

**Intercultural Communication and  
Dialogue Competence:  
An Attempt at Synthesis  
through useful "Fictions"**

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Working paper  
of  
International Society for Diversity Management e.V.  
**No. 2**

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*“The fact remains that getting people right is not what living is all about anyway. It’s getting them wrong that is living, getting them wrong and wrong and wrong and then, on careful reconsideration, getting them wrong again. That’s how we know we’re alive: we’re wrong. Maybe the best thing would be to forget being right or wrong about people and just go along for the ride. But if you can do that—well, lucky you.”*

*(Philip Roth 1997: 35)*

In his novel *American Pastoral*, Philip Roth’s protagonist, in his frustration in getting a right understanding of the main characters, announces that life is about getting it wrong. For me this means that we cannot escape the tenuousness of trying to understand a person or situation deeply. We use past knowledge and frames to somehow get it right. But the more we investigate the person or situation the more complex our communication and interaction become. Past knowledge and frames are fictions in our minds as we attempt to communicate, operate with and understand the person (people) across from us, getting it wrong again and again, correct-ing it and hopefully making it more coherent and creative. This is what this article is about, that is, the question of how and to what extent can various fictions like frames, metaphors and communication and operational styles contribute to synthesizing and synergizing two forms of practice: (mainstream) intercultural communication (Bennett 1993 & 1998, Dodd 1998, Casmir 1999, Hall 1966 & 1998, Marten & Nakayama 2000, Ting-Toomey 1999, etc.) and dialogue (Bohm 1996, Ellinor & Gerard 1998 & 2001, Hartkemeyer, Hartkemeyer & Dhority 1998 and Isaacs 1999).

In this statement of intent there are some basic assumptions which should be made explicit. First, fictions are not something bad; in fact, they can be very useful. A fiction’s practical use is its own legitimation.\* In the communication process\*\* they can be helpful if we view them with detachment, as frames. Once they form harden-ed pictures in our minds about the “other(s)”, the “self” and the whole social interaction, then they are mistaken for some reified reality. In communication, people often commit this mistake in that they spontaneously and reactively follow their deep habits and tacit assumptions deriving from their first language, their culture, co-culture, gender, age, their biographical influences, profession, and any other relevant aspects of their identities in a diverse world.

When people face a communicative (or operative) situation with an unexpectedly different “other” or “others”, their deep, usually hidden assumptions may not work as well anymore. They have to form guesses on how to proceed and adapt; in other words, they form fictions. And then, as Roth proclaims, more often than not, they get it wrong and that is what communication and life is all about. At best, they recognize what went wrong and correct their messages and reactions in creative ways; at worst, they deny, withdraw, become aggressive and dismissive (all those

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\* See the quote by Hans Vaihinger (in von Glasersfeld: 88).

\*\* From now on whenever I say the word “communication”, the word “operations” could just as well fit in here.

dysfunctional strategies listed repeatedly in the Culture Shock discussion). They form generalizations and quick judgements about the “other” which then, with a little or much help from some fear, become hardened (an obvious metaphor). On the dark (another metaphor) side, stereotyping, prejudices, stigmas, scapegoats, enemies, victims of “mobbing”, etc. are the result. On the lighter side, they idealize individuals into heroes and create positive, rigid stereotypes of groups and cultures.

Forming generalizations has something to do with this stereotyping; however, generalizing is also a necessary part of life and science. Without it we could not anticipate and form any basis for systematic decision-making and action. Once this necessity for generalizing is accepted and after some reflection, the number of questions multiplies quickly: What form should a generality take and in what context, if it is not to become destructive? How can it be of help in facilitating the communication process toward understanding and coherence? What can a person do in order to use generalities safely? In dialogue training the response to this latter question might be: Suspend it (like hanging in on a hook), detach from it—or in German, “in der Schwebe halten” (keep it in a hovering position like a bird in midair). Other questions related to the pragmatics of generalizing might be: Can generalities form patterns of communication, called here “communication styles”? Can these be of help, especially in developing intercultural (and interpersonal), communicative competence? Can we place communication styles within “frames of discourse” which can be useful for the practitioners of intercultural and dialogue competence? Can we recognize “rich” frames of discourse and thereby recognize areas of culture which are especially pregnant to the participants in that culture? By recognizing certain key metaphors in these frames, trying different ones and pursuing these in depth, can we improve our understanding of ourselves and the foreign “others”? And finally, can we frame so-called “unsuccessful” dialogue or intercultural communication in such a way as to turn it into a success?

