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BRIDGING DIFFERENCES
AND LEARNING
THROUGH
CONVERSATION

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Conversation is one of the most fundamental forms of connection. As people weave their patterns of relationality and interdependency, their similar and differing ways of perceiving and responding emerge. Through conversations, and the spaces between the conversations, people share their points of connection and grapple with the inevitable differences. Creating a context that fosters Good Conversation where those differences become a catalyst, rather than a barrier, to learning and ongoing connections is a monumental challenge and is the essence of this research.

This qualitative research study included 55 interviews with 23 people, 16 of whom were in an intact group and were interviewed three times over nine months. People were asked to tell their stories about conversations that stood out for them. Through an extensive thematic analysis, the dynamic nature of the conversational context became ever more apparent.
The conversational context supporting Good Conversation must include a *Receptive Space* to hold the both/and of polarity while also recognizing and nurturing the fundamental nature of relatedness. Effort must be made to create a space that attends to the varying needs people have for safety. The space needs to be one that encourages the exploration of differences while moderating the energy level and fully engaging the cognitive with the affective capacities - the head with the heart.

The conversational context also requires the *Full Inclusive Expression of Voices* where reflective listening is given as much potency as active speaking, creating conditions more receptive to change and learning than the static quality of monologue. Full voice involves support for silence as an option while building on each other’s contributions is also valued and sought. Voices are included through verbal and non-verbal recognition and the empathetic engagement of each person. Similarly, the conversational context must provide a space safe enough for people to take risks with each other. And people often must be able and willing to stay in conversation with each other over time if their potential learning is to be realized.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Because collaboration and partnership seem integral to this research and because the emergence of this work for me has been very collaborative, I have engaged in the work in an invaluable partnership with each of the participants who were interviewed, with another doctoral student, Patricia Jensen, and with my advisor, David Kolb. I have also worked with my other committee members - Don Wolfe, Richard Boyatzis, and Darlyne Bailey - similarly in a collaborative manner that I highly value. They have each shaped both my learning and my understanding while offering me the kind of support that I receive as a gift for which I am truly thankful.

Without the willingness, articulateness, and the intellect of the participants who agreed to be interviewed, many of whom for three interviews over an academic year, truly this research could never have occurred. Their time, trust, and openness to us are deeply appreciated.

I especially want to give credit and appreciation for the intense collaboration with Patricia Jensen in the research design, in the creation and writing of the Literature Review and Theory Development and the Methodology Chapters, and in the collection of data. Her intellect, spirit,
and friendship have been an inspiration and a support to me throughout the dissertation process. Similarly, I want to give credit and appreciation to David Kolb for his conceptual genius and affirmative guidance that he so generously shares. The many conversations that the three of us have shared throughout this process have been one of the joys that have blessed my life. And I look forward to those continuing.

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Whenever a person embarks upon a dissertation process, ideally it grows out of the essence of who they are and the life experiences that have helped shape them. My journey in this dissertation has grown out of my life experiences of growing up in the South, raising two daughters, working as a female professional primarily in the South, traveling extensively in both the developed and developing world, working with heartfelt commitment for feminist and other concerns especially affecting the "dis- or less-enfranchised," sharing close and life-changing relationships with others both professionally and personally, and living among extended family whose values and ideologies are often quite different from my own. The reluctance I have personally known and experienced from others to be "receptive" to or "influenced" by those who are different has affected me deeply and stimulated considerable growth and learning within me. These experiences have contributed to my passion to learn how to increase people’s sense of relatedness to each other and to humankind, rather than the not uncommon inclination to feel the separateness, to protect the self from "those other people," and to try to be "right." I see such waste of human energy and resources, pain, and alienation around me that I feel
there is a need for better forms of connection and understanding.

Throughout the dissertation process, I have struggled to focus my passion and attention without losing the meaning of the effort. I am reminded of the words of Martin Buber who says that the meaning "wishes to be born by me into the world" (Buber, 1958). And I have looked inside myself to better understand what meaning wants to be born into the world.

I have wanted to learn how to foster relationality and to create contexts for learning that cultivate bridges across differences and actually utilize the differences as rich resources. One of the primary ways adults interact and make contact is through conversation. Thus, I am fascinated by how to create conversational contexts that promote good conversation and receptivity to learning. Thus, most succinctly, the purposes of this dissertation for me are:

* to learn how to create a context for good conversation and

* to learn how good conversation can help create bridges and webs of connections across differences among people to enable people to see those differences as potentially rich resources.
Before elaborating on these purposes, it seems important for me to be more explicit about what I mean by differences among people. My primary interest is in the perceptions that each person has of other people, of ideas, and of ideologies, rather than my imposing upon them the categorizations of differences that I notice.

Accordingly, while some people might focus on the more visible differences of gender, color of skin, and nationality of origin, I am similarly interested in the perceptions each person carries about differences in religion, life style, age, sexual orientation, ideology and belief systems, regionality, etc. If a person perceives of another person as different and thus other than them, how might the conversational context help their differences become a source of learning, growth, and even satisfaction and pleasure rather than a source of alienation or distance? How might each of these people become more receptive to being influenced by these differences? How might conversation become a medium for the fusion of new horizons of meaning? Hence, I want to learn what are the elements of conversation that foster relationality, understanding, and learning.

The research for this dissertation has given me considerable insight into these concerns and questions although it feels like the journey has just begun. The essence of this work is in the name of the dissertation,
"Bridging Differences and Learning Through Conversation." The confluence and interface of Conversation, Differences, and Learning is at the heart of this work. Differences can be a catalyst for learning through conversation.

When conversations take place in a Space that is Receptive enough to support the full inclusion of the Voices of active speaking and reflective listening, differences can be bridged and become a vital resource for learning and understanding. Attention must be given to creating a conversational context with space that is receptive to all voices for developing consensual norms. The space and voice that Habermas (Habermas, 1991; Geuss, 1985) envisioned can be expanded more intentionally to proactively include people who have historically been absent. The space and voice can be expanded to proactively include the reflective as well as the assertive dimensions of conversation. It is in holding the tension in the polarities of the reflective and the active, the feminine and the masculine, the apprehensive and the comprehensive that the most creative possibilities live and the challenges await the learning. Each person must name their own experience for it to have relevance and thus engage in the dual knowledge of learning. Attention to creating a
context for good conversation offers the possibility for naming one's own experiences and for the creative tension within the polarities to live.

Conversation is not made up of parts that can be dissected and analyzed separately because that is not how it exists in people's lives. Conversation is a gestalt that lives as a whole in the spaces between people. The primary findings of this dissertation need to be seen as intensely interdependent phenomena. Similarly, therefore, the very form that this dissertation takes reflects its content. The form and content throughout have been emergent and as dynamic and interwoven as the conversations themselves. Thus, the very interdependence of the phenomena being explored is reflected in the interdependence of the voices herein.

Throughout this work, there is the interweaving of the voices of the participants, the literature, my colleagues, and my own. Although this form does not follow the usual pattern and sequencing of the traditional dissertation, I think it does reflect a congruence with the nature of conversation itself and the process of the inquiry that this work embodies.

I have not embarked on this work to find a truth or to speak as a philosopher or psychologist, to create meaning from the perspective of the speaker. I have instead set out in the spirit of openmindedness as suggested by Jerome Bruner who says,
I take Openmindedness to be a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one’s own values (Bruner, 1990, p. 30).

Thus, this work emphasizes the perspective of the listener as well. It emphasizes the interplay of speaking and listening within a space receptive to learning from multiple perspectives with an openmindedness to hearing the unfamiliar, even when its edges seem rough and hard to absorb. This work does not seek to know a truth but to seek the legitimacy of multiple perspectives that exist in the living experience of conversation among people. Thus, the chapters of this dissertation need to include both the real words and presence of the participants, my colleagues, and my words as well as references to the literature throughout in an effort to integrate in its very form the interdependence of the polarities.

This work has been altogether emergent for me and for those with whom I have been working, to elicit the stories of others and as I create my own. For me, this work has been most appropriately pursued in the natural settings of people’s lives as they have engaged in naturally occurring conversations and then sharing their perceptions and stories of their experiences and learning. For me, this work has required the collaborative interaction with my colleagues, both students and faculty, as co-inquirers and has required the quiet reflection of my own solitary exploration. Thus,
this dissertation journey has been a way of allowing both the meaning
which emerges through my partnerships and the meaning within me to
begin to "be born...into the world."
Introduction

In approaching this work on conversation for the expression of self and differences as a source of making meaning and learning, the literature is resplendent with resources to guide the journey. The literature that has informed this effort includes work on conversation, dialogue, relatedness, conflict, differences, power differentials, gender, and philosophy.

The use of language is one of the most common means used to communicate with one another. Throughout Western history, these uses of language to communicate have been variously conceptualized as rhetoric, discourse, composition, dialogue, and conversation. The intention of this study is to explore this use of language - or conversation - as it is spoken and heard to become a bridge across differences and become a source of making meaning, learning, and understanding.

While contexts, relationships between and among participants, and the forms of communication may vary, engaging with others in these ways

** This chapter was conceived and written in collaboration with Patricia Jensen.
can be viewed as "acts of meaning" (Bruner, 1990). As learners, people are in search of a more fertile understanding of conversation as a form of making meaning. To describe any phenomena implies taking a point of view, selecting aspects of the observed considered to be relevant and is, therefore, evaluative (Elshtain, 1981b). In this light, I will begin by explicitly stating some of my guiding assumptions. Then I will explore the writings of individuals from diverse disciplines whose perspectives influence my understanding, organizing thoughts initially by discussion of the contexts followed by presenting a theoretical model of Good Conversation. In subsequent chapters, this theoretical model will be grounded in the lived experience of conversations of the participants in this work. Also, in the Methodology Chapter, explanation is given about what is intended by the term model in the context of this dissertation. This chapter closes with a discussion of the literature that relates specifically to the process of engagement with differences as it may affect conversation.

Assumptions

To elaborate on the quote cited in the previous chapter, openmindedness is integral to good inquiry as is aptly described by Jerome Bruner,
I take Openmindedness to be a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one's own values...it demands that we be conscious of how we come to our knowledge and as conscious as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives (Bruner, 1990, p. 30).

Because no research is value-free and emanates from personal values that influence perspectives, it is important to be explicit about some of these primary values. Thus, some of my guiding assumptions are:

1. "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p.38). Social knowledge can be viewed as, "current consensual interpretations of common experience, and language as the activity of social interaction through which people develop those interpretations and share them" (Clark, 1990,p. 21). Therefore, "knowledge is an 'activity' in which we participate with others through our discourse, and not a 'commodity' that discourse carries from one person to another" (Clark, 1990,p. 21).

2. Human relationships are a primary way each person experiences the "Self." This idea of self is described by Bruner,

Is not Self a transactional relationship between a speaker and an Other...Is it not a way of framing one's consciousness, one's position, one's identity, one's commitment with respect to another? Self, in this
dispensation, becomes 'dialogue dependent' designed as much for the recipient of our discourse as for intrapsychic purposes (Bruner, 1990, p. 101).

3. Relationships between and among adults who interact primarily as peers are preferable to more hierarchical interactions based upon notions of dominants and subordinates. Peer-like, collaborative interactions are more likely to promote learning, encourage each person to develop their potential, and make available a wider range of human resources. Temporary inequality and proximal development are inherent within many learning situations such as parenting, teaching, mentoring, and indeed in some facets of peer relationships. Yet, among adults, these differences can best be viewed as resources which can contribute to development and learning rather than focused on as hierarchical distinctions in which differences are viewed as deficiencies.

4. Realities are multiple and are both apprehended in the concrete experiences of life and comprehended through social construction. From this perspective, the meanings that human beings derive or attribute to both tangible entities and intangible phenomena are as
varied as the people who perceive them. This concept of dual knowledge is implicit in the way learning takes place (Kolb, 1984).

5. Pluralism and a search for holism characterize contemporary life.

[Pluralism requires that conflicting notions of shared, social knowledge coexist, and that the conflicts themselves be publicly explored. Consequently, it necessitates that the conversations that sustain a community proceed not towards agreements that would end the exchange but toward the exposure of disagreements.” (Clark, 1990,p. 57).

Thus, the exploration of these differences through conversation in a search for new meanings and new understandings is a resource for learning.

Therefore, as I embark on this work, I share some of my primary values and assumptions and begin to view the literature from multiple perspectives in a spirit of Openmindedness to learning. First, I consider some of the varying contexts of conversation specifically focusing on the varying cultural, psychological, and learning contexts where conversations occur.

**Contexts**

Life itself is the broad context for learning. Each culture develops and institutionalizes specific means to ensure that its accumulated
knowledge and wisdom, norms and values, ethos and beliefs are conveyed from one generation to the next generation. Thus, learning can occur in a variety of contexts across life where each person engages with their world and is therefore influencing the context of the conversation. An illuminating interpretation of culture is set forth by Jerome Bruner.

The view I am proposing reverses the traditional relation of biology and culture with respect to human nature. It is the character of man's biological inheritance, I asserted, that it does not direct or shape human action and experience, does not serve as the universal cause. Rather, it imposes constraints on action, constraints whose effects are modifiable. Cultures characteristically devise 'prosthetic devices' that permit us to transcend 'raw' biological limits—for example, the limits on memory capacity or the limits on our auditory range. The reverse view I am proposing is that it is culture, not biology, that shapes human life and the human mind, that gives meaning to action by situating its underlying intentional states in an interpretive system. It does this by imposing the patterns inherent in the culture's symbolic systems—its language and discourse modes, the forms of logical and narrative explication, and the patterns of mutually dependent communal life (Bruner, 1990, p. 34).

Thus, Bruner is asserting that cultural learning influences and even shapes over time biology and becomes self-perpetuating, having vast implications on the context and even content of language and conversation.

The psychological perspective of a conversation similarly influences the conversation. In Toward a New Psychology of Women, Jean Baker Miller asked and observed,
[W]hat do people do to people who are different from them and why?...At the level of humanity in general, we have seen massive problems around a great variety of differences. But one of the most basic differences is the one between women and men. (Miller, 1976, p. 3)

She states that though it is not always clear, in most instances of difference, there are factors of inequality affecting the context. Miller identifies two fundamental factors of inequality as inequality of status and power.

These two fundamental factors of inequality of status and power are distinctly manifested in the two types of inequality that Miller differentiates - temporary and permanent inequality. “Temporary inequality” she refers to as relationships in which the “lesser party” is socially defined as unequal, and by definition, this type of inequality is bounded by time. The “superior party” presumably has some combination of qualities that they will assist the lesser party to develop. This development, from unequal to equal, is the primary purpose of the relationship. Thus, parents assist children to become adults, teachers assist students to become capable graduates and their colleagues. The ultimate goal of this type of relationship is to end the inequality. Citing other examples of “helping” relationships that are based upon “temporary inequality” such as healing, penology and rehabilitation, Miller observes that society has not found very good ways to encourage the movement from inequal to equal. She acknowledges that even in
temporary inequality, in theoretical and actual unequal relationships, there
is therefore often difficulty in treating the lesser person "as a person of as
much intrinsic worth as the superior" (Miller, 1976,p. 5).

In the second type of unequal relationship, referred to as "permanent
inequality," the goal is to enforce the inequality and is not time bound.
Here, individuals or groups are defined as unequal by ascription which can
include race, sex, class or religion. In an ironic sense, the nature and range
of one's relationships are seen as being their "birthright," and the nature of
these unequal relationships is implicitly assumed by the "dominants" to be
permanent. However, as Miller points out, in this second type of unequal
relationship, the effects are kept extremely vague, if not denied. She
concludes that difficulties in relationships of temporary inequality may be
the result of the fact that they exist within the context of permanently
unequal relationships. Miller states that permanent inequality "has
determined and still determines the only way we can think and feel"
(Miller, 1976,p. 6) in relationships of temporary inequality.

In relationships of permanent inequality, superiors or dominants
define subordinates as inferior to themselves and tend to classify these
groups as defective or substandard. Acceptable roles for subordinates are
defined by the dominants and include those jobs that the dominants do not
want to perform while reserving a range of desired and valued activities for
the dominants. These valued activities are further reserved by and for the
dominants through attributing innate deficiencies to the subordinates based
upon the assumption that their incapacities cannot be changed. What
subordinates are usually encouraged to develop are characteristics that are
pleasing to the dominants including submissiveness, passivity, dependency
and an inability to think or act.

Given a dominant group's influence in a society, its assumptions and
beliefs are translated into a culture's philosophical, moral, and social theory.
This extensive process of translation creates an interfacing of the
psychological and cultural influences on the context of the conversation.
Dominants legitimize permanent inequality as "normal." Therefore, one is
behaving normally when one treats subordinates as inferior and obscures
what one is doing by giving common rationalizations such as "the home is
women's natural place" or "blacks are less intelligent than whites." Miller
states that clearly inequality has created a state of conflict. However,
dominants prefer to avoid conflict, especially open conflict that could call
the status quo into question. Since dominants are usually convinced that
the way things are is both right and good, for themselves and for the
subordinates, they view challenges to normalcy as threatening. Miller
observes that, operating within the status quo, dominants usually cannot
even see that the situation of inequality deprives them, especially on the
psychological level. These ideas are elaborated further later in this chapter.

Dominants, by definition, cannot exist without subordinates. Since
the dominant group holds power and authority, subordinate groups need to
focus on basic survival. Therefore, subordinates generally avoid direct,
honest reaction to belittling and/or destructive treatment, all having
dramatic impact on the kinds of conversations that occur. For example, in
our society women and minorities who act in their own self-interest may
incur economic hardship, social ostracism, or be physically or
psychologically abused. Thus, subordinates may resort to indirect or covert
ways of acting and reacting in relationship to dominants.

The dynamic of this relationship has important implications for both
dominants and subordinates. Dominants are denied direct and honest
feedback regarding their impact on others which is an essential component
to self-understanding, growth, and learning. Through limiting the range and
scope of the subordinates' area of action, subordinates are denied a realistic
evaluation of their overall capabilities. Subordinates may "take as true" the
dominants' definition of them or attempt to imitate the dominants.
When subordinates, for example, blacks and whites who participated in the Civil Rights Movement, men and women who participated in the Women's Movement, began to challenge the status quo, they focused attention on the permanency of unequal relationships. They questioned the premises of these relationships. Miller concludes that mutually enhancing interaction between individuals and/or groups who are unequal is not probable, but rather that conflict is inevitable. Therefore, the important questions are:

Who defines the conflict? Who sets the terms? When is conflict overt or covert? On what issues is the conflict fought? Can anyone Win? Is conflict bad by definition? If not, what makes for productive or destructive conflict? (Miller, 1976,p. 12)

As described earlier, within the context of unequal relationships, the existence of conflict is denied. Miller states that inequality creates hidden conflict which she characterizes as covert and closed conflict. In effect, both dominants and subordinates are diverted from open conflict in their conversations and instead deal in hidden conflict based upon falsifications. Yet, expression of their real differences could potentially be a source of growth and learning for each. Given this situation, Miller states, "For this hidden conflict, there are no acceptable forms or guides because this conflict supposedly doesn't exist" (Miller, 1976,p. 13). And further,
"Knowing only the pain and futility of hidden conflict, one believes that ‘that’ is what conflict is" (Miller, 1976, p. 127).

When subordinates no longer accept their inferior status, they may engage in open conflict notably affecting the kinds of conversations that can emerge. Miller’s primary focus throughout her book is on women and women’s particular experience of being treated as subordinates although much of what she describes applies to many others as discussed later in this chapter. She acknowledges that conflict has been a taboo area especially for women. As women continue to pursue self-determination, they will in the process, illuminate conflict as an inherent process of existence. She states that the basic nature of reality is that conflict is inevitable. Indeed, conflict can be a source of growth. Miller concludes that the methods used to conduct conflict do not have to be the traditional approaches; others can be used - thus, having important implications for the nature of the conversations among all subordinates and dominants.

Noting that conflict begins at birth, Miller characterizes the interaction between an infant and the person caring for the child. She describes the fact that children initiate conflict around their desires. Miller states:
As these two people, with two very different states of psychological organization and desires, interact, the outcome will be the creation of a new state in each person. The result will also be somewhat different from what either of them 'intended'. (Miller, 1976,p. 128)

It is thus out of numerous such interactions (conflicts) that individuals develop new conceptions of what they are. In terms of these interactions Miller states:

...each party should perceive more, and want 'more' as a result of each engagement and have more resources with which to act. All too often, the opposite is true, and conflicts result in lowered goals and diminution of resources. (129)

Observing that most adults are better at suppressing conflict than they are at knowing how to conduct constructive conflict, Miller acknowledges that this ability is not one that many people in our contemporary society have learned well. Indeed, conflict can appear to be destructive. However, Miller asserts:

[Conflict] becomes dangerous when its necessity has been suppressed...it is actually the lack of recognition of the need for conflict and provision of appropriate forms for it that lead to danger. This ultimate destructive form is frightening, but is it also not conflict. It is almost always the reverse; it is the end result of the attempt to avoid and suppress the conflict. (Miller, 1976,p. 130)

Citing women as a primary example, Miller states that for women to even 'feel' in conflict with men has meant that there is something
"psychologically" wrong with them. She indicates that when women 'feel' in conflict, there are good reasons to believe that they should 'be' in conflict. Indeed, for some women to initiate conflict means initiating conflict with their image of themselves. This can be equally as hard as dealing with conflict with another.

Miller suggests that in "waging good conflict" a person will inevitably encounter conflict with their old conception of themselves. Therefore, individuals need other people with whom to test their perceptions, and to believe that they can be right as well as 'have' rights. To do this requires courage and a community of like-minded individuals in conversation with each other. In conclusion, she states, "The hope for success lies in respectful engagement with other people" (Miller, 1976, p. 133). The heart of this work is about finding respectful and effective forms of genuine engagement with others - the very essence of Good Conversation. As people both shape and are influenced by their culture, and each culture has a distinctive ethos regarding the naming of and dealing with differences, an essential aspect of learning is "the respectful engagement with other people." (Miller, 1976, p. 133) These learning contexts that allow people to engage with each other are considered next.
As articulated by the Russian cognitive psychologist, L.S. Vygotsky, a learning context can be viewed as a zone of proximal development.

Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development as the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Bruner, 1990,p. 73)

The earliest learning and development context is the relationship between an infant and her primary caretakers. Winnicott (1965) pictures this context as a “holding environment.” It is within this initial environment that infants begin to develop their own innate potential.

According to Ruthellen Josselson,

Throughout life, we need to feel held in developmentally more mature idioms, but we continue to need to be contained, bounded, grounded in order to grow. (1992,p. 6)

In setting forth a theory of experiential learning, David Kolb describes this relationship between the person and context:

In experiential learning theory, the transactional relationship between the person and the environment is symbolized in the dual meanings of the term experience—one subjective and personal, referring to the person's internal state, as in the 'experience of joy and happiness,' and the other objective and environmental, as in, 'He has 20 years of experience on this job.' These two forms of experience interpenetrate and interrelate in very complex ways...The word transaction is
more appropriate to describe the relationship between the person and the environment in experiential learning theory, because the connotation of interaction is somehow too mechanical, involving unchanging separate entities that become intertwined but retain their separate identities...The concept of transaction implies a more fluid, interpenetrating relationship between objective conditions and subjective experience, such that once they become related, both are essentially changed. (Kolb, 1984, p. 35-36)

Similarly, in somewhat more instrumental terms Jack Mezirow describes a contextual approach to learning as,

This approach sees experience as events that have meaning as a whole. The quality of events is a product of transactions between the organism and its context, or the totality of events that the organism has experienced. The essence of experience is seen as continuous activity and change. What is learned and remembered depends on the various contexts of the event-psychological, social, cultural, physical—and the context within which evidence of remembering and learning is requested. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 9)

Thus, context that surrounds the learning has many dimensions and influences what occurs in the conversation.

**Theoretical Model of Good Conversation**

Spoken communication between and among individuals is described by a variety of terms including conversation, dialogue, discourse, discussion, speaking and talking. This section will begin with a review of a few of the views of these distinctive forms of oral communication as they
occur in diverse contexts, for various purposes. It will lead into a
description of a theoretical model of Good Conversation.

According to Clark (1990), philosophy, cultural anthropology,
literary theory, rhetoric, communication and composition studies use three
terms to describe a process of discursive exchange: *dialogue, dialectic, and
conversation*. He defines these three terms as:

The term *dialogue* describes the cooperative shape of that
process, an exchange of discourse that is characterized by its
participants' consciousness of each other, by their conscious
efforts to interact cooperatively. The term *dialectic*, by
contrast defines its collaborative function, how that process of
exchange enables people to construct together assumptions
and agreements they can share. The familiar term
*conversation* describes that process itself, the natural
experience of cooperative, collaborative interaction. (Clark,
1990,p. xvi)

Clark suggests that the term *dialogue* can be used to describe any
exchange of assertions and responses. He describes *dialectic* as a particular
kind of dialogue, one where its participants collaborate in constructing and
revising knowledge they can share. Clark elaborates on dialectical
discourse by saying,

[D]iscourse that is dialectical...treats knowledge as current
consensual interpretations of common experience, and
language as the activity of social interaction through which
people develop those interpretations and share them...
assumptions underlying a dialectical rhetoric demand that any
rhetor function as but one voice in a pluralistic process of
collaborative exchange through which a community of equals discover and validate what they can collectively hold as true...a dialectical rhetoric guides us in the process of coming to agreement. (Clark, 1990, p. 20)

The cooperative, collaborative, egalitarian interaction which Clark (1990) describes as dialectic discourse and refers to when it is in process as conversation is closely related to the model of Good Conversation being proposed.

It was the late James Waters who first proposed good conversation as the way for managers to develop "clear and compelling ethical positions" in their organizations.

Good conversations can have three main effects. First it can legitimize ethical concern as an important dimension of managerial life... Second, it is probably the only way managers can seek guidance and gain clarity about what to do in a particular situation. Ethical standards will always be general and abstract, and managers must always make judgements in response to concrete situations. Finally, it is out of public discussion and agreement that feelings of obligation ultimately arise (1988, p. 179).

The essence of Water's message here is that awareness, bringing the abstract into the concrete, and creating feelings of obligation are the fruits of Good Conversation. Yet, this essence of Good Conversation has relevancy across contexts as a guide for promoting ethical interactions and is not limited to the managerial context.
In trying to imagine this kind of conversation, Jane Roland Martin's description of good conversation seems especially applicable.

A good conversation is neither a fight nor a contest. Circular in form, cooperative in manner, and constructive in intent, it is an interchange of ideas by those who see themselves not as adversaries but as human beings, come together to talk and listen and learn from one another. (1985, p. 10)

This circular, cooperative and constructive interchange is reminiscent of the kind of mutuality of relationship described above.

Offering a similar perspective in his work on dialogue, Paulo Freire, suggests that,

Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence...leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnership in the naming of the world (1992, p. 79-80).

The kind of conversation or dialogue that is being suggested here is different from what is often experienced. The intent is this dissertation is to present a model of Good Conversation which would push somewhat at the edges of “what is.” The grounded model that will be developed in subsequent chapters is that of a dynamic process addressing the conversational context rather than a static model of a method to be applied.

Through Good Conversation, the context of the conversation can provide the fertile ground for relationality to thrive, for the full voice of
speaking and listening, and for conflict to be a source of making meaning and learning for both the individuals and the group. While a good conversation cannot be forced, attention to the context of the conversation can be invaluable to its possibilities. The model thus encourages a context of Ideal Speech, Ideal Listening, relationality, full voice, and growth-promoting conflict for conversation that can allow for the exploration of differences to enhance the making of broader meanings, learning, and new understanding. Now I explore each of these elements of the context for Good Conversation.

Good Conversation: an Ideal Speech Context

The source of the concept of Ideal Speech is Habermas’s discourse ethics (Habermas, 1991) and the transcendent concept of the Ideal Speech situation (Geuss, 1985). In Ideal Speech, all norms in a speech community are created only when each person who is to be affected by the consequences of the norms has contributed to their development. In other words, norms are established consensually with the inclusion of each affected person (Habermas, 1991). For example, all members of a work group, not just the professionals or the leadership, would thus contribute to the establishment of the working norms.
Similarly, an Ideal Speech situation is one in which "absolutely uncoerced and unlimited discussion between completely free and equal agents" can occur (Geuss, 1985, p. 65). Inherent within Ideal Speech are the processes of enlightenment and emancipation. Therefore, Ideal Speech requires that each person is able to question values and assumptions. Through this questioning, they can consider letting go of the self-delusion that previously held norms are legitimate even when they are damaging to the people affected—i.e., enlightenment. For example, when a child takes in the negative messages of an early authority figure and comes to believe he/she is not capable of success, enlightenment through Ideal Speech situations can facilitate the person letting go of these messages—this self-delusion. Or using the language of Miller, as described earlier in this chapter, of subordinates and dominants, enlightenment must occur for the subordinate to begin to question the culturally learned status quo.

Likewise, only when a person is able to question values and assumptions, to feel free not to accept the prevailing norms, and to go to the next step of creating their own norms—i.e., emancipation—can they be functioning in an Ideal Speech situation. For example, when limited roles of women are given to young girls, women are held back from following their own life and vocational callings unless enlightenment and then an
emancipation process occurs enabling more personal decision making. Thus, the premises of Ideal Speech could have profound implications for conversation because of the implications of fostering enlightenment and emancipation within conversations.

In fact, however, Habermas is silent about the specific inclusion of traditionally absent voices as a way of insuring some reversal of historical patterns. While Habermas's communicative reason values both dialogue and the inclusion of the community, there is real question whether an approach which does not explicitly address equality of all voices from other than a generalized rights and justice perspective can offer inclusion. Feminists, while also raising many of the concerns raised by Habermas, are increasingly suggesting that his model does not go far enough (Benhabib, 1987; Fleming, 1992; Young, 1987; Fraser, 1987). Because

the roles of citizen and worker are, socially and historically, unquestionably masculine and those of child rearer and consumer are feminine...to leave the gender of citizens unthematized is to leave it masculine and implicitly to support the traditional view that the public sphere is proper to men. (Fleming, 1992, p. 250)

If the traditionally masculine assumptions are to be changed, they will need to be challenged and liberated from the traditional sexism and patriarchy which pervades. And as soon as there is a “call for women's inclusion in a community of equals [there] is also an acknowledgement of
their cultural and historical exclusion." (Fleming, 1992, p. 251) By the exclusion and lack of recognition that comes with this historical oversight, be it intentional or not, there are destructive effects on those excluded and unrecognized, be those women or minorities or any other excluded group. As Charles Taylor suggests,

excluded groups are given...a demeaning picture of themselves...dominant groups tend to entrench their hegemony by inculcating an image of inferiority in the subjugated. The struggle for freedom and equality must therefore pass through a revision of these images. (Taylor, 1992, p. 65-66)

Similarly relevant here is the work of Seyla Benhabib, who makes a distinction between the generalized other and the concrete other, (Benhabib, 1987) and the work of Charles Taylor, who draws related parallels with his politics of dignity and politics of difference (Taylor, 1992). The generalized other and politics of dignity correspond to a more comprehensive or abstract conceptualization while the concrete other and politics of difference relate to a more apprehensive perception. Traditionally, philosophers, as does Habermas, have assumed the perspective of the generalized other in self-other relations consistent with the search for universal principles and abstract conceptualization. From this perspective of moral impartiality, every person is viewed as an autonomous being who has the same claims as all others and thus the commonality
among these autonomous individuals, rather than the differences, are assumed. (Kittay and Meyers, 1987)

Likewise, Taylor describes "the development with the modern notion of identity [having] given rise to a politics of dignity" (Taylor, 1992, p. 38) as being concurrent with the collapse of social hierarchies and emergence of democracies. This perspective similarly encompasses a difference-blindness, universal rights, equality of respect, and a "unity of purpose that seems incompatible with differentiation." (Taylor, 1992, p. 50)

In contrast, from the perspective of the concrete other, each person is viewed as an individual rooted in their unique, concrete experience of relatedness to others and thus the differences among all people in relationship are assumed (Kittay and Meyers, 1987). Although he does not talk specifically about the concrete other, Taylor's focus in the politics of difference includes a similar shift toward the importance of distinctiveness and the particular identity as an individual and a culture. He carries these assumptions forward to say,

Where the politics of universal dignity fought for forms of nondiscrimination that were quite 'blind' to the ways in which citizens differ, the politics of difference often redefines nondiscrimination as requiring that we make these distinctions the basis of differential treatment (Taylor, 1992, p. 39).
As the search for moral impartiality has required the recognition of claims of all others in the universalistic abstract, comprehensive mode, the value of the more individual and apprehensive process of one human being connected to another in relationship has been suppressed and undervalued. Similarly, the assumption of commonality around the prevailing norms of the generalized other has contributed to the lack of appreciation for the uniqueness of differences that each person brings into their relationships and each culture offers. A more intentional and proactive effort is necessary to acknowledge the "cultural and historical exclusion" (Fleming, 1992, p. 251), to include previously excluded voices, and to expand upon traditionally masculine and Western assumptions. The full inclusion of the universalistic, comprehensive mode along side of the more apprehensive mode requires the inside-out valuing of both as well as the outside-in expression of that valuing through the conversation.

Although he does not use the same language, Martin Buber is addressing a similar concern as he advances the I/Thou relationship - "Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations...The primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being" (1958, p. 3). Naming the world as proposed by Paulo Freire is similarly relevant to an Ideal Speech context because as Freire says:
"In the dialogical theory of action, Subjects meet in cooperation in order to transform the world...The I and the thou thus become...two thou's which become two I's. The dialogical theory of action does not involve a Subject, who dominates by virtue of conquest, and dominated object. Instead, there are Subjects who meet to name the world in order to transform it" (1992, p. 167).

Freire further explains the value of naming when he says,

To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. (1992, p. 76).

Freire is making a radical proposal for the inclusion of all voices in the matters which affect people's lives, to transform the world. Within this kind of Ideal Speech context, a person can speak from their whole being, authentically name their own reality as she or he experiences it, and fully participate in an ongoing re-creation of the norms of that reality.

