of dialogue and the MIT dialogue project (Isaacs, 1993), Scharmer’s theory of generative dialogue provides practices for groups to learn and think together for the purposes of unfolding new knowledge, ways of knowing and ways of being. Combined with elements of Isaacs’ research (1993, 1999), Scharmer introduces a process model (Figure 3.1) that charts the modes of conversation not all groups move through.
### Enacting Emerging Futures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>generative dialogue</th>
<th>reflective dialogue</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➞ presencing, flow</td>
<td>➞ Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➞ time: slowing down</td>
<td>➞ I can change my view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➞ space: boundaries</td>
<td>➞ empathic listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collapse</td>
<td>(from within the other self)</td>
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<tr>
<td>➞ listening from one’s future Self</td>
<td>➞ other = you</td>
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<tr>
<td>➞ rule-generating</td>
<td>➞ rule - reflecting</td>
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<tr>
<th>talking nice</th>
<th>talking tough</th>
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<tr>
<td>➞ Downloading</td>
<td>➞ debate, clash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➞ polite, cautious</td>
<td>➞ I am my point of view</td>
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<tr>
<td>➞ listening = projecting</td>
<td>➞ Listening = reloading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➞ rule-reenacting</td>
<td>➞ other = target</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➞ rule-revealing</td>
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### Reenacting Patterns of the Past

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Figure 3.1: Four Fields of Generative Dialogue (Scharmer, 2003)

Similar to Mezirow’s ideal of discourse, the third field of “reflective dialogue” in Scharmer’s model describes a context in which learners can safely discover and inquire into one another’s assumptions. Interestingly, Mezirow does not prescribe a practice or set of practices for discourse. Yet—perhaps somewhat ironically—he notes that it takes practice (Mezirow, 2003). In contrast, David Bohm describes an attention-based practice of “suspension” (Bohm, 1996). Suspension is important within the reflective dialogue stage of Scharmer’s model, insofar as it helps participants reveal their tacit or hidden assumptions together during the dialogue. Absent from Mezirow’s model, suspension helps learners cultivate a first-hand experience of the nature of thought and consciousness within a collective context. Over time, suspension helps
one become less identified with his or her habits of mind and points of view. Learning to be less embedded or reified in their perspectives, learners gradually develop a fundamentally different basis of relationship to their thoughts and emotional processes. To put this in the parlance of Kegan's TL framework, we learn to have our thoughts rather than be our thoughts. In this regard, suspension plays a practical and active role in helping learners explore horizons of experience that lie beyond the conventional categories of identity and discourse.

Suspending our thought processes when encountering moments of difference, dissonance, judgment and so forth invites the possibility of slowing down our stream of consciousness. This can, with practice, provide a receptive opening or “clearing” (Heidegger, 1962) where learners can make experiential contact with emotional, intuitive, imaginative, kinesthetic and other forms of knowing. In this way, suspension offers a practice for learners to explore the subtle textures and nuances of different ways of knowing. By slowing down the pace of conventional discourse, learners can explore those ways of knowing that otherwise dwell on the periphery of a group or an individual's horizon of awareness. Given the potential of feelings and emotions to prompt reflective learning and insights, suspension helps develop a willingness within learning communities to respond to the feelings, emotions, intuitive promptings, kinesthetic shifts and so forth that might otherwise be suppressed, and that might in turn create barriers for transformative learning and personal development.

Following from suspension is the practice of “presencing” (Scharmer, 2000), a key liberating discipline within the fourth stage of generative dialogue. Presencing is a contemplative practice that helps learners move beyond reflective discourse, which is primarily informed by memory and the past. As a foreground to contemplative practice, critical and reflective discourse helps learners expose their unexamined tacit assumptions. Beneath tacit
knowledge is the deeper category of "self-transcending knowledge" (Scharmer, 2001a) which becomes available as learners develop their capacity for presencing. Unlike Kolb's classic learning cycle in which knowledge is built upon previous knowledge, presencing involves learning from attention to what is emerging—knowledge that is sensed but not yet embodied in our experience. This takes place through forms of whole-body sensing and listening from the emerging shared meaning at the generative dialogue stage. Presencing becomes a vital practice to bring to group inquiry insofar as it opens up creative possibilities for unfolding new knowledge that draw from a range of ways of knowing in contrast to relying purely on discursive reasoning, which tends to eclipse these possibilities. From learning to witness the mental stream of our ideas and beliefs (i.e., suspension) and pre-sense (i.e., presencing) emerging meaning and knowledge, we begin to explore beyond the traditional categories or forms of transformative learning in groups.

In addition to the above mentioned practices, and as distinct from Mezirow's ideal of discourse, from my experiences teaching and facilitating generative dialogue, I have come to appreciate how the process can serve the developmental function of a "holding environment" (Winnicott, 1965). Kegan has since recontextualized Winnicott's construct as the psychosocial environment at each stage of development throughout one's lifespan (Kegan, 1982). Broadly characterized as the particular form of life-world conditions that an individual is embedded within, one's holding environment is a reference to the quality of the contexts out of which we grow. As our form of discourse shapes the "norms" of interaction within one's peer and learning cultures, generative dialogue practice provides a culturing environment of conversation. Contrasted with Mezirow's ideal of discourse, generative dialogue is structured by awareness rather than habituated past patterns of critical reflection, memory or thought. In this regard,
generative dialogue practice opens a collective learning space where moment to moment attention can permeate the conversation. Over time this begins to create a holding environment for conversation that can help better support learners’ array of needs. What makes generative dialogue particularly effective as a holding environment are the practices of suspension and presencing, which resemble the ideal learning conditions for transformative pedagogy insofar as they “promote a sense of safety, openness and trust” (Taylor, 2000) as well as the capacity to simply be and co-construct meaning from the shared presence and presencing of the group.

Isaacs interprets this holding space with the metaphor of a series of “containers” (Isaacs, 1993) of conversation where participants learn how to develop a collective capacity to hold the creative tension between different ideas, conflicting emotions, different ways of knowing and so forth. This creates an alchemical vessel where social learning processes can be contained, allowing tensions and paradoxes charged with energy to creatively unfold. In this way, generative dialogue offers a series of holding environments that accompany each stage of conversation. In turn this provides an overall set of “integrative circumstances” (Clark, 1991) to support learners’ transformative learning experiences. It is important to note that these conditions cannot be facilitated by the educator alone. Rather they are co-constructed and co-developed by participants who are willing to assume shared responsibility for collectively creating conditions that foster TL.

3.4 Exploring Forms of TL as Illuminated by Generative Dialogue

Because both the subject and phenomenon of transformation are enormously exciting and appealing, there’s a temptation to become intoxicated by the thrill, hope and spectacle of it all, which can make it difficult to get at what transformation is. (Kegan, 2002, p. 144)

As Kegan (2002) points out, the analytic dimension of transformative learning needs to be better distinguished from its emotional or aesthetic dimension in order to bring more clarity to what is actually transforming. There has been a lack of consensus or clarity within the field of
transformative learning around the question of what exactly constitutes transformation in the context of adult learning and development. Partly this is due to the subject being mysterious (Dirkx, 1997); the language appealing (Brookfield, 2000); and an overall lack of common ground and shared theory (Mezirow and Aalsburg, 2000) within the field. For these reasons, we are left with the challenge of discerning and identifying further significant forms of transformative learning.