Secondly, dialogue is a disciplined process (and form of training) developed in the last fifteen years in two canters in the US: Glenna Gerard and Linda Ellinor (1998 & 2001) on the West coast and William Isaacs (1999) at MIT. The latter project emerged out of the context of special skills needed for so-called Learning Organization, developed mainly in the work of Peter Senge (and closely related to systems). In short, there is now an ongoing attempt to give some clear idea of what is meant by dialogue, its skills, competence and applications in organizations. Both of these directions of practice and application were inspired by the work of the physicist, Nobel Prize winner and philosopher of science, David Bohm (1996).

Both of the above assumptions (fictions are useful and dialogue is a disciplined process) presuppose the importance of a communicator attempting to put her/himself in the observing, metacognitive position, that is, the observer observing her/his own and the other’s (and others’) thinking, behaviour, and the total interaction in a setting. Being objective here is itself considered a communication style which can be perceived from the metacognitive position as the self-observer attempts to observe him/herself trying to be objective. (This is a bit of the same inclusive logic of physics: modern physics does not oppose 19<sup>th</sup> Century physics; the latter is included as useful and true up to a point.)

An underlying motivation for this exploration is to discover more systematic entries of mutual enhancement across the interfaces between dialogue training (based on Bohm) and mainstream intercultural communication competence (as developed in the US in the last 50 years), with the further hope of creating new synergies of application. The procedure will be to define and elaborate

some key points in both disciplines and then look for ways to weave them together.

As a consequence, the first task of this article is to clarify--or better, describe the chaos in--the terms intercultural communication (IC) and "third culture" (TC). The second task will be to describe and explain dialogue theory and certain aspects of its practice in light of some of the obvious connections to IC and TC (in a reciprocal, mutual, fruitful enhancement). The third task is to discuss possible "frames of discourse" as potential guides or tools to improve both dialogue and intercultural communicative competence (again, in the sense of a reciprocal, mutual enhancement). Included in this discussion of frames will be the question of the usefulness of constructing communication and dialogue styles, recognizing so-called "rich" frames, playing with metaphors and developing them in more depth in the dialogue with the intercultural or diverse "other". At the end of our discussion of frames we will also consider the value of reaching a higher metacognitive position, in order to turn "unsuccessful" intercultural dialogue into "successful" communication.

## 1. Intercultural Communication and "Third Culture"

Understanding Intercultural Communication as a discipline starts with the question of the definitions of culture and communication, both of which have been subject to endless theoretical discussions that often do not reach a consensus. For simplifying purposes I'll divide these clusters of definitions into three areas, the last of which will be the working definition for this paper.

a. The first definition of culture is the common view that normal people are used to (at least in Western Europe and the US); it is something that either people have or they don't. In anthropology this view is considered "high culture" and therefore elitist. It implies an appreciation of a certain aesthetic niveau which has to be acquired with lots of effort. Ignorant people don't have it. This view is not the way I use the word culture in this paper.

b. The second direction of definitions arose historically out of cultural anthropology. Such definitions either comprise long lists of contents or aspects of culture such as habits, traditions, law, morals, norms, rituals, etc., or they are referred to as pat-terns of behaviour which are learned or acquired in our socialization. Sometimes the term "system" appears in the definitions, sometimes not. But normally the proponents of these definitions equate cultures with identifiable wholes which can be described and compared systematically. This has nearly always been tacitly assumed and not questioned.

c. Recently that has changed. The charge of reification and reduction has reverberated many times from the side of the critics. Take the words of Clifford Geertz (1973: 11):

One is to imagine that culture is a self-contained "super organic" reality with forces and purposes of its own, that is, to reify it. Another (way to obscure it, S.H.) is to claim that it consists in the brute pattern of behavioural events we observe in fact to occur in some identifiable community or other; that is, to reduce it.

Geertz' criticism is on the level of reified objectivity; on the subjective level he is just as critical in his reference to Ward Goodenough's view of culture "in the minds and hearts of men." (in Geertz,

1973: 11) In other words, either we reify what is out there or what is in here.

Geertz offers an alternative "interpretive view of culture"; "we begin with our own interpretations of what our informants are up to, or think they are up to, and systematize" them by putting them into writing. These writings are "constructions" or "fictions", not false as such, but rather "'as if' experiments." (1973: 11) He emphasizes that "cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And ... the more deeply it goes the less complete it is." He continues in a choice of words reminiscent of the quote of Philip Roth: "It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion...that you are not quite getting it right." (1973: 29)

Ethnographers, intercultural communicators, and anyone seriously interested in communicating effectively with the cultural "other" have to be ever persistent in moving close to the concrete experience, action, interaction, and, if I may add, communication at the moment in its process. Structure and frames can be created and tested for their usefulness. Any certainty beyond that is at risk of reification.