Good Conversation: an Ideal Listening Context

"Ideal Speech" is an active, assertive dimension to communication whereby each person is assured the right to speak, to question, to introduce, to express, and to exercise their rights (Habermas, 1991). Yet, without the receptive and listening dimensions, Good Conversation cannot occur.

Without being open to hearing, being influenced, and being challenged to consider new possibilities, the conversing is not likely to contribute to new
understandings and learning, especially across the inevitable differences among the members of the conversation. Without being open enough to be able to hear the challenges to ethical norms that Hans-Georg Gadamer describes (and discussed below in the section on Reflection), learning from the differences is minimized or nonexistent.

An Ideal Listening context includes considerable self-acceptance on the part of the people involved, valuing and making space for reflection, an inside-out orientation toward learning, and empathy and trust as guiding lights for the interactions among people. Some elaboration on each of these elements follows.

Self-acceptance

Enhanced self-acceptance contributes to the possibility of valuing the uniqueness - i.e., the differences - of each person. There is a relationship between the level of self-acceptance a person feels and the tendency to stereotype or accept others (Rubin, 1967; Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950). In other words, as an individual comes to accept their own whole self, warts and all, the person is more able to let go of their prejudices and stereotypes of others - their non-acceptance of others.
When a person is fully free to speak and feels they are being genuinely heard, the affirmation experienced contributes to increased self-acceptance - thus enabling them to listen more completely, allowing for the synergistic cycle of the other person feeling heard and experiencing increased self-acceptance. Self-acceptance involves being heard and believing more fully in what is being known. The more people can experience self-acceptance, the more they can bring parts of themselves into the conversation. It is in this way that learning about oneself and about those who seem different can be born out of the dynamics of Good Conversation. Good Conversation can create a cycle within which people are empowered to bring themselves into the conversation and learn as they teach others.

Moreover, as people are more fully in relation to themselves, they come to be more fully in relation to others. Janet Surrey described this process when she said that a group of women with whom she had been meeting for years had come to “hear each other into speech” (Surrey, 1991). In an Ideal Listening context, the individuals would be cultivating their own acceptance of self through which they could move forward in their journeys toward acceptance of and relationality with each other.

This theme rings loudly in the work of two quite different people - the American psychiatrist, Jean Baker Miller, and the Brazilian writer,
educator, and social critic, Paulo Freire, two authors whose work has previously been cited repeatedly. Throughout their work is the theme of dominance/subordination as discussed above in the words of Miller and of the oppressors/oppressed in the words of Freire. In part, they are articulating very similar messages although while Miller focuses primarily on gender, Freire is mostly addressing the oppressed in the developing world. Yet, in each case their central ideas are relevant and carry an invaluable message to each person vis a vis the sense of their own personal power.

In the works of these two authors, they express concern that the subordinates/oppressed have internalized the beliefs and images of the dominants/oppressors and thus feel badly about themselves and are dehumanized. They both warn against taking on the characteristics of the dominants/oppressors and call for the creation of new models which restore humanity. Freire beautifully uses the metaphor of the birthing process to describe what needs to happen.

Only as they discover themselves to be "hosts" of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor, this contribution is impossible... Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one (1992, p. 33).
Reflection

Hans-Georg Gadamer expands upon Habermas’s focus on the creation of a procedure that leads to a universal truth, to advocating a process of ethical reflection, the purpose of which is not to find universal truth. Instead, he sees ethical reflection as an interaction among the participants in the dialogue with the Sache, or the subject matter, topic, or object of the dialogue. In this interaction,

It is this Sache, not the participants or their viewpoints, which determines the structure and goal of the dialogue. It also determines the truth of the dialogue, for the ‘truth’ is a result of a ‘fusion of horizons’ of the participants viewpoints about the Sache in question” (Kelly, 1990, p. 141).

Within the genuine experience of reflection, Gadamer assumes that ethical norms will be challenged and negated, requiring people to always remain open to creating a broader solidarity or shared normative ground. This ethical reflective process is not a neutral procedure as Habermas proposes, but one grounded in ethical tradition and thus is not value-free. In this sense, Gadamer expands the concept of Ideal Speech by focusing on the interaction and the listening dimensions of Good Conversation. A “fusion of the horizons” can only occur when each participant has spoken and been heard.
In ongoing relationships with diverse other people, individuals begin to be influenced and to incorporate some of their values. Through dialogue, reflection, and interaction in relationship, there can be an influencing of the other and a socialization to the newly created norms and values which are being developed synergistically. In the words of Ruthellen Josselson, "Relationships are recursive: People in relationships modify each other" (1992, p. 17).

A foundational element of this kind of interaction is the capacity to hold paradoxical tension - to hold both the static and the dynamic, the discursive and recursive - in affect and in conversation. Without at least a minimal level of safety and support as offered through the more static interaction, it is not possible for most people to venture into the unknown and unpredictable world of relating to those people perceived as different. The more unfamiliar the person or the idea appears, the stranger the new voice, the more people need to venture forward from a firm foundation of safety and support to be able to meet the diverse other in a vulnerable and receptive frame of reference.

Similarly, it is important is to hold the tension of the polarity in the discursive and recursive conversation. To develop the distinction between
discursive and recursive, it is necessary to first distinguish between values and valuing. The distinction was described in this way -

As valuing is an affective process of attending to and a phenomenon in motion and evolving, it offers less predictability than values which are the comprehensive interpretation of the process of attending to, when it has ceased to be emergent. Thus, valuing is not initially a cognitive interpretation. Instead it is a process of attending to, out of which can emerge a new relational appreciation in the interaction with the diverse (Baker and Kolb, 1993, p.23).

Discursive conversation is a comprehensive process and focuses on the value - as opposed to valuing. It enables participants to move forward in a more linear fashion into the future and to perpetuate shared values. Purely discursive conversation could be illustrated by a relatively straight line.

Recursive interaction, on the other hand, requires a reflective space. Conversation which is more recursive in nature allows for the unsettling voices to be spoken and heard and thus to become a part of the creation of the norms and creation of new values. The process is similar to what Freire is referring to when he says,

Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (1992, p. 58).

Purely recursive interaction, however, could be illustrated by a circle which keeps centering further into itself and going nowhere. Thus, the holding of
the paradox of the discursive and the recursive is integral to Good Conversation.

This paradox is implicit in Freire's idea of dialogue which sees reflection and action as intimately interdependent and essential to each other.

...the essence of dialogue itself: the word... Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed - even in part - the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world (1992, p. 75).

He insists that the transformation of the world for which he is calling begins with the word, that must grow out of these two dimensions.

The insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection - true reflection - leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection (1992, p. 52-53).

For Freire, reflection without action is mere verbalism or idle chatter, and action without reflection is activism or action for action's sake. (1992, p. 75-76)

Freire's concept of dialogue is similar to Good Conversation when he insists that "...the requirement [for both reflection and action] is seen not in terms of explaining to, but rather dialoguing with people about their
actions" (1992, p. 38-39). Through direct, open conversation learning can proceed in two directions. As elaborated upon above, Jean Baker Miller describes the lost access to knowledge for the dominants when the subordinates must resort to disguised and indirect ways of interacting (1986, p. 10).

Whether focusing on people's behavior or the learning process, the approach used is important in striving to hold the paradox and integrate both ends of the continuum. This continuum of reflection/action is one of the axes of Kolb's Learning Style Model in which the horizontal axis extends from Reflective Observation to Active Experimentation. The limitations of attention to one approach to learning to the exclusion of the other is described by David Kolb when he says,

..the way in which the conflicts among the dialectically opposed modes of adaptation get resolved determines the level of learning that results. If conflicts are resolved by suppression of one mode and/or dominance by another, learning tends to be specialized around the dominant mode and limited in areas controlled by the dominated mode (1984, p. 31).

Especially in the Western culture where doing and activity are typically emphasized and rewarded far more than reflection, singular attention often needs to be given to slowing down the pace and explicitly attending to holding the paradox. The process of reflection and looking within often
has a spiritual quality and is expressed well by Peter Vaill when he encourages each person

..to pay more attention to one's own spiritual qualities, feelings, insights, and yearnings. It is to reach more deeply into oneself for that which is unquestionably authentic...Spirituality for me is the search for a deeper experience of the spirit of various kinds that one can feel stirring within...So the key things about the way I use the word spirituality are search and stirring of spirit within (1989, pp. 31,213).

Thus, Vaill is advocating this reflective process to allow for the searching for the spirit within.

One of distinctions which Martin Buber makes between the I/It and the I/Thou relationship is that in connection with the world of the It, the individual becomes more and more skilled in the experiencing and the using of the world in contrast to being in the world. This contrast of experiencing/being also seems to parallel the active/reflective dichotomy. Yet, he warns repeatedly that "the development of the ability to experience and use comes about mostly through the decrease of man's power to enter into relation" (1958, p. 38-39). Thus, if the conversation does not integrate both poles of the continuum - the reflective and the active - the potential for developing relationality will be impaired.
Inside-out

As learning is approached from what David Hunt calls an “Inside-out” perspective that is rooted in personal experience, “You will need to regain your trust in yourself and your experience to adopt the Inside-out approach and begin with your self” (1987, p. 3). As people regain their trust in themselves, they can move forward to value and accept those whom they perceive as different from themselves. If the beginning point is the valuing of each person’s individual experience, then the uniqueness of every person is assumed and considered a resource. Whereas, with the more typical Outside-in approach to learning, the dissimilarity of each person is considered a problem to be solved. Thus, the point of departure for the learning—resource or problem—becomes a pivotal consideration.

With an Outside-in approach, the valued uniqueness of the individual experience is often lost, and the traditional Human Resource approach has encouraged coping with what is perceived as the problem of diversity. Good Conversation as a vehicle to facilitate recursive valuing and assumption breaking then emerges from not only the presumption that each individual in the relationship is different, but from a presumption that differences are an inherent resource. The assumption of differences as a resource contributes to creating a conversation among equally valued
participants, quite different from many of the conversations which typically are a part of most people’s lives.

Empathy

The essence of Ideal Listening is empathy. Empathy in this context is well defined by Alfie Kohn in his book, No Contest, when he says:

Empathy, in the sense of picturing myself in your situation, is not enough: The point is to see your situation from your perspective which is not identical with mine. I must...see the world as you do, experience your inner life. This, according to Buber, is a “bold swinging -demanding the most intensive stirring of one’s being - into the life of the other.” When I both regard you as a subject and recognize your otherness, there is the making of human relationship at its fullest. All of us can strive to receive others this way and in so doing we prepare the ground for genuine dialogue, a reciprocal sharing by which both participants are enriched (1986, pp. 137-138).

The Ideal Listening situation requires the kind of empathy which Kohn delineates and the kind of “bold swinging...into the life of the other” which Buber describes. Implicit in the I/Thou relationship is being open to influence, change, and the possibility of learning with the other in relationship.

Another way of thinking of this kind of empathy is to frame it in terms of the deep trust that can emerge in conversation and in relationship. In Freire’s words, “A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the
people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust” (1992, p. 47).

Without a trust in each person and in their ability to reason, according to Freire, instead of dialogue or Good Conversation, it is easy to fall into “using slogans, communiques, monologues and instructions” which is an “attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication” (1992, p. 52-53). By entering into the conversation within a framework of intentionality about self-acceptance, reflection in concert with action, inside-out learning, empathy, and trust, the opportunities of hearing and learning across the intrinsic differences of the people in the conversation are enhanced immeasurably.

Good Conversation: a Relational Context

A notion of the “self” has been prominent in psychological theory and is especially relevant to the manner in which a person engages in conversation. In the United States, prior to the work of feminist scholars, theorists of human development, from Eric Erikson (1950) to Daniel Levinson (1978) described human development as a process of separating from others to become autonomous and independent. These models have been predominately based upon men’s experience.
Based upon the work of Carol Gilligan (1982), a group of psychologists and a psychiatrist have been working collaboratively through the Stone Center at Wellesley College including Judith Jordan, Alexandra Kaplan, Jean Baker Miller, Irene Stiver and Janet Surrey (1991). These and other scholars studying and writing about women's experiences, dispute the fullness of understanding of human development based only on men's experience. As earlier described, cultures have evolved distinctive expectations and responsibilities for men and women. As such, the broad contexts in which boys and girls develop their identity and sense of self, and where men and women live out their sense of self, provide learning opportunities that reflect these cultural expectations. As Janet Surrey notes, "inquiry into the nature of women's development is a step in the evolution of understanding human development" (1991, p. 52).

In contrast to a notion of a separate self, Surrey (1991) proposes a self-in-relationship. She describes this self as:

The notion of the self-in-relation involves an important shift in emphasis from separation to relationship as the basis for self-experience and development. Further, relationship is seen as the basic goal of development: that is, the deepening capacity for relationship and relational competence. The self-in-relation model assumes that other aspects of self (e.g., creativity, autonomy, assertion) develop within this primary context. That is, other aspects of self-development emerge in the context of relationship, and there is no inherent need to disconnect or to sacrifice
relationship for self-development. This formulation implies that we must develop an adequate description of relational development in order to understand self-development. (Surrey, 1991,p. 53)

Thus, from this perspective the primacy of relationship as opposed to autonomy would heighten further the importance of conversation as a source of development and learning.

Judith Jordan (1991), further describes this self-in-relation through the concept of mutuality. She says,

Crucial to a mature sense of mutuality is an appreciation of the wholeness of the other person, with a special awareness of the other's subjective experience. Thus the other person is not there merely to take care of one's needs, to become a vessel for one's projections or transferences, or to be the object of discharge of instinctual impulses. Through empathy, and an active interest in the other as a different complex person, one develops the capacity at first to allow the others' differentness and ultimately to value and encourage those qualities that make that person different and unique. (Jordan, 1991,p. 82)

Jordan describes this sense of mutuality as mutual intersubjectivity, as suggesting the following for each person in a relationship:

1. an interest in and cognitive-emotional awareness of and responsiveness to the subjectivity of the other person through empathy;

2. a willingness and ability to reveal one's own thoughts and feelings, giving the other access to one's own subjective world;

3. the capacity to acknowledge one's needs without consciously or unconsciously manipulating the other to gain gratification while overlooking the other's experience;
4. valuing the process of knowing, respecting, and enhancing the
growth of the other;

5. establishing an interacting pattern in which both people are open
to change in the interaction (Jordan, 1991, p. 83).

Thus, a highly interactive exchange is present in a relationship of mutuality
that has the potential for change, requiring a receptivity to the new and
different.

Earlier, I noted that Jean Baker Miller described inequality as
differences in status and power. In terms of mutuality, Jordan states that
power dynamics clearly interfere with mutuality. She states:

...a motivation for personal power and ascendancy directly
contradicts the notion of mutuality...If one is primarily concerned
with the establishment of a position of dominance vis-a-vis another,
the motive eliminates the possibility of a real interest in the
subjective experience of the other. Rather, one’s own interests are
felt as uppermost. Manipulation of others to achieve ends that are
unilaterally defined becomes the focus of the interaction.
Whenever an individual’s own needs become so primary that they
obscure the perception of another’s needs, mutual concern and
empathy cannot exist. Furthermore, when the emphasis is on
instrumentality or striving to maintain power, often through
competition, self-disclosure decreases. Disconnection and
inequality are basic to a power model, along with a prevailing
sense of competing subjectivities. Models of mutuality depend on
interaction, a capacity for empathy, and reciprocally enhancing
subjectivities. The two ways of approaching relationships really are
at odds with one another. (Jordan, 1991, p. 93)
Thus, conversations will be influenced by the power dynamics in the relationship and by a person's perception of themselves as primarily separate or as mutually related to others.

In moving toward Good Conversation that bridges differences as a source of learning, this highly relational kind of interaction and the implicit changes it implies for each person is integral to the process. An illustration is described by Josselson:

"...developmental process occurs along the track of greater and more differentiated connection to others. As we grow we become able to relate to others in more complex ways, which means that the nature of our interaction with others becomes that much more multifaceted" (1992, p. 18).

Prior to this feminist work, Martin Buber's I/Thou relationship offered an exemplary image of relationality. The I/Thou relationship is one of directness and mutuality as when Buber says, "My Thou affects me, as I affect it" (1958, p. 15). It is a relationship which comes through grace and cannot be found through the seeking for it. While the I/It relationship is one of natural separation, the I/Thou is one of natural combination (1958, p. 24). Perhaps one of the reasons that there is such preoccupation with things, doing, and using in the world grows out of the male model of separation, autonomy, and individualism as the ideal and a model more representative of the I/It relationship. Through a more relational orientation
of mutuality and connection, norms which are more like this image of the

I/Thou relationship might be possible. In the eyes of Buber, the:

aim of relation is relation's own being, that is, contact with the
Thou...He who takes his stand in relation shares in a reality, that is,
in a being that neither merely belongs to him nor merely lies
outside him. All reality is an activity in which I share without
being able to appropriate for myself. Where there is no sharing
there is no reality. Where there is self-appropriation there is no
reality. The more direct the contact with the Thou, the fuller is the
sharing (1958, p. 63).

This place of being in relation is uniquely different from doing,

experiencing, and using. The sharing in a reality that Buber portrays is

similar to the "fusion of horizons" which Gadamer suggests and the

meaning-making and learning sought through Good Conversation.

Prior to the conversation or the words is the relation. This space prior
to conversation is described so beautifully by Buber as "the hand of the

child arched out so that what is over against him may nestle under"

followed by the "actual relation, a saying of Thou without words, in a state

preceding word form" (1958, p. 27). Yet, the dialogue is the essence of the

contact among persons in each other's lives as the,

I and Thou take their stand not merely in relation, but also in the
solid give-and-take of talk. The moments of relation are here, and
only here, bound together by means of the element of the speech in
which they are immersed. Here what confronts us has blossomed
into the full reality of the Thou (1958, p. 103).
The question then emerges whether the Good Conversation precedes the relation as a way into the joining of the I and the Thou or whether as Buber says the relation must precede words. If the intention is to bridge differences through conversation as a source of learning, perhaps being in relation is at the heart of the intentions. Buber seems to speak to this phenomena saying, "Structures of man's communal life draw their living quality from the riches of the power to enter into relation" (1958, p. 49).

Good Conversation: a Context Which Promotes Full Voice

Within Good Conversation each person can offer their "what is" to the interaction for consideration. The more similar the individuals participating, the more similar the "what is" contributions, the more static or discursive is the dialogue. For example, in spite of the diversity among white people, all-white groups are relatively more likely to have similar "what is" conversations than if people of color are included as participants on an equal footing.

The static discourse of sharing similar and relatively easily agreed upon contributions frequently can be effective in maintaining the status quo values and minimizing conflict. The static discourse of similarity and maintenance of the status quo does not, however, facilitate innovation or
flexibility. It is also not readily adaptive to the changing world or the increasing diversity within organizations.

Through the offering of dissimilar “what is” assertions, the conversation becomes more dynamic and recursive enabling the questioning of the status quo values, the revisiting and the testing of previously held assumptions. Through the inclusion of more disparate voices, more opportunities can be created for the kind of emancipation and enlightenment proposed by Gadamer and described above. Through the inclusion of more diverse voices, participants in the conversation can become grounded in a broadened reality. The contextualizing and relationalizing of the interaction is also heightened through the inclusion of disparate other voices in Good Conversation. Yet, the inclusion of the dissimilar “what is” within an organization requires the inclusion of “voices” which often have either not been present or have been silenced in the past.

In the words of Paulo Freire, the “culture of silence of the dispossessed” must be broken (1992, p. 10). The “private” must become more “public” drawing from the work of Elise Boulding, who refers to the underlife or the within phenomena of women who have had their influence to work for the public good limited to the private world - the world of the home or from a subordinate place under those in control, or those in the
overlife (Boulding, 1992, p. 19). And the conversation needs to be between two Subjects, "those who know and act," rather than some participants in the conversation being regarded as Objects, those who "are known and acted upon" (Freire, 1992, p. 20).

Once again, the holding of the paradoxical tension is relevant. The discursive process offers us movement into the future. It is indicative of progressing forward and the creation of new norms. On the other hand, it is the recursive inclusion of different voices, all as Subjects in the conversation, which enables people to move out of the frozen affect of fixed values to revisit the essential questions. It is in the recursive process that people are attending to and valuing the "what is" reality for each of the voices. Through the recursive process, consensual norms are created for all who will be affected by them. For example, the inclusion of the voices of African-Americans in decisions regarding integration of schools prior to the 1960's would have caused reconsideration of broadly prevailing norms much sooner.

Yet, when voices have traditionally been filtered out of the dialogue within an organization or some other context, they may sound strange or unknown, especially initially when they begin to be heard. For example, in board meetings which previously have been all male, the introduction of
several fully participating female voices into the conversation can introduce not only new linguistic styles and enunciations, but also unfamiliar levels of vulnerability and novel topics for consideration.

While the inclusion of these new voices can favor a more dynamic and recursive discourse out of which can emerge more innovation and adaptive behavior, this inclusion usually also brings with it higher levels of tension, conflict, and reactive behavior. In addition, previously silenced voices may initially be expressed with anger or with unfamiliar approaches, further increasing the tension. Freire says that mutiny is often the voice of those who have had to be silent "in the creation and development of their communities" (1973, p. 26). The transition from silence to having full voice is an unavoidable developmental stage during which learning and ongoing negotiation need to be nurtured.

Another contributing factor to the difficulty of creating Good Conversation is the inherent differences in the language and linguistic styles used by men and women. Increasingly, there is research which accents these distinctions. A recent review of the literature by Susan Case outlines at least nine major areas of sex-based language differences. Specifically relevant to the concept of Good Conversation, Case found that the women she had studied in actual working groups were better listeners than their
male counterparts (Case, 1992). Here again are gender related differences which contribute to the importance of the role of women in creating Good Conversation.

For all of these reasons, Good Conversation is difficult and requires commitment and effort. Therefore, the challenge is to channel the increased level of tension into a sustained, constructive conversation and to learn more effective ways of handling conflict, another concern that will be discussed below.

Good Conversation: A Context of Growth Promoting Conflict

The word "intrinsic" has been used to describe the differences among people because as the word is defined by Webster's, it refers to "the essential nature and constitution of a thing" (Webster's, 1993). Differences among people are essential to who they are. Even among those who are similar in the most visible ways, such as gender, race, life style, ethnicity, age, etc., the variations are unlimited and immeasurable. Therefore, the potential for conflict is similarly unlimited and immeasurable. Miller refers to this phenomena when she say, "the fundamental nature of reality - the fact that, in its most basic sense, conflict is inevitable, the source of all growth, and an absolute necessity if one is to be alive." (1986, p. 125)
In his classical work on conflict, Georg Simmel talks about the inevitability and usefulness of conflict. Coser summarizes Simmel’s work by saying,

...no group can be entirely harmonious, for it would then be devoid of process and structure. Groups require disharmony as well as harmony... both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ factors build group relations. Conflict as well as co-operation has social functions. Far from being necessarily dysfunctional, a certain degree of conflict is an essential element in group formation and the persistence of group life (Coser, 1956, p. 31).

Simmel develops sixteen propositions from these premises, including the group binding, group preserving, unifying, and power balancing functions of conflict. He also explicated the importance for the expression of the differences inherent within conflict indicating that,

Flexible systems...by allowing occurrences of conflict, make the danger of breakdowns of consensual agreements remote...the expression and acting out of hostile feelings through conflict leads to mutual and unilateral accommodation and adjustments between component parts...Insofar as conflict is the resolution of tension between antagonists it has stabilizing functions and becomes an integrating component of the relationship (Coser, 1956, p. 79-80).

Building on these ideas, Simmel says that the expression of conflict can become a mechanism for the ongoing revision of norms, rules, and institutions. This revising process through the expression of conflict is inherent within the process of Ideal Speech and Ideal Listening described above and thus requires the inclusion of conflict in the conversation.
Looking at the more recent literature, Kirchmeyer and McLellan reviewed a stream of research that,

supports an association between group diversity and decision quality...when debate or controversy was built into the decision-making process, decision makers demonstrated more exploration of ideas and more openness to others...produced more valid and important assumptions...and reached decisions which more often integrated the ideas and concerns of multiple parties...and were of higher quality...than when harmony or consensus prevailed (1991, p. 74).

They go on to emphasize, however, the importance of the relationships and context required. The relationships and attention to the context allow for the expression of conflict in ways that contribute to, rather than distract from the improved quality of decisions -

..it seems that members with divergent points of view may require more time to establish working relationships and to gain confidence with the decision-making process than members with similar points of view. Also, the supportive climate which is necessary for controversy to be most constructive...may require an extended period of development (1991, p. 74).

They reference the work of Pelz that concluded that "if an atmosphere of trust and confidence can be generated a high level of intellectual conflict can be tolerated without damage to the communication channels" (1991, p. 74). This atmosphere of trust and confidence and attention to the relationships among people are some of the distinguishing factors of conflict when it is growth-promoting. Just confrontation without attention
to relationships and to the context surrounding the expression of differences
often will not promote learning or good conversation.

Yet, the question of why people are generally so uncomfortable with
conflict arises. Perhaps one reason is that many people were raised to
avoid conflict all together, at least until the problems loomed so large that
some eruption occurred. Thus, avoidance and violent eruptions, whether
verbal or physical, are often the two conflict management approaches most
familiar to people. Neither of these, however, promote "constructive
resolution" of conflict.

Another reason for the discomfort may be previous experience people
have had in conflictual situations where inequity was pervasive. The
impotence and vulnerability of those situations is accurately threatening.

Once again, Miller is a valuable source here -

..basic difficulty with conflict, which underlies the problems
encountered in handling any specific conflict, [is that it] bears a
strong resemblance to the way conflict is viewed and conducted by
any dominant group in an unequal situation...we can recognize that
the major models we have known for conducting conflict are those
derived from the dominant-subordinate mode under which we have
all grown up and lived. Experiencing conflict within that mode has
restricted our abilities to understand and deal with it (1986, p. 129-
130,133).
In fact, it can serve the interests of the dominant power structure not to engage in conflict because it is likely to bring the status quo into question (Miller, 1986, p. 9).

The perceptions a person has about power, therefore, will shape in many ways their engagement with conflict. The feminist literature is full of references to power to, power with, power for rather than power over. Nancy Hartsock uses words such as energy, capacity, and potential in reference to power (1983, p. 210). She elaborates on Hannah Arendt’s accounts of power as ability, potentiality, and empowerment. Moreover, Arendt’s concept of power was a collective one that only exists within the context of the group and proposes that power is “not just to act but to act in concert” (Hartsock, 1983, p. 218). Elise Boulding’s perspective is that “Power is taken here simply to mean the ability to achieve desires in the face of opposition or obstacles: the power to ‘get what one wants’” (1992, p. 30-31).

If conflict is approached within a framework of a feminist perspective on power, and if considerable attention is given to learning constructive ways to engage in conflict, it is possible to tap some of the growth potential of hearing and grappling with the differences inherent within the
conversation. "The best conflicts are those that lead to more and better connection rather than disconnection" (Miller, 1986, p. 140).

In summary, this part of the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter has explored ways that the context influences the perceptions and interpretations that people make of their conversations. It has also proposed a theoretical model of Good Conversation that includes conversation in a context of Ideal Speech, Ideal Listening, relationality, full voice, and growth-promoting conflict.

As conversation across the inevitable differences among people is a primary focus of this work, the exploration of the literature relevant to the process of engagement with differences follows.

**Engagement With Differences**

Building upon the previous section on conflict and the value of differences, this section focuses on the perception of differences as assets and opportunities as so well articulated by Jean Baker Miller,

Growth requires engagement with difference and with people embodying that difference. If differences were more openly acknowledged, we could allow for, and even encourage, an increasingly strong expression by each party of her or his experience...fear of difference springs from the dominant-
subordinate tradition in which difference means deficiency - and deficiency is the organizing principle. As subordinates we are told we are deficient - a falsity. Then the alleged deficiencies are used against us. Meanwhile, dominants uphold the pretense that they do not have deficiencies - another falsity. Everyone becomes terrified of difference because it means deficiency...Our ability to engage with that new thought and feeling is the source of our growth and the growth of the relationship between us (1986, p. 13, 137, 140).

Thus, perceiving of differences as a source of growth and learning, rather than as deficiencies and cause for fear and avoidance, is fundamental. The frame of reference for this section of the Literature Review emphasizes differences as a given, the engagement with differences as a source of personal and societal learning and development, and the opportunity for increased relationality through the naming of differences directly in Good Conversations.

The process of self-perception and the perception of others and the meanings which are attributed to those perceptions is complex and multidimensional. It involves an intricate interweaving of psychological, cognitive, and sociological dynamics.

The research on attribution and intergroup theory specifically relevant to the idea of receptivity to differences includes the importance of personal and social histories in attributions, social categorization and social identity,
stereotyping and prejudice, and in/group and out/group distinctions
(Alderfer, 1977; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Miller, 1986; Coser, 1956;
Sherif & Wilson, 1953; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, and Sherif, 1961;
Blake, Shepard, & Mouton, 1964; Allport, 1954). Where this research is
focused on the interaction between a person and a different other, it is
appropriate to briefly review some of it in this context.

Alderfer (1977) makes a distinction between the intergroup differences
that are induced by the organization and those that are rooted in the
personal and social histories that individuals bring to situations in which
they find themselves. My emphasis initially is on the historically rooted
perceptions, that contribute to the attributions of various groupings and
Alderfer says are the most potent in group conflicts.

Conflicts arising from age, sex, and ethnic group differences are
heavily influenced by history. The feelings, attitudes, beliefs,
perceptions, and behaviors that people bring to interactions
influenced by these variables, reflect the cumulative results of
unique personal experience, socialization and education, and the
collective history of the ethnic groups with which they identify
(Alderfer, 1977).

Specifically relevant to this study are the attributions that are associated
with gender, racial, and ethnic identities. A person's sense of self is
impossible to separate from gender, race, and ethnicity (Walters, Carter,
Papp, & Silverstein, 1988; Alderfer, 1977). These ways that people are
different from each other are usually quite visible and contribute to the attributions people make toward each other and thus influence their conversations.

Another valuable perspective is social categorization and social identity theory that relates to the in-group and out-group phenomenon where, the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups...is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group...the mere awareness of the presence of an out-group is sufficient to provoke intergroup competitive or discriminatory responses on the part of the in-group" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). One's social identity consists "of those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The classic research by the Sheriffs established that the dynamics of growing in-group cohesion can be associated with the increased perception of an external threat. The Sheriffs' field experiments in the late 40's and the early 50's in a boys camp (Robbers Cave) included three phases. They found that competition among groups enhanced in-group solidarity and the stereotypes of those in the out-group. Yet, when superordinate goals were introduced requiring the groups to work together, the conflict and hostility among groups decreased (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; Austin & Worchel, 1979; Alderfer, 1977). Thus, the introduction of superordinate goals into the conversation may influence the in/out-group
dynamics. However, it is important to remember that the research of the Sherifs and many other people after them has used all male samples and may not be generalizable to female or mixed groups.

One of the definitive works related to stereotyping and prejudice is Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice*. It also is specifically relevant to the in-group/out-group research. Allport defines ethnic prejudice as "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group" (Allport, 1954).

Where people perceive strong elements of stratification that prevent or inhibit movement from one group to another (certainly relevant to gender, racial, and many ethnic groups), there will be movement of "social behavior away from the pole of interpersonal patterns toward the pole of intergroup patterns." This effect is as likely to occur for the people associated with the upper as for the lower strata (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In other words, where people perceive of themselves as members of social strata that they cannot control, they are more likely to behave out of their group-defined image than to interact as individuals, contributing to the kind of prejudice or antipathy and "group as a whole" orientation described by Allport.
Allport also addresses specifically the process through which people can constitute an in-group. He suggests that while world-loyalty is difficult, it is not impossible, and that actually "The loyalties that clash are almost invariably those of identical scope" (Allport, 1954). For example, he suggests that loyalties can be illustrated as ever widening concentric circles, with the world-loyalties (loyalties to the world at large) in the outermost circle and the family loyalties in the innermost circle. Clashes are most likely to occur within one circle, such as within family, racial, or ethnic groups. In addition, he says,

Attitudes partial to the in-group, or to the reference group, do not necessarily require that attitudes toward other groups be antagonistic...Narrow circles can, without conflict, be supplemented by larger circles of loyalty (Allport, 1954).

Allport's concept of ever widening concentric circles and world-loyalty is analogous to the later research on the role of superordinate goals as bridges across in and out groups (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, Sherif, 1961; Blake, Shepard, & Mouton, 1964; Blake & Mouton, 1986; Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1988; Tjosvold, 1985). Thus, relevant to this research is how Good Conversation can serve as a bridge across in and out groups in the articulation of superordinate goals as well as within groups. Perhaps in this way Good Conversation can assist people in experiencing their
interdependence at ever wider levels and thus appreciating their relationality with other people who may have been perceived as different - in the out group - or those who are different within their own groups.

While much of the research cited thusfar points to the importance of the attributions or categorizations, there, of course, are also other factors that influence behavior. Milton Rokeach pursued a line of research that centered around the concept of belief and disbelief systems and how they relate to the acceptance or prejudice of others. According to Rokeach, each person has both a belief and a disbelief system that is revealed in everything a person says and does and is thus far more inclusive than a person’s ideology that he connotes as a “more or less institutionalized set of beliefs” (Rokeach, 1960, p. 35). Rokeach says:

The belief system is conceived to represent all the beliefs, sets, expectancies, or hypotheses, conscious and unconscious, that a person at a given time accepts as true of the world he lives in. The disbelief system is composed of a series of subsystems rather than merely a single one, and contains all the disbeliefs, sets, expectancies, conscious and unconscious, that, to one degree or another, a person at a given time rejects as false. Thus our conception of the disbelief system is that it is far more than the mere opposite of the belief system (1960, p. 33).

The specific pertinence of the idea of belief/disbelief systems on this work is that Rokeach and many of his colleagues have consistently found that the differences in belief systems have much more bearing on whether a
person discriminates against or is prejudiced against others than whether there are more visible differences such as race or ethnicity.