In response to this challenge, the final section of this chapter will expand upon Kegan's notion that definable distinctions (i.e., forms of consciousness) are needed to better understand the transformative shifts that take place for learners. It will do so by describing how generative dialogue practice promotes learners' development through different stages within various lines of development with corresponding changes in the learners' states of consciousness as articulated by Wilber's integral framework.

3.4.1 Change in Learners' Stages within Developmental Lines

In a nutshell, Kegan's framework of transformative learning draws our attention to how a person's evolving order of consciousness structures their experience differently at each stage of development. Taking a step back from Kegan's model, let us now consider the "self" (or self-system or self-sense) that develops in adult and young adult learners. Although there are many ways to depict the self, Wilber has advanced an integral template of the various phenomena of human consciousness that constitute the self, culled from over one-hundred developmental psychological systems East and West (Wilber, 2003c). Deriving his research from these developmental frameworks, Wilber maintains that the self unfolds through various stages or levels in a flowing series of streams.

According to Wilber, one of the primary characteristics of our self-sense is how we
identify\textsuperscript{21} with these basic structures or levels of consciousness. When this takes place, we generate a specific type of self-identity, with specific needs and drives at different stages. As noted above, Kegan has articulated these levels in terms of five stages of epistemological styles, which give rise to the self as a nested series of functional systems. Wilber’s integral spectrum of consciousness relies on a similar categorization ranging from seven to ten functional groupings or basic levels (Wilber, 2000). The Spiral Dynamics framework of Beck and Cohen (1996) utilizes eight stages depicting the evolution of values and worldviews. Kohlberg’s scale of moral development is based on six stages. Loevinger’s ego development model employs a dozen stages and the list of developmental models\textsuperscript{22} unfolds, each working with a different scale of measurement and specific feature of consciousness.

By bringing this broad cross-section of developmental models together, Wilber (2003a) points out that each developmental model can be more optimally represented by a specific developmental line. In addition to the multiple intelligences discussed earlier, developmental lines also represent the “self-related” (Wilber, 2000) lines of development as in the examples listed above. As Wilber points out:

There are the developmental lines in general (cognitive, affective, aesthetic, kinesthetic, mathematical, etc), and, as a subset of those, there are the developmental lines that are especially and intimately associated with the self, its needs, its identity, and its development—and those are the self-related lines. (p. 38)

According to Wilber (2003c), the lines with more centrality or prominence in our experience are the self-related lines.\textsuperscript{23} Similarly Kegan’s model holds a greater significance within the context of transformative learning than the other developmental lines that correspond to capacities and

\textsuperscript{21} The self sense is our sense of self at a given stage. It is not so much the content of what we identify with, but more the process of identification.

\textsuperscript{22} According to Wilber (2000), these models have been empirically tested by dozens of developmental theorists on subjects across genders and cultures.

\textsuperscript{23} Other self-related lines include self-identity, morals, needs and values (Wilber, 2003a).
skills (e.g., multiple intelligences). Nevertheless, within an integral context of neighboring developmental lines, Kegan's framework exists alongside at least two dozen other developmental frameworks. In instances where Kegan's framework might be mistakenly applied as a comprehensive framework of development, the theory becomes prone to conflating the part (i.e., the domain of consciousness his research addresses) with the whole (i.e., the spectrum of existing eastern and western perspectives of human consciousness). From this brief analysis we can see that treating Kegan's or any developmental theorist's model as an authoritative paradigm ignores the contributions of neighboring developmental lines.\textsuperscript{24} Kegan's model works well within its own domain and context of application. Yet, if we overextend this interpretive lens into other domains of consciousness or experience, we risk denying, excluding or marginalizing the insights from neighboring paradigms (i.e., Kegan's earlier reference to other ways of knowing as colorings). Wilber (2003e) elaborates:

\begin{quote}
Any plausible integral metatheory, by virtue of its attempt to acknowledge all major legitimated paradigms in various fields, would set implicit boundaries to the believability of any single paradigm operating on its own. An integral metatheory would, in effect, free the paradigm by limiting it. As it is now, when any paradigm oversteps its authority and begins to make pronouncements about other phenomena brought forth by other paradigms, the only principle guiding the pronouncements tends to be, "I'm right, you're wrong." (p. 1)
\end{quote}

In this regard, Wilber's integral approach provides a helpful framework for recontextualizing existing partial perspectives of transformative learning theory.\textsuperscript{25}

The holding environments within each field of generative dialogue can help serve as a practical context for exploring changes in learners' self-related lines, which in turn support the

\textsuperscript{24} It is important to note that these other frameworks (i.e. developmental lines) have by and large not made their way into the literature of transformative learning theory.

\textsuperscript{25} Wilber's frameworks provide a useful synthesis of the field of consciousness studies by illustrating the commonalities and underlying patterns of how the different facets of consciousness develop, in addition to providing a meta-theory that attempts to assemble these disparate frameworks within a larger comprehensive paradigm (Gunnlaugson, 2005).
development of more complex stages of consciousness along different developmental lines. With Bohm’s practice of suspension, learners move into a receptive and open state of attentiveness that creates the conditions for non-defensive inquiry. The subtle action of suspension, like awareness-based forms of meditation, frees up energy to consider another’s way of thinking or perspective in a respectful and inclusive manner that supports the emergence of Buber’s I-Thou (1958) relationships rooted in mutuality. Suspension also simulates the movement of psychological development that Kegan (1982) describes as central to his subject/object principle. In other words, what you are identified with or embedded in at one stage of development, tends to be temporarily transcended at the next stage, which allows you to see yourself and others with less subjective distortion. The elements of ourselves we are tied, fused, or imbedded in are the elements we are subject to. The elements of our knowing or experience that we can reflect on are the elements we are object to. Suspension therefore provides an experience of the process of forming and reforming our relationship to the way we hold our ideas, believes, feelings and experiences as learners.

With practice, in generative dialogue, participants become more attentive to the life conditions, beliefs and worldviews in which they are embedded. It would be misleading to suggest the practice of suspension brings about a fundamental change in stage within one’s self-related line of development. However, suspension facilitates and simulates the transition from being focally identified with one’s thoughts or feelings to being free to witness them, which gives us a preview of a different self-sense or more complex order of consciousness as in Kegan’s framework. To what extent suspension plays a role in facilitating a stage shift within the self-related lines of development or other multiple intelligences remains a question for future research. Still, generative dialogue provides an important function in this process by stimulating
both the *self-related* lines of development and the *capacity* and *skill* based lines by giving learners an experience of moving from being one’s ideas to witnessing them; from being one’s thoughts to witnessing them; from being one’s feelings, to witnessing them. With practice, adult learners begin to cultivate a learning disposition that is open to change and evolving more complex adaptive forms of being and learning in the world.

### 3.4.2 Change in Learners’ Capacity for Shifting *States* of Consciousness

Mezirow frames TL as the process in which adult learners call into question the uncritically assimilated frames of reference, beliefs or purposes that have prevented them from developing autonomous thinking. Mezirow’s framework closely describes the changes learners experience in moving from Kegan’s third stage of “the socialized mind” to the fourth stage of “the self authoring mind” (Kegan, 2000, p. 64). As we strive to become critically reflective of our assumptions (Mezirow, 1997), through the cycles of action and critical reflection that inform Mezirow’s ideal of discourse lies a necessary course of adult learning. However, as this section will attempt to convey, such a stance tends to privilege analysis and critical reflection in ways that prevent the emergent capacity of meta-awareness (Jordan, 2000), which is helpful in supporting the emergence of multiple ways of knowing and deepened “states” of consciousness (Wilber, 2003a).