Here is not the place to get involved in a long discussion of the definitions of communication, suffice it to say that the questions of interpretation, of receivers as well as senders of messages with all their involved habits and expectations, are at least as complicated as the question of what culture is and how we can use it. To simplify matters, I want to define communication as the attempt of at least two people (or to be more exact, two living beings) to make themselves understood coherently enough in order to act on it together in a reasonably coordinated fashion with a relatively understandable outcome.

Edward Hall (1998: 54-55), the founder of intercultural communication as a discipline, once made a distinction between two aspects of culture: manifest and "tacit acquired". By manifest culture he meant "words and numbers"; by "tacit acquired" he meant the nonverbal of communication, that which is "highly situational and operates according to rules which are not in awareness, not learned in the usual sense but acquired in the process of growing up or simply being in different environments." He mentioned his studies of this aspect of culture "grew out of the study of transactions at cultural interfaces. The study of an interface between two systems is different than from the study of either system alone....working at the interfaces has proved fruitful because contrasting and conflicting patterns are revealed." In this paper I want to continue Hall's use of the term "interface" (another metaphor), which in my view, should be central vocabulary for talking about communication and culture. Culture is communication. (53) Culture is what happens at the interface to the diverse "other". The practical question deriving from this vocabulary is: How can we consciously send and receive messages across interfaces and get things done? (The word "consciously" is emphasized because much or even most of communication and culture is assumed to be subconscious.) Getting things done is related to the technical term operationalization which also has interfaces.

In short, communication is a form of social interaction; another form of social interaction is operationalization. As in communication, people send and receive messages across interfaces in other forms of social interaction, that is, across the operational interfaces with their bodies and their environments. When people operate in the world, they may set concrete goals which have to be reached, anywhere from coordinating their bodies and minds on a soccer team, in order to win, or as a team operating a steam cracker in a large chemical company safely and without unexpected

interruptions, or as a plumber replacing a flange, etc.--operations, like communication, have interfaces, even if it only means between your feet and the soccer ball. The ball is expected to react or respond in a certain way. And, again in the spirit of Roth's quote, we often get it wrong and keep practicing to get it right.

A major area of discussion within intercultural communication involves the question as to the usefulness of the so-called "third culture" model. Two interculturalists will be referred to here: Carley Dodd (1998) and Fred Casmir (1999).

The "third culture" model starts with imagining that a person from culture A meets a person from culture B. They both notice differences and uncertainty and ideally both start to build culture C based on their discovered similarities. Culture C is the "third culture" which is constructed in some way by both or all parties involved in the attempt at communication or cooperation. As in Figure 1, according to Dodd, each of the persons from cultures A and B are not just from cultures alone. They are more than that. Each person is made up of a culture, a personality and a personal relationship. This point is important because often the differences between these aspects of consciousness are separated and reified.

In discussions of culture it is not uncommon for at least some people involved in the discussion to object to the idea that they may have a culture by referring to their unique, personal differences. (Every person is different. And I am not that!) What these people, usually strongly individualist, may not be aware of is that deep, tacit basic assumptions or values which make up a part of a person's identity can be cultural, biographical, and related to personality at the same time. For example, a person may be an Afro-American sixty year old man, musician from New York City. These diverse culturally related factors (American, Afro-American, old, musician, from New York City) may all be very relevant to his world view, the way he perceives reality. He may also be an Enneagram Four (a personality typing system based on the ideas of Helen Palmer). In this personality type he perceives the world in terms of a search for something that he has always missed in his life; he compares spontaneously. According to this Enneagram, he is a tragic-romantic bordering on melancholy and from this melancholy he can create wonderful music. From his biography he lost his father when he was three years old; as a teenager he was always getting into fights in his rough neighbourhood in New York City. His mother took him to church until the age of 12 where he learned the gospel tradition of singing. His music teacher at his school inspired him to play the saxophone. When the pro-tests in the South began, he went south in the summers to help out in the protests. He was drafted as a soldier and sent to Vietnam where he experienced combat. Later he suffered from this psychologically and his music helped him to heal himself. Here is the complexity just of one man. Now let another person enter into the communication, or ten more people, or 100 at a concert and we lose sight of the complexity. It approaches the infinite. Now in a communication event with this man, what part is culture, what part is his personality and what part is his biography and general history surrounding all of this? To separate them is only an analytical construction. In the consciousness of the moment they are all together in one reality or one perception.