...that insofar as psychological processes are involved, belief is more important than ethnic or racial membership as a determinant of social discrimination. Our theory leads us to propose that what appears at first glance to be discriminations among men on the basis of race or ethnic group may turn out upon closer analysis to be discriminations on the basis of belief congruence over specific issues (1960, p. 135)...From an individual standpoint, prejudice is conceived to arise from a conditioned avoidance of belief systems incongruent with one's own, and not from a general conditioning to hate outgroups as a class, this being a secondary development that arises as prejudice becomes institutionalized (1960, p. 164).

Their findings after extensive research fully supported their theory and hypotheses that the congruence or incongruence of beliefs was far more of a determinate in the relationality that developed among people than categorizations such as race or ethnicity. They suggest that race or ethnic categorizations may function more as symbols that represent complexes of beliefs that people perceive as similar to or different from their own (1960, p. 391). Thus, one of the obstacles to moving outside of an in-group or innermost circles of people perceived to be similar may require learning about similar shared beliefs with those on the "outside." Once again, Good Conversation can play a valuable role in facilitating this process. Likewise, the conflicts experienced within in-groups or within the same circle, such as
within a family, may emerge out of the inevitable differences in beliefs discovered among people within families, ethnic groups, etc.

It is appropriate here to shift to another area of relevant research that was initially discussed in the previous section of this chapter - that of the proclivity to sense others as connected or separate from the self. A person's perception of others as connected, and thus interdependent, may be related to their capacity for relationality and receptivity to others. Conversely, a person's perception of others as being separate, and thus independent, may be related to their propensity to exclude others - to not developing relationality or to not being receptive to others. As introduced previously, the work of Carol Gilligan and her research team at Harvard is especially germane to the concept of connectedness and separation - or attachment and detachment.

According to this research, the concept of responsibility includes for many people the consideration of one's self in relation to others rather than responsibility in an abstract, detached sense. Thus,

the ability to put oneself in another's position...implies not only a capacity for abstraction and generalization but also a conception of moral knowledge that in the end always refers back to the self...If the process of coming to know others is imagined...it implies the possibility of learning from others in ways that transform the self (Gilligan, Ward, & Taylor, 1988).
Thus, as people perceive of themselves as connected to others and can "put oneself in another's position," they may be more aware of their interdependency and begin to be more receptive to learning from them or being influenced by them as they know that their well-being is inextricably tied to the well-being of others.

The concept of empathy, being able to share in another's emotions, thoughts, or feelings, needs further elaboration here. In an unpublished study by Novice, foreign students were asked who of their fellow students would most likely succeed in the U. S. foreign service in their home countries. The crucial factor cited by each student was the empathic ability - those "who had demonstrable ability to put themselves in other people's shoes; they had skill in sizing up other people; they were sensitive to the other's frame of mine" (Allport, 1954). When a person feels connected to humanity and interdependent with the rest of humanity, one vital element may be the capacity to see the world through the other's eyes, to put themselves in the other's shoes.

Another important theoretical relationship is the role that self-esteem plays in a person's receptivity to differences. To consider the relevance of self-esteem to this research, the literature is permeated with the importance of self-esteem apropos to group experience, subordinate and superior self-
perception and interaction, prejudice, interdependency, etc. (Weick, 1979; Alderfer, 1977; Gilligan, Ward, & Taylor, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Self-esteem may be a fundamental foundational element in being receptive to differences.

Allport elaborates upon the theme of status and self-esteem as integral to whether a person is prejudiced or not. His premise is that high status and high self-esteem allow a person to put their fear and anxiety - basic apprehensions - into proper perspective thus not needing to enhance one's own status by being superior to an out-group. He cites and agrees with other research that identifies this lack of self-esteem and status as the "primary root" of prejudice (Allport, 1954).

Some important findings growing out of the ovuminal (Comerford, 1994) research during the 1940's on prejudice, found that:

persons who are high in ethnic prejudice and or authoritarianism, as compared with persons who are low, are more rigid in their problem-solving behavior, more concrete in their thinking, and more narrow in their grasp of a particular subject; they also have a greater tendency to premature closure in their perceptual processes and to distortions in memory, and greater tendency to be intolerant of ambiguity (Rokeach, 1960, p. 16, from Adorno et al., 1950).

There also seems to be a relationship between children who are punished excessively and the later characteristics which are associated with people who are high in ethnic prejudice (Rokeach, 1960, p. 16-17).
Other germane research is that of Donald Fiske and Salvatore Maddi focusing on how the variation in a person's experiences can serve in their development, their interaction with their environment, and in their affective experience (Fiske and Maddi, 1961, p. v). When they use the term "varied experience", they are referring to both internal and external changes and use the term interchangeably with "variation in stimulation" and define these as,

...the concept of variation in stimulation refers to the extent to which stimulation at a particular moment differs from that which preceded it, or to the average degree of such moment-to-moment changes (1961, p. 12).

How a person responds to or initiates changes or variation in their experience seems directly relevant to their openness to differences and willingness to interact with or seek out the unfamiliar. Maddi's work suggests that some degree of variation is positive when he says,

Although the evidence is far from conclusive, it seems reasonable to suggest that moderately novel situations are associated with approach behavior but that extremely novel and minimally novel situations are associated with avoidance behavior (1961, p. 381).

Thus, under normal circumstances some moderate level of variation or unexpected occurrences seem to be positive for people and contribute to their learning, competence, and adaptability, and that people actually seek them out. On the other hand, either too much protection from varied experience or an excess of unexpectedness can have quite the opposite
effect. Maddi describes three quite different orientations that people bring into adulthood from their early childhood exposure. The first is the child who was exposed to a moderate degree of variation and unexpected occurrences, and the child sees the interrelatedness of the events in their lives. This orientation leads to what is generally regarded as normal development in which the person learns to find the unexpected interesting and a source of learning. This individual "will be hardy enough to function effectively in a complex and changing world" (1961, p. 400).

A second orientation is one where the child is overprotected and sheltered from the unexpected to such an extent that it is avoided outright. The result often is that when the unexpected does occur, it is extreme and too much for the child to accommodate. The child then expects few if any surprises and "will quickly come to regard the possibility of the unexpected as threatening and unpleasant" (1961, p. 400).

The third orientation avoids a wide range of situations because they are seen as monotonous and boring. These children are actually neglected and because their cognitive functioning is undervalued will not be stimulated to a very high degree to develop subtleties of thought requiring a fair amount of discrimination...expectancies will tend to be so overgeneral...the ordinary course of events...will be experienced as more or less expected and monotonous...This
formulation may be relevant to the development of juvenile delinquency (1961, p. 400-401).

This first orientation seems to prepare the person to greet the normal unexpectancies of life with positive affect because of their past experiences, and the preference for some novelty seems to be related to the development of competence, especially when the person actually seeks out a wide range of experiences. The inability of most people to handle extreme novelty seems consistent with the need for some psychological safety from which to learn (Maslow, 1962). It may also be related to the pace that people can take in the new and unexpected.

This work is congruent with the work Adorno, et al. in the 1940's and of Rokeach who found that feeling threatened leads to dogmatic responses and closed belief systems in both individuals and in institutions. Because people have a need to know, a need for a cognitive framework, and a need to protect themselves from what seems threatening, they will be more open to the novel and different when they do not feel threatened (1960, p. 67-68). Rokeach says,

The many findings we have reported in this volume regarding differences between persons who are open and closed in their belief systems can be accounted for by assuming that an enduring state of threat in the personality is one condition giving rise to closed belief systems. With [one] exception...the correlations between closed belief systems and anxiety are always positive and from the
standpoint of factor analysis, factorially the same. This position is bolstered by some additional data...which suggest at least partly that threat and its effects on the closing up of belief systems has its origin in childhood experience (1960, p. 403).

So how do people learn to accommodate these new and varied experiences and novel unexpectancies? How do people develop open belief systems which can adapt to their changing environment and to new experiences? Rokeach proposes that for people with open belief systems their peripheral beliefs are both related to each other and to external authorities, while those with closed belief systems have beliefs that are not interrelated to each other but are dependent primarily upon external authoritative endorsement. Thus, because a change in one belief cannot affect other beliefs without the approval of an outside authority, the closed system person has less capacity to learn spontaneously, to synthesize a complex situation in the moment, or to integrate new experiences. Thus, these new and varied experiences may seem overwhelming and threatening to the closed system person because

..without authority to guide them, they may take note of the single change that has taken place but they will not know how to cope with it or how to integrate it with the rest of their system (Rokeach, 1960, p. 229-230).

A profile emerges of the person who scores high on the Dogma Scale and is described by Rokeach as a closed system person, is one who is able
to analyze specific beliefs but is less able to synthesize beliefs in the
creation of new belief systems. A profile emerges, on the other hand, of
the person who has a more open belief system, who is better able to
integrate and synthesize varied experiences, and who has the potential to be
more receptive to differences.

Largely because of his research that indicates that belief congruence is
far more important than racial and ethnic categorizations in the accepting of
different people and ideas, Rokeach takes an optimistic view of social
change. He does not see the necessity for deep psychological changes in
personality for people to learn to interact differently with each other (1960,
p. 163-164). He suggests that there are many things that can be done to
courage people to develop more open systems and to facilitate the
synthesis of more complex data. He outlines five variables which:

    aid and hinder the formation of new systems. One variable that
    seems to account for the differences in the formation of new
    systems between open and closed persons is the ability to
    remember, or to keep in mind all the new parts to be integrated.
    When memory is by-passed by seeing to it that the parts are all in
    the visual field...synthesis is facilitated. A second variable is the
    extent to which one is willing to 'play along,' or to entertain new
    systems...relatively open systems have been shown to be better off
    in this respect...A third variable is past experience, which defines
    whether a particular system is, psychologically speaking, new or
    not new...The less new a system, the more will synthesis be
    facilitated...A fourth variable is whether the beliefs of a new system
    (political, religious, scientific, etc.) are exposed, imposed, taught, or
promulgated all at once or gradually. In those with relatively closed systems, problem-solving is clearly facilitated when the parts of the new system are presented all at once 'on a silver platter.'...A fifth variable that has been shown to facilitate or hinder the formation of new systems is the degree of isolation of beliefs within the system. The greater the isolation within a system, the less the positive transfer from one system to a similar one, and the more difficult it is to discover inherent contradictions within the system...isolation within a belief system may be thought of as...the inability to defect from an inherently contradictory system (1960, 286-288).

It follows then that the way information is presented, the variety of past experiences a person has, and the degree of a person's cognitive complexity are all important variables here. According to Maddi, there seems to be variability in the complexity of stimulation among humans.

It may be that the persons who characteristically choose high degrees of stimulus complexity also have high characteristic curves of activation, and hence are most frequently seeking increased variation. The converse would be the case for individuals showing preference for low levels of complexity (Maddi, 1961, p. 444).

While this form of complexity may or may not be cognitive, there may be associations between various forms of complexity that a person seeks and accommodates. Undoubtedly though, considerable cognitive complexity is required for the kind of integration and synthesis Rokeach describes for the various beliefs within one's belief system to not be isolated from each other.
Consequently, the research regarding cognitive complexity and a tolerance for ambiguity is pertinent to this work. Education has been shown to contribute in some situations to increased tolerance. In a study by Bobo and Licari, they extended the effect of more years of education to also consider cognitive sophistication and demonstrated that both contribute to an increased willingness to extend civil liberties to nonconformist groups. While this is not exactly comparable, it does give some support for the hypothesis that increased cognitive complexity and tolerance for ambiguity might be associated with increased receptivity to differences, at least philosophically. Specifically, Bobo and Licari found that cognitive sophistication accounts for a substantial fraction of the effect of education on tolerance...confirmation of previous claims about the presence and sources (i.e., cognitive sophistication) of education effects on willingness to support the rights of disliked groups (Bobo and Licari, 1989).

Care must be taken, however, not to generalize that support for the rights of abstract groups would necessarily translate into receptivity to individuals. Also, their operationalization of cognitive sophistication was limited to vocabulary.

The concepts of tolerance for ambiguity and cognitive complexity are elaborated extensively by Robert Quinn who suggests expanding the "either/or" perspective to a "both/and" approach. He suggests the process
of interpenetration which "requires a complex view of polar categories, of how the categories become one, and how new qualities emerge that reflect both of the original categories" (Quinn, Spreitzer, and Hart, 1990). The idea of being able to relax the bipolarity and perceive of others in nondualistic terms offers enormous potential for being receptive to the diverse other. Years ago, the early seeds for these ideas were present in Allport’s book when he said, "tolerant thinking about ethnic groups is, no less than prejudiced thinking, a reflection of a total style of cognitive operation" (Allport, 1954).

The value of being able to contend with paradox is illustrated in Quinn's description of the difference between the novice and the master manager. He says,

Hidden beneath this surface manifestation of master, however, is a capacity to continuously hold, test, and experiment with opposing conceptualizations of reality. The novice, limited by the mechanistic assumptions that are implanted by technical instruction, has little understanding of such a notion (Quinn, 1988).

Related to these ideas are Gillian Stamp's work on managerial capability which suggests that there are differences in cognitive complexity in the processing of information and tolerance for ambiguity among the five levels of capability that he describes. It may not be until a person has reached at least Level 4, that he calls Search for Rule Structure where
substantial uncertainty can be handled, that adequate cognitive complexity exists for managers to be comfortable with the ambiguity and unpredictability that exists in interactions with highly diverse others (Stamp, 1981).

Within the developmental learning perspective of the human growth process delineated by David Kolb, there are three broad developmental stages. The first is the acquisition stage when the self is undifferentiated followed by the specialization stage where a person interacts with the world from one primary learning style. As a person moves toward the third stage of integration, which Wolfe and Kolb call “self as process - transacting with the world,” an integration of the four adaptive modes of learning is required.

Through these three stages, development is marked by increasing complexity and relativism in dealing with the world and one’s experiences, and by higher-level integrations of the dialectic conflicts between the four primary genotypic adaptive modes - concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation... Development in the concrete experience adaptive mode is characterized by increases in affective complexity. Development in the reflective observation mode is characterized by increases in perceptual complexity. Development in the abstract conceptualization and active experimentation modes are characterized by increases in symbolic complexity and behavioral complexity, respectively. (Wolfe and Kolb, 1991)
According to them, as a person becomes more integrated at the third stage of development, their access to the various modes of complexity are increased. Perhaps increases in perceptual complexity allow for a person to better discern the interrelatedness of the parts of their belief system and thus adapt to their changing environment and to new learning. As the potential for affective complexity enlarges, their sense of being threatened may decrease, and their breadth of past experiences may expand leaving them more open to novelty and new opportunities for learning. Also, perhaps more affective complexity is related to their sense of connectedness and interdependence as well as their empathy and receptivity to differences. As their symbolic and behavioral complexity grows, perhaps their competence in understanding and in articulation can contribute to their participation in Good Conversation.

Summary

The model of conversation suggested here brings to mind the definition of a Learning Conversation given by Sheila Harri-Augstein and Laurie Thomas:

Learning conversations enable individuals to experience the processes whereby meaning is created, and hence learn how to learn by systematically reflecting upon, and thus expanding, the
terms in which they perceive, think, feel and act. (Harri-Augstein & Thomas, 1991)

Implicit in the idea of Good Conversation are the concepts of creating meaning, learning, and the expansion of the possibilities for perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting. Also implicit in conversation are the interpersonal connections that are made and sustained through conversation and give such joy and pleasure, as well as pain, to people's lives. This whole phenomena of relationship is like an all encompassing embrace that seems to hold the actual conversations of the participants and will come alive in their words in the chapters on Space and Voice (Chapters 5 and 6).

Partially because of the likelihood that some considerable degree of cognitive complexity and verbal skill may be helpful for many kinds of Good Conversation, this study focuses, as described in the Introduction, on working with people with these capabilities. The focus of this work is on gaining insight into the contextual considerations that would make Good Conversation more likely. Whether the conversation was perceived as good would also be up to the people engaging in the conversations. Yet, it is still somewhat of an ideal toward which people can strive, with a full awareness that it will not be easy to accomplish. Therefore, the expectation was that this initial work will be more profitable by concentrating on more
"expert" people from whom to learn with subsequent research expanding to others. In the Methodology Chapter that follows, the approach of this work is outlined.
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology used to explore how differences can be bridged to become a source of learning and the methodology used to ground a model of Good Conversation is outlined in this chapter. The model, as described in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter, is grounded in this research in the concrete experience of two ongoing groups while engaged in their respective learning environments. The two complementary studies are referred to here as Study 1 and Study 2. The methodology for Study 1 is derived from Naturalistic Inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and includes an in-depth, co-inquiry approach (Wolfe, 1980) with first year doctoral students in Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University. The methodology for Study 2 is based upon constructivism and is a complementary, but somewhat less intensive approach, working with participants in one class of Professional Fellows also at Case Western Reserve University.

Because I plan to continue to work with adults, as co-learners in a variety of learning environments where I believe conversation is integral to learning, my aims for the studies are:
1. To develop a grounded model of Good Conversation among people exposed to learning environments where conversation is valued;

2. Within conversation, to explore the perceptions of differences and the implications of those differences in learning and developing meaning, understandings, and feelings of intentions;

3. Within conversation, to explore the ongoing perceptions of mutual intersubjectivity as they contribute to understanding more deeply others' meanings and to identifying areas of divergence;

4. Within conversation, to explore how perceptions are negotiated and renegotiated;

5. Within conversation, to explore the perceptions of feelings of relationality between and among the members of conversation groups;

6. To explore the implications of the research for creating contexts that can facilitate Good Conversation.

In view of my study aims, I used a methodology based on Constructivism. For Study 1, I derived a method based on Naturalistic Inquiry because it provided guidance for focusing attention on naturally
occurring conversations. One of the tenets of Naturalistic Inquiry is that findings of a study are specific to that study context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). However, the distinction that Lincoln and Guba make between transferability and generalizability does not seem like a relevant distinction since both approaches imply the extension of the findings of the research into additional contexts. Additionally, Naturalistic Inquiry requires "prolonged engagement" and "persistent observation" thus leading to an in-depth study overtime in one context. Therefore, Study 1 rests in a sustained conversational context, a semester-long doctoral seminar on Adult Learning and Development, and on interviews with these participants over a nine month period initiated at the beginning of the seminar and extending five months after the seminar ended.

As this research was initiated collaboratively, the methodology, interview protocols, and literature review were all developed in full cooperation by Patricia Jensen and me. All interviews were completed by the two of us together, and much of the early data analysis was similarly done collaboratively. Our ongoing conversations throughout this research have supported the work.

An ultimate goal of mine was to generate a model of Good Conversation beginning with people exposed to conversational learning
environments. From a Naturalistic Inquiry perspective, questions related to the transferability of the findings from this one study to other similar contexts rests with the individuals in each context. To strengthen the model's potential to be transferred or generalized to other similar contexts and to further enrich and ground a model of Good Conversation, the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 were integrated with each other as well as with the conversational model as described in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter. The emphasis here, however, was not to create a static model of a method to be applied but to generate a dynamic, interactive model as a guide for the creation of a conversational context to enhance Good Conversation. The intention here was to learn about conditions that can be encouraged or facilitated to increase the likelihood of Good Conversation emerging where differences can be bridged and become a source of learning.

Fit of Naturalistic Inquiry and a Constructivism Paradigm to Study 1 Focus

To determine the appropriateness of using Naturalistic Inquiry as a study methodology, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that investigators address five specific questions. The questions generated the following
considerations, each highlighting the appropriateness of this methodology for Study 1.

1. Is the phenomenon represented by a multiplicity of complex constructions? Each participant in the conversations brought their own perceptions, experiences, knowledge, and understandings of social realities resulting in the creation of a multiplicity of complex constructions.

2. What is the degree of investigator-phenomenon interaction and what degree of indeterminacy will that interaction introduce into the investigation? Patricia Jensen and I undertook a co-inquirer (Wolfe, 1980) approach with the participants to study the phenomenon of conversation. We attended and participated as co-learners in the full semester of ORBH 570 seminar conversations and interviewed together each person three times over nine months, thus resulting in a high investigators-phenomenon interaction.

3. What is the degree of context dependence? We anticipated and found that conversations are at least partially context-specific. In this sustained conversational setting, the discursive and recursive nature of each conversation reflected its context.
4. Is it reasonable to ascribe conventional causal connections to the
phenomenal elements observed? In view of the multiple
perspectives participants brought into the conversations, the
complex theoretical content, and the inherent “real-time” dynamics,
single or simple causal explanations are inappropriate and not
given.

5. To what extent are values likely to be crucial to the outcome?
The values of all participants including the co-inquirers, the values
implicit in the context, and the values reflected in the literature
upon which this inquiry is based contributed to shaping the
conversations and to the interpretation of the results.

Therefore, using a methodology based upon Naturalistic Inquiry seems to
be appropriate for Study 1.

Fit of Naturalistic Inquiry and a Constructivism Paradigm to the
Substantive Theory Selected to Guide Study 1

Conversation is central to Constructivism. As earlier stated, the goal
for this inquiry is to develop a dynamic, interactive model of Good
Conversation relevant to people exposed to learning environments where
conversation is valued. In the review of the literature, I have drawn upon
the work of scholars and researchers in diverse areas to develop a model of Good Conversation. Through this research I wanted to explore, within a naturalistic setting, how individuals construct and interpret their reality through conversation in order to further refine and ground a model.

Paradigms can be characterized by the way in which they define ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Constructivism takes a relativist ontological position that:

realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

A number of writers working in diverse disciplines (c.f., Gadamer, 1989; Rorty, 1989; Bruner, 1990) support a relativist ontology in which knowledge is viewed as a shared interpretation rather than an absolute reality.

Constructivism takes a subjectivist epistemological perspective that:

inquirer and inquired into are fused into a single (monistic) entity. Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

Constructivism takes a hermeneutic, dialectic approach to methodology where:
individual constructions are elicited and refined hermeneutically, and compared and contrasted dialectically, with the aim of generating one (or a few) constructions on which there is substantial consensus (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

Consistent with Lincoln and Guba, I am not debating whether individuals actually exist or whether conversations actually occur. Yet, as Lincoln and Guba say, "the meanings and wholeness derived from or ascribed to these tangible phenomena in order to make sense of them, organize them, or reorganize a belief system, however, are constructed realities" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I perceive of conversations as dynamic and emergent interactions among individuals who hold multiple mental constructions. Thus, using the naturalistic paradigm which is based on assumptions of multiple realities constructed by each participant in the conversation is appropriate.

Study 1 Method

We derived a methodology based upon Naturalistic Inquiry to explore conversation in a learning environment, in terms of perceptions of valuing differences, fostering mutual intersubjectivity and relationality, and influencing feelings of intentionality. This study used an interview approach to elicit the perceptions of participants regarding their evolving
conversations together over two consecutive semesters, thematic analysis of
interview data to interpret meanings, and feedback of themes after Round 2
to participants for further clarification and refinement. Finally, the
inductively analyzed data were integrated with the findings of Study 2 and
the scholarly literature on dialogue and conversation to create a grounded
model of Good Conversation relevant to people exposed to learning
environments where conversation is valued (See Table 1).

Participants for Study 1

In light of the study aims as listed above, we wanted to sample a group
whose members have the following characteristics:

* a commitment to learning,
* shared purposes for conversation,
* prior experience in groups and facility in interpersonal
  interactions,
* well-developed verbal skills, and
* a willingness to participate in the research.

Additionally, the intention was to work with a group meeting together
overtime in a natural setting.
All applicants to the doctoral program in Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University are screened through multiple means for their intellectual and interpersonal capabilities, emotional maturity, and commitment to learning. Thus, students who are selected to enter this program generally exhibit refined conversational capabilities and therefore offer the potential for learning and extending the results from an “expert” system.

All of the 16 participants in ORBH 570, the Adult Learning and Development Seminar, in the fall of 1993 were invited and agreed to participate as co-inquirers and all continued their participation throughout the life of the Study. This Adult Learning and Development Seminar was selected because the content focuses broadly on a range of theory and practice related to learning, and it was conducted as a conversation among co-learners. First-year doctoral students in this Ph.D. program take ORBH 570 in their initial semester. The entering class in fall, 1993, was composed of 13 students, with 6 women and 7 men ranging in age from 24 to 49. They have diverse ethnic/racial representation including four African-Americans, one Brazilian citizen of Japanese parents, one Dutch citizen, and one Filipino citizen - thus, meaning that 7 of the 13 are not Caucasian Americans. They also brought a range of work experience in
industrial, business, educational, religious, and health care organizations. In addition to the first-year students, course participants included one female MBA student from India, one female Management of Informational Systems doctoral student who is a German citizen and who was educated and had lived extensively in South Africa, one Korean male doctoral student in Organizational Behavior, the white male course faculty member, and the two white female doctoral candidates who designed and implemented this study.

Instrumentation for Study 1

The primary means of gathering data were audiotaped interviews, audiotaped seminar sessions, and participation in the seminar. The purposes of the pilot interview, referred to throughout as Round 1 of the interviews, were to elicit the individual's perceptions of and reflections from any previous conversations that stood out for them as well as to refine the interview protocol. After the pilot or Round 1 interviews, Round 2 of the interviews elicited the individual's perceptions of and reflections on conversations that had occurred during the ORBH 570 seminar sessions. Round 3 of the interviews asked the participants to focus on conversations that stood out for them that they had had with at least two other people.
They were asked to recall conversations where there had been strong differences and to focus on something they were recently engaged in learning. The Interview protocols are in Appendices A, B, and C in the order that they were completed.

Procedures for Study 1

Patricia Jensen and I attended the seminar sessions of ORBH 570, fully participated in the conversations as co-inquirers, recorded the sessions after about the fourth one, and convened the feedback session with the participants after Round 2 of the interviews. Interviews for Round 1 were completed between September 13-21, 1993; for Round 2 between October 25-December 13, 1993; and for Round 3 between April 6-May 9, 1994. Interviews ranged from approximately forty minutes to almost 2 hours. The feedback session was held for the 16 participants on March 23, 1994, with 15 of them attending for at least part of the session. Prior to the session, each of them were given a transcript of their Round 2 interview and two overviews of perceptions prepared by Patricia Jensen and me. At the session, they were asked for general as well as specific responses and invited to respond either in that context or later. Two of the people sought us out for further discussion.
Study 2 Method

To further ground our understanding of conversation in learning environments, Study 2 was designed to complement the findings of Study 1. In this section, the Participants, the Instrumentation, and the Procedures used in Study 2 are described. While this study is also generally consistent with Naturalistic Inquiry assumptions, it does not depend upon the hermeneutic cycle or upon "prolonged engagement" and "persistent observation" as Study 1 did.

Similar to Study 1, this study uses an interview approach, here to elicit the perspectives of the Professional Fellow Program participants during the 1993-94 academic year. In the interviews, they were asked to focus on their evolving conversations together in this one-year program, and a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was completed. Then, this inductively analyzed data was integrated with the findings of Study 1 and the scholarly literature to ground a model of Good Conversation relevant to people exposed to learning environments where conversation is valued (See Table 1).
Participants for Study 2

- Convenience sampling was used to select a group of people with similar characteristics to those selected for Study 1. However, the participants in this study are uniformly advanced professionals who have committed to a one-year professional development, non-degree program rather than to extended doctoral study. The Study 2 participants have the following characteristics:

  * a commitment to learning,
  * shared purposes for conversation,
  * prior significant professional experience,
  * well-developed verbal skills, and
  * willingness to participate in the research.

Again as in Study 1, the intention was to work with a group formed and meeting together overtime in a natural setting. Since prior experience in groups and facility in interpersonal interactions is not as explicitly emphasized as admission criteria to this program as for the doctoral program, we considered this a "pragmatic" group, individuals who have organizational administrative responsibility, rather than an "expert" group.

After Patricia Jensen and I met and worked with all of the 1993-94 Professional Fellows Program at two of their retreats and did their Critical
Incident Interviews, they were invited to participate as co-inquirers in this study, and 7 of them agreed to be interviewed. The 1993-94 group was composed of 16 Fellows, with 4 women and 12 men. The 7 individuals who were interviewed were 2 women and 5 men, ranging in ages from 37 to 61, and all were Caucasians. Participants have professional education and experience in medicine, law, engineering, and business. All but 1 of the participants held significant administrative or professional positions at the time of the interviews.

Instrumentation for Study 2

The data on their perceptions was gathered through the audiotaped interviews. The interview was designed to elicit their perceptions of and reflections on conversations which occurred among the Fellows and was very similar to the Round 2 protocol used for Study 1. The interview protocol is in Appendix D.

Procedures for Study 2

Interviews were conducted between April 6-May 6, 1994, and ranged from approximately thirty-five minutes to 1 1/2 hours. Because there was not the sustained ongoing interaction with the Fellows of successive rounds
of interviews, they were not included in the hermeneutic process of feedback and revision.
TABLE 1
Study Protocol

Study 1
Pilot Interview - Round 1
(general conversations)

  Preliminary Theming

  Protocol ---> Interview 1 - Round 2
Revision  (conversations from seminar in
          ORBH 570-Adult Learning and Development)

  Thematic Analysis

  Feedback ---> Refine
  to group  Themes ---> Interview 2 - Round 3
  (conversations of differences)

  Thematic Analysis

  ---> Refine
  Themes

Study 2
Interview 1 - Round 4 ---> Thematic Analysis ---> Refine
(conversations with Professional Fellows)

After Completion of Study 1 and Study 2
Integrate Refined Themes, the Model of Good Conversation, and other aspects of conversation as outlined in the Literature Review to develop
> New, Grounded Model of Good Conversation.
Introduction

As I began this journey into making meaning and learning from the wealth of rich stories we were told in our "conversations" with the participants, I was reminded again of the well-spring of Jerome Bruner's writing. It is clear that my approach to this work is not that of a psychologist or a philosopher who would in this context be primarily focused on finding the truth and expecting to find it from the "speaker" or the source of the active, assertive voice. Instead, my focus is to draw meaning and legitimacy, primarily from the multiple perceptions of the "listeners", who also have the voice to speak.

Bruner makes a distinction between the logico-scientific mode or the paradigmatic mode and what he calls paradigmatic "imagination." He describes paradigmatic imagination by saying,

...paradigmatic 'imagination' (or intuition) is not the same as the imagination of the novelist or poet. Rather, it is the ability to see possible formal connections before one is able to prove them in any formal way...Perhaps Richard Rorty is right in characterizing the mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy (which, on the whole, he rejects) as preoccupied with the epistemological question of how to know truth - which he contrasts with the broader question of how we come to endow experience with meaning. (Bruner, 1986, p.13,12)
As I approached the stories about conversations which stood out for the participants and the relevant literature, I was aware that I was trying to "read a text for its meaning" (Bruner, 1986, p. 10). I was trying to endow the experiences with meaning to make the kinds of formal connections that may not be provable, that Bruner is describing.

I was also aware of

...in fact asking not only a morphological question about the actual text, but also a question about the interpretive processes that are loosed by the text in the reader's mind. (Bruner, 1986, p. 7)

Thus, the naturalistic, co-inquirer methodology seemed especially appropriate. Yet, a rigorous process of working with the stories was required if I was to fully hear the stories of the participants rather than simply to impose my story upon theirs. Hence, the process I used needs a full explanation. For me, the process fell roughly into two general time frames - prior to receiving the Round 3 transcripts and after receiving the Round 3 transcripts. Therefore, I have divided them accordingly below.

**Initial Process of Inquiry**

Throughout the data analysis process, my emphasis was on staying grounded in the actual words of the participants. Thus, an inductive
approach was followed always being drawn back to the perceptions of the listeners who were telling us stories about their conversations and the meaning they were making.

During each interview, Patricia Jensen and I took careful notes as well as audiotaping each interview. After the first round, we read through the notes and discussed them at length prior to revising the interview protocol and beginning the second round. After Round 2, we made the decision to have the tapes transcribed because we felt that there were too many words, nuances, and valuable data being lost without written transcriptions.

When the transcriptions from Round 2 were ready, we began reading them together and making corrections to improve the accuracy of the transcripts as necessary (often needing to listen again to the audiotapes). Initially, we read and discussed the transcripts to get an overall impression. Then, we went back and pulled out some initial questions that we wanted to explore, such as which conversations (from the seminar) the participants considered good or not good, which seminar sessions had been chosen by each participant, what contributed to or inhibited good conversation, and what stood out for people.

From this preliminary thematic analysis, there were some primary themes clearly beginning to emerge where people talked a lot about:
* Differences and Similarities

* Experiences of Learning

* Ideas about Conversation

* Relationality

Once again, we carefully read through each transcript and underlined each of these themes using different colored pens for each theme, enabling us to then look back over the transcripts and quickly see the frequency of the themes and where the themes began to overlap. One thing that was then readily apparent was how often the three primary themes coincided, giving me a fundamental focal point for my learning from the data early on:

* The expression and exploration of differences through conversation often are associated with learning.

For me, this focal point then guided much of my future work of making meaning from the data. I then returned to the transcripts yet another time to identify specifically when these three phenomena of differences, conversation, and learning occurred together. In fact, of the 16 people interviewed in Round 2, all but one showed some indication of this overlapping process occurring for them in Round 2 (stories where they
were recalling conversations from within the ORBH 570 seminar sessions).

There were, of course, many other themes also beginning to emerge such as

* relationality,
* conflict,
* silence,
* intentions,
* self-esteem,
* internal dialogues,
* inside-out learning,
* awarenesses of complexity,
* cognitive/affective distinctions or overlays,
* listening,
* reflection,
* pre- and post-cursers to conversations,
* confrontation,
* content themes,
* group size,
* barn-raising,
* having or not having voice, and
* metaphors.
Many of these are apparent in the final themes of focus in the next two chapters while some have not been explored because they were less frequently or less fervently discussed.

In preparation for our interactive feedback session with the participants from Study 1, Patricia Jensen and I each prepared a one to two page overview of Observations for every participant from the Round 2 interviews. To prepare these observations, I reread a fresh copy of each Round 2 transcript again, and this time I read and highlighted with different colors for words of action, the event, or their interpretation. Using this information and the information and notes from my previous readings, I prepared my observations. We gave each participant observations from Patricia and observations from me as well as a copy of their transcript to read prior to the feedback meeting on March 23, 1994.