In addition to critical reflection, generative dialogue practice cultivates meta-awareness as a gateway to inviting and honoring other ways of knowing that would otherwise be suppressed or left unexplored at the margins of group discourse. Integral theorist Thomas Jordan (2000) defines meta-awareness as follows:

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26 Kegan (1982) refers to his subject-object movement as the shift from “being” imbedded in certain experiences to “having” them. I have deliberately replaced the term “having” with “witnessing” in order to better distinguish the relationship between cognition and the other developmental lines. To *have* the contents of other lines could in some circles, suggest a kind of cognitive imperialism which fails to honor the respective intelligences and contents of consciousness.
Meta-awareness means awareness of the sensorimotor schematas, emotions, desires and thoughts that tumble through our being. Instead of being had by one's habitual behavioral patterns, emotions, desires and thoughts, meta-awareness means that there is a locus of witnessing in consciousness that can make the behaviors, emotions, desires and thoughts objects of attention. (p. 33)

In the context of generative dialogue, the traditional cycles of action and critical reflection are supplemented with an additional cycle of meta-awareness. Before the emergence of the meta-aware position, the learners' attention tends to be quite absorbed by the emerging content of the discourse itself. With the cultivation of meta-awareness, less of our attention becomes bound up in the discursive realm of thought and the emotional forms of reactivity that tend to be imbedded in our thought patterns (Bohm, 1996) as conveyed in the last section on suspension. From generative dialogue experiences, I have found that meta-awareness can take numerous forms within the individual and the intersubjective field of inquiry. In the latter context, meta-awareness often simply involves venturing a meta-conversation about the existing conversation. Within the later stages of generative dialogue, there is a need for recursive conversations about what was just talked about, felt, intuited or sensed. These recursive conversations may initially bring about frustration for participants who may claim to experience the dialogue as not going anywhere. This frustration can settle if the group can let go of task-oriented objectives in the interests of serving learning-oriented processes. Alongside other practices of generative dialogue (e.g., suspension, presencing and creating a holding environment within a conversation), meta-awareness helps us notice deeper assumptions or behaviors in ourselves and the group that were previously unconscious—especially creative possibilities of new knowledge that has not yet fully emerged. In this way, the group learns to explore the subtle emergent territory of learning, which tends not to be immediately recognizable for others who adhere to conventional standards of group discourse (e.g., task-based learning or critical reflection). By focusing on being aware
of and differentiating from the contents of awareness, meta-awareness becomes a fertile space for supporting the development of other ways of knowing through generative dialogue.

Mezirow characterizes transformative learning as a form of “metacognitive reasoning” (2003) in emphasizing insight into the “source, structure, and history of a frame of reference, as well as judging its relevance, appropriateness and consequences” (2003, p. 61). In contrast with processes of meta-cognitive reasoning, meta-awareness involves a similar movement from being embedded in cognition to taking a perspective of one’s content of cognition. Yet meta-awareness is distinct from meta-cognition in that meta-cognitive processes involve awareness within the context of cognition, whereas meta-awareness includes yet extends beyond the categories of cognitive reasoning. From these expanded horizons of embodied awareness, participants learn to be meta-aware of different intelligences, faculties of knowing and ways of being in the world and classroom. Reflective thinking, which relies on metacognitive reasoning, tends to rely on executive control and self-communication about experiences (Mezirow, 1981). From Mezirow’s perspective, the learner utilizes metacognitive awareness for the purposes of gaining cognitive control over a given learning experience. From the perspective I am introducing, the learner is no longer investing their identity in trying to gain control of their learning. Rather, there is a more primary commitment to allowing for a multiplicity of possibilities and apparent contradictions to coexist in order to begin to glean patterns of knowing through forms of vision-logic and embodied meta-awareness. Considering Mezirow’s ideal of independent thinking from this postconventional perspective, autonomous thinking is no longer the most mature or appropriate ideal for engaging the transformative learning process within contexts of adult and higher education (Gunnlaugson, 2005). If one places Kegan’s self-authoring mind (e.g., fourth order) as the highest stage, this would be a fair presupposition.
However, if we address Kegan's fifth stage of the "self-transforming mind" (2000), the cognition of adult learners begins to develop to the level of vision-logic. At this stage, learners are no longer exclusively identified with their interpretive ideologies and therefore can witness other's perspectives as partial facets of a larger dynamic unfolding wholeness.

As the capacities for meta-awareness and vision-logic strengthen, so also does the witness-self, which according to Wilber (2000) is available to everyone regardless of their stage of consciousness within the self-related lines. In other words, it is not necessary to be at either Kegan's fourth or fifth order consciousness to experience the witness-self. As participants learn how to hold the content of their consciousness in a fundamentally different way, via suspension, they learn to become familiar with the witness position in conversation. The witness is constructed and identified from a new foundation of distributed compassionate awareness (Scharmer, 2001b) versus the self-cherishing ground of egoic processes. As expressed in various wisdom traditions (i.e., Buddhism, Hinduism and so forth), this unidentified form of witnessing awareness is paradoxically not of space or time, yet always present (Combs, 2002; Aurobindo, 2000; Wilber, 2000). According to Wilber, traditionally individuals can experience the witness self through forms of contemplative practice that bring about shifts in their "state" of consciousness.

From Wilber's integral framework, the transformative potentials contained in the deeper states of consciousness represent what consciousness will later become at higher stages (2003a). In making the distinction between states of consciousness (which are temporary) and structures of consciousness (which are permanent), within the context of discourse this distinction can be helpful for identifying subtle states of being that temporarily arise within individuals and groups. In turn, learning to recognize states of consciousness can help learners sensitize to these optimal
learning experiences as a vital dimension of transformative learning. As Wilber points out (2003d), a person can, through long term contemplative practice, begin to convert these temporary states into permanent traits or structures, which means that learners begin to have access to these realms on a more-or-less continuous and conscious basis (Wilber, 2003c).

If bringing about such transformations is to be a realistic aim within adult and higher educational contexts, there is a need to establish practices in order to cultivate such potentials in our lives. Given that generative dialogue serves as both an evolving container and a discipline within which states of consciousness can be supported and developed, with this distinction, we can also address the expanded states of consciousness that accompany shifts in one's worldview or frame of reference. More than this, future research will do well to explore the extent to which Mezirow's disorienting dilemma is necessary to produce a state-shift. In other words, can the positive expanded states of consciousness experienced within generative dialogue (and other contexts) offer a different learning corridor to shifting one's frame of reference or worldview? Alongside contemplative practices such as awareness-based meditation, it seems that generative dialogue offers a practical classroom context for further exploration into the merits of different states of consciousness within an integral framework of transformative learning.