From this example we can deduce two strengths of Dodd's model: 1) it allows for the complexity and points toward increasing complexity and 2) it transcends culture by pointing to the strength of the broader concept of diversity. Rather than talking about intercultural communication, diversity communication is closer to what is really going on in the communication process. This should

contribute to the clarification of so-called cultural diversity as well. Diversity as such is the better concept because it does not limit itself to the cultural or to the personal—but in fact in common conversation and discussion these fine points are obscured. Herein lies the second strength of Dodd’s model of the “third culture”: It does not limit itself to the cultural or the personal.

Dodd uses some other elements in his model. When the first and second cultures come together, he introduces the construct of *perceived cultural differences (PCDs)*<sup>\*</sup>.

Perception becomes a major part of his theory in the basic assumption that all cultural and personal differences are mediated through perception. The next step in the model is that the PCDs can lead to “uncertainty and anxiety”. From there the behavioural reaction on the part of the participants can be either functional or dysfunctional strategies for coping with the situation. Dysfunctional includes strategies such as “stereotyping, withdrawal, denial and hostility”. On the more functional level the participants are motivated to find adaptive, more positive paths for providing “for a common ground for relationship-building strategies.” The model “underscores how we can utilize several simple but powerful intercultural insights and skills” which can bring about desired outcomes. “In sum, the model is an adaptive model, calling for participants to *suspend judgement* (emphasis by SH) and bias while they engage in a third culture created by the intercultural participants to explore mutual goals and common concerns. In other words, out of the perception of dissimilarity, participants A and B can carve out a Third Culture between them, a culture of similarity.” For now let us note that suspending judgement is a key skill proposed by Dodd to build a third culture. It is also a key skill in the dialogue training. Notice also some of the metaphors: “suspend” judgement and “build” the Third Culture. Dodd also uses the word “invent” (a Third Culture). The result of the Third Culture means that participants A and B “experience positive climate, commonality and trust....” (1998: 6-10)

Fred Casmir gives a very elaborate argument for the use of the Third Culture paradigm. He maintains the TC is a “construction of a mutually beneficial interactive environment in which individuals from two different cultures can function in a way beneficial to all involved”; it is “communication-centered” and focuses on “long-term building processes....” (1999: 92) One strength here for our purposes is that

Casmir focuses much more on the environment in which the building of the Third Culture construction takes place. (For a bridge one needs an environment and a sense of space and time.) Relying on chaos theory Casmir tries to move away from the assumption that a culture is somehow a stable system with a stable identity; he understands it “not as an endstate but as an ongoing evolutionary process. “ (95) He cites Iannone: “Over long periods of time, chaotic systems tend to develop deterministic patterns. Therefore, systems need to experience disorganization, inconsistencies, and gaps in order to transform themselves not into end-products, but into an on-going evolving learning process.” (in Casmir, 1999: 95) (Here it is hard to not to notice the similarity to the assumptions and goals of Learning Organization. See Peter Senge 1990.)

This assumption concerning chaotic systems contradicts some of mainstream inter-cultural communication, at least in its application in business environments, in particular, the work of Gert Hofstede (1997), who begins with universal, etic dimensions of culture and universal definitions of these dimensions; this sort of interculturalist then proceeds to measure their presence or absence in national cultures (presumably stable identities). Nigel Holden (2002: ch. 2) criticizes Hofstede in