Generally, the response in that meeting was that people felt the observations accurately reflected their experience of both the story they had told about a conversation and of their interviews with us. There were a few brief follow-up conversations clarifying words or ideas. There were a number of questions about why we had not given them copies of the Round 1 transcripts, and most people said the Round 1 conversations had been personally more meaningful to them than those from Round 2 (limited to
seminar discussions). As a result, we had the Round 1 interviews transcribed. Overall, the feedback was generally affirming of our initial ideas about their perceptions while not very substantial in terms of specific feedback.

Using the ideas, information, and discussions growing out of the data analysis and feedback session, the Interview Protocol for Round 3 was developed and was changed radically from the first two rounds. Its focus was primarily two-fold:

* to ask about a conversation they had had with two or more people that had involved “differences that mattered” to them and

* to talk about a recent learning they had been having.

These two reflect the increasing importance of differences and of learning to both us and to the participants. In addition, they were asked a few general questions about conversation designed to explore further some specific themes that were emerging from the previous interviews - themes that we wanted to know more about (note general questions in Appendix C).

Round 4 of the interviews was with the Professional Fellows. We decided to use a very similar protocol to Round 2 drawing upon their interactions with each other, though not limited to the seminar sessions
themselves, largely to see if there was any significant difference between the two groups of participants. We found that while there were differences in things such as more examples of concrete work experiences (not surprising since they were almost all currently working full-time), there were not substantial differences in their observations about the strong emerging themes.

Second Phase of Inquiry

In our preparation of the Interview Protocol for Round 3, I realized the intensity of my interest in specifically pursuing the notion of conversations where there are differences that really matter to people as a way of delving into what was becoming more and more a strong emerging theme of the stories we were being told. For me the theme, while too soon to articulate then, involved the role of differences in conversation as a source of learning, new awarenesses, or new understandings, sometimes leading to new behavior. Therefore, when the transcripts began to come back to us, although we had made a decision to make corrections to them prior to any analysis, I found it difficult to wait to begin in-depth theming of the Round 3 data because I was getting so excited about what I was reading. However, I corrected my half, and we shared the revised transcripts.
Because this theme of how differences got played out in conversations was more my passion than anyone else's, I began to work on the data analysis alone for the first time. Initially, I read all of the revised Round 3 transcripts, taking notes, and thinking a lot as I went. I began early on to take notes onto separate pages for what looked like possible themes thus organizing the participants' comments by preliminary themes. I referenced quotes and who made them under each of these themes, noting page numbers of the transcripts so that I could quickly find them again. I also began using the system of following page numbers by a comma and the number indicating the round of interviews. In other words, a quote from a participant in Round 4 on page 14 would be followed by their initials, the page number, and 4 - for example, (DG, p. 14,4). This process became critical as I began to integrate the quotes from 4 different rounds of interviews.

As a result of reading the Round 3 transcripts, the pages of possible themes I was accumulating, and the previous work of theming Round 2, I developed a list of possible chapters for the dissertation with a different theme for each chapter. Those themes/chapters at that time were:
* Ideal Speech and Ideal Listening

* The Interplay of Energy and Silence

* Contexts Nurturing the Bridging of Differences

* Growth Promoting Conflict

* Relationality

* Learning

The unifying focus of the importance of exploring differences through conversation as a source of learning was becoming even more clear. In fact, while all of the interviews asked people to recall conversations that stood out for them, only one round specifically asked for conversations that involved differences and none of the interview data I have used in this analysis pulled specifically for learning (from the four rounds of interview data, the only part not analyzed and reported here is the part of Round 3 that specifically asked the participants to talk about a current learning experience). Yet, from the data that I analyzed:

* in approximately 98% of the 55 interviews, people talked about some kind of differences among the people in the conversations and
* at least 80% of the interviews included mention or discussion
  about some form of new learning, new understanding, or new awareness.

Thus, this unifying focus was clear to me and allowed me to proceed with
the thematic analysis.

I then reread each of the Round 3 transcripts again and placed quotes
relevant to each theme with page numbers on pages I had developed for
each theme/chapter. This process provided a further refinement of the
thematic analysis, resulting in dozens of pages of possible sources to
illustrate themes.

At that point, I spent considerable time working with the data and
themes from Rounds 2 and 3, leading to my realization that there were two
overarching themes that were clearly emerging. The two themes were:

* The necessity for a Receptive Space to hold the conversation for
differences to be bridged and

* The importance both of Voice and for Voice to include both the
active, speaking and the reflective, listening dimensions.

Deciding to focus initially on the theme of Receptive Space, I once
again reread all transcripts from Round 3 and made much more indepth
notes out of which emerged the subthemes under Receptive Space. Using
those notes and references, I began to write up that part of the results leading to even further refinement of the subthemes. Writing for me is in fact an important part of the process of coming to know, and the writing of the chapter on Receptive Space has strongly confirmed that experience for me. I then carefully reread all the interviews from Round 1, 2, and 4, making the same kinds of extensive notes by possible themes, adding pages as I went along for themes that I had not yet identified. The incorporation of quotes and learnings from these remaining three rounds of interviews were then integrated into the chapter on Receptive Space leading to further revisions of subthemes. At this point I shared the initial draft of this chapter with each of my four dissertation committee members, met with them, and got feedback.

My next priority was to begin writing the chapter on Voice drawing on the data from all four rounds of interviews. Using the initial drafts and the feedback from the dissertation committee members, I began writing the chapter on Voice and completed extensive revisions, separating and combining themes as I went. For example, at one point the subtheme which is now safety was originally two subthemes of safety and how to talk. After doing an indepth analysis of the flag words of each subtheme, it became apparent that I was talking about the same phenomenon rather two
different ones in this case. The reverse occurred when late in the analysis I realized that I had combined empathy with several other subthemes, and it needed to be separated out because it has a distinctive quality to it in many of the quotes. Overall, there was considerable frequency with which the themes were mentioned and considerable relatedness among the themes. Specifically, at least a quarter of the people in the research mentioned each of the subthemes, except for the one on change. In most cases, the themes and subthemes were mentioned by one third to a half of the participants. From the 23 participants in the study, at least 96% mentioned some concern regarding the subtheme of safety as being important in their conversations. Of the 55 conversations, at least 67% included talk about safety issues. Thus, the themes and subthemes emerged clearly from the data.

Summary

The process outlined above took place over approximately a year interspersed with collecting more data throughout the interview process and the writing that became a invaluable part of the analysis process for me. In the next two chapters, the two overarching themes emerging from the data are explored indepth - Creating a Receptive Space to Explore Differences and Bringing the Full Voice of Speaking and Listening into the Receptive
Space. While these two are integrally related, they also stand as distinct themes, each having multiple subthemes.
Introduction

Conversations are held or contained within a space. This space can be more or less receptive to the expression of the integrity, potential, and differences among the people in the conversation. The expression and exploration of these differences can become a vital source of learning and development, if allowed. As I listened to the voices of the participants in this study, I heard the need for a conversational space receptive to those differences.

The receptivity of the space that holds the conversation will have compelling implications for increasing the understanding among the conversants. To be receptive, both the fears, which are perceived from inside, and judgements, which get projected outside, need to be suspended at least briefly. The primary intents of this chapter are to learn how the receptivity to understanding can be increased among people through their conversations and to contribute to a grounded model of Good Conversation facilitating that growing understanding.
Under the overarching theme of Space, I have found five subthemes that are highly interrelated in the creating of this space. No one of these subthemes of making an effort, attending to feelings of safety, choosing to confront differences, moderating the energy, and talking from the head and the heart stands alone to create that space. For example, when people choose to confront their differences within a receptive space, they need to make an effort to attend to creating a safe enough space to be heard while they moderate the energy level in the conversation and attend to concerns of both the head and the heart. It is through varying degrees of attention to and thus valuing of these five phenomena simultaneously that a conversational space receptive to exploring and bridging these differences can be created to increase learning and understanding among people.

This chapter begins with discussions of the meaning of space and the meaning of differences in this context. Then I turn to the kinds of stories we were told through the interviews followed by a description of each of the five subthemes, extensive quotes from the interviews to illustrate each of the subthemes, and the relevant interpretations I have made. This chapter closes with a summary these interrelated subthemes. My descriptions of the subthemes and the interpretations I make are always
grounded in the actual words of the participants in the study, as can be seen through the quotations used throughout.

The Space Between

The "space between" people within a conversation, if receptive, allows for the holding of their relatedness, the holding of polarities and the dialectic, a deep choicefulness, and for the sacred to be present. Each of these possibilities will be explored briefly beginning with the phenomenon of relatedness.

Holding of Relatedness

In the world of quantum theory or the new science of physics, "the underlying currents are a movement toward holism, toward understanding the system as a system and giving primary value to the relationships" (Wheatley, 1994, p.9). In the words of Fritjof Capra,

The further we penetrate into the submicroscopic world, the more we shall realize how the modern physicist, like the Eastern mystic, has come to see the world as a system of inseparable, interacting and ever-moving components with the observer being an integral part of this system...As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated 'basic building blocks', but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole (Capra, 1991, pp. 25&68).
In fact, the importance of relationships is emphasized when Wheatley goes on to say, "In the quantum world, relationships are not just interesting; to many physicists, they are all there is to reality" (Wheatley, 1994, p. 32).

In a Space Between Us, the author emphasizes the relatedness of people as being the "only means of overcoming the space between us" (Josselson, 1992, p.4). Ruthellen Josselson says that "Interpersonal life... is an effort to connect... to overcome this psychological and physical space... The 'between' - the way the space is filled or reverberates - becomes all important" (Josselson, 1992, p. 5). She elaborates eight dimensions of the transcending of that space between, the first and most primary being that of holding. This kind of "holding environment" beginning with the mother/child relationship as fundamental to healthy human development has been given extensive attention since being proposed by Winnicott (Shapiro & Carr, 1991, p. 35; Winnicott, 1965).

The space "holding" a conversation is crucial and deserves the utmost consideration if it is to be a receptive one. The "holding environment" evolves from being primarily a physical experience for humans early in life to a primarily emotional one holding the relationships as people grow into adulthood, although the need for the physical holding and grounding never ends. But the concern in this context focuses on the relatedness and the
psychological holding environment that can make "possible the emergence of their own innate potential" (Josselson, 1992, p. 29).

This holding environment can become "places or people who contain or ground us while we exercise some aspect of our autonomy or skill" (Josselson, 1992, p. 34). This expression of the uniqueness of each person's potential, autonomy, and skill requires a space receptive to the highly varied differences that come with those expressions of uniqueness. This holding environment, when it is receptive, then can become like a container or boundary that "encloses and protects and makes safe what is inside" (Josselson, 1992, p. 30). If conversations are to enable the increased understanding across differences, the space between needs to be this kind of a holding environment and directly address the kinds of concerns that many people in the research raised regarding safety, acceptance, respect, pace, energy, and conflict.

The interpersonal dynamics of projection, transference, and defense mechanisms can also be assumed to be operating to varying degrees within this holding environment. However, a full exploration of these elements requires a psychological analysis that goes far beyond the scope of this work. The confidentiality of the interview process that involved months of relationship building, the preponderance of the comments that spoke to the
participants' internal perceptions more than attributions or rationalizations, and the phenomenon of the holding environment itself in the interviews at least somewhat mitigates the effect of these interpersonal dynamics. In fact, Shapiro and Carr seem to address this process when they say,

The containing and interpreting that occurs within the holding environment provides individuals with the opportunity to become aware of their projections and to reinternalize them. Through so doing they achieve a more complex sense of themselves, a more empathic view of others, and a strengthened ability to join with others in different roles in a shared task. In other words, they grow and develop. (Shapiro & Carr, 1991, p.39)

The interview process itself did seem to offer opportunities for just such growth and development.

Holding of Polarities

Another dimension of the phenomenon of holding is that of holding the polarities - the dialectic. So often there is a tendency to assume that one extreme of a polarity must be chosen rather than the holding of both ends of the polarity to enable a synthesis within the dialectic. Wheatley addresses this concern when she says that the need to decide which piece of information or which position was correct...point[es] our efforts dead into the ground - away from the conflicts that can move us toward the light, toward new, more complex understandings (Wheatley, 1994, p. 108).
It is through the exploration of these conflicts embedded in the polarity that "can move us toward the light" and an entirely "new, more complex" level of understanding can be reached - where a fusion of new horizons of meaning can be created. As described by Gadamer and referred to in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter, ethical reflection can allow for a dialogue, not to find a universal truth but a "truth' as a result of a fusion of horizons of the participants viewpoints about the Sache" (Kelly, 1990, p. 141).

Charles Taylor addresses directly the role of conversation in helping to explore the new possibilities that each person could never be knowledgeable about unless they learn

to move in a broader horizon, within which what we have formerly taken for granted as the background to valuation can be situated as one possibility alongside the different background of the formerly unfamiliar culture. The 'fusions of horizons' operates through our developing new vocabularies of comparison...so that...[we reach a] basis of an understanding of what constitutes worth that we couldn't possibly have had at the beginning (Taylor, 1992, p. 67).

Thus, the receptive space for the conversation can be a holding environment for polarities to explore broader horizons with others to stretch the conversants to a new level of understanding, to a fusion of new horizons of meaning they would not have had before the conversation.
Insight into the way the mind polarizes information can be found in Edward de Bono's metaphor of the jelly mold illustrating the memory surface of the brain. He suggests that,

What happens to patterns put on to the memory-surface is largely determined by the traces left on the surface by previous patterns. The memory-surface is no more than a system which allows past information to interact with present information in a self-organizing, self-selecting and self-maximizing fashion (de Bono, 1969, p. 97).

He draws the analogy of this memory-surface of the brain to what happens to a smooth, flat dish of jelly that has drops of hot water spooned onto it. Each drop of water creates channels of impressions that get deeper and deeper making it more and more difficult to create new channels/impressions because the water flows in the depressions formed by previous drops - thus, in this way he suggests that "the past organizes the present" (de Bono, 1969, p. 97).

Because it is often not easy to create new impressions, there is a tendency to hear people and ideas in conversation in such a way that the information is taken in largely based on past experience, thus inhibiting new learning. De Bono says that,

Polarizing occurs when the presented picture, instead of being broken down into its natural attention areas, is broken down into already established units...The danger is not just that the ready-made units may not be the most appropriate for the situation, but
also that these units themselves lead off to other patterns which only serve to make the artificial split even wider...the original picture might come to be regarded as...two separate parts rather than as a whole (de Bono, 1969, p. 141,138).

In other words, often information comes in as one side of a polarity losing sight of the possibility of the validity in the other part and of the existence of the whole as valuable. A space is required to hold a conversation that is receptive enough to allow for the "presented picture" or new and unfamiliar ideas in a conversation to be taken in not entirely as "established units" that are organized only by the past, but as new sources of learning.

Deep Choicefulness

Another element of the receptive space is that of a deep choicefulness. Deep choicefulness in this context involves much more than simply making a decision or choosing from the obviously apparent options. It implicitly encompasses having internalized deeply, perhaps even subconsciously, a full range of possibilities extending beyond those generally available to people. It involves the enlightenment and emancipation that Gadamer says are critical to Ideal Speech as described in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter (Guess, 1985). Often the possibilities generally available to people in conversation are restricted by the
socialization of roles and the unnecessarily limiting messages of personal potential - a process of restrictions and limitations that is often mutually allowed. Gerda Lerner talks about this process specifically regarding the limitations of women in patriarchy when she says,

Women have for millennia participated in the process of their own subordination because they have been psychologically shaped so as to internalize the idea of their own inferiority. The unawareness...has been one of the major means of keeping women subordinate (Lerner, 1986, p. 218).

It is through an ever increasing awareness of one's choices and the presence of a receptive space to hold the conversation that a deeper choicefulness can be supported.

In conversation, one of the seeming impediments to hearing or letting in a new and unfamiliar viewpoint is how much to allow that new perspective to become one's own. The more that each person in a conversation feels they have a genuine choice about what to take in as one's own, the less there is a need to hold the unfamiliar at arm's distance - to not really hear it and consider its validity. If, however, there is a sense of a deep personal choicefulness about how much to take in without losing one's own identity, there is less of a need to defend against "hearing." A person can consider (hear) the unfamiliar more fully if they know they can fully choose to discard what does not fit for them. Thus, in a conversation
where there is ample receptive space for choosing, it is possible to hear and speak more freely.

Using the Kolb Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) for illustration, the experiencing of the conversation in the Concrete Experience offers each participant the options of either rejecting, avoiding, or embracing what is being said. I am suggesting that the more receptive the space holding the conversation, the more likely the person can embrace the differences at least enough to move forward in the cycle to the point of reflection. Through the process of reflection, they can consider “choosing” some portion of the unfamiliar for changes in their abstract conceptualizations. Thus, creating a receptive space may help move a person toward reflection as a precursor to new conceptualization, experimentation, and thus possible new concrete experiences.

Sacred Space

The final dimension of the “space between” I want to speak to at this point is the creation of a temenos or a sacred space. The new paradigm shift called for by Capra and the holistic and ecological worldview of quatum physics requires going
beyond the scientific framework to an awareness of the oneness of all life...Ultimately, such deep ecological awareness is spiritual awareness...then it is not surprising that the new vision of reality is in harmony with the visions of spiritual traditions (Capra, 1991, p. 326).

One of these spiritual traditions is Temenos, which in "ancient Greek thought...is a magic circle, a delimited sacred space within which special rules apply and in which extraordinary events are free to occur." (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 75) In Athens there was "a sacred precinct (a temenos) dedicated to Gaia...[and] the temenos of Gaia, the fissure and the well, can easily be understood as the doors of life and death" (Jung, 1956, p. 364, 371).

Within the temenos, the partnership of chaos and Gaia collaborate to give the order and form necessary to allow for the freedom of unpredictable creativity to emerge. This partnership is articulated by Wheatley when she says,

At the beginning was Chaos, the endless, yawning chasm devoid of form or fullness, and Gaia, the mother of the earth who brought forth form and stability. In Greek consciousness, Chaos and Gaia were partners, two primordial powers engaged in a duet of opposition and resonance creating everything we know (Wheatley, 1994, p. 121).
This opposition and resonance are the fissure and the well Jung is
describing above and are the inevitable dialectic tension the space needs to
hold, the paradox of order and disorder.

The paradox of chaos was known anciently, in its mythic pairing
with order...This mirror world of order and disorder challenges us
to look, once again, at the whole of the system. Only when we
step back to observe the shape of things can we see the patterns of
movement from chaos to order and from order to chaos (Wheatley,

It is within this paradox of order and disorder that
movement occurs.

In Free Play, Stephen Nachmanovitch gives an eloquent depiction of
the interplay of limits and freedom. He describes the dialogue or
conversation that can take place between the individual and their work
within the sacred space of temenos where

Limits yield intensity...containment of strength amplifies
strength...[and] With one dimension constrained, play becomes freer
in other dimensions... [because] If certain values are constrained
within narrow limits, others are free to vary more strongly
(Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 84-85).

As I listened to the voices in the interviews, I heard the call for some
values or limits in conversation to provide a space to allow for the evoking
and emerging of the new and the creative. I heard a need for the those
values and limits to allow for the exploring and unpredictability required to
create the fusion of new horizons of meaning. They sound like a call for *temenos* - a space that Nachmanovitch says must be carefully prepared requiring each person “to clean and clear mind and body” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 75). He also warns that people get constrained in their creative process requiring that “When you are stuck...Stay in the *temenos* of the workplace. Relax, surrender to the bafflement; don’t leave the *temenos*, and the solution will come. Persevere gently” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 141). Many of the participants in the research spoke to the essence of this partnership of order and chaos and how different their conversations were when they felt stuck and when there was a flow.

Now it seems appropriate to look next at the meaning of differences in this context, the kinds of differences which might then emerge in conversations, and finally at what people actually said about their concrete experiences relevant to a receptive and sacred space in conversations.

The Nature of Differences

The nature of differences as used here encompasses both perceiving and valuing. The only differences that each person perceives are those that are given importance - those they are valuing. In other words, there are infinite differences, but only the valued ones are of any import—i.e., then
becoming valued differences. The distinction between valuing and values in this context is an important one and was outlined more fully in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter but is briefly reviewed here.

"Valuing" in this context is a process of "attending to" (Kolb, 1992). For example, if I place no value on the color of a person's shirt, it is not a difference I even note or "attend to". Yet, as soon as I make an association of red shirts with a political group associated with a cause which I either support or abhor, the color of a person's shirt becomes a difference that I "attend to" - I note it, and I may have a reaction to it. I may also associate the person in the red shirt with "values" with which I resonate or reject.

"Valuing" is an affective or apprehensive process of "attending to", and thus touches my emotions, my heart. It is a phenomenon in motion and evolving, while "values" are the cognitive or comprehensive interpretation I make in my head when it has ceased to be emergent. Valuing then is a recursive process whereas values represent the freezing of the affect. The differences holding the most potency for people, mattering the most, are those that come from the heart and the head - in other words, those with both affective and cognitive associations. In fact, most of the stories
people told of conversations that stood out for them included both, as discussed later in this chapter.

The Dual Knowledge Theory of Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984; Baker and Kolb, 1993) can be a way of understanding this polarity. Holding the tension within the polarity of the affective and the cognitive requires a valuing of both the concrete experience, the naming through abstract conceptualization, and the capacity to draw upon each. It requires the capacity to use each aspect of the polarity rather than having to choose one or the other.

Throughout this work, differences are those of valuing and values and are defined in terms of the perception of the person speaking. Something is not a difference because I or some authoritative source has declared it as such. Differences come from the distinctions among people in their attending and in the values they hold. The valuing process in a conversation is primarily an immediate one in the here and now and relates to the context, the relationships, the chemistry between people, self-esteem, communication styles, learning styles, etc. that are alive in the interaction. The values that each person brings into the conversation come out of all of the overlapping cultures and experiences that have contributed to their sense of identity. These can include value differences growing out of their
associations relevant to their race, gender, ethnicity, life style, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, age, etc.

Using this understanding of differences, the kinds of differences that might matter and thus emerge in a conversation could range from an almost unlimited range of cultural perceptions or experiences to a similarly infinite number of interpersonal dynamics. In terms of the cultural effects of how people would perceive and then manage conflicts, Gudykunst outlines how

People in low-context, individualistic cultures [like many within the United States]...usually interpret the source of conflicts as being instrumental in nature...people can argue over task-oriented issues and remain friends. People in high-context, collectivistic cultures [like most Asian countries]...tend to see conflict arising from expressive sources (Ting-Toomey, 1985). Because the person and the issue are not separated, it is difficult to have open disagreement without one or both parties losing face (Gudykunst, 1991, p. 129).

Thus, the way relationships are developed and maintained, conflicts from style, expectation differences about how to resolve conflicts, and boundary issues around how open or private to be in conversation are the kinds of differences which could easily emerge from just this one situation.

Gudykunst goes on, for example, to describe how much more direct people from the U.S. are about discussing their differences than most Asians are. Just this one style difference is likely to become an issue requiring
considerable attention for people from these cultures when in ongoing conversations with each other.

Another kind of story which might emerge in the conversations about differences that matter to them would result from what Cynthia Garcia Coll described as "cultural mistrust or the lack of trust experienced by members of minority groups toward members of a dominant group" (Coll, 1992, p. 6). When the sense of trust among participants in a conversation is highly varied, people enter the conversation with highly incongruent expectations around openness and privacy, hopes and apprehensions, comfort and guardedness, informality and informality leading to conflicts that will have to be managed.

Another whole realm of differences is that of developing and sustaining relationships among people as they explore and test how intimate or distanced, how animated or controlled, how intellectual or playful they can be and want to be with each other. As people discover values they share or do not share, infinite opportunities emerge of where to go with the relationship - to avoid, confront, or engage further. Is this relationship one where anger, appreciation, disagreement, love, hurts, affection, fears, misunderstandings, and concerns can be expressed? Does it feel safe to be
authentic and imperfect in this relationship? Boundless possibilities bring up differences that require attention if the relationship is to continue.

A difference in the color of skin or the ethnic background of a person does not necessarily lead to conflicts that need to be managed, however. Sometimes people from quite dissimilar backgrounds find that they have a natural affinity for each other and share values or interests that bring them together. Likewise, some people from very comparable circumstances may find tension or aversion to each other resulting in conflicts of some intensity. On the other hand, others may find themselves in conversation with people whom they regard as dramatically different and yet be intrigued with them and eager to get to know each other and learn from each other. Each person's perceptions of the differences they will attend to or values they will share or explore with each other can take innumerable forms, reflecting some of the differences in how people respond to "varied experience" as described by Maddi (Fiske and Maddi, 1961) and discussed in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter. It seems appropriate at this point to share some of the kinds of stories and differences people actually talked about in the interviews.
Stories Told Through Conversation

Prior to collecting data for the research, I proposed a tentative model of Good Conversation. Then the participants in the research were asked to tell their stories of conversations which stood out for them, as described in the Methodology Chapter. Stories were sought because they offer direct access into the authentic experience of people, as a way of grounding the model. In the words of Susan Hull,

People hunger for [the] story...because in speaking from the inside out, we say less about what we believe to be true (out there) and more about what simply is true (in here). And that is where we make our deepest connections with one another and with God. Stories are...about losing and finding, not ultimate truth; about particulars and pastimes where soul is shaped (Hull, 1994).

Through the stories of the participants, one of the phenomena they told of “losing and finding” was a space within which they could be more receptive to both speaking and hearing. As I have immersed myself in the stories, I have become increasingly intrigued by the kinds of spaces that can be created - those receptive enough to increase understanding and learning and those with barriers that interfere.

Before sharing and analyzing the specific responses, I want to describe some of the kinds of stories that we were told. To honor the confidentiality of all of the participants, specific details and quotes will not be given in
full context here although that approach would provide a more engaging
type of reading. Yet, the sharing of the types of stories can hopefully offer
some of the flavor and essence of these conversations that made this
research so fascinating and enjoyable.

The stories varied among the four rounds of interviews for a variety of
reasons. As described in the previous chapter, the first three rounds of
interviews were with the first year doctoral students throughout the year at
various stages of their developing relationships with each other and their
group development. In addition, in the first round they could choose any
conversation, in the second round they were asked to draw on a class
conversation from ORBH 570, in the third round to draw on a conversation
with strong differences. Round Four of the interviews was with the
Professional Fellows asking them to recall conversations with other
Fellows, either in or out of class. Thus, the stories are influenced by the
people and groups in various stages of development as well as by the
parameters given to them in selecting conversations. I will now share the
stories by the round where they were shared for the sake of clarity.

In Round One, with interviews being completed in the early weeks of
the first semester, only five of the sixteen conversations selected were with
other members of the group - a sharp contrast from Round Three.
approximately eight months later. While two of the conversations had
taken place in a group setting, only one of those was with this group. Of
the remaining fourteen conversations, ten had been with one other person
and four had been with two other people. Four of these conversations had
taken place on the telephone. At this early stage of their interactions with
each other, only five of the conversations chosen were with other members
of this group. Even with no instructions to focus on differences, all of the
conversations involved people talking about various kinds of differences.

The stories of many of the conversations centered around relationships
with five of them being about the development of the relationships and
three others focusing on working through relationship issues among the
people with whom they were talking. In two other conversations, the
primary topic was about receiving feedback. In yet two more
conversations, racism was the topic while cultural differences were
discussed at length in another two. Three of the conversations were
between parents and children with some advice giving regarding new jobs,
new career decisions, and illness. Another conversation reflected on a
previous conversation between a potential student and a professor during
the interview process for prospective students, exploring their unresolved
differences and the ongoing implications for their relationship.
In Round Three, perhaps at least partially because they were asked to talk about conversations that involved differences and because of the stage of their group and relationship development at the end of their second semester, over half of them talked about trying to work through their own differences with each other. Thirteen of them were talking extensively about their relationships with each other. All of the conversations involved struggling with differences in some way. Often these two phenomena overlapped with considerable talk about the struggle of being in relationship with each other. Also, having been in classes together for the previous eight months and being in a group development class at the time of the interviews likely contributed to the preponderance of discussion about their efforts to relate with each other. The only other prominent topic in the stories told was race and cultural differences with five different people bringing up this subject, again not surprising since they were asked to focus on differences that mattered to them and given the racial and cultural diversity within the group of sixteen.

There were several people who talked about race and cultural differences from a somewhat conceptual perspective although specific conversations were very present for them as they talked. Yet, they tended to talk less about individuals or their personal feelings about people and
told their stories more in the third person seldom using names of people. On the other hand, others talked about this topic from a deeply personal place, about their own visceral reactions and responses to each other and to things being said. Let me give some examples.

* In one case, the specific things being said between two people in an intense discussion about race led to a deeper relationship between the two people and a deeper engagement around the issue than was usual for this person. It was as though the relationship enabled the person to be pulled into a conversation about race in a way that had not happened before for them.**

Three people shared stories about cultural conflicts, with two of these incidents having erupted in their living situations among people of different cultures. These people talked about how the differing cultural expectations contributed to the situations.

**(throughout this paper, individual participants are referred to with plural pronouns (e.g.,them,they) instead of singular pronouns (e.g.,his or her) in the interest of maintaining confidentiality regarding gender.)
* In one, there was a clear cultural difference in terms of the priorities that should be given to work in contrast to taking care of personal health and well being. (p/a)

* In another, there were sharp cultural differences in the style considered appropriate in disagreeing with each other. (p/j)

* In a third instance, although the conversation did not take place in their home, there were three different cultures represented among the three people in the conversation. The topic was about how directly to express differences of opinion or perspectives. One person came from a culture where clear and direct expression was expected, assuming there would be no damage to the relationship.

Another person in this conversation came from a culture where a difference of opinions would only be expressed after a solid relationship had been established with priority always given to maintaining the relationship. This conversation led to considerable discussion and reflection about cultural differences and their relationships with each other as well as about relationships generally in their lives. (p/h)
Another impetus for the frequency of conversations about working through their relationships with each other may have been that the group development retreat occurred close to the time of many of the interviews. At the retreat and soon thereafter in a class, people in the group received feedback from each other regarding how they were perceived by their classmates. Several of the conversations that were recalled related to this process of receiving, giving, and making sense out of the feedback.

* For one person, the feedback was primarily from two other people, and the strains in the relationships were poignant. It seemed that there was a genuine desire to hear the feedback and to improve the relationships along with frustration and fatigue with working on them. (p/f)

* In another, but similar conversation, someone talked about the things they had been told about how they are perceived. They had reflected a lot on these perceptions and how they might have been operating in their life in the past as well as thinking about how it would affect their career in the future. (p/e)

* From the perspective of giving feedback, a participant talked about the value of saying things in the group and having their perspective supported by others who had made similar observations. This person
also talked about the effect of saying these things in front of others and the subsequent need to behave accordingly in the future. The reinforcement of peer pressure seemed to operating here. (p/g)

One person told a story about a class where they had had a definite difference of opinion with two people and yet reacted quite differently in each case. The previous relationships they had had with each of these two people strongly affected their response.

* This person said that where there had been a solid friendship in the past, there was an openness to hearing the differences and a calm accepting of the person. In the relationship with a history of feeling judged and no room to be different, the same patterns continued to be played out again. (p/o)

Yet another person described the role of the leadership in group.

* They said that their sense of safety was decreased because the leader participated with other group members in avoiding naming and discussing some of the behavior this person observed in the group. Moreover, there was a perception that the leader was choosing to ally themselves with some group members - all contributing to this person feeling the group was not a safe place to take risks. (p/b)
Another story was about a conversation with two people (not members of this group) outside of the class.

* In this conversation, there were also issues of trust and lack of safety. The story included the perception of an unexpected power play where one person seemed to have a greater say in their decision-making than the other two, augmenting this sense of being unsafe. (p/c)

One story was of a conversation between a student and professor.

* They realized through this conversation that they had very different learning styles. This new understanding helped them see why they had had such different expectations of each other, although it required considerable effort to gain these insights. Other differences, however, were apparently not discussed and seemed like unfinished business. (p/l)

In Round Two, because of the interview instructions to focus on a class discussion, all of the selected conversations took place in ORBH 570 with the same class being selected by four people and a fifth person choosing the next class and reflecting back to that class. Another class was focused on by three people. All other conversations were individual ones selected by only one person.
The class that four people talked about was a discussion on the differences between West and East economic systems, cultural differences, and the responsibility of a cultural to preserve its own integrity. The class that three people talked about was one where differing perceptions of intuition were discussed at length. Three people talked about different classes where values were a primary topic of conversation. Race was the topic of a class chosen by someone while men's and women's differing ways of knowing was talked about by a man. For two other people, the topic of the class was essentially unrelated to the reason the conversation stood out for them because a single comment that had special meaning to them personally was the focus. In two other classes, an event that occurred, rather than the conversation itself, was the focus - one was when Asian bells were used and another was the reading of medicine cards. All but one of the conversations involved struggling across differences among the people talking.

Similarly, in Round Four the seven Professional Fellows interviewed were asked to recall a conversation with other Fellows but not necessarily during their class seminars. Three of them chose a conversation involving the whole group with only one focusing primarily on the content of the class. In that case, the conversation was in response to a presentation by
the Dean that generated strongly differing opinions and a lively discussion resulting in considerable new learning for this person through those differences. In another case, the class discussion was about the process of forming a Society of Fellows for all past and present Fellows and about the strong differences of opinions regarding the appropriate process to follow. The third class involved intense interpersonal differences where a Fellow described a tense confrontation between a faculty member and another Fellow.

Three other conversations selected were between two Fellows in each case, mostly outside of class. In one case, a Fellow talked about a series of conversations with another Fellow who had had dramatically different life and work experiences as well as quite contrary ethical standards. Yet, this person found the conversations a source of real learning about others and about themselves provoking clarification of their own values. In another case, the conversation was a very personal, brief sharing leading to some internal contemplation about related personal issues. In the third instance, the conversation was between two Fellows who were working on a group project together leading to considerable new awarenesses about themselves and their work.
The seventh conversation selected focused primarily around a Fellow's presentation to a subgroup of other Fellows. Once again in every case, the conversations related in the interviews involved engaging across differences of some importance to the people relaying the stories.