3.5 Closing Remarks

This chapter builds upon Mezirow and Kegan's contributions, and attempts to shed light upon the deeper structures of transformative learning by drawing upon Wilber's integral framework to identify three distinct forms of consciousness that are significant within the context of transformative learning. Intended to join the emerging discourse of the emerging second wave of TL theory, this chapter has also attempted to demonstrate the need to explore how aspects of generative dialogue process (i.e., meta-awareness, vision-logic, multiple intelligences,
multiple ways of knowing, suspension and presencing) help bring about shifts in the forms of the learners’ consciousness in terms of the stages of both the capacity-related and self-related lines of development, as well as states of consciousness. Within this preliminary integral framework, there is room to honor a greater breadth of transformative shifts of consciousness that unfold for learners, in addition to recognizing areas of growth that may have been experienced, but not yet identified as a form of TL. While it is not yet clear to what extent each shift constitutes a fundamental change in form of the learners’ consciousness, or the degree to which generative dialogue serves these processes, these and other distinctions raised within this chapter offer a preliminary conceptual framework to inform both andragogical practice and future conceptual, hermeneutic and empirical research.
3.6 Works Cited


(Available from Dr. Claus Otto Scharmer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, E53-423 Sloan School of Management, 20 Wadsworth Street, Cambridge, MA, 02142)


4.1 Introduction

The ultimate source of the Susquehanna River was a kind of meadow in which nothing happened: no cattle, no mysteriously gushing water, merely the slow accumulation of moisture from many unseen sources, the gathering of dew, so to speak, the beginning, the unspectacular congregation of nothingness, the origin of purpose. And where the moisture stood, sharp rays of bright sunlight were reflected back until the whole area seemed golden, and hallowed, as if here Life itself were beginning. (Michener, 1995, para. 65)

Like the proverbial Zen finger, Michener’s quote directs our awareness to the hidden, yet always present source of life that plays a formative role in shaping us and our manifest world. Whether this underlying source is viewed from the form of a river, an artist’s creation or a generative conversation, we are reminded of the significance of the subtle originating processes that are imperceptibly taking place upstream from our accustomed horizons of attention.

Viewing this analogy within the context of group learning, a pervasive tendency is to unmindfully invest our attention in the often competing currents of thought, past associations, habits and conditioning that invariably surface downstream in our spoken discourse. Debate and discussion, though well-suited to serving the interests of previous cultural-historical periods, focus primarily on the specific downstream thought content. Often this takes place to the exclusion of individuals and the group being aware of the process of thought itself (Bohm, 1996) and the hidden source or blindspot out of which our thoughts and experience originate (Scharmer, 2000). In such contexts of spoken discourse, well ingrained strategies to defend or advocate our views arise from a deeper identification with our thoughts, positions and judgments. In practice, this habitual process restricts exploration of the subtle creative possibilities of conversation. As Bohm (1996), Isaacs (1993), Reason and Torbert (2001) and

27 This chapter is presently under review by AQAL Journal (USA), having received financial support from a Masters SSRHC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) Canadian Graduate Scholarship.
others have argued, such habits prevent us from uncovering the deeper forms of tacit knowledge that lie upstream. According to Scharmer’s research on presencing (Scharmer, 2000; Senge et al., 2004) this restricts us from accessing new knowledge through contact with the unmanifest source of our experience.

Following from Bohmian dialogue²⁸ (1987, 1996) and the MIT dialogue project (Isaacs, 1999), Scharmer’s account of generative dialogue (GD) (2000, 2003) addresses the above modes of attention and knowing within four fields of conversation. Building upon Scharmer’s contribution, this chapter examines how the dimensions of consciousness within Wilber’s AQAL²⁹ framework introduce a set of new practical distinctions for practitioners and facilitators working with the GD model. On the whole, this chapter ventures a series of exploratory perspectives concerning how Wilber’s AQAL model can help augment the transformative potential of generative dialogue practice in various contexts of collective learning.

4.2 A brief overview of Generative Dialogue

Looking more closely at Scharmer’s model (i.e., Figure 4.1), each of the four fields represent a distinct form of conversation that corresponds to the stages of group development, but also to the modes of spoken discourse that groups participate in and move through:

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²⁸ As a practice, Bohmian dialogue is a way of inquiring into the individual and collective presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, and feelings that ordinarily inhibit communication. Bohm’s conception addresses both our underlying assumptions as well as the psychological pressures behind these assumptions. In this sense, Bohm is proposing a basis for creating a new kind of culture where opinions and assumptions are not defended incoherently and people think together (Bohm, 1996).

²⁹ Wilber’s AQAL model has become the shorthand version of his integral approach. AQAL is short for all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, and all types (Wilber, 2003). For the purposes of this chapter, I have focused on the first four lenses, as the distinction of types focuses on horizontal typologies that lack a basis for universal applicability and more on personal insights (and cultural contexts) of a given individual (Wilber, 2000).
Initially there is often well-intentioned politeness and conformity (Scharmer, 2000) in service of the whole, which leads to undiscussables (Argyris, 1990) or threads of conversation that participants avoid. This dynamic can arise when participants hold back what they are thinking or feeling and project meanings to the contributions from other participants based on previous interactions. In order to move beyond this common group dynamic, Scharmer points out that individuals need to bring what they are thinking into alignment with what they are saying. If this initial transition is delayed, it tends to manifest later on with individuals needing to voice their “truth.” The challenge in moving from talking nice to talking tough involves finding skillful ways to share the perspectives one is withholding or naming the dynamic within the conversation.
that is preventing authentic expression, as once again, the container of the group dialogue tends to be unstable at this stage (Isaacs, 1993).

Scharmer locates the conversational norms of argument and debate culture within the second stage of his generative dialogue framework. Here participants can easily get locked into polarized and expressive views, followed by reactivity and combative listening (Scharmer, 2000). This stage risks various forms of breakdown (Isaacs, 1999) as individuals become overly identified with their perspectives and felt needs to impart or express their views. Moving from talking tough to reflective dialogue depends upon being more attentive to one’s judgments, thoughts and psychological processes through the practice of “suspension” (Bohm, 1996). Suspension of one’s judgments or reactions requires learning to bracket one’s views and embrace competing perspectives as important partial illuminations of the larger gestalt of the group subject or issue. Shifts within the larger field take place when participants who are otherwise locked into advocacy, begin to collectively practice suspension, as Bohm elaborates:

Suspension is not easily grasped because the activity is both unfamiliar and subtle. Suspension involves exposing your reactions, impulses, feelings and opinions in such a way that they can be seen and felt and also be reflected back by others in the group. It does not mean repressing or suppressing or, even, postponing them. It means, simply, giving them your serious attention so that their structures can be noticed, while they are actually taking place. Suspension may permit you to begin to see the deeper meanings underlying your thought process and to sense the often incoherent structure of any action that you might otherwise carry out automatically. (Bohm et al., 1991)

Suspension is a key transition practice that helps groups become more aware of the pervasive tendency to reenact past patterns based on previously formulated perspectives or beliefs. Similar to meditation, suspension facilitates in-the-moment awareness of our thinking and emotional processes, in turn helping us temporarily shift from a first to third person perspective of the contents of our consciousness. This opens a creative space within ourselves and the group to witness these contents as the dialogue process builds. With sufficient practice and duration in
this third field of conversation, participants learn about the “structuring, layering or genesis of their experience” (Varela, 2000), which in turn helps develop capacities for empathic listening and thinking together as a collective.