Now I would like to share some of the actual words from people that speak to the space surrounding their conversations.

**Themes Relevant to Space in the Storytelling**

Creating a receptive space can be a real challenge, especially for conversations across strong differences that may carry emotional and historical tension. Where this challenge is present, the conversational space may be fragile. It is beautifully articulated by one of the participants who described it as a bubble - where we must pull ourselves back to allow the bubble to be whole to create a

"space in between...to let difference emerge and learn from that difference" (p/m, p.5-6,3).

This person expands this idea in talking about two contrasting, ongoing conversations. In one

"the conversation...builds up and we grow together and there is space in between."

In the other conversation, there are
"totally different dynamics...there is a break in between. There is not much flow" (p/m, p. 9,3).

Another person used the same language of a space “between” in a conversation with two other people of a different race saying,

“I was able to actually put stuff out in between us. And it was not my construction of you, or your construction of me, but that we did something together, that we made some meaning together as opposed to hanging our own on the other" (p/f, p. 9,3).

It is as though when care is given to creating and supporting a holding environment between people, some of the previously unspeakable differences can begin to become a part of the conversation.

Allowing for this kind of space is not only difficult but also may be as one person said

"uncomfortable and frustrating" (p/e, p.17)

and for another the conversation

“didn’t feel nice” (p/b, p.14).

Yet, in spite of feeling uncomfortable and frustrated, the person felt they learned something very important about themselves in the conversation. In the second instance, while not feeling nice, they appreciated the honesty being expressed that helped them understand how much the issue being discussed mattered to the other person. A third person described a similar interaction in saying,
"It was not an easy conversation. It was not a pleasant one, but I do think it was a good one...because I learned...could see the possibility that they were the way they were for reasons other than what I had thought" (p/f, p. 9,3).

Thus, if the metaphor of the bubble can be extended, the receptive space may be quite delicate and fragile while being of real benefit to sustain where possible. The tension of the order and chaos can be held within the sacred space of temenos. As seen in these examples, the sustaining of the receptive holding environment for the conversation can contribute to learning and increased understanding.

The remainder of this chapter will explore what the participants in the research said about the creation of a receptive space to explore differences in their conversations. The integrally interrelated themes of their responses relevant to a receptive space are:

Making an Effort

Attending to Feelings of Safety

Choosing to Confront Differences

Moderating the Energy

Talking from the Head and the Heart
Making an Effort

In their stories about these conversations that stood out for them, some people realized that it was necessary to make a real effort to create a receptive space where people can be more receptive to differences. Without an explicit effort, often an ongoing effort over time, the receptive space either is not usually created or it cannot be sustained beyond the momentary, serendipitous occurrence. Yet, the question arises of an effort to do what. The kinds of effort that were related to the creation of a receptive space for exploring differences included:

* careful attention being given to trying to understand,
* trying to be understood,
* trying to speak to be heard,
* committing and setting aside time for the effort, and
* swallowing some things along the way by not always speaking.

In some cases the effort was made for pragmatic and instrumental reasons.

In a difficult conversation about race this kind of effort was expressed when someone said,

"we searched and really delved deeply to make sure that when we were hearing people, we really heard what they were saying...And...we tried to speak in ways that allowed other people to hear us" because there was a "desire for a better understanding among us" (p/d, p.9,3).
In a similar conversation, another person described

"trying to understand where the differences and the feelings were coming from." (p/m, p.11,3)

This same person characterized this conversation as a good conversation partially because there was among the people involved an

"intention to engage in the dialogue" (p/m, p. 12,3).

Someone else talked about a difficult conversation that had a very slow start, but did actually develop into opportunities for much more understanding because of the effort they both made. When asked how the conversation was developing and how they felt about that, the response was,

"It was a very long time, not sure at all what direction it should go...there was a certain will to reach each other...took a long time before that got into the discussion, the power." (p/b, p. 4,1)

The will that each of them had to reach each other was required to get them beyond their struggles with each other to reach new understandings.

One of the Professional Fellows said that what stood out about the conversation was

"we had made the commitment to set the time aside to get together at that particular time...It was inconvenient for [them]. It was inconvenient for me. We had ownership" (p/w, p. 14,4).
In another conversation also about racial differences, a person said they got involved in the conversation on this topic for the first time partially because one of the members of the group let them know that it was a "personal passion" and personally wanted to talk about it. Because they did not want to hurt a friend, they made the effort and participated in the conversation (p/n, p. 5,3).

Specifically, this person said,

"if I did not become involved in the conversation, I would be building a wall between us...that was not something that I wanted to do...if I don't get into this issue now...it will never happen" (p/n, p.4,3).

The effort this individual made was depicted as

"trying very hard to keep strong, tight control of myself and what I was saying and expressing because I was aware that it was a potentially very sensitive issue...I was not holding out, not necessarily holding back, but being very aware of what I was saying" (p/n, p. 6,3).

This kind of effort to be aware of when and how to speak was also expressed by someone else who when receiving feedback said,

"I had to remind myself to shut up, listen, don't interpret...had to just repeat it as a mantra for at least five or ten minutes until I got intrigued and pulled into the discussion without a need to do that any more" (p/f, p.18,3).

Similarly, effort to create a more receptive space was seen in a conversation between a student and professor, where there is an inherent
power deferential. The power inequity seemed to be functioning and contributing to extra effort being exerted when the student said, I

"caught myself a couple of times...I tried to present it in a way [for the professor] to...understand the space that I am in" (p/l, p.4,3).

This person went on to say,

"I don't want to fight..get into an argument... Okay, what can I do here and that is when I somehow opened up I think a little more...I have to put my anger aside" (p/l, p.5,3).

This “opening up” sounds like receptivity growing out of intentionally making an effort.

The dilemma of having to choose when to speak up and when to listen was recognized by a participant in the research who said that while they do not like to fight, they

"just cannot accept some of what I experience" and did not want to be “submissive” (p/j, p. 10,3).

In each of these cases, there seems to be a conscious and explicit effort to understand and to be understood.

From a pragmatic and more instrumental perspective, when asked what contributed to feeling more receptive, one response included,

"more than anything just the fact that not being receptive doesn't get anywhere" (p/g, p. 16,3).
This person added that the conversation would result in a different behavior on their part which they described as

"different action...because the whole group heard it, it would be a little difficult for me to carry on ...and not be seen as a little bit off or mean or intentional" (p/g, p. 17,3).

Here a cognitive awareness led to an intentional effort that had the potential to change behavior.

Attending to Feelings of Safety

An integral part of making an effort to create a receptive space is the way people talk to each other and is directly related to a critical theme woven throughout almost all of the interview conversations - the need for safety. The sense of safety could be gained in various ways. When people felt accepted, feelings of safety seemed to encircle people most readily and comfortably. Acceptance includes being accepted as the person they are as well as continuing to be accepted in the relationship in spite of the differences being discussed. The nature and history of the relationship between people was an integral dimension to feelings of safety. Where acceptance was more difficult, being treated with respect could also serve to create a safe, non-threatening place for conversations to increase understanding. Thus, attention can be given to feelings of safety by:
* giving respect and recognition at a minimum
* giving acceptance, good intentions, genuineness, and attention to relationships wherever possible,
* being non-judgmental,
* being flexible,
* being open,
* being in relationship,
* being willing to accept ambiguity,
* being patient,
* building trust among people, and
* moderating the amount of uncomfortability in the space.

A number of people referred specifically to argumentative and confrontational ways of talking that got in the way of their receptivity while others referred to a different kind confrontation that allowed the differences to be discussed and heard more easily. Thus,

* less argumentative confrontation was more likely to lead to learning, new understandings and awarenesses, and improved relationships.
The need to be accepted without being judged was expressed by a participant who said that through their conversation with someone they

"came to realize that we accepted one another and especially [them] accepting me as I am, you know, without making any judgement" (p/n, p.15,1).

Someone else mentioned how important it is for them to have

"a lack of judgment when I have a good conversation... it is not an either/or, and it is not a, yeah, but don't you think. It is more of a...barn-raising, where somebody will throw out, this has been my experience, and I'll add to that, and you keep building on it. As opposed to a judgment... So it is just a sharing of experiences and common ways" (p/o, p. 9,1).

Yet, another person said that a conversation was good because

"we were both willing to say...I would like to find out what happened from the other person's perspective. And we were both very accepting of the other person's perspective. And we were also very accepting of the fact that the other person was hurt" (p/n, p. 9,1).

One participant shared a conversation where they had received some feedback that was difficult to hear but given in a way that made it possible to hear saying that they

"just very directly told me...But there was a quality in the way [they] gave me that feedback that was very easy for me to listen to. I did not feel attacked, devalued, dismissed, made a problem of...so although the feedback and the information...was upsetting...I was able to hear it...[they were] so direct and so non-judgmental...there was no good or bad attached to anything" (p/f, p.1&4&9,1).

Another person said,
"Good conversations are direct. Straightforward. And a sincerity about them" (p/e, p. 8,1).

In the words of one person who described this phenomena of needing enough safety to be open to hearing differences quite simply said,

"when I do not feel threatened, that also helps in making me open" (p/h, p. 8,3).

When asked threatened in what way, the response highlighted the importance of the relationship when they responded,

"threatened...when I feel that even if I disagree, I would be acceptable to another person" (p/h, p. 8,3).

They went on to describe this possibility in a specific relationship where

"many times when we would discuss...we would have disagreement. I always felt at the end that no matter what our disagreements were, there was a kind of bonding between us...I felt safe disagreeing with [them] because we would still be friends" (p/h, p. 8-9,3).

A similar perspective was offered by a Professional Fellow who said,

"I did not feel that anything I said...would impact my relationship with anybody in the group. I felt that, at the end of our discussion, that we would all get up and walk away...I don't think...ever really crossed my mind with anything that I might say would... perhaps damage a relationship" (p/u, p. 4,4).

Another Fellow referred to this ability to talk freely among the Fellows as being very different from the rest of their lives where they have to be much
more careful. This person attributed the difference to the bonding that occurred at their first retreat together saying,

"after the first retreat, we were able to talk in general freely. I don't think that we could talk about things in the other groups the way we talk among the Fellows...the first retreat created the bonding among us...we live in a way that we are very restricted in what we do and how we express...the majority of us...are in a position...end up not being exactly yourself... all of these do's and don'ts. But all of those rules are gone after the questions that we had during the retreat, the exercises" (p/r, p. 3&9,4).

Another person expressed a similar response in a conversation in which they felt they found their voice fully. When asked what facilitated their ability to speak, they referred to the

"atmosphere. I had pretty good feelings that these people were not out to get me or hurt me and that helps a lot. And then I had an example of the previous day...pretty good confirmation of that happening" (p/f, p. 19,3).

In these cases, a feeling of safety was based upon learning from experience with specific people that told them they would be safe and either accepted and/or respected.

This learning about the context, of course, can give information that the space is either safe or unsafe. In the words of one person, their experience with a group was that

"we have beat each other up so much" (p/k, p. 22,3).

When they were to be together for a three day retreat,
"I think we were all a little bit concerned as to what was going to play out...we each learned to suspend some of our own initial concerns... willing to let go of some of our standard operating procedures because of some of the apprehension about" being together for three days. (p/k, p. 22,3)

Thus, the role of the context can be seen here to be influencing the behavior of people vis a vis feelings of safety where an extended time together seemed to motivate people to alter their norms.

Later in this chapter in the section on choosing to confront, I give an example of a participant who describes a pattern of behavior in a group where they did not feel safe to take risks or share their opinions. This assessment grew out of their previous experiences and

"learning how important it is that you are accepted by the" (p/b, p. 11,3)

leader/facilitator to be able to take risks and share opinions.

A Professional Fellow expressed similar concerns regarding the role that faculty play. One said,

"I think one of the faculty people has a way of handling the group by interjecting with sarcasm...One of the evenings in which I thought there was really good conversation...one of the members of the group really took a position... and was teased by one of the faculty members. I think that person probably has been to only one or two sessions since...has said very little when [they have] been back" (p/s, p. 9,4).
Teasing, or what is perceived by group members as teasing, does not contribute to creating feelings of safety or a receptive space for conversation.

On the other hand, several of the participants talked about a faculty person who had a quite different effect on the creation of a receptive space for conversation. One person when asked if they noticed anything in that conversational context that contributed to good conversation, the response was,

"Yes, I think [name]'s characteristic of not dominating or lecturing...I forget almost that [name] is sitting there...the fact that [they are] able to do that or allow that to happen, I think that is good and allows for good conversation...there is I think more constraint in...the other classes" (p/p, p. 12,2).

This same faculty person's approach was described by another participant this way,

"I am finally beginning to understand the strength of [name] as a teacher...there is a great deal of grace in [their] awkwardness. And that is creating space where we can go into directions, go into areas that we may not have otherwise" (p/k, p. 22,2).

In another case, a person expressed concern about whether there was ill intent on the part of the people with whom they were in conversation saying,
"I want to believe that nobody had ill intent for whatever reasons. They put aside the egos...but I am not sure that was happening" (p/p, p. 16,3).

This person also said they felt at times they were being

"talked over" and that the other people "were not accepting my point of view and I did not understand that. I am frustrated about that" (p/p, p. 18-19,3).

Another person described a

"power play"

when a small group of people made some important decisions which would affect each of them,

"all votes were not equal" (p/c, p.19,3)

and the resulting decisions

"violated my sense of safety" (p/c, p. 20,3).

Someone else used a potent metaphor to describe the group conversation as a war zone saying,

"If you are willing to go out there into the war zone, you know, don't say don't shoot me. You are in a war zone" (p/g, p. 19,3).

Such a metaphor of war and shooting conjures up unsafe images that certainly interfere with the receptivity of a conversational space - with the holding of relationship, polarity, choicefulness, or sacredness.
A subtheme of the concern about safety revolved around the perception of interactions as genuine or disingenuous. Contradictory statements or behavior were often perceived as disingenuous. One portrayal of a conversation was of a person who

"wanted two things that were contradictory and in conflict...and so it was offputting" (p/c, p. 17,3).

This conversation was described as one which

"made me uncomfortable, and very disconnected. Made me want to leave because I don't want to be persuaded by somebody" (p/c, p. 16,3).

Another person was talking about a group conversation about race in which they said,

"I was receptive to hearing other people's opinions...I heard it, I received, but I did not necessarily a hundred percent believe it. Why I did not believe it is I don't think it is possible for anyone who's spent time in America to not see color as an issue" (p/e, p.15,3).

In this situation, the words again were not perceived as being genuine. A third instance related to a conversation in which the person telling the story felt there were contradictions in someone's words and behavior recurring in the group's conversations. In each of these examples, there was difficulty believing some of what was being said and some perception of disingenuous behavior contributing to a less than safe experience.
Another aspect of being genuine was addressed by a Professional Fellow about how hard it is for some people to get out of their professional roles associated with their positions -

"there were people within the group [of Professional Fellows] that could shed their professions and really discuss the things that they felt were important to them and did not have to posture...and there were other people who simply could not do that" (p/x, p. 2,4).

This person went on to say that good conversation would be helped

"if you can eliminate the pretense. Then you can have very good exchanges...Even the playing field" (p/x, p. 15,4).

In marked contrast to posturing, when asked in what way a specific conversation was a good conversation, one response was,

"The level of honesty of how people were feeling...People being very honest" (p/o, p. 16,3).

All of these comments peak my interest about what it is that contributes to a person feeling accepted and what are the barriers. In one person's words,

"when [they were] a little kinder...it helped me...when [they were] not looking harsh and abrasive, then I was much more accepting" (p/j, p. 10,3).

Another person said,

"I am just beginning to understand that [they have] different needs and [have] clearly been through a lot more than I have...so I am willing to accept that and I am becoming more receptive to that" (p/g, p. 16,3).
The readings for a class and the class discussions contributed to someone else’s observation that

"I have learned that it is important to try to understand differences on their own terms and not to bring too much judgment to it initially ...it is worth trying to understand how cultures arrive at such very different ways of dealing with the same situation and factoring that in to how I understand the person" (p/f, p. 6,3).

This same person, however, at the personal level expressed frustration about being

"tired of getting beat on...I don't like being made to feel as if I am an oddity or abnormal ...so that makes it hard for me to hear" (p/f, p. 7,3).

After an extended conversation among these people, this person’s perception was that

"it has diffused some of my frustration with them, but the judgment is not entirely gone... but it was decreased by the encounter" (p/f, p. 7,3).

In a class conversation, a person had a strong difference of opinion with two other people and realized that the relationship they had with each one strongly affected their receptivity. They described their differing responses to each person. In one case, they said,

"with [name], I could immediately align myself. Perhaps it is because I have a better personal relationship with [name], but I just felt more open and more free to disagree...to be at a different position knowing that that would be okay"(p/o, p. 12,3).
When asked what contributes to that receptivity, the response was there had been

"from the very beginning...a mutual support for each other...real feeling of support that helped both of us I think transcend when we came to those differences...that is who I am, that is who you are, and that is okay" (p/o, p. 14,3).

With the other person with whom they had differences of opinion, their

"perception of that difference is I sense [them] judging, making judgments and being very definitive in those judgments" (p/o, p. 13,3).

Thus, feeling accepted as opposed to feeling judged is pivotal in the formation of the relationship in the first place and then in being receptive to the hearing and consideration of differences.

When there is not a relationship in which to hold the conversation, it is much more difficult to create a safe and accepting place. One person said there just was no

"chemistry"

between them and another individual even though they felt

"guilty because I want to like and feel connected to [them] more than I do... something in the space between us" (p/c, p. 22-23,3).
This person used words such as offputting, disconnected, uncomfortable, and discounted to describe the unsafe relationship and the lack of receptivity. Another individual talked about one reason they did not get into a conversation at all, even though there were differences of opinion they would have pursued with other people, was because there was no relationship to ground the interaction saying,

"I am not going to get into it...because I don't have that good a relationship with [them]" (p/g, p. 7,2).

The idea of exclusion was mentioned by someone else when asked what contributed to them not feeling receptive to differences in a conversation, they responded with,

"I think I was also feeling excluded because they got into a tussle about each other, and they were using me as an excuse...he saw fault with me" (p/a, p. 6,3).

An often stated element of feelings of safety was the need for a nonthreatening and nonjudgmental atmosphere and accepting attitude. A Professional Fellow said that the expression of uniqueness is inhibited by,

"Personal fears, personal prejudices... judgmental air as opposed to an accepting air...antagonism" (p/w, p. 15,4).

Another Fellow said that what contributes to a good conversation is a
"non-threatening environment...a feeling that you can offer your opinion and you are not going to get penalized for it in any way, shape or form. And the feeling within the group that we don't know the answer, so let's throw some ideas out...and come up with an answer. There is no right or wrong...no predetermined answer. I have been involved in too many business meetings where you come in, and it has already been decided, and yet we spend an hour debating...why even bother. We don't learn anything from this. It has already been decided" (p/u, p. 11-12,4).

Here the non-threatening environment is described as also including no predetermined judgments about what is right or wrong, willingness to accept ambiguity, and allowing for the openness to differences of opinion and for minds to be changed.

Another person talked about learning to be open enough to suspend judgment. They realized the importance

"not to bring too much judgment...initially, that there are whole enormously different cultural scripts...not something I would have taken into account before. I am more willing to suspend judgment to sort of look at stuff like that" (p/f, p. 6-7,3).

Trust is frequently mentioned as part of this kind of environment.

One person said that what contributes to the expression of the uniqueness of people is when we can

"trust ourselves and each other...trying to be less judgmental with each other. Trying to be more open and accepting" (p/k, p. 21-22,2).
Someone else said that what inhibits people from freely expressing themselves were

"trust issues" (p/e, p. 13,2).

Similarly, when asked what contributes to a good conversation, one response was

"safety, spontaneity, honesty...cooperation" (p/b, p. 17,2).

One individual shared a conversation about some very private things that they had discussed in class. They were able to talk in this setting because they said they

"felt...comfortable sharing it in the class...I felt that I could trust the others" (p/a, p. 1,2).

In a specific conversation where some very strong different perceptions were being worked through, an individual said,

"[They] trusted me...our conversation was very genuine. And we were very considerate of each other's feelings" (p/d, p.4,1).

Here the intertwining of relationship, genuineness, trust, and consideration for the other could be seen.

Fear becomes an inhibition on multiple levels. This phenomenon was described this way by one person,

"Fear is one of the obstacles...it just came to my mind that whenever I don't have any fear, I can give myself totally to a particular thing that I am doing" (p/h, p. 3,2).
Another person talked about this dynamic in a specific situation where the conversation

"allowed me again to feel more comfortable in the group and therefore participate more in the group as time went on...my feeling more comfortable with the group was meaningful for me. My being able to share something with other people who were able to appreciate and resonate with me was meaningful" (p/p, p. 10,2).

The dynamic of blame similarly comes into play in relation to acceptance and being non-judgmental. In a conversation about race, one person said that the conversation was a good one because

"new understandings were reached"

and one of the reasons for the new understandings was that

"[name] is not trying to right here solve racism in general...or to try and put blame on someone for racism" (p/n, p. 7,3).

This lack of blame seemed to be helpful in creating a more receptive space for understanding. On the other hand, in another conversation a person felt that the other person was

"trying to put it on me and I will not take it on me. I will take it between us...it is a two-way street...[person] was not going to dump this on me" (p/l, p. 2,3).

The sense of having blame put on them interfered with this conversation by raising the level of anger and increasing the difficulty with listening,
especially in the beginning of the conversation. Specifically expressing this concern, one person said,

"what got in the way of listening was truly because I heard blame. Even though maybe... nobody said the word...I heard the word blame" (p/g, p. 9,2).

Other critical dimensions of creating safe space are respect and recognition. Respect and the recognition of the other can be invaluable to the creation of a receptive space for increasing our understanding. The value of recognizing racial differences was emphasized when one person said that

"it is not necessarily appropriate to try to deny their existence...The recognition of the difference does not have to stifle the relationship. To ignore the difference, retards the development of the relationship" (p/d, p. 5,3).

As more knowledge about the differences is gained, this person felt

"you are kind of obligated to respect that difference [and] that as a result of the conversation, we as a group have a better feel for how those differences feel when you wear them" (p/d, p. 5,3).

A Professional Fellow summed up importance of respect by saying,

"Without respect...there aren't many really good conversations" (p/s, p. 9,4).
Someone said that when they think of good conversation,

the first image that came to their mind was,

"Mutual respect" (p/p, p. 14,1).

The contrary perspective was expressed by another person who said that what kept their conversation from being a good one was

"I don't think what I said was appreciated or respected ... I am not asking for you to change your opinion about how I feel...not asking for you to...take on that feeling. I am asking for you to simply respect it" (p/g, p. 23,1).

By staying with a difficult conversation, another person also talked about learning and recognizing some critical differences which had been behind a series of miscommunications saying,

"I learned about the way in which [person] was approaching this. I never recognized how important...[that] was for [them], that is true...I recognize that paradox...probably the thing that I picked up on." (p/l, p. 6,3)

Another person described several situations where their own impatience had

"cost"

them in the past in terms of friendships and extra work on projects - costs which might have been avoided if

"I had only listened to people or been more patient" (p/e, p.12,3).
In this case, the impatience led to them talking to others in ways that interfered with creating a receptive conversational space.

A distinction between harmonious and confrontational dialogue was referred to by several people. Confrontational dialogue was described by someone as,

"put[ting] forward my views, my stance, my point of view and this is it"

while in contrast in harmonious dialogue they said,

"in order for me to contribute to [being] in between...you have to bend yourself...to swallow some of the things that you bring in" (p/m, p.6,3).

This person went on to say that when the conversation became very argumentative and confrontational, it was

"exhausting and hindered"

the conversation, and they expressed concern over whether there was enough

"room"

among people in these conversations to put forward different perspectives because it became

"an issue of safety" (p/m, p.21-22,3).

While these people were not suggesting avoiding confrontation with differences as discussed in the next section, they are describing a
confrontational, argumentative way of talking to each other that got in the
way of creating receptivity to hearing the differences.

Someone else talked about this kind of argumentative interaction
saying that good conversation is inhibited,

"when some people become sort of belligerent or
militant...whenever a conversation would turn that way,
whenever it seems you are forced to defend a particular
position...I noticed that the conversation would stop...the
person would be pushed against the wall...when you force
them to buy your ideas" (p/h, p. 17,2).

Another person described a similar experience when,

"people want to change other people's opinions. Not respect
them, not understand them, but change them" (p/g, p. 12,1).

This feeling of having people try to change them provoked a strong
reaction of closing down the flow of the conversation.

The opposite effect was felt by someone when they realized the
person they were talking to was not trying to change them saying,

"when I felt that [they were] not trying to convince me of
[their] point of view, I think that was when I came to realize
that there is really no self-interest here. And I was able to
accept it" (p/h, p. 10,1).

Thus, the notion of room and safety in a conversation seems to be
around the perception of flexibility or likelihood of movement from a
position. A participant described inflexibility of a specific person when they said,

"I did not feel that there was any flexibility for me to dialogue with [them]...I did not feel that there was going to be any movement from that position and that evoked a defensive reaction in me that was very real...to me" (p/o, p. 12,3).

A contrary experience was when another person talked about an energy which is not competitive but instead is

"conducive"

to learning in conversations where people are engaged mentally and

"emotionally was not closing them up; they were still open to this situation" (p/a, p.17,3).

Yet, a different perspective on feeling pressure came from someone who said that

"in the context of this group...feeling uncomfortable or having lively discussion with people or understanding different people's viewpoints, I don't have a problem feeling uncomfortable while I am doing it" (p/e, p. 15,3).

Perhaps the degree of uncomfortability is critical here. Another person talked about a difficult ongoing interaction with a colleague who is

"too confrontational...[who] builds walls... [is] very argumentative (p/i, p.7,3)...[who] does not bridge the gap...(p/i, p.8,3) [who] just blows stuff at you (p/i, p.9,3)."
They go on to characterize their feeling in this interaction as

"miscommunicating this way...[which] felt like being suppressed. You know, put under a stone and just squeezed...That is what was happening to my learning at that point" (p/i, p.11,3).

This person considers this argumentative energy as the rebuttal of

"countering one another" which becomes "destructive" (p/i, p.20-21,3).

After this encounter, this individual realized that they

"could listen to [them] or look at [them], but I could not do both...what does it mean to look and listen versus just listen or just look" (p/i, p. 12,3).

When the space in between is too small, taking in the overconfrontational conversant at more than one sensory level (looking and listening) was experienced as overload. Perhaps the psyche was protecting them from this overload. The idea of yielding, being patient, and having room are all integral to the behaviors which can be used in confrontation and are diametrically opposed to alternative behaviors such as aggression, rebuttal, and suppressing. Certainly there are times when yielding and being patient are not conducive to better understanding, but having them as
a part of one's repertoire as a resource to use discriminately seems to be a positive contribution to creating receptive space in conversation.

Some of the other barriers to a receptive space include anger and strong differences of opinion. One participant specifically said,

"What is hindering it [receptivity]...my anger ...I have to put my anger aside but I really wanted to throw it at [them]" (p/l, p. 5-6,3).

Another person in response to the question about what hindered their receptivity responded,

"really being pissed off and wanting to put them in the wrong and say they were just screwed up and that is their problem" (p/f, p. 8,3).

In another part of this same interview when describing the feedback received, this person's anger is expressed but seems to be tempered somewhat -

"I felt very interested in what [they] had to say. Very engaged at the feeling level. I was angry at [them]. Sometimes I clicked with [them], sometimes I did not...Sometimes I felt frustrated and blocked" (p/f, p. 5,3).

In terms of strong differences of opinion, for several people these emerged out of different cultural expectations regarding such things as differing cultural priorities and assumptions. When these cultural collisions occurred, it made it difficult for people at least initially to be open even
though they could explicitly articulate that at least part of the reason for the conflict was because of a difference in cultural assumptions. In one of these cases, the cultural differences were accentuated by differing personal experiences. This person's perception, as is mine, was that white males typically receive a level of acceptance and respect different from that given to black females, and that some behavior on the part of white males is perceived quite differently when black females behave the same way.

Strong differences of opinion did not have to come out of cultural collisions, however. Someone said,

"I was not receptive because I disagreed so strongly" (p/p, p. 14,3).

This person described this disagreement as one in which

"the issue was something that I was trying to explain to them as being unique about my situation versus their situation. And they... did not agree with my point of view... We went back and forth... for at least a half an hour... finally there was expressed agreement. I am not sure that they agreed with me or if they just got so tired of arguing... I think feelings kind of got in the way of a good conversation" (p/p, p. 12-13,3).

This same person also suggested that their own

"big ego" (p/p, p. 14,3)

may have additionally contributed to them not being receptive.
When asked if there were any changes in their point of view following a tense conversation filled with strong differences in perspective, a Professional Fellow said,

"I just became more convinced [of] the value of working things out through talking to each other" (p/s, p.6,4).

Yet, there seems to be a delicate tension of allowing the differences to emerge and be expressed while at the same time assuring that the environment is respectful enough for people to continue talking long enough for the learning to emerge. For example, another Professional Fellow said that it is much easier to learn when there is

"a feeling of good will, of genuineness...You can't expect people to listen or learn in an atmosphere of terror or anxiety, it just does not happen...People have certain innate abilities and in order to use those, you have to create an optimum kind of environment to do that" (p/x, p. 17,4).

On the other hand, a third Professional Fellow articulated the tension in describing a conversation where they had been talking to a small group of other Fellows saying,

"They looked interested...looked like they found something that excited them a lot, but that they were not sure whether they would be glad that they found it in the long run or not...not convinced that ultimately, they would be glad that they found it. Exciting is one thing, pleasurable is another, and I could see this on their faces...I was aware of a lot of change in them as we went along" (p/v, p.10-11,4).
This comment really speaks to the process of learning that can be exciting and tumultuous, but not always "pleasurable" or easy. This whole dimension of learning is explored in the next chapter, but in this comment above seems especially relevant to the kind of space holding the conversation. In this case, the atmosphere was safe enough to allow for openness to hearing at a new level that was exciting.

Choosing to Confront Differences

While the way people talk during confrontations can vary dramatically and can have a distinct effect upon the space created and how the message is received, a prior consideration must be when to choose to confront differences.

* Allowing for the expression of differences of opinion, ideas, feelings, values can be a source of learning and growth, of developing relationships, and of resolution of differences;
* Explicitly supporting the exploration and confrontation of differences and risk taking can contribute to a receptive space if careful attention is given to being proactive about the other themes included in this chapter and to building the necessary common ground and relationships. Common ground and
relationships can provide the foundation to allow each person to begin to consider new perspectives and reach new understandings as the differences are confronted in the conversation; and

* The way people interact when they confront their differences is inseparable from consideration specifically for attending to feelings of safety if people are to be able to risk confrontation in constructive ways.

One person directly addressed the role of confronting differences in learning when they said,

"If we all just agree, that can be pretty boring. And actually, I think learning would be inhibited because we would not critically evaluate a question. But if the level of difference is too great, then there is no conversation...no understanding, no common ground" (p. 21,3).

Confrontation with differences is integrally connected to both the assumptions people have about relationships and the cultural milieu of the conversation. Reminiscent of Gudykunst's comments, in a conversation among several people from various cultures, the participants' differences in how readily to express their disagreements were discussed. The person talking about the conversation said their personal preference was
"to listen...first and perhaps reflect on it. And later on, when I had a chance...tell [them] where I stood" (p/h, p. 4,3).

In this person's culture,

"It is only after we have made a sort of strong relationship with a person, that we can tell the person that we disagree or agree...without fear of breaking that bond" (p/h, p. 6,3).

One of the other individuals in this conversation always shared exactly and directly where they stood on an issue and had said that

"it promotes the relationship better if the person knows whether you agree or disagree" (p/h, p. 6,3).

This was a new awareness for the storyteller who indicated they had

"never thought of it that way and I think it has some truth in it" (p/h, p. 6,3).

When the storyteller reflected on their relationship with this other person, they realized they

"had never felt [person] say that you are lower or higher...because you disagree" (p/h, p. 6,3).

Thus, after some reflection, the conversation led to this person learning to trust the continuity of the relationship through confrontation with their differences. Other new learnings which came from this conversation included
"a different way of approaching a conversation" as well as an "insight into...one of my cultural values" (p/h, p. 7-8,3).

This same person in an earlier interview about another conversation had talked about how the confrontation of differences and a serious disagreement with another person that had led to their relationship actually becoming stronger.

"I felt the relationship was going to break...actually it became even stronger, the bond that bound us together became even stronger...I felt that we had a good conversation because we were able to talk about our feelings, rather than agreeing on a particular idea" (p/h, p.7,1).

For another person who also shared cultural values about avoiding confrontation, they described that although they

"don't like to fight" (p/j, p. 10,3),

they said that something that they are learning about relationships is that if they

"confront, both can win...a confrontation was a little bit helpful" (p/j, p. 11,3).

Thus, the confronting and exploration of differences can become a source of learning, building relationships, and resolution of differences.

A number of people referred to the difficulty of confronting differences. One person, who was especially articulate on this topic, referred to someone who consistently in conversations is
"dropping the discussion if it went into a more personal direction" (p/b, p. 11,3)

as a way of avoiding confronting differences. In contrast, reference was made to another member of the group who was willing to bring out the differences for discussion by saying that they

"did a very brave thing not obeying" (p/b, p. 12,3)

the implicit norms of the group - norms of a

"system in flight" (p/b, p. 14,3).

They especially focused on the role of the leader/facilitator of the group who, in their perception,

"was...leading the flight towards not raising the issue" (p/b, p. 11,3).

This person's assessment was that the leaders/facilitators in this system were often avoiding conflict and choosing sides in groups in such a way that people have to

"deal with it [differences] outside of the group in private discussions...then it becomes a culture of people who become fearful" (p/b, p. 15,3).

This person, when asked what they had learned from these experiences, said they had learned that they do not

"dare to take risks anymore" (p/b, p. 12,3) and learned to be "careful with sharing my opinions ...from a pragmatic point of view, this was not fruitful" (p/b, p. 14,3).
Another example of the avoidance of confrontation was called 

"deliberate stupidity" by an individual saying,

"I had some sense that people were not connecting with each 
other. They were talking past each other...pretending not to 
understand each other...knew what was going on but were not 
acknowledging it...sort of a deliberate stupidity" (p/f, p. 2,2).

This person went on to say they became aware as a result 

of the conversation that sometimes,

"it is safer to pretend not to understand each other than to 
take the time and the trouble and the fear and the risk to 
explore what we have covered and understand ...I include 
myself in that because I can think of times when I pretended I 
did not understand. When I think I probably knew a lot 
more...it seemed safer to do that" (p/f, p. 7-8,2).

Someone else talked about how the group found it difficult to stay focused 

on some issues such as race leaving the issues unresolved and unaddressed 

because of

"deliberate avoidance...when I say deliberate, I mean kind of 
something that is innate, that people do when they are 
uncomfortable about something, talking about something...this 
is just a topic we don't talk about in most circles" (p/g, p. 
6&9,1).

One person talked about their reluctance to bring up a topic for the 

group to discuss that was personally quite hard for them because of the 

personally painful feelings they had about talking in the group. They 
thought of it as
"a real challenge for us as a group...I don't know if I can do that [talk in the group about it] because it feels pretty painful to me" (p/f, p.2,1).

To illustrate an alternative when the confrontation was not avoided, an individual described a time when the differences were discussed openly. In that conversation they heard some information which they still

"don't understand quite...but at least when [they] shared that, I could understand [their] feelings and I could relate" (p/b, p. 16,3).

At other times when the energy in the conversations was

"suppressed," this person felt that the conversation was hindered and led to

"misunderstanding" and was "not healthy and not helping people to understand each other and to open up" (p/b, p. 16,3).

Thus, an argument was being made for the importance of confronting differences in the group to avoid misunderstandings, private conversations, subgroupings, and the fear of risking. When confrontation is being circumvented, the group does not feel like it is a safe place to speak openly. Instead, this person described creating a safe place for confrontation as one where
"you have very different opinions but where the ground is made so that you can understand the other person better" (p/b, p. 15,3).

This "making of the ground" is the creation of a receptive space for the conversation where there is temenos or a "delimited sacred space within which special rules apply and in which extraordinary events are free to occur" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 75).

In a more general sense, the way people talk to each other profoundly effects whether people feel safety. One person described feeling

"not generous enough to yield a little kindness to her...[being] a little bit frozen" (p/j, p.11,3)

when the woman with whom they were talking was aggressive and rude. Yet, with the same woman, when she was

"a little bit kind" (p/j, p.10,3).

it contributed to their being more receptive and to the conclusion that their confrontation with each other

"was a little bit helpful" (p/j, p.11,3).

Finding this confrontation helpful was not easy, however, and required breaking a cultural pattern for this person.
An additional example of the value of confronting differing perspectives came in a conversation between a student and professor. After a tense conversation and confrontation between them, the student's perception was that

"It was not good, it was not bad...I did not leave with a greater power or position. [They] did not leave with a greater power or position. Neither of us were diminished by it either...it was a necessary conversation...the quality of the conversation was good [although] it did not resolve the way I would have liked it to" (p/l, p. 7,3).

The benefits of confrontation can be more fully realized by giving attention to the making of the ground or the creation of a receptive space to facilitate that process - all of which requires the interrelatedness of an explicit effort, a sense of safety, a moderating of the energy, and talking from the head and the heart.

Moderating the Energy

The whole notion of how people talk to each other and a sense of safety is related to the energy present in the conversation. A recurring theme was that:
* Moderating the level of energy between the fast, intense-paced energy and a slow, belabored energy level contributes to improving the receptivity of the space holding the conversation.

* Within this middle range of energy there needs to be time for reflection, time to listen and absorb, time to learn, respect for the differing paces of people, and less demand to juggle multiple dynamics simultaneously, thus contributing to learning across differences.

* Especially where there is fear or pain, if the energy is too fast paced, it narrows the "space between" people so that there is not enough room to bring up the differences in a spirit of receptive consideration. This narrowing of the space can contribute to people either avoiding the confrontation or coming at each other with such passion that safety is jeopardized, and it is difficult for anyone to hear and be open to influence.

This perception that the amount of energy in the conversation has an effect on the quality of the conversation was verbalized by one who said,
"some of the conversations where you really learn about the other person or about the topic is when it is more of a medium range energy level. The higher the energy level gets, the more it tends to be just your own personal... stuff that I am just slinging out there... I get too involved in the conversation to really be a good listener... the really low energy conversations tend to just not produce any reactions whatsoever and the conversation dies" (p/n, p.13,3).

Another person felt similarly, specifically regarding emotionally laden issues like race and gender saying that

"a high energy and high personal involvement can get in the way if you are looking for an objective relationship from an emotional idea" (p/d, p. 18,3).

A third person described a conversation which was

"very much enhanced" when "there was good participation from everybody... but you know it is funny, the energy level, people were a lot more subdued... which from my perspective would lead me to believe... when I am listening and when I'm being reflective, I am a lot more subdued" (p/k, p. 22-23,3).

Yet another person talked about what in the context contributed to good conversation as,

"the environment... environment of silence... coming to the conversation with respect... and also with anticipation" (p/h, p. 16,2).

The combination of silence, respect, and anticipation speaks to a space made more receptive by the moderating of the energy.
Often within the space, however, there is so much energy and activity that they talked about having to juggle many things just to be fully in the conversation. Someone described what was going on in their minds often as they talked to themselves and how this internal monologue gets in the way.

"there is always a monologue going on... sometimes I can still it quite well and then there are other times when it is very noisy... particularly if something I heard that someone else said stimulated monologue...I get busy thinking about that. It takes me away from the conversation so I don't listen. Sometimes I really miss stuff. Sometimes I can sort of do two things at one time" (p/f, p. 6,2).

If the energy level of the conversation is very rapid, this juggling of two things at once becomes even more difficult. Another similar complication was shared by an individual who said,

"When there is energy in a conversation, it is a tough balance...sometimes people stop listening because they want to make a point... [like] today...I am not sure that there was a barn-raising type conversation going on when each individual is making their own individual point... whenever there was a stop in the conversation, a number of people tried to speak...like a vying...for their voices to be heard" (p/o, p. 4,2).

Thus, occasionally slowing the conversation, even into silence, can help moderate the energy level to give people time to listen and create a more receptive space for the consideration and reflection upon what is being spoken.
Intensity named as passion seemed in some cases to be somewhat more problematical. A participant talked about a changing energy level that they referred to early in the conversation as

"passion...energy I guess did get in the way because we were both rather energized to get our points across" but said that "the energy and spunk tapered off as our conversation began to become more productive" (p/l, p. 17-18,3).

This same person said, however, about another conversation with someone else, the energy was

"a very positive thing...where we were building on each other" (p/l, p. 17-18,3).

With this person the nature of the passion - getting our points across or building on each other's point of view - seemed to be the importance difference.

A similar intensity that was less productive can be seen in another individual's conversation where one person's energy level and passion was much stronger than that of the other two people, leading to this assessment,

"[name] had a lot of energy...the need to try to persuade me into feeling differently than I feel or felt. [They were] invested...[and have] a lot of investment passion...So I think it very much influenced the outcome" (p/c, p. 21,3).

In this case, the speaker felt pushed and did not feel positive about the outcome. Someone else talked about working with a colleague who was
more observant than they are and able to see when the pace needed to be
slowed down saying,

"[they] would see how things are...many times I would not be
in touch with that and just go on...And [they] would be the
one to tell me to stop first or give them time...[they have] that
gift of perceiving what other people feel" (p/h, p. 4,1).

Sometimes people do need to be given more space to be ready to move
forward, and as is shown here, sometimes there is a need to be able to
work collaboratively to perceive when the energy needs some moderation.

The phenomena of knowing when to be silent, while acknowledging
the intensity in the conversation, was mentioned in talking about a
conversation in which there was

"a lot of energy...not the...frequency of the people speaking
but...synergy and silence too ...synergy in silence. Intensity in
silence" (p/m, p. 21,3).

Sometimes the intense energy of the conversation can be a vital
resource while still not helping people hear each other. In one case, there
was,

"passion for the person's point of view" came forward because
"the issue we were discussing was so fundamental to our sort
of having common ground...to address the opportunities" (p/p,
p. 17-18,3).

This person said the energy was more of a help than a
hindrance
"although...we ended up not feeling well about the situation...I wasn't convinced that there was real agreement about my point of view...I did not leave the conversation with good feelings and I don't think they did either" (p/p, p. 17-18,3).

Overall though, it seemed that in this conversation, the value that they all placed on the opportunity and the issue overshadowed the fact that the conversation was filled with misunderstandings and frustration as seen in the statement that

"we were definitely trying to get at the right answer...if you ignored it and did not think it was important, I think the opportunity we are trying to deal with would not be addressed as well" (p/p, p. 18,3).

Therefore, in this situation there was a shared value and passion. Yet, the conversational space was not a particularly receptive one again raising the concern for the kind of energy or passion that is being expressed. Energy can also be a source of learning. One person said a lot of energy in the conversations

"contributed to the learning...made me become impassioned actually and when I sense that I am very interested in something, I tend to put myself into it. It excites a lot of emotions...I kept thinking about it...It was with me for sometime" (p/h, p. 16-17,3).

In this example, passion and intensity is positive force in the conversation for learning. In other situations, however, passion and intense energy can
contribute to a less receptive space creating obstacles to understanding -
obstacles that need to be anticipated and lessened wherever possible.

When there were intense feelings of fear and pain in a conversation
creating barriers to understanding, the shrinking of the receptive space was
portrayed eloquently as a narrowing -

"space that you allow yourself to acknowledge each other's
differences is really, really getting narrow...the more you get
closer to each other...in conversation, the less space you have
to reach that person because you are bringing together so
strongly a difference... that you can't see that there is a way
of dealing with this difference" (p/m, p. 5,3).

When there is fear or pain, the space between people can become so
narrow that there is no room to bring up the differences in a spirit of
receptive consideration. Instead, the tendency is to either avoid the
confrontation or to come at the others with such passion that it is difficult
for anyone to hear.

The person who told about a class conversation in which they had a
strong difference of opinion with two people, delineated a contrast in their
response to each of the two individuals that was related to the nature of the
previous relationships and to the kind of energy between them. In one
relationship

"there has...been an allowing each other to be with it
[differences] and that is okay"
while with the other person,

"I feel very much like [name] wants to change me...don't feel a lot of room for us to accept each other's differences. I just don't feel that same space" (p/o, p. 13,3).

This description sounds again like the narrowing of the space, there not being enough room between them. Another person used very similar language in describing a conversation in which they felt very unreceptive saying,

"there is something in [them] that needed to try to change me, needed to try to persuade me, and be something that I did not want to be instead of just hearing me and just acknowledging that [they] heard me" (p/lc, p. 17,3).

When there is a narrowing of the space within which people are allowed to be different, the receptivity to learning or being influenced to reach new understandings is similarly narrowed.

Distractions from the conversation also play a role in the focus of one's energy. Extraneous, but apparently important, distractions that interfere with the focusing of energy include time pressure and unmet expectations. In one case, the telephone conversation had interrupted the person and their work that they

"had to get back to. I needed to get back to the other work I was doing...time became a constraint...I...started focusing on other stuff..that I was doing" (p/p, p. 14,3).
Another example was when someone said,

"I had a class later that night to TA [teaching assistant]. I was not feeling relaxed...those would all be factors in my just feeling like this is not going anywhere and I want to leave" (p/c, p.18,3).

Overall, focused and moderate energy seem to allow for opening of the space to hold both the active involvement and speaking with the reflection upon what is being said. The slowing of the pace to a middle range may bring the "order" required to unleash the creative power of "chaos."

Talking from the Head and the Heart

Throughout most of the descriptions of people's conversations in all 55 interviews, people were simultaneously talking from the head (the cognitive, more analytical process) and talking from the heart (the affective, more emotive process). Very few people talked about conversation as being just cognitive or just affective while almost all saw some combination in these conversations that had especially stood out for them. Thus,
* A more receptive space is created for conversation across differences when people are using their heads (the cognitive) integrated with using their hearts (the affective) as well, and when both aspects are valued.

Not surprisingly though given the research on gender differences in language (Tannen, 1990; Case, 1993), there do seem to be some differences among the women and men in describing the value they place on the expression of the emotional (affective) and the rational (cognitive). Perhaps women are more comfortable at least in verbalizing the value of the affective or emotional dimensions of the conversation.

In at least three cases, concern was expressed about too much emotionality interfering in the conversation, especially around sensitive issues. Each of these three people were males, with no females expressing that concern. One man said

"I...was trying to intellectualize my emotional reactions in part because I was afraid of... what might happen if the emotions started getting played around with. I was afraid I would get out of control because...it is a sensitive issue. And my gut feeling was that several other people were doing the same thing...I think people were trying to talk about them in a detached way...to bring them to light without actually being overwhelmed by them" (p/n, p. 3,3).

Another man said,
"I think feelings kind of got in the way of a good conversation" (p/p, p. 13,3).

The third man said,

"I tend to have conversations where I don't have to involve me if it is at all possible. I tend to think that people are much more comfortable in an objective environment where they do not have to put themselves into the fray with me. And I have gotten used to working that way" (p/d, p. 4-5,3).

In contrast, one woman made a distinction between

the "analytical versus non-analytical" saying that

"if you are too analytical, you just break... conversation into pieces...takes out...the heart of it, maybe the dessert or...taste...[on the other hand] sharing some real personal thing, I think that is a wonderful way of growing the conversation because it gives meaning to it. But...if I analyze it...that really breaks the potential of the dialogue to emerge and grow in a much more fruitful, meaningful way for the entire group...when somebody starts analyzing too much...I feel stifled, stifled for me and for that person...this is a stop...sign" (p/f, p. 7-8,3).

In this narrative, the distinction between talking with the head - the analytical - and talking from the heart - the more affective - is eloquently articulated. Yet, the distinctions drawn here illustrate the struggle in speaking and in listening to hold both the head and the heart in the conversation.
A man spoke also to the importance of not overemphasizing the head, or intellectual as they called it, when they talked about a topic for a class discussion that was especially relevant and memorable for them.

"The topic got my juices going for days ahead of time. And I sense other people's as well. There is nothing like a hot topic...engaged in more levels than in the intellectual" (p/f, p. 12,2).

Another man talked about how the conversation he was describing had resulted in him thinking about how critical the inclusion of both the cognitive and the affective dimensions are in his consulting work saying,

"it helped me think more about...the importance of relating on an affective level, before you can understand on a cognitive level...one thing that definitely became even more clear for me...the impossibility of understanding each other at the cognitive level, without working also on how we are working as a group and relating" (p/b, p. 11,2).

He went on to say that the new understanding he had reached as a result of the conversation was of,

"the intertwining of the affective and cognitive relating, that is something which became more and more important. An issue I am most sensitive about...that [it] is not good I think to have that either/or option. I think having such a conversation [which included the affective] as we had is worthwhile to create a fertile ground to talk about this [more cognitive topic]" (p/b, p. 16-17,2).

In an earlier interview about another conversation, this person said,
"I think by talking in this rational way, we were not able to connect any further" (p/b, p. 11,1).

Here, several months earlier, the beginning of his awareness of the limits of the purely rational can be seen.

The value of this kind of realization is explained by someone who talked about how much easier it is sometimes to talk from the head than from the heart.

"in a conversation there is some kind of fear of people going lower than [the] cognitive level and touch really the heart of their problem, what that means to you. Sometimes it happens, but not often...Because I think going below, means revealing yourself more. Revealing your mind is not as hard as revealing your heart" (p/m, p. 2,2).

Another powerful, affective force in some conversations that was emphasized was pain. One person talked about how with some issues like race, there is a

"personal, historical, and generational pain" (p/m, p. 6,3)

that can create formidable barriers to creating a receptive space for conversation where understanding can be increased. Experiencing this kind of pain obviously touches the heart deeply. It affects the facility a person has in giving expression to that pain.

A metaphor that was given to illustrate the personal internal struggles and pain in a conversation about race was of a river. In the
metaphor, resisting the pain inhibits the flow of the river, or of the conversation, in contrast to allowing it to flow:

"I somehow sense that the issue.. has to be touched but...it can't be touched...issue has deep, deep pain around it, the racial issue. Pain that...both parties are trying to acknowledge... [the] conversation.. is going against the flow of the river and [there is] the difficulty of letting go of that resistance and just flow with the river. As much as you try to resist... the flow of the river, the tendency is... to drown. If you let it go, just emerge and just come up to the surface of the river, then you go again, flowing. I think it is a very difficult conversation... because I saw people struggling and... being scared or being insecure, avoiding pain... I think the closer you are physically... or emotionally to that issue, I think the further you are from developing a good understanding and engaging dialogue. There is not that space in between... because there is no flow, you feel more pain (p/m, p. 5,3).
"It is painful for both parties to acknowledge that there is a common ground... because the pain for both parties I think was so deep and so intense" (p/m, p. 10,3).

This person gives voice to the barriers that pain deeply rooted in people's "personal, historical, and generational" experiences creates. It illustrates how difficult it is to find a receptive space where the fears and judgements can be suspended long enough to genuinely speak and listen together to explore the differences - rather than having the differences pulled under the surface by the resistance and drowning the potential learning. Being able to stay present in the temenos and creating a sacred space may be the only way to confront these differences and work through the pain.
Summary

Hearing these voices dispels any illusions that a receptive space to hold the intense differences of valuing and values, the anger and pain, the joy and excitement, the fear and energy that accompany those differences would be easy to create. Yet, the potential of providing this receptive holding environment is worth the effort. With care, this space can allow for the surfacing of differences and inevitable conflicts which move us "toward the light, toward new, more complex understandings" (Wheatley, 1994, p. 108). The potential of providing a holding environment that can make "possible the emergence of...innate potential" (Josselson, 1992, p. 29) and that can nurture the primacy of relationships offers too much hope not to make the effort. What then can be learned from these voices?

Making an effort to understand, to be understood, to speak to be heard, and swallowing some things along the way is fundamental. Attending to the space between in conversations requires being both proactive and receptive. Nachmanovitch refers to these two necessary phenomena as the "Creative and the Receptive, making and sensing...a resonant pair, matching and answering each other" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.34). The sense of safety that comes with acceptance, respect, recognition, flexibility, openness, and patience is of primal importance. A safe space is
one that tries to avoid judgement, blame, fear, ill intent, power plays, exclusion, rudeness, coercion. Being aware of modulating the energy providing space for listening and reflecting while not suppressing participation deserves serious attention. Explicitly supporting the exploration and confrontation of differences while being proactive and creative about building the common ground and making a safe and receptive space for the confrontation is vital. Valuing the differences and the relationships that can hold those differences requires a sacred space where all can be mutually attended to and each person feels a deep choicefulness.

Creating a receptive space to explore differences in conversation is a tall challenge. Yet, not to create that space leaves us with the differences being pulled under the surface by the resistance and the drowning of the potential of too many individuals and the potential learning that they can offer each other.
Introduction

In the previous chapter, the focus was on the creation of a receptive space to explore differences in conversation. The essence of this chapter focuses on the speaking of and listening to the voice in conversation - the voice that comes into the receptive space. The artistry required is to delicately hold the polarity - and the accompanying tension - of speaking and action in partnership with listening and reflection in the carefully crafted receptive space.

The action dimension of this polarity incorporates the assertion of the full, unencumbered, inclusive voices. The reflection dimension encompasses the deep listening to hear and receive the unfamiliar and uncomfortable as well as the familiar and pleasant. This action pole represents those qualities most often associated with the masculine while the reflective pole holds those qualities that are generally thought of as the feminine. In the words of Marie Fleming,
it is difficult to see how an analysis that draws uncritically on categories that have traditionally privileged male experiences can produce liberating results for either sex" (Fleming, 1992, p. 250).

Therefore, the inclusion of both the feminine and the masculine qualities is critical.

The action pole is also representative of more individualistic cultures while the reflective pole resonates with more collectivistic cultures. Thus, given both of these phenomena, transformational change may be necessary within most Western cultures to fully include the reflective pole. In conversation, the intention needs to be holding both, not exactly in balance, but perhaps with a rhythmic symmetry that allows each to live fully in its own spontaneity.

As with any polarity, the holding of the tension can allow for its creativity to thrive. However, the creativity requires a genuine valuing - attending to - of each part with its unique differences and a recognition that each part is incomplete without the other. As noted in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter, Freire speaks directly to the essentiality of integrating action and reflection in saying that "reflection - true reflection - leads to action...[and] action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection”
Similarly, Kolb emphasizes the necessity of both Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation in learning. He points out that "If conflicts are resolved by suppression of one mode and/or dominance by another, learning tends to be specialized around the dominant mode and limited in areas controlled by the dominated mode" (Kolb, 1984, p. 31).

Grounding the Model Concepts of Ideal Speech and Ideal Listening

In the initial model of Good Conversation as described in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter, Habermas's Ideal Speech (Geuss, 1985) was extended with the complementary process of Ideal Listening. The intent was to say that the assertion of speaking with full voice in Ideal Speech must be integrated with the reflection of listening fully if differences are genuinely to be explored in Good Conversation. The action and reflection polarity is encompassed within these two concepts and is similar to the polarity Nachmanovitch proposes, "The Creative and the Receptive, making and sensing, are a resonant pair, matching and answering each other...[in] the eternal dialogue between making and sensing" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 34,79).
Within the concepts of Ideal Speech and Ideal Listening, there were numerous elements outlined in the proposed model of Good Conversation in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter. To ground the model in people's experiences, I will cite remarks made during the interviews specifically relevant to Ideal Speech and to Ideal Listening. However, as these two phenomena overlap and hardly stand alone in conversation, I will be focusing primarily on the comments of the participants that relate to the "eternal dialogue" between speaking and listening - to the interaction. I am focusing on this interplay between the active and reflective because it is the heart of the participant's comments and because it is in this dynamic interaction that the essence of the conversation seems to come to life in people's lives.

Emerging from the interview conversations are five themes relevant to this expression of voice through the active and reflective. I begin this chapter with a description of the interaction that I am calling the Interplay of Speaking and Listening, followed by the five other themes:

* The Interplay of Speaking and Listening

* Allowing for Silence

* Building Through Speaking and Listening

* Recognition Through Speaking and Listening
* Empathy from Listening to Speaking

* Change Through Speaking and Listening

* Learning Through Speaking and Listening

After each of the descriptions, I include quotations from the interviews illustrating how these phenomena are experienced in people's conversations. The chapter closes with brief conclusions about these five themes related to the interplay of speaking and listening.

As these interview comments on voice are read, they must be heard within their original context. That context is of the stories as briefly described in the previous chapter.

The Interplay of Speaking and Listening

Throughout the interviews with the participants, the "eternal dialogue" between the assertive process of speaking and the receptive process of listening was everpresent. When both the active and the receptive voices are in rhythmic symmetry with each other, the quality of the conversation is enhanced.

This interplay seems to underlie the experience of a participant in this example. When asked in what ways a specific conversation had been a good conversation, they responded with
"When you are speaking, you speak with the other person as a consideration in mind...And listening, you have to listen to hear what is said, rather than having a preformed opinion which does not allow change...I thought this conversation had both of those pieces present for the entire conversation" (p/d, p. 9,3).

Listening to hear, rather than with a preformed opinion, while speaking

with consideration for the other embodies the interplay of action and reflection.

Another example was expressed as

"The more I am able to actually hear what is being said, the easier it is to find my own voice. The more I tend to be reacting to what is being said, the more I tend to be just making noise" (p/n, p. 14,3).

For this person there seems to be the creative tension of the polarity present

when they find their voice to speak through the hearing from others. Yet,

when they react (as with a preformed opinion), they are just "making noise," rather than being receptive to hearing something new.

Within the active part of the conversation, there are complex and

mutual responsibilities for each person to be both expressive and to give

space for the voice of others. For example, when one person was asked if they had been able to find their voice in a conversation, the response was,

"I was not aware of having to find it" (p/k, p. 23,3).
When asked if they knew why, they said because there was

a natural flow to the conversation where they were

"aware of giving other people space to speak ... when I needed
to speak... it was just naturally flowing... not at all concerned
about needing to find it [voice]" (p/k, p.23,3).

This person described their current learning being related to the importance

of teamwork and how important it is to

"help provide space for other people to be with theirs [voice]"
(p/k, p.24,3).

As one feels the deep choicefulness of having their own voice, they can be

more generous in the giving of voice to others.

There were two people who illustrated this process with dance

metaphors. One person thought of the conversation as one where you are -

"speaking from the heart and when you feel very, very open
and vulnerable... you are able to listen and to speak from that
sense. There playfulness... has an upside and a downside. It
can be used to dismiss or diminish... but used a certain way, I
think it can be a wonderful part of the conversation because it
gives it a dancelike quality... dance... where when the energy is
there and there is music and you are always changing, you
are moving. You are in contact, you move away, you are
back in touch" (p/f, p. 15,1).

This quality of being in movement, both toward each other and away from
each other, and yet in dance together throughout is seen in the second
metaphor as well. This metaphor was of the conversation as a group dance-

"not a choreographed plan...just kind of a spontaneous modern ballet with members intertwined...then go away from the group and spin pirouettes and come back... spontaneous fluidity" (p/o, p. 15-16,2).

Bringing these images into the verbal interaction, one of the Professional Fellows called the process of interaction in a good conversation an

"exchange...there is someone who is the initiator of a conversation [who] says something and someone receives it and digests it and returns it and then it is received again" (p/x, p. 14,4).

A quite different kind of conversation without this exchange was described by a Fellow who said,

"I was not talking about my problems really as [they were]...I was keeping my own problems to myself. But I was enjoying listening" (p/t, p. 3,4).

While this person felt they enjoyed and benefited from the conversation, towards the end of the interview as part of their reflection upon the conversation they said,

"How interesting...now you have talked to me...asking questions about conversations. What I am not sure is, the conversation should be both ways I believe to be a good conversation...my conversation that I described...was mainly
one person talking to me, and...I was receiving...my contribution was mainly listening” (p/t, p. 9,4).

As this person reflected on their conversation, they decided that a good conversation needed to be more of a two-way exchange than they had realized before.

Another Fellow in describing a conversation that stood out for them and one from which they had learned said,

"the conversation went back and forth...[they] would talk and I would talk and so there was an interplay...if you don't have that, it gets boring for one part or the other" (p/t, p. 10,4).

When asked what contributes to good conversation, this Fellow responded,

"The conversations were good when both people are receptive to the other point of view... people have to be willing to listen and there has to be a give and take...if it is one person pontificating their view...it is not much of a conversation. You might as well listen to a videotape. If both people are adding something to it, then it could be something special. But you have to be willing to listen" (p/t, p. 13,4).

This person then used a metaphor to illustrate their image of a good conversation.

"I view it like a ping pong game or tennis or something. The ball has to constantly go back and forth. If it stays too much on one side, that's it. It gets dropped. So it has got to stay in motion and people have to be responding” (p/t, p. 15,4).
When this kind of back and forth interplay is not occurring, a very different type of conversation results. One Fellow described a person they perceived as not able to engage in this kind of sharing as

"always sort of at-bat. And never receiving. And I think when that happens, you don't have any meaningful interchanges" (p/x, p. 3,4).

Thus, the interplay and exchange among people in the conversation is critical to what most people identify as Good Conversation.

Allowing for Silence

* Silence can assist in promoting the eternal dialogue of speaking and listening by offering opportunities for reflection, respect for the people’s differing conversational tempos, space to hear and consider, and learning.

* Allowing for silence is not the same as making or requiring silence, but instead is being attuned to when the silence is full of energy and possibility. It is when people are given the opportunity to listen into the silence.

The value of this space for silence was described when a participant was asked what helped them listen, and their response was,
"a brief moment of silence...I either speak or listen to someone and think...and then respond. It is a give and take. You can't take at the same time and give at the same time. It is almost the same motion...the flow is very important to me in conversing with anyone, either in a group or...one-to-one" (p/m, p. 4,2).

Another person described the feeling they had during the dissertation interviews where they felt they were given the -

"space and time I need to express myself and that is what helps me to be here and say what I want to say" (p/a, p.18,3).

This person also said they felt both respected and valued in the conversation, reminiscent of the elements of a receptive space.

Of course, there are different kinds of silence as expressed by someone who said,

"there can be silence that...you feel people are really thinking about it [conversation]. And there can be silence where you just feel, who cares...That to me is bad conversation" (p/i, p. 16,2).

In addition, some people are uncomfortable with silence. One person said that whenever it is quiet too long, they have to start reading to fill the time. Someone else said that although they used to be very uncomfortable with silence, now

"I am becoming more comfortable with silence. I am not totally comfortable yet, but I use it as an insightful period. It is a period for reflection" (p/d, p. 7,2).
An example of reflection and use of silence was described by someone telling about a conversation they had on the telephone: In the conversation, they were helping the other person make a decision. During the first part of the conversation, they thought the decision was clear and had been made, and then -

"about halfway through the conversation, we started together re-evaluating that...I was brought around to say well wait a minute, let me back off a little bit. Let's re-evaluate whether or not we made the correct decision..." (p/p, p. 5,1).

There was a new found willingness in this individual to slow down, reflect, and reconsider what was being discussed. This willingness grew out of their ongoing efforts to listen more carefully and to speak in response to the other person rather than just speaking out of their own immediate thoughts and feelings.

These uses of silence as a time to take in what is being said before moving forward to action again seems related to creating a receptive space and the preference by many for a middle range of energy. This phenomena is expressed by one who said,

"we need to get out of the noise, [to] attend to the true self" (p/j, p. 5,2).

Another person, who said they have a tendency to talk a lot, said they became aware that
"Listening is really a key part of the conversation. Air time may not be a key issue" (p/2, p.7,2).

The eternal dialogue of speaking and listening is promoted if the listening continues occasionally into the silence.

Building Through Speaking and Listening

Integration of the creative and the receptive, of the action and the reflection, can lead to the fusion of new horizons of meaning through a building process of interaction. Nachmanovitch illustrates this building process when he describes when "sounds equal music." He gives a metaphor that I think can occur in a Good Conversation, as well as with music, when this polarity is being fully held.

When each sound answers a question posed by some other sound in the total group, when each larger grouping of sounds answers the other groupings, when the field of sounds both questions and answers the field of thought and emotion in us (both listeners and players), then we have music. That is, the multilayered aggregate possesses wholeness and integrity (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 172).

When each person has listened and reflected deeply enough to be able to respond in ways that create a "field of sounds" questioning and answering the "thoughts and emotions" in all of those participating, then the music of Good Conversation has been made.
* Building through the speaking and listening of conversation

requires engaging in the conversation with focus, respect,
trust, and affirmation where ideas are built upon, related to
each other, and often subtly interwoven.

* Only through listening deeply is it possible to respond to
what has actually been said, and not said, on multiple levels
and yet also continue to move the conversation forward.

This process of building through the conversation is similar to the
way musical themes are played by a jazz combo. This kind of response
requires the fullest inclusion and expression of speaking and listening, of
making and sensing, and the ongoing “eternal dialogue” between them.

One of the stories we were told in an interview was a rich example
of the building process within a field of sounds. The story was about a
private conversation between two people who discovered they were sharing
similar relocation adjustments in moving to Cleveland and entering
graduate school. Yet, there were some strong differences in their situations
as well. Following the private conversation, one of the people brought up
this topic in a conversation in a group setting. The other person from this
previous conversation was telling the story in the interview. Their
description brings to my mind the "music of Good Conversation" as given
above. When the group discussion began, the person telling the story said,

"because I think hearing it the second time, I heard [them]
saying something that I did not hear the first time" (p/c, p.
6,2).

As they listened, at first it was hard to hear but then they realized they
were hearing in a new way -

"I heard in [their] tone. Maybe that is what allowed me to
listen to [their] tone more, is that I did not have to listen to
[their] words any more. I heard [their] words before. So
this time, I was listening to how [they] said it. The way...I
think that is what enabled me to hear the levels or layers of
what I think [they were] trying to say...allowed me to hear
what was really going on, instead of just the words" (p/c, p.
7-8,2).

During this group conversation, these two people were sitting next to each
other, and the listener began to hear multiple levels of meaning being
expressed. When asked what stood out about the conversation, the
storyteller said,

"sitting next to [them] and not seeing [their] face, and not
focusing on [their] words so much...that was a real interesting
experience, because I am reliving it with you, realizing that
that made it possible...perhaps if I had not had the
conversation before, if I had not heard [them] use the words
before. I might not have come out at the same place.
Perhaps if I had been looking at [them] instead of just
listening...maybe just a lesson...that listening deeply is
wonderful. It is difficult. Sometimes you get impediments"
(p/c, p. 14,2).
This person was listening and responding to a “field of sounds.” Later in a follow-up conversation between these two people, this individual responded with “questions and answers” to the “thoughts and emotions” of the other individual in ways that speak to the “eternal dialogue of making and sensing.” They were creating the “music” of good conversation.

Often in the interviews, this flow of the conversation was specifically named as a building phenomena encompassing the full polarity of action and reflection. One person described such a conversation as

"the building upon an idea. It was not that people could not get their own ideas in there, but...there was this interweaving that was done very gently and subtly, with respect for the ideas that were already on the table" (p/o, p. 14,2).

The interplay of listening carefully to what is said and speaking directly to what is heard can be seen here. Yet, this respectful consideration of the ideas of others is also a characteristic of the receptive space discussed in the previous chapter.

One person talked about their previous experience of having these kinds of building conversations in their earlier work experience much more often and more easily than in this current group context saying,

"you build up a common vision and at the end you cluster things, and you have a kind of materialized group idea about what are the important concepts...to relate those ideas to each other in order that you build new meaning ...that is not done
here...so difficult...I think they are in a competing way [here]
...to show off...a reaction of mine is then to become
silent...very bad reaction. Not a helpful reaction" (p/b, p. 16-17,1).

This person's perception was that differences in the group, the lack of trust,
the large size of the group, the competition, and the showing off interfered
with the building of a common vision and new meaning within the group.