Following Bohm’s suspension of thought, Scharmer adapts Varela’s phenomenological gesture of “redirection” (Varela, 2000). Redirection involves learning to subtly move our attention to sensing into the source of the stream of what is trying to emerge in the greater dialogue group as people share their contributions. Put in another way, redirection involves literally redirecting one’s awareness to the newly emerging content and “to the source of the mental process rather than the objects within it” (Varela, 2000). According to Varela and Scharmer, the gesture of “letting come” is a recursive move of attention that involves being receptive to new meaning, knowledge and insights. As Figure 4.1 suggests, participants moving from the fields of reflective to generative dialogue experience a shift from reflective inquiry towards learning to engage with future possibilities arising in the present through presencing or subtly sensing into the unmanifest dimension of experience. Scharmer suggests this threshold between reflective and generative dialogue is traversed when participants within the group begin to “see from within the source of what is emerging, letting it come into being through us” (Senge et al., 2004, p. 45). Though different catalysts can bring a group across this creative threshold, essentially this transition involves a discontinuous shift in awareness from suspending one’s thoughts to presencing or redirecting one’s attention to the source of our experience in the conversation. Presencing upstream to the source of our experience and meaning leads to the excavation of new knowledge through embodied contact with new meaning and insights which emerge through the group’s generative field of conversation.

4.3 Venturing an Integrally-Informed Model of Generative Dialogue
As the remainder of this chapter proposes, in addition to bringing about the fruits of new knowledge and shared meaning, generative dialogue also develops new capacities of consciousness in participants as individuals and as a collective. For the purposes of establishing new distinctions and orientating generalizations in service of developing a more comprehensive theory of generative dialogue, I will now turn to the main elements of Wilber’s AQAL metatheory. Intended to complement the focus of Scharmer’s model, central to this inquiry will be the significance of the transformative potentials of consciousness within the participants themselves and as a collective.

4.3.1 Unpacking Wilber’s Four Quadrants within Scharmer’s Four Fields of Generative Dialogue

Wilber’s AQAL approach rests in his quadrant model[^30], which acknowledges four basic co-arising perspective-dimensions of reality: subjective (i.e., interior of an individual), intersubjective (i.e., interior of a collective), objective (i.e., exterior of an individual) and inter-objective (i.e., exterior of a collective):

[^30]: According to Wilber (1997, p. 4), “These four quadrants are a summary of a data search across various developmental and evolutionary fields. I examined over two hundred developmental sequences recognized by various branches of human knowledge -- ranging from stellar physics to molecular biology, from anthropology to linguistics, from developmental psychology to ethical orientations, from cultural hermeneutics to contemplative endeavors -- taken from both Eastern and Western disciplines, and including premodern, modern, and postmodern sources.”
Summarized as the interior and exterior perspectives of individuals and collectives, each quadrant refers to one of these four perspectives, each of which we can take on any life situation, and so upon any instance within the context of generative dialogue. Unpacking the quadrants within the generative dialogue model as a whole, any moment within one of the four fields of conversation is informed by a range of experiences (e.g., suspension, presencing, bearing witness), behaviors (e.g., advocating, inquiring, making decisions), cultures (e.g., the worldviews and values of the participants and group) and systems (e.g., guidelines and rules within organizations, classrooms, or learning communities where GD is taking place) that are particular to one of Scharmer’s four fields:
Given that each of the quadratic perspectives exert a relative influence on each field of conversation, practitioners can call upon these dimensions of their experience for a broader communion with their reality as its arising.

In addition to generating the above distinctions among Experiences, Behaviors, Cultures and Systems within Scharmer’s four fields, Wilber’s quadrant model expands upon Scharmer’s explanation of how rules evolve through the four fields (i.e., Figure 4.1): Instead of Talking Nice being merely about rule-reenacting, we can see via Wilber’s four quadrants that rules are being collectively re-enacted within the Lower Right Quadrant, as are the UL experiences, UR behaviors, and LL cultures associated with those rules. If we move to the field of Talking Tough, it is not just that rules are being revealed, but the experiences, behaviors, cultures and systems
surrounding those rules are being revealed as well. For reflective dialogue, experiences, behaviors, cultures and systems are being reflected upon. And for generative dialogue, experiences, behaviors, cultures and systems are generated. Framed in this way, we can honor the evolution of rules or guidelines within groups as well as these broader fundamental dimensions of reality (experiences, behaviors, cultures and systems) where evolution is tetra-unfolding within the generative dialogue process. This distinction becomes particularly significant in ensuring these four vital horizons of emergence within a given conversation are taken into account by the generative dialogue group. Additionally, Wilber's quadrants become particularly significant in the fourth generative field as groups evolve new experiences, behaviors, cultures and systems, ensuring that the full generative potential of the model is exercised. Overall, the quadrants facilitate the transition to a more integral practice of generative dialogue where individuals develop their capacity to honor these four co-arising dimensions of reality within all the four fields of conversation.

4.3.2 “Levels” and “Lines” Informing Generative Dialogue Practice

*No problem can be solved at the same level of consciousness that created it* — Albert Einstein

Wilber’s developmental *levels* are evaluated within the context of various developmental *lines* (Wilber, 2003), which represent distinct capacities of consciousness. Although there are lines of development running through all of the quadrants, for the purposes of articulating an integrally-informed model of generative dialogue, this chapter will focus primarily on those developmental lines within the interiors of individuals and collectives (UL and LL quadrants) that inform GD practice. Given the absence of an empirical measure of the overall level of individual consciousness, it is important to note that *levels* refers to the orders of complexity within a given developmental line (Wilber, 2003). In other words, as Wilber (2003b) explains, the particular context of development determines what one is measuring as Wilber elaborates:
There is no such thing as a level of consciousness: a 'level of consciousness' does not exist by itself, because it is always a level of some line that is being measured: there is a level of moral development, a level of self development, and so on, but not a separate thing called a level of consciousness that you can see and measure. Consciousness always has some sort of content, and that content—moral, cognitive, spiritual, psychosexual, linguistic, artistic, etc.—is what you see and measure. (p. 2)

Picking up where Gardner left off with his theory of multiple intelligences\textsuperscript{31} in educational circles, Wilber draws on a broad assortment of developmental theorists and expands upon Gardner's notion of "multiple intelligences" with the distinction of lines or streams.

While not all the higher developmental stages of certain key developmental lines are capacities that are available to every participant, the later conversation fields of generative dialogue (i.e., reflective and generative dialogue) rely upon more complex intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities of consciousness than the fields of polite discussion or debate. Given the wide range of critiques against hierarchical models of stage development as privileging some combination of elitist, gender or ethnocentric biases by the researcher (Reeves, 1999), it is perhaps no surprise that dialogue theorists have been reluctant to draw correlations between one's stage of consciousness (along specific lines) and one's capacity within different fields of conversation. Nevertheless, not all of the higher developmental levels of every developmental line are available to everyone. More to the point, generative dialogue relies upon certain capacities of consciousness that not all adult individuals have necessarily developed, as the next section outlines. Therefore, in the interest of supporting the fourth stage of generative dialogue within adult and higher education settings, there is a value in exploring how such capacities and skills might be cultivated by learners.