A Professional Fellow described a different kind of interaction that
they said contributed to good conversation as

"being with a group of people who can listen together to a
speaker rather than interrupting...kind of a flow...able to pick
up on what was said before without jumping over" (p/s,
p.9,4).

Another person used the barn-raising metaphor to
illustrate this building process -

"Someone puts some timber out there and starts to try and
build a room and other people stay with that for a while" (p/f,
p. 13,2).

This idea of focusing on a "room" or a topic was mentioned by
numerous people. In one case, the person said,

"It was a good conversation for me because... there was
focus...Sometimes...it is just like throwing ideas and then they
just fall off. But...the people seemed to be discussing their
particular topic...so there was focusing, and it was very
enriching for me because...it clarified by own stance" (p/h, p.
1,2).
One Professional Fellow commented that one thing that inhibits good conversation is

"when the question or comment...is too open-ended...I figure, he must be talking to them. And they figure, he must be talking to her. It doesn't really touch anybody" (p/v, p. 13,4).

Another individual remarked that it was

"easier for me to understand, to listen...if I have a feeling for what the theme is about and if we are not springing from one theme towards another. There is a kind of topic...or issue ...I have the feeling that it was more building on each other's ideas" (p/b, p. 10,2).

Thus, it seems that really hearing and staying with themes or ideas long enough to try to develop them, while respectfully contributing new perspectives, is an important dimension of good conversation for some people.

This building kind of exchange was contrasted to conversations where -

"you have to defend your position...as if you were attacked...But [here]...people would ask questions. Some would respond, some would ask questions, that kind of interchange. I found it very delightful, and I tend to learn more even if I am just listening" (p/h, p. 2,2).

Elements of a receptive space once again seem to be needed for the building process to flourish. This perspective was recounted by someone as-
"everyone was involved in the conversation... [when] people were silent, they were deep in their thoughts, trying to...just think about it. The people who were vocal, they affirmed their ideas and digested other people's ideas and throwing back...There was a nice flow to the conversation" (p/m, p. 1,2).

Yet, another person depicted a conversation as a good one where -

"we more than usual talked to each other and listened better than we have. I do not think that people felt shot down" (p/o, p. 13,2).

The immense difficulty of building on each other's comments across intense differences in conversation, however, is all too familiar. One conversation was characterized as

"an action and a reaction...the chemistry coming out...As it began to unfold, I was very uncomfortable because I saw it coming as an open hostility. I was pleased with the way it developed...no hostility shown, just some very strong...opinions...they were very respectful of each other in offering those opinions" (p/d, p. 4-5,2).

Even in the midst of these strong differences of opinion here, however, the interaction of the active and reflective could be developed respectfully.

The building process is often associated specifically with affirmation. When asked for a metaphor for good conversation, someone responded -

"Good conversation is mutual, it is interactive...there is a dynamic happening... There is something happening back and forth, and it is building up and up and up...When my point is
affirmed, and someone picks it up, it reaffirms me to say, okay, I'm giving this a shot, and I will throw a different angle one it. And it just feels good" (p/l, p. 14,2).

This affirmation seems related here to elements of safety present in a receptive space. Once the person feels affirmed and safe, they are more willing to risk.

The role of affirmation can be seen again, where after a particularly stressful confrontation, there were some follow-up conversations. When one of the people involved in the confrontation was asked if they changed their point of view after the subsequent conversations, they said,

"the conversation helped soften what I was feeling...I think when one gets affirmed, as well as when one just begins to find a voice again...I left there just feeling a lot more comfortable with the group, a lot more comfortable with myself" (p/l, p. 17,2).

An especially appropriate metaphor was given that seems to illustrate the essence of the building process that was spoken to throughout many of the interviews. It was of a small jazz combo, reminiscent of the "field of sounds" that Nachmanovitch spoke about above. This process of the jazz combo playing music together was described saying,

"Where one instrument says something and then another instrument sort of starts with that and starts to put a different twist on it... then play with it for a while and in the end, it is something completely different... But at the same time, all of the instruments are working together and...still shaping the
direction of the whole. It is not like...just one person...is not entirely able to go off complete[ly] different...but... there is a considerable amount of freedom to do what they want to" (p/n, p. 9-10,1).

The jazz combo playing music is an especially apt metaphor for the building interaction of Good Conversation.

Recognition Through Speaking and Listening

Affirmation can be experienced in different ways at multiple levels. Perhaps the most basic form of affirmation is to be recognized and acknowledged by others. Once again the recognition that can come through the interplay of voice is reminiscent of the respect and recognition necessary for a receptive space to hold the conversation.

* Recognition involves letting others in the conversation know that they are seen and heard and requires a response to acknowledge that recognition.

* Recognition and acknowledgement can be given through words, eye contact, nodding, and giving another the space to speak.
* Often as people feel recognized by others, they seem to feel more confident and affirmed from within themselves, contributing to them finding a fuller voice.

* Recognition means attending to people to assure that they know they are heard, included, affirmed, and not alone.

There were instances of recognition recalled throughout the interviews with participants. For example, early in the life of the group, one person who had not spoken very much put forward their ideas in written form at the same time that several others did. However, their paper and ideas were noticed first and discussed at length by the group, giving them the experience of being recognized and acknowledged. At first this person said they felt uncomfortable with this focus and attention, but as the conversation continued, they felt

"more comfortable in terms of what I was saying. And more clarity and maybe even more confirmation through the discussion. Yes, more confirmation...the discussion helped confirm to an even greater extent my beliefs...I was very much affirmed in what I was saying. I believed in what I was saying... more from the inside and it was somewhat reaffirmed by some of the people who shared" (p/p, p. 6&3,2).

Another person talked about a conversation where they offered a quite different perspective from others being presented. They noticed two
things occurred right away. One was that one person disagreed with them.

The second thing,

"the bigger thing that I noticed was the number of heads shaking yes. That I had perhaps struck a chord, or I was saying something that had meaning to them...It was almost like I was hitting more similarities than differences" (p/o, p. 5,2).

What stood out in their perception was the nonverbal recognition they received.

In another case, someone contrasted one conversation from those more typical for them as a time when they very spontaneously spoke and felt recognized.

"I did not think about it. But I felt very different there...was nice...Because I heard people laugh...they saw that I said something that mattered to me, very spontaneous...sometimes I try to have things thought out first before I start speaking. I did not do it here and it was better...I started to talk ...before having clear what I wanted to say" (p/b, p. 7&4,2).

This person indicated the importance of this recognition in the group by going on to say,

"I had the feeling often in this class of being alone...but I found this [day] as a less alone experience, as a more shared experience. More connection...I made more connections...I felt that it was not only me, but the bigger group had more connections, future connections ...concerns or joy...better shared" (p/b, p. 14,2).
Once again the recognition and acknowledgement from others was not only noticed but seemed to be related to the person feeling affirmed and more involved and included in the conversation.

In contrast, when people feel excluded or on the outside, they often do not participate in the speaking and listening, do not feel the same connections to the ongoing flow of the conversation. One person expressed it this way:

"I think what inhibits people from talking about themselves, me, I feel that way... [because] I am on the outside of this group" (p/i, p. 17,2).

One of the Professional Fellows chose a conversation to talk about in the interview because it stood out as very different for them in the group of Fellows saying,

"throughout this program, I felt very much the odd-man out and what am I doing here... whatever I have to give, to contribute to the group is not appreciated, is not thought of as something of value to them. And that maybe is why that particular conversation was so nice for me, because I had...something of value to them...that was a kind of rare thing" (p/v, p. 5,4).

After this conversation where they felt they had offered "something of value" - been recognized and affirmed - they said,

"I felt better about me...trying to figure out just exactly why. I guess just that my point of view was valid" (p/v, p. 10,4).
Another person put this perspective forward very straightforwardly saying,

"I know that was what I was feeling. That I wanted to be taken seriously" (p/e, p.1,1).

Someone else responded similarly in talking about a group conversation where they expressed a quite different point of view. During the discussion several people acknowledged (though not necessarily agreed with), this person's point of view. The storyteller said,

"it did make me feel better when [name] and [name] [said that]...I certainly benefited from them saying, 'I see [your] point. Let me just express to you how I feel about that' " (p/g, p. 10,1).

In this case, as in several others above, being agreed with was not as important as feeling seen and heard - recognized. This experience was expressed by a person, when asked how they were feeling during the conversation, who said,

"a feeling of kinship, that somebody else who knows what that experience was about. Light of understanding...in the conversation I felt like yes...it was not a black hole" (p/a, p.3,2).

This recognition and acknowledgement seems to be a precursor to people being able to fully speak and fully listen in conversation. In this last example, the person had been silent and detached throughout the
conversation, but then spoke up for the first time when they felt recognized through this kinship. Then they were able to enter into the dialogue spontaneously and fully.

Empathy from Listening to Speaking

Empathy is best defined by Kohn as cited in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter,

Empathy, in the sense of picturing myself in your situation, is not enough: The point is to see your situation from your perspective which is not identical with mine. I must...see the world as you do, experience your inner life. This, according to Buber, is a 'bold swinging--demanding the most intensive stirring of one's being--into the life of the other'... there is the making of human relationship at its fullest. All of us can strive to receive others this way and in so doing we prepare the ground for genuine dialogue (Kohn, 1986, pp. 137-138).

As discussed in the Literature Review and Theory Development, listening with the kind of empathy which Kohn delineates and the kind of "bold swinging...into the life of the other" that Buber describes can prepare the ground for fuller voice. Implicit in the I/Thou relationship is being open to influence, change, and the possibility of learning with the other in relationship. Empathy involves the kind of trust that Freire says can emerge through the conversation and relationship. It involves also the
appreciation for difference implicit in empathy in the words of Judith Jordan,

Through empathy, and an active interest in the other as a different complex person, one develops the capacity at first to allow the others' differentness and ultimately to value and encourage those qualities that make that person different and unique (Jordan, 1991, 82).

While the valuing and encouraging of differences may not always be reached in the empathy being defined here as an element of voice in conversation, it serves as a model that serves the conversation well to work toward. Thus,

* Empathy in conversation involves being in relationship and a mutuality of trust. It requires engaging with and listening to others, while imagining oneself in another's situation, that is not identical to one's own. It requires hearing more than one's own perspective. Empathy involves "putting oneself in the shoes of the other."

* Empathy requires at least the acknowledgement of the differences among the people in the conversation and an effort to try to appreciate and learn from the differences as possible sources of new understanding and learning.
Empathy is a theme found in many of the conversations that stood out for participants. When people listen with empathy, it contributes to the fuller expression of voice in the interplay between speaking and listening.

This process of making an effort to be empathetic is eloquently described by one person who talked about,

"Trying to be at one with experience behind the perception. And try to relate to that. And try to understand it...a big, big struggle" (p/m, p. 4,2).

In this quote there is a trying to be with the experience of another person as they share their perception and trying to relate to that experience as a precursor to that perception. In this process, the door can begin to open into understanding and appreciating how a different perception can have authenticity and become a source of new learning. Yet, as they said, this process of trying is a big struggle.

Another person also talked about the effort required when they were in a conversation with someone who had been through some experiences different from ones they had had saying,

"I had never been in an abusive situation...yet I attempted to find common ground in [their] experience and mine. To be able to relate it" (p/o, p. 3,1).

Empathy growing out of the relationship was discussed when someone was asked why a conversation was standing out for them. Their reply was,
"[their] ability to listen...[their] ability to create a space, an environment where I could express myself...non-judgmental attitude...compassion...[They] were actually in my shoes. [They] told me, [they] never really wanted to... give me feedback knowing how I would react. But...as a friend I would feel guilty if I did not tell you...there was an element of empathy...very compassionate...very gentle" (p/h, p. 16,1).

The safe, nonjudgmental space of empathetic acceptance within the relationship allowed for difficult speaking and listening to occur. Another example of empathy within a relationship was described by someone else who said they began to

"think about trust. Kind of unconditional friendship...taking a person for who they really are...understanding where the other person is coming from and not judging. And understanding their point of view and who they are" (p/o, p. 15,1).

Implicit in the empathetic response is this "not judging," reminiscent once again of an element of the receptive space required for Good Conversation.

The feelings that accompany empathetic experiences varied. An individual talked about when they are in a counseling relationship,

"when I do not get what the other person is trying to say, and it is so difficult...the person is feeling heavy and I am also feeling heavy...But when I could identify, empathize with what he or she is feeling, what he is thinking, even if I don't agree. Then it is a sense of...a feeling of lightheartedness" (p/h, p. 6,2).

This same person, however, described conversations when
"many times I would cry...because I feel the pain that other people experience and the guilt" (p/h, p. 9,1).

Similarly a Professional Fellow talked about a difficult conversation the group had where they related especially to one person who,

"really tries to find the middle ground. He tries so hard...was having a hard time trying to find a middle ground in this discussion. And he too became more silent...and I think a little perplexed. And I felt kind of bad from him. [They are] a very sweet person and mean[s] really well...I was sorry to see [them] trod upon" (p/s, p. 7,4).

Another Fellow talked about how

"No one has a simple life. If you delve into anyone's life, you will find all sorts of stories...when I talked with [name] was a reaffirmation of that...I think that [they are] probably walking on eggshells at this time...probably wants to make this work as best as possible. So [they] needed to hear that [they are] doing [their] job" (p/x, p. 14,4).

Anticipating the next two themes, through the experience of empathizing, often new awarenesses or learnings can emerge. A Professional Fellow said that

"prior to this time, my experience with training managers has been less than satisfactory...through [name] I could see a legitimacy of industrial training managers and the benefits of what they do" (p/w, p. 11,4).

Another new awareness came for a person who said that the group discussion
"clarified my own stance. I did not necessarily agree with what others were saying, but what I found at the end of the discussion was where do I stand, or where do they stand. And I tried to put myself in the shoes of the other person and tried to look at people in their perspective...now I understand why people would have this train of thought" (p/h, p. 1,2).

This putting oneself in the "shoes of the other" seems to be the essence of empathy in conversation.

Change Through Speaking and Listening

Through the exchange and interplay of speaking and listening, there can be influence or change within people. Although related to learning, when the participants talked about change as described here, it was different.

* Change involved having a change in feelings, being touched emotionally by others, or a kind of integration with others where they were both/all changed by the interaction.

* Change in this context was where people through being asked questions, being listened to, and expressing themselves allow themselves to be open to the change that followed.

This change may also have involved learning, but the people did not explicitly articulate learning.
This dynamic of change is highlighted by a Professional Fellow who said,

"It was like I was changed by the experience. And they were changed by the experience. All of us forever, slightly changed by this. And so in a way, I felt a little emptier because I gave something away. But I felt fuller, because I got something better for what I gave away. So if I gave away ten percent, I got back twenty-five" (p/v,- p. 4,4).

This person went on to say,

"I like a conversation...where both people are like crossing a bridge. I cross over to them, they cross over to me. And you really touch each other, and you really change each other. And that does not often happen, but it happened then... after you have done that, you just can't help but feel closer to the other person. Even if you were having a good fight with them" (p/v, p. 10,4).

During a conversation which included hearing some very difficult feedback, one participant said their friend was

"asking questions that would help you to make you express yourself, and reveal what is inside you...made it easier for me to speak. I have never experienced any conversation with [them] where [they] would interrupt me or [they] would not listen" (p/h, p.8,1).

As questions were asked and answered, change could come through hearing and responding to feedback. Conversations between these two people were portrayed in a metaphor that spoke of the changes they both experienced in their relationship. The metaphor was of two rivers which merge downstream -
"whenever we converse, in the beginning [we] would be very far from one another, but gradually, [we] would merge" (p/h, p. 17,1).

An analogous metaphor from someone else is that of building a bridge together where -

"you make something and there is a joint product. Something emerges out of the interaction, where you can't see this is mine, but that is yours, but it is a new gestalt...very strong...reaching each other. But is more the process of building than the end result" (p/b, p. 21,2).

The process of speaking with full voice when it is difficult to say what needs to be said and of listening fully to allow for change does not happen easily. Without the eternal dialogue of both people making it happen (speaking) while sensing the response and the meaning (listening), it cannot occur. Yet, these good conversations may be more likely -

"when people...are there...taking energy from each other" (p/e, p. 8,1).

Learning Through Speaking and Listening

This section begins with two kinds of primarily cognitive learning. First, examples are given of learning that involved becoming aware of new complexities; changing their minds; and/or seeing new, multiple perspectives. Then there was a substantial learning of concrete, new information. Another whole dimension of learning that is developed next
in this section is the learning that is more explicitly affective and has multiple dimensions. The learning that many people initially had about their personal interactions with others was followed by learning about themselves in a myriad of ways. The final part of this section briefly explores some examples where the cognitive and affective were more explicitly blended.

Through their conversation across differences people were often able to be open to seeing new complexities, new ways of looking at things, and to learning from each other. Thus.

* Learning through conversations usually occurs across or through their differences. The impetus for learning often results from some exploration of those differences, within the context of a relationship. Differences, learning, and conversation are integrally related and are often found in the same conversations.

* Learnings takes on many different forms - some primarily at a cognitive level, some primarily at an affective level, but most often where the cognitive and affective are integrated.

Sometimes as the conversations that participants shared had evolved, people would begin to see that their perceptions were only a small slice of the possibilities. For example, one person said,
"I...became aware of how complicated...how complex a particular topic is...can be looked on from several angles...after the conversation, because I heard some other perspectives, I began also to widen my horizons...perhaps...there is another way of looking at this" (p/h, p. 7,2).

This portrayal articulates the widening of horizons as cited in the previous chapter and discussed by Gadamer and Taylor. Through the "eternal dialogue" of the making and sensing, the speaking and listening in good conversation, people can expand their horizons to see beyond where they were able to see alone.

In another conversation, someone said they

"became aware of the fact that it could be, that term could be perceived as much more complex than just simply a gut approach...It opened my mind more to variations in definitions and perceptions" (p/l, p.5&7,2).

Someone else talked about a conversation they had following a group discussion with one member of the group saying,

"The conversation with [name] did help me to understand [their] perspective" (p/d, p. 9,2).

A Professional Fellow recounted an extended conversation about a topic related to their professional experience. As the conversation began, they said,

"I might have had an opinion that...prevented me from discussing the entire issue completely... might have been a barrier to
conversation because I did have some ideas that I felt fairly strongly about" (p/u, p. 3,4).

However, as the conversation continued, this person went on to say,

"we had a good discussion...there were quite a number of different opinions...Things that I took somewhat for granted, I found a lot of the people in the program had some distinctly different opinions on, because of the background that they were from or the business that they were involved in...got a lot of opinions out...one of the things that impressed me...was just the willingness of everybody to offer the opinion" (p/u, p. 1,4).

When asked if anything was clarified for them during the conversation, their response was

"I continued to push them, and they continued to push me. I got a sense of where they were coming from...it became clear to me...I learned some things that changed my mind on some things based on the conversation that we had" (p/u, p. 8, 4).

The willingness to speak fully one's opinions and the willingness to listen and hear new information led to the widening of this person's horizons and learning through their conversation.

In another case, one Fellow visited another Fellow at their place of work as the two prepared to work together on a project, and they talked for several hours. When the Fellow was asked if anything was clarified during this conversation, the response was
"That radical change is perhaps more...ubiquitous, perennial...me and my little organization are not alone. Just hearing what [name] was going through, it became clear in my mind that this is more of the rule than the exception. Other things...yes. It helped put focus on these individuals [affected by the change]...my sensitivity to interpersonal relationships was enhanced. I came away a stronger, better person as a result of it. I like to call that learning" (p/w, p. 10,4).

In response to being asked if they had reached any new understandings during the conversation, they said during the conversation they began to

"understand that a person is not determined or locked in by one's birth...[where a person grows up] is not the ultimate determination of what a person becomes or fails to become" (p/w, p. 13,4).

Another Fellow summed up this often repeated process of having their horizons widened when asked if a conversation had been a good conversation by saying,

"Yes. It is one I will remember. I learned something from [them]" (p/t, p. 13,4).

There are examples in the interviews of this widening of horizons occurring at the macro and more content level and at the micro and more personal level. At the macro level, one participant described a conversation with a German woman who did not believe the Holocaust had ever happened because of the history lessons and history books she had had in school in Germany. After their long conversation, this woman went on to take history courses and read books in the United States exposing herself to
much new information. When the participant was asked in the interview what they became aware of after the conversation they said,

"a sensitivity to people having different ideas and ones you may hate... And I don't live in an absolute world either... about how we can control what people believe to be reality. How we can manufacture truths" (p/d, p. 7,1).

This person talked about the interplay of fully speaking and listening leading to a change in perspective as they began to understand the genuine differences between them and the woman in the conversation by saying,

"in the sincerest sort of way, I was kind of probing her to see if in fact, are you really being square with me or are you just kind of yanking my chain... once I found out that she was really for real... my perspective changed... can we talk about this some more because I am really interested in how you feel, why you feel that way... a real kind of academic exercise, but it was born out of something else... a genuine liking of a friend" (p/d, p.3,1).

Seemingly because of the relationship of friendship here, the person stayed fully engaged. The interchange between them led to a conversation resulting in considerable learning, changed perspectives, and new behavior that is outlined below. This person went on to say the conversation meant to them that

"You just kind of absorb whatever is there... becomes your reality... made me think and check my own historical references... made me acknowledge that I could have been, the books could have been wrong. I would not have thought that from any previous experience about educational materials that I have been exposed to" (p/d, p. 12,1).
One of the significant things about this conversation was the extent of the effect that this conversation had on both people's lives. The German woman had told her husband

"how much she had changed as a result of it" (p/d, p.14,1).

For example,

"It had an impact on her communicating German history to her two children. And it caused me to re-explain World War II to my two children...From a perspective of this is what we have been taught. It is not always right, what you are taught and what you read is not necessarily a truism" (p/d, p. 16,1).

In a different conversation, this same person said they had other new awarenesses through talking with someone who was from a monocultural society, an experience for which they did not

"have any real frame of reference for" (p/d, p. 7,3)

prior to their conversations.

On a more micro level, after a series of group and one-on-one conversations and some feedback being received, one person talked about learning whole new ways of seeing their own personal interactions with others. The effect of this new learning can be seen in this comment -

"if I am more and more successful in approaching things in this [new] way, I think it will change how I act, I interact with people. How I think about personal problems. The extent to which I look to other people for support and reassurance" (p/f, p. 12,1).
The magnitude of the potential learning and its effects here is similar to the previous example with the German woman, but the content is on the micro level of the individual's personal life and relationships with others.

Someone else talked about a conversation they had with a friend. In the conversation, their friend talked about learning to meet new people with the expectation of giving, rather than meeting new people with the fear of anticipation. As their friend talked, they realized they could learn to change their frame of reference as well, saying,

"I have nothing to fear...that startled me a lot because I had noticed that...in a lot of my relationships...I was experiencing...the fear of meeting the unknown...It suddenly changed a lot for me...if...my only objective [was], to give, then I have nothing to fear. And it helped me, and the fear just vanished...it opened up a lot of new spaces for me...It allowed me to become comfortable...not to have as many expectations from others...it was giving me strength" (p/a, p. 3&10,1).

Sometimes the learning was about the interpersonal dynamics within a relationship. In one example, a conversation started with strong differences and anger. Yet, by both people having voice and staying in the conversation, they were able to learn more about each other. There were some new awarenesses that part of their problem was that one was a auditory learner and the other was a visual learner -

"our differences are the way in which I like to hear things, and [person] likes to read things" (p/l, p. 2-4,3).
In the interview when asked if there had been any new learning in a conversation, one person said,

"I don't think I ever put it together...I know I have a different relationship with each of those two individuals, but my reaction...what it evoked inside of me...was a new learning in terms of seeing the difference between the two" (p/o, p. 15,3).

Thus, in these two cases as the people were able to stay in conversation with each other, they were learning.

Several people talked about learning through the interplay of speaking and listening that was specifically relevant to the concerns often expressed in the previous chapter about the need for a nonjudgmental and accepting receptive space. After a series of conversations and the structured reflection of the interview, one person said,

"what the conversation now means to me in terms of the bigger picture is just that I don't [have] to be so quick to judge" (p/i, p. 14-15,2).

Someone else talked about learning through the conversation not to try to change other people's values, as they had in the past, saying,

"I was thinking about when in the future...what stance I would have...like for instance should I force my values on other people...But now I am thinking that what I can only do perhaps is to tell them about my values. And they will be the ones to decide what they want...people make their own decisions, and what I can only do is perhaps tell them how I made my own decisions. What values are important to me. I sort of mirror to them...but I cannot
really make them make decisions like I would make decisions" (p/h, p. 9-10,2).

This person holds a position of authority in their work that extends the importance of this learning even further. In other words, they will have positional influence even without trying, making it especially valuable to learn the importance of others having responsibility for their own decisions.

This dynamic of an interplay between the speaking and listening can also be interfered with by many phenomena such as expectations, ego, projections, defenses, etc. One person talked about hearing many things about a person prior to meeting them. This information became a filter through which they saw and heard the person in their first conversation, feeling their openness being clouded. It was only in the speaking and listening in the interview about eight months after the initial conversation - a structured opportunity for reflection - that they began to be able to hear this new person somewhat more fully. They said that because of all the things they had heard prior to their first meeting, by the time they met,

"to an extent, I almost was prepared for [them] to be a bastard...If [name] and I were in two vacuums that met each other, I don't know if it would have been the same experience that it was...I was inundated...with everybody's opinion of everybody else, and I have tried to separate my own experience with that person from what everybody else is saying...I think I almost would have preferred to have talked with [name] without that" (p/k, p. 5&10,1).
The interview for this study provided an opportunity for the reflection and interplay between speaking and listening to occur leading to new awarenesses -

"this is the first time I have really tried to vocalize what I have been watching in [name]... trying to understand for myself and figuring out how to move forward to establish some kind of a relationship with [them]...it has actually been good for me to talk with you about it because the more that I talk about it...realized there was more for me to learn...this is a challenge for me. It is a learning opportunity" (p/k, p. 5&15, 1).

It seemed that the passage of time and stepping back from the initial conversation that had been so interfered with by the comments of others allowed this person to become more open to learning. The learning involved opening up to the importance of this relationship and to really trying to listen and speak without these filters in this relationship in the future.

Someone also talked about learning what a healing capacity conversation can have saying,

"I had not been aware of the process of conversations healing as much...but they have played an important role."

As a result of the conversation, they said,

"the clarification was that there is value on conversation...value I see it in terms of better understanding our emotional processes...a help in dealing with situations that seem overwhelming. And also in helping...that these emotions do not become an impediment in
your...other activities... or in any other forms of expression" (p/a, p. 1&7-8,2).

This person went on to describe the conversational context of this group as one characterized as

"The thought of learning. And unhurried learning" (p/a, p.12,2).

This person’s learning led to changes in behavior -

"the whole class has helped me get more involved in conversations outside of class. I am taking extra efforts now outside the class to converse with people, to be open and honest" (p/a, p. 10,2).

These new awarenesses for this individual seemed to be facilitated by the context that allowed both for responding spontaneously to something said in the conversation and for the unhurried flow of conversation, reminiscent of the need referred to above for some time for silence and reflection.

Although the word healing was not used, someone else said that a series of conversations both one-on-one and in a group setting were very helpful because

"I think what it did for me is probably put my situation in perspective...[their] vocalizing that gave me a chance to start working on it for myself" (p/c, p. 5&8,2).

In terms of the impact of these conversations, the response for this individual was...
"much more positive. I am not shutting out whole pieces of myself like I was. I am not trying to fit into something I am not. I have opened up my world. I have opened doors" (p/c, p.12,2).

When asked how these conversations changed their intentions to act, they talked about gaining a new perspective that enabled them to see

"that all takes a certain amount of effort...but once you have it, it starts to just blossom and build on itself and it gets easier...it provides energy...And it means all of a sudden you can get lots more done in your whole life, you become a whole person...happened in a way which is fairly typical for me...I focus on someone else's issue and try to understand that person's issue and try to help that person understand that issue. And then, amazingly, I figure out something for myself...I was not even intending to figure out something for myself...but it is amazing how it always seems to...come back. That happens to me a lot" (p/c, p. 13-14,2).

Another individual talked about a conversation with someone that began with strong differences as a

"discussion in which you start with different opinions...a distrust, in which it was possible to reach each other. And as a consequence afterwards, have different feelings about each other and be more able to play again...maybe even...having learned something about it, about myself" (p/b, p. 14,1).

As these two people both spoke and listened through their different opinions and hurt feelings, they were each changed by what they were able to say and what they were able to hear allowing them to learn from each other and to move to a more playful kind of interaction. The interplay of holding the tension of actively expressing their perspectives and of listening
fully to the other, however, was necessary to move beyond the early
distrust and misunderstandings. This person also said that at one point in
the conversation, they actually opened up more to the other person because
the dialogue was improved saying their feelings -

"changed at the moment that I felt more dialogue ...more an
attitude of including, including the other person in it" (p/b, p. 7,1).

They went on to describe that "including the other person" meant to hear
the feedback they were getting about how they come across and how it
affects others and taking that into consideration when they spoke.

Through the process of speaking and listening fully, these people were able
to learn life changing things about themselves resulting in not only changed
attitudes, but also changed behavior.

In another case, a Professional Fellow was describing a very personal
conversation that was an unusual experience for them. As a result of this
conversation, they realized,

"It made me think that perhaps I could have this kind of
conversation more often. That has been the hope...[to] talk openly
about these issues" (p/r, p.6,4).

When asked what this conversation meant to them, the
response was that it brought,
"For the that there are some areas and some problems in my own life that are unresolved. And that one day, I will have to do something about them" (p/4, p. 7, 4).

Similarly, several people talked about how the conversations helped them gain perspective on their own values or priorities, again learning about themselves at a very personal level through the interchange of speaking and the listening with others. A Professional Fellow who was considering some major career changes talked with another Fellow who was quite different from him in terms of work, education, values, style, etc.

Through their ongoing interaction, this Fellow said,

"I learned something from that. In a philosophical sense, to see how somebody works, it makes you check some of your own values. And your own affirmations, what it is that you want to do. And to look at values that you have and say what is important, what is not important" (p/4, p. 11, 4).

Another person described a series of conversations with their parents.

When asked if these were good conversations, the response was,

"Some of them were good. Some of them were defensive. Some of them really were thought-provoking...They made me focus on things that I had thought about...I am glad my parents made me look at. They made me question...what is more important...helping me prioritize what was important" (p/4, p. 7-8, 1).

Again, the interaction in the conversation led to the sharpening of personal values and priorities.
Another kind of personal learning was described by about a half of a dozen people. It was about becoming more aware of ways that they had grown or developed personally. In one situation, a person talked about getting back together with an old friend to discuss a misunderstanding they had had almost a year before and never resolved. As they talked about the misunderstanding and began to see that neither of them had acted in a way to intentionally hurt each other, the storyteller was,

"realizing that I just did not want to get back into that same relationship...I think I actually ended up learning as much about me in this conversation as I did about what happened" (p/n, p. 6,1).

A long-term professional relationship and friendship was described in another interview. After giving a seminar with this friend and colleague, the person in the interview talked about being given some feedback by their friend about some problems in their work. They said in the conversation with their friend, they became more aware of their

"feelings...our relationship...my actions...of the way I responded to the people. The way I did that particular work, that particular seminar... whenever we have a conversation, I always become more aware of myself and my behavior. My values, my ideas" (p/h, p. 9,1).

As a result of the conversation, there was some personal learning and changed behavior that took place that was characterized as,
"For me, in a sense it changed the way I looked at that particular behavior...saw there was really something in what [they were] saying to me...it changed my perspective, my whole way of looking at it. Not by force, but because I think...[they were] really correct" (p/h, p. 10,1).

When asked if there were any intentions to act differently as a result of the conversation, they said,

"I became more aware of some of my actions. And that I had to change...I notice that whenever we have conversations, [they] would make me aware of a particular dynamic or a particular aspect, and we would fight, argue...then at the end, we would understand what had happened. [They] would upset me, but I always had a feeling of now I have to be responsible for my behavior, I have to change...I realized it is not helping me, it is not helping other people" (p/h, p. 13,1).

This person talked a lot about how their friend and colleague listened intently and asked questions to help them express themselves. Thus, through each one continuing to both speak and listen with care, this individual was able to get beyond reacting to the feedback, to see new things about their own behavior, and to accept greater personal responsibility for changing their behavior in the future.

In terms of changed behavior, someone who had a history of some unsatisfying conversations with a specific person talked about a recent conversation that had gone very well. They said,
"I feel a growth occurring within myself... certainly has been
growth within me in terms of my ability to have better
... conversations with [them]. And I learned from this conversation"
(p/p, p. 11,1).

There seemed to be continuing progress being made here with this person
focusing on their intentional efforts to listen better while speaking in ways
that could be better heard.

Often the experience of confronting the differences seemed to lead to
various kinds of learning. One of the participants talked about a tense
conversation that began when someone told them that they did not feel
respected by the person telling the story. The storyteller said they were
told they had a style of reacting quickly and bringing up a different point
of view and

"that gave [them] the feeling that I was not respecting what [they] said" (p/b, p. 2,1).

As the interview progressed, this person realized for the first time that the
confrontation had improved their previous conversation, giving it more
energy when the differences between them were openly stated.

"But now in answering your question, I said, ah, the dialogue
improved, and I got a different feeling when [they]...included...not
only... feelings, but also [their] own antithesis" (p/b, p. 8,1).

Through the statement of the "antithesis," there was a lot of learning about
the impact of their behavior on others as expressed in these comments,
"I will be more aware, what I do in answering and not spontaneously spring up and saying, 'that is not true'...but also to show others...what I appreciate...to show that I understand what the other person...feels...the most important thing is...understanding the impact of what this kind of spontaneous reaction can have...especially when there is an atmosphere with a lot of tension" (p/b, p. 12&14,1).

The learning here grew out of these two people being able to openly speak and listen to their differing perceptions.

Similarly, another participant said they began to reassess their perceptions of a good conversation as the interview progressed. They came into the interview assuming that a good conversation is

"about making that connection...the enjoyment... revelry... real animation, this real communion... fun conversations" (p/k, p. 16,1).