\textsuperscript{31} Gardner's seven types of intelligences include: kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, mathematical intelligence, linguistic intelligence, spatial intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence.
4.3.2a Cognitive Line

Beginning with the cognitive line, we cannot ignore Wilber's proposition that the *conventional* stage of cognition (i.e., discursive rationality) does not yet have the capacity to integrate the multiple perspectives with which we are presented by our increasingly interconnected world. The capacity, which Wilber terms "vision logic," becomes available with the emergence of the *postconventional* level of cognition. According to Wilber (1995), vision logic is the capacity to allow differences and contradictions to coexist, and in doing this, to see how otherwise incompatible notions can fit together through forms of multiple perspective taking. Indispensable to the fourth field of generative dialogue, the nature of vision logic glimpses how things might "fit" together by weaving perspectives from the multiple currents and systems of meaning and ways of knowing that arise within the generative dialogue process.

Such a form of perspective taking is facilitated by "meta-awareness" (Jordan, 2000), which arises when one suspends their thoughts, in turn opening a space to notice new meaning or knowledge. In this sense, generative dialogue participants learn to stabilize themselves at a level of meta-awareness that is at least "one level above habitual engagement" (Varela, 2000). If we look to the spoken discourse traditions of debate, the psychological pressure of debate tends to block the emergence of meta-awareness and vision-logic by keeping participants absorbed with the downstream content and context of a given argument. In my experience with debate, this tends to result in polarization of different perspectives, with lack of interest in the assumptions underlying the differences or how the differences might be integrated. On the other hand, generative dialogue is committed to learning from what is emerging in the intersubjective field.

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32 Thomas Jordan (2000, p. 33) offers a definition of meta-awareness "Meta-awareness means awareness of the sensorimotor schemata, emotions, desires and thoughts that tumble through our being. Instead of being had by one's habitual behavioral patterns, emotions, desires and thoughts, meta-awareness means that there is a locus of witnessing in consciousness that can make the behaviors, emotions, desires and thoughts objects of attention."
This enables participants to witness their reflexes of thought and emotion; rather than be unconsciously acting out and subsequently identified with these reflexes. Similar to meditation practice, suspension offers a way-station for the self to dis-embed from the ego and re-embed within the witness self position. According to integrally-informed theorist Thomas Jordan, meta-awareness is also an advanced form of cognition that can attend to and draw support from a variety of emotional, behavioral and thought content without identifying with such content as who one is and therefore is not prone to being lost in such streams of consciousness (Jordan, 2003).

4.3.2b Emotional Line

In addition to cognition, another vital developmental line that is relevant to generative dialogue is emotional intelligence. Although many developmental lines develop in a relatively independent way, Wilber also regards developmental lines as “streams” (2000), which is helpful in the case of emotional intelligence, which relies on cognition as well as other neighboring developmental lines. In the field of reflective dialogue, participants begin to invite more relational ways of knowing and being through conversation that develop our capacity to embrace differently shaded emotions without necessarily repressing or expressing the emotional content. With practice, generative dialogue groups develop the capacity for a form of collective “emotional alchemy” (Goleman, 1997), where emotional pain is met with collective compassion and openness. However, depending on each individual’s stage of development of emotional intelligence and other supportive lines (e.g., moral and cognitive intelligence), there will be a greater or lesser ability within the group to hold conflicting emotions well. Furthermore, generative dialogue develops an individual’s capacity to embrace and allow for different shaded emotions, in turn making participants less prone to being emotionally reactive. Yet, once again,
there will be individuals who have not yet developed their emotional lines to this degree and so rely on the modeling from others within the group who have. Further advanced forms of emotional intelligence enable participants to not only to imagine what one would think and feel if they were in someone else’s shoes, but also to imagine what another person thinks and feels (Jordan, 2003). Higher levels of emotional intelligence enable people to be less tangled up in their own or other’s personal emotions, which enable the participants to better serve the group’s creative processes.

4.3.2c Worldview and Values Line

In considering the developmental line of worldviews and values, generative dialogue also offers a preliminary “integral” map of conversation. Over the course of human existence, it is reasonably speculated that a dialectical relationship between the “micro structures” of consciousness and “macro structures” of society inform our psychosocial development through an evolutionary unfolding of different stages of consciousness (Wilber, 1995; Beck and Cohen, 1996). During a particular epoch, broad samples of individuals and cultures reflect different stages of values. In the case of Beck and Cohen’s (1996) Spiral Dynamics model, the developmental sequencing of traditional (blue), modern (orange), postmodern (green) and integral (yellow/turquoise) worldviews and values match well with Scharmer’s four fields. As a tentative orientating generalization, there appears to be a correlation between making the shift from an “argument culture to a dialogue culture” (Tannen, 1999) and the shifts from traditional and modern worldviews to a postmodern worldview as defined by Wilber and Beck.33 To build

33 For a further explanation of traditional, modern, postmodern and integral worldviews, I recommend visiting: http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/kosmos/excerptB/intro.cfm/ as well as http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiral_dynamics for further information on Spiral Dynamics
on Tannen's distinction, moving from a conversational culture of conventional dialogue to one of generative dialogue reflects the shift to a more integral\textsuperscript{34} level of values and worldviews.

Loosely correlating the levels of the Spiral Dynamics model with Scharmer’s fields of conversation, politeness overlaps well with the values of the traditional blue meme; talking tough with the modern orange meme, reflective dialogue with the postmodern green meme and generative dialogue with the integral yellow or turquoise meme. The norms or cultural climate of spoken discourse in which meaning is made can be broadly distinguished along this continuum from traditional, modern, postmodern and integral norms. For those readers who are familiar with the memic codes of the Spiral Dynamics model, interpreting the generative dialogue model in this way can help enrich understanding of the values and worldviews that correspond to the characteristic ways of listening, speaking and assumptions that inform each field of conversation.

\textsuperscript{34} If by “integral” we utilize the Spiral Dynamics Integral criteria of the capacity to transcend and include the previous worldview and value structures (as reflected in the generative dialogue model, which honors all four fields of conversation, unlike conventional dialogue theory that defines itself in opposition to debate or discussion (i.e., Bohm, Buber, Gerard, etc).
As illustrated above, *talking nice* typically involves adhering to the conventions of in-group patterns of communication that follow from an order enforced by tacit or explicit guidelines (i.e., blue meme). In moving to *talking tough*, we find the tradition of debate culture with its individualistic orientation that plays to win through strategic forms of interaction that uphold power structures in the interests of modern ideals of advancement and progress (i.e., orange meme). With the movement to the field of *reflective dialogue*, there is often an interest in honoring interpersonal sensitivity and equality where decisions are made through reconciliation of difference and consensus processes (i.e., green meme). In *generative dialogue*, participants become interested in integrating the differences (i.e., yellow meme), where people begin to experience and unfold new meaning and knowledge through the larger flowing wholeness.
experienced by the group (i.e., turquoise meme). Granted these are preliminary orientating generalizations. More integrally-informed research is needed to identify to what extent generative dialogue might serve as a developmental space for supporting the collective emergence of a more integral worldview and set of values within individuals and groups. Additionally, what worldviews and ways of life will help individuals and groups achieve the stages of development and states of consciousness required for GD? Overall, this preliminary template (i.e., Figure 4.4) invites further contemplation into how the correlative values and worldviews depicted by Beck and Cohen’s model play out within the respective fields of conversation within generative dialogue.

4.3.2d Collective Intelligence Line

As participants explore the latter fields of generative dialogue, they begin to experience more interdependent processes of learning and thinking together. With sufficient practice and duration, participants learn how to sense, listen and think together from the source of emerging shared meaning that is arising through the present moment. In moving from the lower to the higher fields (i.e., transition from talking tough to reflective dialogue), the boundaries between participants begins to soften through empathic listening and suspension. When the group passes the final threshold into generative dialogue, this gives way to newly emerging forms of collective intelligence.

Berkley professor of cognitive science Eleanor Rosch describes this as a movement from analytic knowing to a form of wisdom awareness she describes as “primary knowing” which involves a “transformation from the subject-object-separation consciousness, towards an order of perception that happens from the whole field, not from within a separated perceiver” (Rosch and Scharmer, 1999, p. 21). According to Rosch, primary knowing requires developing the capacity
to literally sense the source of the unclear knowledge emerging from the collective mind itself. In learning to access forms of primary knowing, participants develop the skills to support one another in cultivating fields of collective learning that increasingly rely upon collective awareness and intention. Though empirical research in the field of collective intelligence is lacking, within the past decade, this recognized potential of group learning is catching the attention of a growing number of social innovators (Hamilton, 2004) and is central to Scharmer’s model of generative dialogue.

4.3.3 “States” of Consciousness

_The Next Buddha May be a Sangha_ -- Thich Nhat Hahn

Wilber’s (2000) model of “states” of consciousness is derived in part from the world wisdom traditions as well as the more recent field of consciousness studies. The AQAL model takes into account, in addition to the natural or “ordinary” states of consciousness of waking, dreaming, and deep dreamless sleep, altered or “non-ordinary” states, which include peak experiences and meditative or contemplative states (Tart 1972; Wilber 1997). According to Wilber (2005), the great wisdom traditions Vedanta Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism both maintain that the three natural states of consciousness—waking, dreaming, and deep dreamless sleep—correspond with three great bodies or realms of being (gross, subtle, and causal). In both traditions, the bodies are said to be the energy support of the corresponding mind or state of consciousness (e.g., the gross bodymind, subtle bodymind, and causal bodymind). Wilber’s AQAL approach sometimes uses the terms “gross,” “subtle,” and “causal” to refer to these three broad states of awareness, even though, technically, they refer just to the energetic support of those states.

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35 According to Wilber (2005), for the wisdom traditions, a “body” simply means a mode of experience or energetic feeling. So there is coarse or gross experience, subtle or refined experience, and very subtle or causal experience. In other words, these are phenomenological realities that present themselves to our immediate awareness. While everyone has access to all their bodies and the energy of each of these bodies, Wilber notes that not everyone is present to these bodies in the moment.
Within the context of generative dialogue practice, each of these three states and corresponding body minds roughly correlate with the three transitions from talking nice to talking tough; talking tough to reflective dialogue; reflective dialogue to generative dialogue. The gross bodymind or our conventional waking state is maintained from talking nice to talking tough, for participants are still engaged within their discursive minds and have not yet begun to reflect on their own process. The shift to the subtle bodymind takes place in the transition from talking tough to reflective dialogue. Experienced through suspension, the subtle bodymind is stimulated when groups and individuals slow down to make in-the-moment contact with their thought processes. This shift is also similar to what takes place in meditation where one moves from being subject to one’s thoughts, emotions and consciousness to having the capacity to abide in awareness and witness these contents. Finally, with presencing, there is a shift from the subtle bodymind to the spacious and vast causal bodymind, where participants begin to experientially make contact with the threshold of emergence that gives rise to the manifest thoughts, ideas, and intuitions that begin to crystallize in our awareness. In a recent interview with Scharmer, Wilber speculates that the practice of “presencing” evokes the “causal state” of consciousness (Wilber and Scharmer, 2004).

These shifts in “state” become particularly interesting when viewed from the AQAL lens of the four quadrants, for within the previous distinction of GD cultures, groups begin to make the transitions from collective gross bodymind to collective subtle bodymind to collective causal bodymind. More recent research within the field of collective intelligence indicates the formation of a “group bodymind” (Bohm, 1996), “co-intelligence” (Atlee, 2003), “collective mind” (Hamilton, 2004) when vital thresholds of group experience are crossed. However, none of these collective metaphors take into account the respective shifts in the group state of
consciousness, leaving out a vital depth dimension of individual and collective experiences. With the distinction of states, we bring attention to the correlative shifts of participants' consciousness in relation to the unfolding field dynamics of conversation and the gesture of moving back upstream to the source of our experience (as depicted in the opening quote).

Just as Wilber (2004) has pointed out, more frequent movement through state changes facilitates and quickens the development of stages along different developmental lines. In this way, generative dialogue, like other methods of collective intelligence serves as an intersubjective (LL) yoga that facilitates individuals temporary change in state of consciousness, which over time can help in the development of the enduring levels of consciousness. These deeper states can provide profound motivation and meaning in ourselves and others, reflecting the temporary emergence of transcendent states of being that often evoke deep feelings of sacred connection with life and the greater cosmos.

In my experience facilitating and participating in generative dialogue groups, I have found it becomes important to introduce the concept of states to give groups a language to recognize and name these state-shifts in their moment-to-moment experience. According to Wilber (2003b), regular meditation practice also helps us learn to dis-identify with the gross contents of consciousness and in turn free up attention for subtle or causal contents:

As meditation deepens, different contents tend to arise, often moving from gross contents (objects of the senses and mental representations of them) to subtler contents (visions, illuminations, bliss) to very subtle or causal contents (vast formlessness, consciousness without an object). (p. 1)

36 Other intersubjective methodologies of collective intelligence include Roshi’s (2006) Big Mind; Cohen’s (2004) Enlightened Communication; Atlee’s (2003b) Co-Intelligence; among others.
Contemplative practices such as meditation\textsuperscript{37} offer an \textit{intrapersonal} (UL) practice for individuals to experience a shift in their \textit{state} of consciousness. As a point of contrast to meditation, an \textit{integrally-informed} model of generative dialogue offers an \textit{interpersonal} (LL) practice designed to bring about shifts in the gross, subtle and causal \textit{states} of consciousness within the group. From this perspective, the objective of generative dialogue practice is not to leave behind the conventional or gross states of mind or to label them as egoic and therefore a hindrance. Rather, the objective is to cultivate the flourishing of all states and their respective bodyminds. In my experience, developing one's capacity to be in the fourth state, which Wilber (2003) describes as "Turiya", would be of great value for practitioners to simultaneously \textit{witness} and \textit{experience} all three states and bodies of the gross, subtle and causal. Recognizing that every state has its relative value, but that the deeper states offer more value gives credence to Scharmer's (2000) reflection on a conversation with Bill O'Brien, "the success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener" (p. 1). Given that there is a distinct self-sense within each state, states can be a useful distinction to experientially illuminate the nature of the interior condition of participants, and in this way help practitioners develop an appreciation for how the state of one's consciousness plays an integral part of the process of individual and collective knowing.