But as we talked in the interview, this person asked themselves if they usually learn anything in these kinds of conversations and decided usually not. On the other hand, the conversation they were sharing in the interview was one that had

"a wealth of issues for me to work on...growth conversation...[on the other hand] fun conversations...I think you need some of...because those energize you and confirm you...but...There was a depth in terms of our conversation. And what I was talking with you about, that has made me reassess what is good conversation. It scares me too, by the way...it helps me realize where I need to do my work. It is too easy to gravitate towards the quote good conversations. And to avoid the other quote bad conversations" (p/k, p. 16-17,1).
Through the combination of speaking to the difficult issues and hearing the
difficult concerns, this person began to see the growth and learning
potential present in these conversations that had previously seemed not so
good.

When people were both cognitively and affectively engaged, it also
seemed to contribute to listening fully and to having voice - speaking. One
person said that one thing that helped them find their voice was

"being in a conversation that was interesting to me...just the level
of confidence with the topic and then the interest with topic...helps
me find voice" (p/i, p. 21,3).

With the self-esteem of feeling confident and the cognitive interest in the
topic, they became more engaged.

Out of this combination of cognitive and affective engagement came
many stories about learning through the conversations. In one case, a white
person and a black person were able to have a long overdue conversation
about race largely growing out of their friendship, being fully engaged at
both the cognitive and affective levels throughout the conversation. The
white person described feeling like they had been told in the past in the
group

"that I did not have a right to talk about racism because I was
white" (p/n, p.3,3).
Through a conversation where some new understandings were reached, this person was told by the black person -

"that me telling [them] that, had meant a lot... because it showed...I actually was aware of racism dynamics, and I had showed some interest in the past. Because...I had generally shut down [in the past]...[name] probably did not realize why that was...it was me showing why I had not really gotten involved in those conversations in the past...from my perspective it was good because [name] was saying...you do have voice on this" (p/n, p. 3,3).

The valuing of both the cognitive and affective dimensions of the conversation was portrayed by someone as a circle, giving equal consideration for each polarity.

"Equality and circularity. Just a picture of a circle, and I suppose that circle means listening and allowing what the other person said to really make an impact on you. And feeling...what is going on inside and basically then responding from that. It is responding from a feeling...and I think there is room for an academic conversation within that...there was an element of feeling and then there was an element of academic conversation, and it fits together and eventually just amalgamated because...we managed to pull in everybody's thoughts and ideas on the work we were doing...there does not need to be a distinction between totally academic or totally emotive" (p/i, p. 17,1).

Substantial new learning is also facilitated when the creative tension of speaking with full voice and listening fully can be held with respect for the difference. In fact, in almost all of the conversations that people chose to talk about that resulted in learning, involved learning across the differences
among the people. A specific example was in a conversation about race, where a person was approached at the break after a heated interaction,

"It took me a couple of seconds to actually get myself out of the fight or flight mode. But then I realized that [they were] not trying to attack me or change me... I was able to calm down and just sit and listen... opened me up so that we could actually... share our opinions with each other, share information and listen to what the other person was saying" (p/n, p. 3-5,2).

This person went on to say that they were able to open up because in this conversation during the break, they were not being asked to

"say it was right or wrong or even to accept it... just saying this is how it is seen from the other side of the fence" (p/n, p. 1,2).

In addition to the way this person was approached, the one-on-one conversation seemed to enable them to hear and decrease the initial defensiveness they felt prior to the break -

"It is very possible that my defensiveness made it hard for me to listen... as I think about it in retrospect... I think it made it easier for me to listen... in the break because... I did not have to think about fifteen other people. All I had to do was to think about [this person]... could focus entirely on [this person] and what [they were] saying and what [they were] feeling... made it easier to listen, definitely" (p/n, p. 5,2).

After this conversation, the person said they had new awarenesses about things that -

"had never occurred to me before... I became aware of the fact that different people perceive situations differently... different people have different reactions to the same situation... aware of my own
personal tendency to feel defensive when I am talking about a viewpoint that affects me personally...I think it might have made me more accepting of different viewpoints" (p/n, p. 1,5-6,2).

The challenge of learning through the inevitable differences is articulately summarized in the comments from a person who said,

"How difficult it is to embrace things. Embrace and not fight it...How difficult it is to widen our range of acceptance...something that comes for free, given from someone who is wise...just take it and embrace it and digest it and take whatever you can take home...The way that I embrace the differences is listening to the different voices" (p/m, p. 4,2).

Although it is a struggle to embrace the differences, the recognition of the differences and the empathetic engagement of "trying to be at one with the experience behind the perception" offers the opening for change and learning. This kind of empathetic engagement and building on each others' comments in conversation allow the differences to become a source of change and learning.

Summary

The full inclusion of the reflective with the active, the feminine with the masculine, the sensing with the making in conversations in Western cultures may require transformational change. Conversations will have to
be entered into with an intentionality to hold the tension of this polarity in rhythmic symmetry that allows each part to live with spontaneity.

The eternal dialogue of both ends of this polarity is promoted by allowing for occasional listening into the silence and by the recognition, acknowledgement, and affirmation of being seen and heard. It is promoted when there is focus and intentionality about building on both what is being said and what is not being said. It is critical to try to be with the experience of another as they share their perceptions and to try to relate to that experience empathetically. Through these processes, it is possible to connect with others across differences to allow for each person to be influenced and changed in ways that are mutual and promote learning.
CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The framing and naming of experience is at the crux of this work in that it is the naming of lived experience that expresses the dual knowledge of learning. Thus, the naming of this work became an important expression of its essence. "Bridging Differences and Learning Through Conversation" comes the closest to realizing the essence of the journey as it brings together the three phenomena that are at the heart of my findings - Conversation, Differences, and Learning. When I began this work, I did not realize where the journey would take me, but the confluence of these three dynamics are clear to me in the conversations that were shared with us. Differences can be a catalyst for learning through conversation.

At the confluence or interface of Conversation, Differences, and Learning, there are two overarching themes - Receptive Space and the Full Inclusive Voice of Speaking and Listening - and many subthemes that are present. Yet, the most essential element of these themes for me is that they do not function independently. It is through the very interdependence of these themes and subthemes with each other that differences are bridged through conversation contributing to the making of meaning and learning.
Therefore, to say that any one theme or part of the findings can create a conversation that enables differences to be bridged in a way that contributes to learning falls far short of my understanding of what happens in the lived experience of the people we interviewed. It is through the interweaving of these themes within the conversation that people begin to let down their barriers against the unfamiliar and hear new possibilities and perspectives.

This final chapter begins with an overview of the primary findings followed by a discussion of these findings, consideration of the limitations of the study, and a brief summary.

Primary Findings

For people whose lives have currently or recently included exposure to conversational learning experiences, the following considerations appear to affect the quality of their interactions:

* Exploration of differences through conversation can contribute to new learning, understanding, and awareness for people under certain conditions;
* For learning to occur through the exploration of differences in conversation, there needs to be a *Receptive Space* to hold the conversation allowing for the *Full Inclusive Expression of Voice* in the conversation. The Full Inclusive Expression of Voice is an interdependent, interplay of the voices of active speaking and reflective listening.

* A Receptive Space for conversation includes the necessity for people to make an effort, to attend to feelings of safety for each person, to choose at times to explore and confront differences, to maintain relatively moderate levels of energy, and to engage in the conversation with both the head and the heart. These subthemes include considerations for building relationships, common ground, and trust; trying to understand, be understood, and trying to speak to be heard; committing time; swallowing some thoughts and feelings; giving respect, recognition, acceptance, good intentions, genuineness, and affirmation; being non-judgmental, flexible, open, patient, and comfortable with ambiguity; and proactively supporting the exploration of differences.
* Full Voice in the conversation includes the necessity for an ongoing interplay of active speaking and reflective listening, at times allowing for silence, building on each other's contributions, recognizing each person, engaging empathetically, and being open to the change and learning that can emerge. These subthemes are highly interrelated with the qualities of Receptive Space and include considerations for such things as offering opportunities for reflection; being respectful and attuned to others; engaging with focus, trust, affirmation, and responsiveness; hearing, including, recognizing, acknowledging, and affirming others in ways that attend to their sense of self-esteem; attending to relationships; and engaging both cognitively and affectively.

* The interrelatedness of the need for safety to risk growth-promoting exploration and confrontation with differences is at the heart of creating Good Conversation that promotes learning and the fusion of new horizons of meaning.
* Staying in conversation over time, as distinct from avoiding, leaving, cutting off, and reacting, is critical for ongoing learning among people. Without the staying capacity, the barriers or resistance to differences may just become more rigid, making people less likely to be mutual sources of positive energy for learning. The Receptive Space and Inclusion of Full Voice often are needed to enable people to stay in conversation, especially when the differences are intense.

* Structured opportunities for reflection on previous conversations can promote new awarenesses and learning.

* The model of Good Conversation proposed in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter was confirmed but needs to be expanded growing out of the results of this work. The model suggests a dynamic, interactive process that is intended as a guide for the creation of a conversational context to enhance Good Conversation, rather than as a static model of a method to be applied. Although my initial intention was not to create a model that is generalizable, the power of the results leads me to alter that intention. Based on this work, I can say that this model of conversation holds true for adults
whose lives include current or recent exposure to conversational learning experiences. Though not definitive, the results are also highly suggestive that these results are applicable to a much wider population. The considerations of context that have emerged through this research are fundamental and seem to transcend specific contextual variations, at least in this culture, although further research is needed before that can be assumed.

Discussion

Both the lived experience and the wealth of interview data from the participants make it clear that while differences are inevitable, every difference is not one to confront. Moreover, every confrontation is not growth-promoting. There also are differences that do not involve conflict at all. The challenge is to learn when and how to explore and confront differences in conversation.

While all of the interviews asked people to recall conversations that stood out for them, only one round specifically asked for conversations that involved differences and none of the interview data I have used in this analysis pulled specifically for learning. Yet, as cited in the Process of Data Analysis Chapter, in approximately 98% of the 55 interviews, people
talked about differences among the people in the conversations. At least 80% of the interviews included some form of new learning, new understanding, or new awareness. Thus, there is a strong interrelatedness among these three phenomena.

Once again, the interrelatedness and interdependence of all of the themes and subthemes is integral to understanding the findings of this study. In fact, one indicator of the overlapping of themes is that at least a quarter of the people in the research mentioned each of the subthemes, except for the one on change. In most cases, the themes and subthemes were mentioned by one third to a half of the participants. Since change is the one theme mentioned less frequently, let me say why it has been singled out. Change seems to be closely related to the process of learning, but I have made it a separate theme because when it was mentioned by some people, they did not specifically mention learning or new understanding. Thus, I could not assume that learning had occurred, even though in several instances it seemed like they were talking about learning.

The participants, as can be seen from the extensive quotes in the previous chapters, often did not find the interface of conversation, differences, and learning an easy, pleasant, or productive one. Their
examples of times when the conversations were not working for them are as informative as the times when they were helpful. It is from the accumulation of the conversations they shared that the two overarching themes of Space and Voice emerged, revealing that when these two dynamics are not attended to and valued, learning and understanding usually do not grow out of conversations across differences. In fact, the differences often become an obstacle rather than a resource.

The most universal concern expressed in the interviews was the need for safety in conversation to enable people to venture forward to take the risks necessary to explore their differences. From the 23 participants in the study, at least 96% mentioned concerns for safety. Of the 55 conversations, in at least 67% there was talk about safety issues. As cited in the Chapter on Receptive Space, the sense of safety that comes with acceptance, respect, recognition, flexibility, openness, and patience is of primal importance. A safe space is one that tries to avoid judgement, blame, fear, ill intent, power plays, exclusion, rudeness, and coercion.

Reflecting on the literature, Rokeach (Rokeach, 1960) and Adorno (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Nevitt, 1950) found consistently that too much threat and lack of safety leads to both dogmatic responses and closed belief systems. Rokeach and his colleagues also found that the
differences in belief systems have much more bearing on whether a person discriminates or is prejudiced against others than whether there are more visible differences such as race or ethnicity.

Thus, the exploration of differences in belief systems through conversation is a catalyst for new possibilities and new belief systems to be considered. It is in a space receptive and inclusive to all voices that this kind of exploration can begin to occur. Through the exploration, the differences can become a source of learning.

While discrimination and prejudice were not specifically delineated in the interviews, many of the questions participants were asked certainly elicited much relevant information about thoughts and behavior relevant to discrimination or prejudice. Some of these general questions asked about participants' differences and similarities with others, things they brought into the conversation that influenced the conversation, their feelings and thoughts, and the things that inhibited or helped the conversational context.

Maslow's (Maslow, 1962) work on the need for psychological safety in order to learn is also consistent with the findings. Moreover, the inability of most people to be able to handle extreme novelty (Fiske & Maddi, 1961) seems consistent with the need for some psychological safety from which to learn (Maslow, 1962) and with the findings of this study. It may also be
related to the pace that people can take in the new and unexpected, all of
which is related to the work of Fiske and Maddi (Fiske & Maddi, 1961) on
the openness to varied experience. Certainly within the context of this
literature, the importance for moderate levels of energy, allowing for
silence, concerns for safety, empathetic engagement, and the importance of
using both the head and the heart in conversation are consistent and
believable.

The work of Allport (Allport, 1954), who along with others suggests
that the lack of self-esteem and status are the "primary root" of prejudice,
again is consistent with the findings of this work. The need for people to
feel recognized, accepted, affirmed, included, acknowledged, and respected
is integrally related to one's self-esteem and sense of status. Thus, when
these needs are addressed in conversation, people seem to be more open to
hearing each other across their differences.

Similarly, the research on in-group and out-group behavior is supported
(Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; Austin & Worchel, 1979;
Alderfer, 1977). When people felt recognized, respected, accepted, and
affirmed, they were much less likely to shut out and exclude others even if
those others are perceived as being members of an out-group, such as
another race or from another country. There are many examples of these
differences being bridged and superordinate goals being discussed when the multiple themes related to Space and Voice were present in the conversation. People could at least intermittently rise above their intergroup conflict to work together for more understanding across their perceptions of differences. Because people bring into any conversation multiple personal and social histories and the associated attributions, the need for full voice in a space that is receptive to the differences is imperative to support learning.

Risk taking and the confrontation of differences does not happen easily. It only occurred in the conversations shared with us in growth-promoting ways where the space was receptive enough to support the risky behavior. In other words, the mutuality of order and disorder, of Gaia and Chaos (Capra, 1982; Jung, 1956; Wheatley, 1994) was demonstrated repeatedly in the interviews when people felt enough safety, acceptance, respect, and affirmation to reach across the differences into the unpredictable to explore and confront their differences. Yet, this process is not an easy one and thus it is not surprising that a strong subtheme within the receptive space theme is the need to make an effort. As mentioned previously, the things people talked about making an effort to do included trying to understand, to be
understood, to speak to be heard, and to swallow some things along the way.

Creating a Context for Good Conversation

This research has increasingly led to a dynamic, interactive model of Good Conversation. This kind of model is quite distinct from a more static model of a method to be applied. This approach, both in terms of how the research progressed and how the model might be used, emphasizes the dynamic, interactive process of emerging conversations and the grounding of theoretical ideas about conversation in the real life experiences of human beings.

The theoretical ideas of Good Conversation proposed in the Literature Review and Theory Development Chapter focused on creating a conversational context of Ideal Speech, Ideal Listening, relationality, full voice, and growth-promoting conflict. To review briefly, Ideal Speech means there is "absolutely uncoerced and unlimited discussion between completely free and equal agents" (Geuss, 1985, p. 65) and involves both enlightenment and emancipation. Ideal Listening suggests a context that includes considerable self-acceptance on the part of the people involved, valuing and making space for reflection, an inside-out orientation toward
learning, empathy, and trust as guiding lights for the interactions among people.

As the two previous chapters are reflections of what the participants in the study actually said about their conversations, the importance of each element of these proposed ideas regarding Good Conversation is affirmed. However, there are several areas where the words and experiences of the participants certainly would require more emphasis than was originally proposed. Also, there is new learning about the dynamic nature of the context that I had not realized or anticipated.

First and foremost as stated repeatedly, the interdependence of the various themes within a context for Good Conversation is even more important than originally understood. Specifically, the interrelatedness of the need for safety to risk growth-promoting exploration and confrontation with differences is at the heart of learning across differences.

The importance of moderating the energy level in a conversation, while directly related to reflection, turns out to be a new specific finding. Another surprise was how often the interview itself became a time for new awarenesses, learnings, and ah-ha's - indicating that structured opportunities for reflection can be integral to learning. Also, intentional listening and deep choicefulness can be initiated by anyone in the conversation in ways
that can change the direction of the interaction and promote the generosity of giving fuller voice to other people. Choicefulness begets generosity if the space is a receptive one.

Furthermore, I had not anticipated the importance of staying in conversation, rather than avoiding or ending it when the conversation becomes difficult. While this was not talked about directly and therefore was not a theme, it stands out in my overall experience of the interviews and their meaning. It was when people were willing to engage in the first place and then stay in conversation that the differences began to be bridged toward learning. Because that is often a difficult and challenging process for people, especially where the heart as well as the head are involved, it requires patience and perseverance that often does not happen quickly and easily. It is often through the staying in conversation that people also manage to stay in relationship and become sources of new learning and meaning making for each other.

Numerous elements that were in the proposed model of Good Conversation turned out in the participants' words to be even more important than I initially realized. For example, the integral role of exploration and confrontation of differences comes through as such a rich resource for learning that not to emphasize its value and assist people in
learning more effective ways to engage across their differences seems like a serious deficit in educational environments and in the culture. Also, the role of recognition, acceptance, and acknowledgement took on more life than I anticipated. Similarly, the vital nature of relatedness, as fundamental to engaging and staying engaged across differences, cannot be overemphasized.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of the study is that each of the people interviewed was participating in a formal learning environment with emphasis on graduate seminar discussions at the time of the interviews, although the Professional Fellows were in a non-degree program. Moreover, 16 of the 23 participants were taking a specific seminar that emphasized conversational learning with a non-directive faculty member at the time of the first two of their three interviews. It is unclear how the self selection of being in these learning environments and the experiences of their situations influenced their observations. While the participants were encouraged to select conversations from a variety of aspects of their lives, and they frequently did including many conversations from personal,
family, social, and work settings, the predisposition toward learning is still probably present for most of these people.

Moreover, the sample size for this study was small with only 23 individuals being interviewed, although there were 55 interviews because of the in-depth work with most of the participants. Yet, this limited sample size certainly calls for expanding this research into not only more diverse groups, but also to larger numbers of similar people as well.

Specifically, I would like to continue this research interviewing adults who are not currently involved in formal learning programs at the time of the interviews. For example, participants could include initially adults in the United States who are working full-time and part-time in all walks of life, both professional and non-professional. Also, interviewing adults involved in varied volunteer activities would give another cross-section of possible participants. Expanding the sample size to furthermore include people engaged in other kinds of formal learning environments is necessary to refine the applicability to broader learning environments. Eventually extending this work cross-culturally is important to me and could be instructive to ascertain whether these seemingly fundamental contextual considerations are culture bound.
Thus, another limitation of the study is that it took place in a setting within the United States with all of the inherent bias of the Western, North American culture. While there were people from many races, cultures, and countries as participants, again the bias and values of this culture where the interviews were completed certainly influenced the interactions and responses.

Understanding the complex world of conversation, interpersonal understanding and learning, and the bridging of differences among people strongly influenced this initial work being done with a group of people who are articulate and skilled in verbal exchange. Even with participants with such skills, it has been difficult and challenging to understand the complexity of what actually occurs in conversation. Future related research, however, needs to include more diverse participants. Until that work continues, it is only possible to say that these findings hold for people whose lives include current or recent exposure to conversational learning experiences. Yet, these findings resonate with such fundamental contextual considerations that I expect there will be wide confirmation of them with diverse participants.
Summary

I began this dissertation journey asking myself the question that Martin Buber asked himself of what meaning "wishes to be born by me into the world" (Buber, 1958). At least for people who are engaged in learning programs, the ways that they enter and stay in conversation with each other in all walks of their lives seem integral to the perceptions and ideologies that shape their behavior. Part of the meaning I am carrying from this work is how pivotal and dynamic the conversational context is for people to be able to be open to learning from one another rather than closing out those who seem different. A context that promotes Good Conversation often involves the softening of barriers, letting in the hard edges of the unfamiliar, and learning through the differences. This experience is reminiscent of the words of bell hooks who describes the "powerful moments when boundaries are crossed, differences confronted, discussion happens, and solidarity emerges" (1994, p. 130).

The conversational context supporting Good Conversation must include a Space Receptive to holding the both/and of polarity rather than the either/or perspective, to enable the relaxation of bipolarity so that people can be perceived in nondualistic terms. The space must recognize and nurture the fundamental nature of relatedness and the fundamental needs for
deep choicefulness and for the sacred. Effort must be made to create the space that attends to the varying needs people have for safety. The context needs to be one that encourages the exploration of differences while moderating the energy level and fully engaging the head with the heart.

The *Full Inclusive Expression of Voices* means support for silence as an active option for participation where building on each other's contributions is valued and sought, where appropriate. Voices are included through the verbal and non-verbal recognition and empathetic engagement of each person. Full voice also involves a dynamic interplay creating a context more receptive to change and learning than the more static quality of monologue. These contextual characteristics seem more likely to be present when reflective listening is given as much potency as active speaking. The conversational context must provide a space safe enough for people to venture into the unpredictable unknown of taking risks with each other. And people often must be willing to stay in conversation with each other over time if the potential learning they have to offer each other is to be realized. Moreover, providing opportunities to reflect on earlier conversations seems to facilitate new awarenesses and learning.

All of this requires a mutuality of responsibility among the people involved in conversations with each other. I deeply appreciate my precious
partnerships with others on this journey, the quiet reflection of my own solitary exploration, and the support and Good Conversations I have had that have helped me bring some meaning into the world. I look forward to continuing this work and those Good Conversations.


Comerford, Susan (1994). Meeting/Conversation, Cleveland, Ohio.


APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Pilot in Study 1 - Round 1

NAME___________ DATE__________

For this interview, we are interested in hearing about conversations that you have been involved in, specifically those which really stand out for you. As much as you feel comfortable talking about this with us, please feel free to consider a range of conversations that you have had, in selecting two to talk about. These interviews are confidential and for our purposes, your identity will be anonymous. If during this interview you want to indicate information that is "off the record," we will treat it as such.

TELL US ABOUT A RECENT CONVERSATION THAT STANDS OUT FOR YOU AND THAT WAS EXTENSIVE ENOUGH TO DISCUSS AT SOME LENGTH. IT MAY BE A CONVERSATION WHICH YOU HAVE FOUND YOURSELF THINKING ABOUT AND KEEP REMEMBERING. WE WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO DESCRIBE THIS CONVERSATION TO US BY TELLING US A STORY ABOUT IT. PLEASE BEGIN BY DESCRIBING WHERE YOU WERE, WHO YOU WERE WITH, THE REASONS YOU WERE TALKING, AND WHEN IT OCCURRED.

Possible Prompting Questions

Feeling:
1. What were you feeling during this conversation?

2. Did you observe anything that gave you a sense of what other(s) seemed to be feeling during this conversation?

3. What were you feeling about the others involved in this conversation?

Seeing Things/Reflection:
4. What, if anything, did you become more aware of during this conversation?

5. As a result of the conversation?

Thinking:
6. What were you thinking during this conversation?

7. Did you observe anything that gave you a sense of what other(s) seemed to be thinking during this conversation?

8. What were you thinking about the others involved in this conversation?

9. Did this conversation result in conclusions or changes in points of view?

Acting:
10. What did you do during this conversation?

11. What were others doing?
12. What happened after the conversation? Results/impact on others?

13. Did the conversation increase your responsibilities to act? change your intentions to act?

General:
14. What did the conversation mean for you? for others?

15. Were you aware of any new understandings reached during the conversation?

16. What contributed to this conversation standing out for you?

Questions for Each Interview

17. When you think about a good conversation, how do you picture the conversation or do any metaphors/images come to mind?

18. Was this conversation a good conversation? Why? In what ways?

19. Are there any questions about this conversation or conversation in general that we did not ask that you wish we had asked or thought we might ask?
APPENDIX B
APPENDIX B
Interview Protocol for ORBH 570, Interview 1 - Round 2

For this interview, we are interested in hearing about conversations that you have been involved in during the Adult Learning and Development course/The Professional Fellows Program, specifically those which really stand out for you. As much as you feel comfortable talking about this with us, please feel free to consider a range of conversations that you have had, in selecting one to talk about. These interviews are confidential and for our purposes, your identity will be anonymous. If during this interview you want to indicate information that is “off the record,” we will treat it as such.

TELL US ABOUT A RECENT CONVERSATION THAT STANDS OUT FOR YOU AND THAT WAS EXTENSIVE ENOUGH TO DISCUSS AT SOME LENGTH. IT MAY BE A CONVERSATION WHICH YOU HAVE FOUND YOURSELF THINKING ABOUT AND KEEP REMEMBERING. WE WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO DESCRIBE THIS CONVERSATION TO US BY TELLING US YOUR STORY ABOUT IT. PLEASE INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF WHERE YOU WERE, WHO YOU WERE AWARE OF, THE FOCUS OF THE CONVERSATION, WHEN IT OCCURRED AND ITS APPROXIMATE LENGTH OF TIME.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON THE CONVERSATION

Precursor:
1. What were the things that you brought into this conversation that helped you/got in your way?

2. What did you see other people bringing into this conversation that helped or got in the way?

Feeling:
3. What were you feeling during this conversation? (In regards to the other(s) involved? the content? the unfolding of the conversation? about any differences/similarities? about your relationship(s) with these people?)

4. Did you observe anything that gave you a sense of what other(s) seemed to be feeling during this conversation? (In regards to the other(s) involved? the content? the unfolding of the conversation?)

5. Did your feelings change during the conversation? Describe.

Reflecting:
6. What and/or whom did you become more aware of during this conversation? Specifically, were you aware of differences you have in beliefs or values with others in the conversation?

7. What were the things that helped you to listen or got in your way?

8. What, if anything, did you become more aware of as a result of the conversation?
Thinking:
9. What were you thinking during this conversation? (In regards to the other(s) involved? the content? the unfolding of the conversation? about any differences/similarities? about your relationship(s) with these people?)

10. Did you observe anything that gave you a sense of what other(s) seemed to be thinking during this conversation? (In regards to the other(s) involved? the content? the unfolding of the conversation?)

11. Were things clarified for you during this conversation? Describe.

12. Did this conversation result in conclusions or changes in points of view? Describe.

Acting:
13. What did you do in this conversation?

14. What did other(s) do in this conversation?

15. Were there results/impacts on you and/or other(s) following the conversation?

16. Did the conversation change your intentions to act? Do you feel/think these intentions were shared?

General:
17. What did the conversation mean for you? Do you know what it meant for others? Do you feel/think there were shared meanings?

18. Were you aware of any new understandings reached during the conversation? Do you feel/think these were shared understandings?

19. What was it about this specific situation that contributed to this conversation standing out for you?

20. Was this conversation a good conversation? Why? In what ways?

21. In reflecting on the overall conversational context, what seems to contribute to good conversation? What seems to inhibit good conversation?

22. As you are coming to know your classmates, have you noticed anything that seems to contribute to individuals expressing their uniqueness? Is there anything which seems to inhibit that expression?

23. Are you aware of any recurring patterns in the conversations of this group?

24. Are you aware of any ways that our study of conversation and interviews with you are influencing the process of conversation in class?

25. When you think about a good conversation, how do you picture the conversation or do any metaphors/images come to mind?
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDY 1, INTERVIEW 2 - Round 3
SPRING 1994

INTerviewee ________________________________

DATE ________________________________

This interview has four parts. We will begin by asking for your responses to reading your interview transcript and our observations. The second section focuses on a significant learning experience for you, the third section focuses on a specific conversation in which you have a clear sense that you felt differences that mattered to you. We will conclude with somewhat more general questions regarding conversation. As with each of your two previous interviews, this information is confidential.

A: Follow-Up to the Previous Interview
We are interested in hearing about your experience of reading your interview transcript, our observations and your own reflections. In our last interview, you discussed:

1. So will you begin by telling us, what was your experience of reading the transcript?

2. What was your experience of reading our observations? Did our observations seem consistent with your experience? What stands out for you?

3. Did reading the interview, our observations, or our meeting on March 23rd, stimulate any new reflection or learning for you?

4. Did that class discussion or our interview stimulate any other related conversations that you have not talked about with us that you would be willing to share?

B: Learning through Conversation
One of our interests in this study is to better understand the factors that can contribute to learning. Will you recall something significant to you that you've learned or are learning this year?

5. Can you describe your learning? What made this learning significant for you?

6. Next, we are going to ask you to describe if and how a number of factors contributed to this learning. Did you read anything that contributed to your learning? Describe.
7. Did reflection play a role? Describe.

8. Did private conversations play a role? Describe.

9. Did class conversations play a role? Describe.

10. Did differences play a role in your learning? Describe. Anything else we haven't asked that you think played a role in your learning?

11. Are you aware of this learning having any influence on, or changing your intentions, feelings, perceptions, thinking or acting in ways that are new for you? Describe.

12. As compared to the beginning of the Fall semester, are you aware of any ways in which you have changed that better assists your learning through conversation?

C: Differences Conversation

Recall a recent conversation you had preferably with at least 2 other people in which you were aware of feeling like you were different from at least one other person in the conversation. The difference might be in terms of your ideas or in other way, but it was a difference that mattered to you.

13. Briefly tell us the story of this conversation. What was especially figural for you in this conversation? Was this primarily a cognitive or affective conversation or both?

14. Describe your perception of the differences. Were they primarily cognitive differences? Primarily affective differences?

15. Did you feel receptive to the differences in this conversation? Describe that experience for yourself. Are there ways which you felt similar to this/these people?

16. What contributed to your being receptive? not being receptive?

17. Do you feel like you learned or became more aware of anything new in that conversation? If so, say more. If not, what hindered your learning/increased awareness?
18. Were there any other conversations which led up to this one? Any related conversations which followed it? If so, describe your experience of them. (If interest in the topic is mentioned, explore the source of the interest.)

19. Was this conversation a Good Conversation for you?

D: General Questions About These Conversations

20. In our previous interviews, a number of you described conversations which stood out as ones in which there was a lot of energy and participation. In the conversations you have just discussed with us, can you say a little about the level of energy and participation? If there was a lot, was there any way that was an impediment or limiting factor of the conversation for you? If so, please describe.

21. Was there an opportunity for you to find your voice in the conversation(s)? If so, what facilitated you finding your voice? If not, what hindered you? Was that a benefit/shortcoming of the conversation for you?

E: Closing

22. Are there any new thoughts, feelings, awareness, or learning that have been stimulated for you as we have been talking today?
APPENDIX D
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Interview Protocol for Professional Fellows, Study 2-Round 4

INTERVIEWEE ____________________________________________ DATE ___

For this interview, we are interested in hearing about conversations that you have been involved in during The Professional Fellows Program, specifically those which really stand out for you. As much as you feel comfortable talking about this with us, please feel free to consider a range of conversations that you have had, in selecting one to talk about. These interviews are confidential and for our purposes, your identity will be anonymous. If during this interview you want to indicate information that is "off the record," we will treat it as such.

TELL US ABOUT A RECENT CONVERSATION THAT STANDS OUT FOR YOU AND THAT WAS EXTENSIVE ENOUGH TO DISCUSS AT SOME LENGTH. IT MAY BE A CONVERSATION WHICH YOU HAVE FOUND YOURSELF THINKING ABOUT AND KEEP REMEMBERING. WE WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO DESCRIBE THIS CONVERSATION TO US BY TELLING US YOUR STORY ABOUT IT. PLEASE INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF WHERE YOU WERE, WHO YOU WERE AWARE OF, THE FOCUS OF THE CONVERSATION, WHEN IT OCCURRED AND ITS APPROXIMATE LENGTH OF TIME.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON THE CONVERSATION

Precursor:
1. What were the things that you brought into this conversation that helped you/got in your way?

2. What did you see other people bringing into this conversation that helped or got in the way?

Feeling:
3. What were you feeling during this conversation? (In regards to the other(s) involved? the content? the unfolding of the conversation? about any differences/similarities? about your relationship(s) with these people?)

4. Did you observe anything that gave you a sense of what other(s) seemed to be feeling during this conversation? (In regards to the other(s) involved? the content? the unfolding of the conversation?)

5. Did your feelings change during the conversation? Describe.

Reflecting:
6. What and/or whom did you become more aware of during this conversation? Specifically, were you aware of differences you have in beliefs or values with others in the conversation?

7. What were the things that helped you to listen or got in your way?

8. What, if anything, did you become more aware of as a result of the conversation?
Thinking:
9. What were you thinking during this conversation? (In regards to the other(s) involved? the content? the unfolding of the conversation? about any differences/similarities? about your relationship(s) with these people?)

10. Did you observe anything that gave you a sense of what other(s) seemed to be thinking during this conversation? (In regards to the other(s) involved? the content? the unfolding of the conversation?)

11. Were things clarified for you during this conversation? Describe.

12. Did this conversation result in conclusions or changes in points of view? Describe.

Acting:
13. What did you do in this conversation?

14. What did other(s) do in this conversation?

15. Were there results/impacts on you and/or other(s) following the conversation?

16. Did the conversation change your intentions to act? Do you feel/think these intentions were shared?

General:
17. What did the conversation mean for you? Do you know what it meant for others? Do you feel/think there were shared meanings?

18. Were you aware of any new understandings reached during the conversation? Do you feel/think these were shared understandings?

19. What was it about this specific situation that contributed to this conversation standing out for you?

20. Was this conversation a good conversation? Why? In what ways?

21. In reflecting on the overall conversational context, what seems to contribute to good conversation? What seems to inhibit good conversation?

22. As you are coming to know the other Professional Fellows, have you noticed anything that seems to contribute to individuals expressing their uniqueness? Is there anything which seems to inhibit that expression?

23. Are you aware of any recurring patterns in the conversations of this group?

24. When you think about a good conversation, how do you picture the conversation or do any metaphors/images come to mind?