\textbf{4.4 Closing Remarks}

As this chapter outlines, an integrally-informed interpretation of generative dialogue

\textsuperscript{37} Wilber (2003b, p. 10) elaborates on the relationship between different types of meditation and connection with states of consciousness: "For example, in a type of meditation known as savikalpa samadhi (or mediation with an object of awareness), one can directly (while fully awake) experience the higher reaches of the subtle realm; in states of nirvikalpa and jnana samadhi, one directly experiences the causal realm; in states of sahaja samadhi, one directly realizes the nondual (which we will discuss in a moment). In all of those cases, one is developing one's capacity to experience higher states by converting them into \textit{permanent acquisitions}. States that are normally unconscious have been made conscious; states that are normally temporary have been made permanent."
introduces a number of new distinctions for practitioners that broaden and deepen the scope of GD practice. Given the respective influences of the different dimensions of our consciousness within the different fields of conversation of Scharmer's model, this chapter attempts a preliminary inquiry and positing of tentative possibilities for further research and development within various contexts of GD practice. As such, future development of generative dialogue theory within an integral context will not ignore the implications of quadrants, levels, lines and states within practitioners and the generative dialogue group as a whole. Again, further research needs to take place in order to explain how an integrally-informed practice of generative dialogue can support transformative learning and advance the capacities and potentials of existing cultures of spoken discourse. In speculating upon the significance of an integrally-informed interpretation of generative dialogue, my intention is that this chapter helps inspire the continued development and refinement of generative dialogue practice.
4.5 Works Cited


5. Summary
In reflecting on the process of writing this thesis, I have grown to appreciate how each chapter has in a specific way provided a context for generating new knowledge through a larger transdisciplinary integration of key perspectives from the fields of transformative learning, dialogue and integral studies. The first chapter was largely inspired by the Holma Dialogue Project that I co-facilitated and initiated at Holma College of Integral Studies (HCIS) in Sweden. From these experiences, and upon returning to graduate school at UBC, it became clear to me that Scharmer’s theory of generative dialogue could offer important contributions to the literature of adult and higher education, particularly in the field of transformative learning. Given that Scharmer’s work has emerged from the field of organizational learning, this chapter is intended to serve an important bridging role by introducing generative dialogue to the fields of adult and higher learning. A core guiding assumption of this chapter is that generative dialogue (i.e., particularly the later stages of the model) not only supports but also serves as a catalyst in engaging different forms of transformative learning (i.e., as defined by Kegan and as I have expanded upon by Wilber in the second chapter).

Through the writing of this chapter I have come to appreciate how the different “intersubjective” field dynamics of group conversation play a formative role in shaping the “subjective” experiences of the students participating when the holding environment of each field is optimally functioning. In other words, how people listen, speak and think together appears to largely influence the potential quality and transformative benefits of their social learning process. As such, an interesting direction for future research would involve exploring the connections between the methods of spoken discourse (i.e., debate or discussion versus generative dialogue) and the relative capacity of each to hinder or support various forms of transformative learning in classroom and cohort settings.
Regarding the second chapter, experiences of coaching, learning with and teaching international students Wilber’s frameworks at HCIS led me to appreciate first-hand how Wilber’s integral theory can help learners gain access to different dimensions of consciousness as depicted in his theoretical and applied models. In a previous article (Gunnlaugson, 2005a), I introduced Wilber’s integral framework as a means for building upon the second wave of TL theorists who are interested in establishing more comprehensive portraits of TL. At the annual 2005 international conference on TL in Michigan, I presented an abridged version (Gunnlaugson, 2005b) of this chapter which introduced Wilber’s categorical forms of consciousness as a response to Kegan’s question, “what form is transforming”?

Reflecting on the development of my understanding of Wilber’s integral paradigm in the writing of this chapter, I have grown to appreciate the need to introduce his frameworks to the field of transformative learning—particularly as the forms I have introduced have not yet been identified by existing TL theorists and risk being marginalized by the comparatively narrow interpretive scope of Mezirow’s ideal of TL. As the second chapter points out, there are a number of generative dialogue practices (e.g., meta-awareness, suspension and presencing) that, when considered from the perspectives or categorical forms of Wilber’s AQAL model, leave us with a comparatively broader theoretical context to interpret TL experiences. Future empirical studies that can demonstrate to what extent generative dialogue brings about shifts in the forms (i.e., states, stages, and lines) of the learners’ consciousness will be of great value for educators. Additionally, in writing this chapter I have come to realize that more research needs to take place to identify to what extent generative dialogue might serve as a developmental space for supporting the collective emergence of a more integral worldview and set of values within individuals and groups—if by “integral” we mean more balanced, comprehensive and whole.
The final chapter offers an integrally-informed interpretation of generative dialogue, and introduces new orientating generalizations for practitioners to broaden and deepen the scope of their GD practices. While writing and editing this chapter, I have introduced several of Wilber’s AQAL distinctions (i.e., lines and states) to the graduate course on generative dialogue that I am teaching through the department of Critical and Creative Thinking at the University of Massachusetts (Boston). From these experiences, I have grown to appreciate how the future development of generative dialogue theory can benefit from an integral context that considers how an awareness of quadrants, levels, lines and states can help develop students’ understanding of their individual and collective consciousness in relation to the generative dialogue model.

Concerning future research, I am also interested in exploring how in-the-moment and foundational practices of generative dialogue contribute to short and long term shifts in the categorical “form” of consciousness of learners—whether in terms of states or stages along different developmental lines. Given the power of these practices in bringing about transformative shifts in students and the fields of conversation they participate in, it would be of interest to determine to what extent an in-the-moment practice like suspension helps facilitate a longer term stage shift within an individual’s cognitive or emotional line of development. Reflecting on how my theorizing in this chapter tends to focus on the inner experiences of participants of GD process, I am also interested in how GD might contribute to educational aims in particular subject areas or even discipline areas in the future. By exploring the broader educational implications of an integrally-informed interpretation of generative dialogue, my overarching intention is to continue contributing to and inspiring the continued development of generative dialogue practice.

In reflecting on the process of writing the thesis as a whole, it is important to note that I
have not applied the same degree of critical evaluation to Scharmer and Wilber’s contributions that is present with Mezirow and Kegan’s frameworks in the second chapter. I believe this to be consistent with my generative intent of a) focusing on introducing and interpreting this relatively recent body of work to the fields of adult and higher education in the first two chapters and b) in the third chapter, exploring intermediate and advanced distinctions for integrally-informed practitioners who are interested in applications of Wilber’s theory. Forthcoming doctoral research will investigate more explicitly what I perceive to be the limitations and shortcomings of Scharmer and Wilber’s theories.

5.1 Future Research

I would like to conclude by very briefly outlining how I currently envision the path of my dissertation research at UBC within the department of Educational Studies, which will further investigate how generative dialogue can serve as a method for facilitating transformative learning processes within adult and higher education settings. To date, the theory of transformative learning has emphasized individual change with insufficient attention given to a) transformative learning in collective learning contexts such as university classrooms and cohorts (Cranton, 1994) and b) the conditions and methods needed to collectively support this process (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). Although existing research addresses the methods of discourse that collectively generate new knowledge (Scharmer, 2000), research that furthers the range of questions raised in this thesis project (i.e., such as the explicit connections between generative dialogue and transformative learning) have not yet been identified.

In response to this and other knowledge gaps, my proposed dissertation will build from the expanded theoretical framework of transformative learning developed in this masters thesis as a response to the call for further research into the ideal conditions and methods of discourse
that bring about transformative learning (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). In addition to further investigating and assessing the validity of generative dialogue through conceptual, qualitative and quantitative assessments, this dissertation will examine more closely how generative dialogue catalyzes transformative learning within different settings of dialogue-based learning in North America with the intent of improving upon the existing andragogical methods of adult and higher educators across disciplines.

5.2 Works Cited