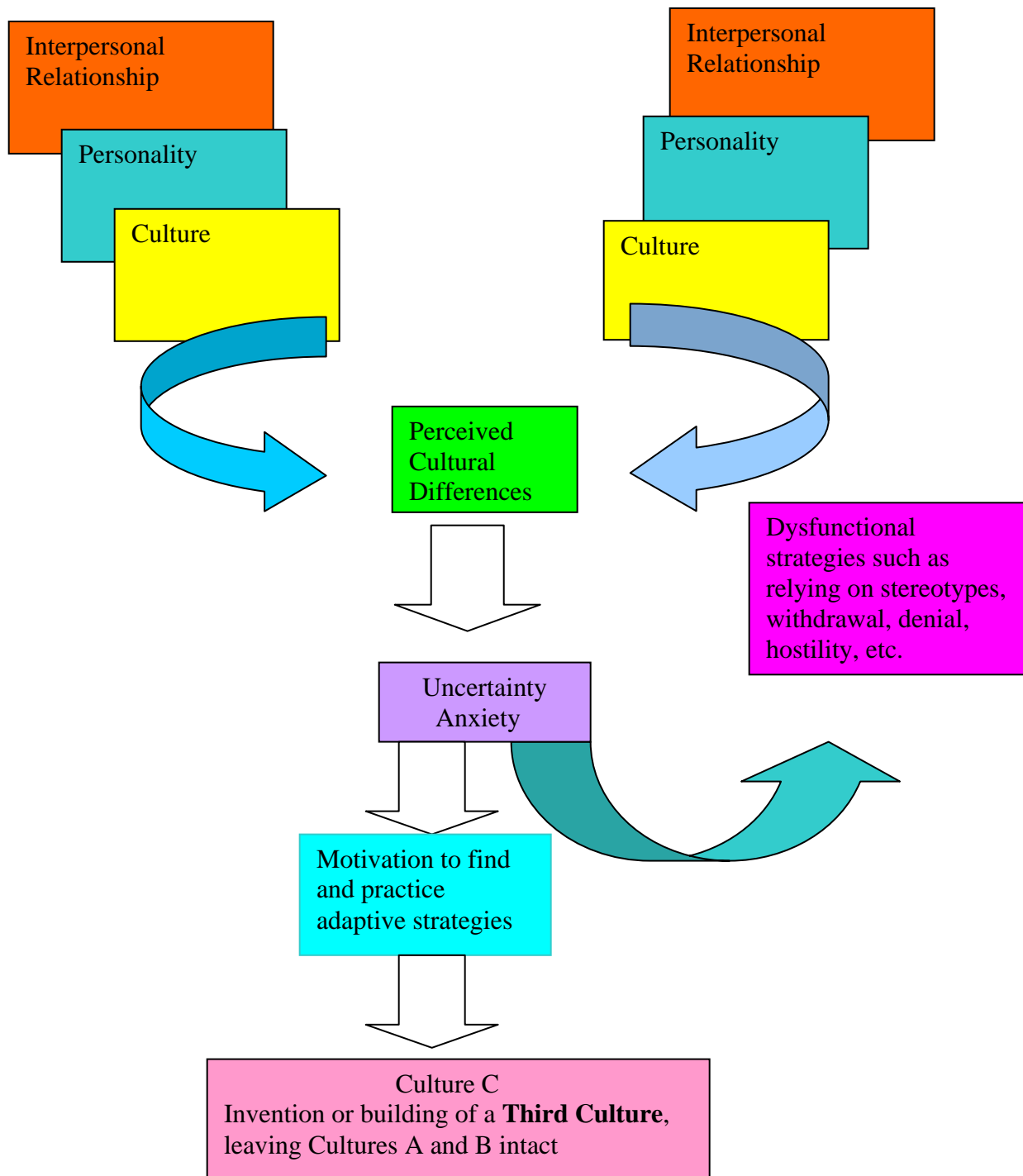
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<sup>\*</sup> David Bohm and F. David Peat (2000) support this close alliance between communication and perception in a whole chapter 2 in *Science, Order and Creativity*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed), (London & New York: Routledge).

the same spirit as Casmir and Geertz criticize mainstream intercultural research. Instead of quantifying the degrees of presence or absence of universal dimensions, Holden advocates the collection and study of “thick” descriptions of companies and

Person from Culture A

Person from Culture B





## Figure 1

Third Culture Frame or Model (Adapted from Carley Dodd 1998: 7)

their identities as they struggle with the intercultural barriers and challenges of globalization. The study of “thick” descriptions of organizational identities, very much like in ethnography, should lead to an accumulation of experience and know-ledge which a company can use effectively as a competitive advantage. (2002: ch. 5, especially 95-99)

## **2. Dialogue**

Dialogue here is conceptualized along the lines of attempts in the last few years in California (Glenna Gerard and Linda Ellinor) and at MIT (William Isaacs) to develop synergy in organizations. Both were inspired by David Bohm’s book *On Dialogue* (1996). Near the end of his life Bohm, an accomplished Nobel Prize winner in physics and a creative philosopher of science, felt that there was a disparity between insights from modern science and social communication. His last short book on dialogue was meant to fill in this gap. Organizational developers like Peter Senge and William Isaacs at MIT and two women consultants, Glenna Gerard and Linda Ellinor, were inspired to find ways to put Bohm’s theory into practice. Peter Senge (1990: ch.12) was hoping that dialogue as a practice could compliment his own theory and practice in what is called Learning Organization. William Isaacs, with the help of the Kellogg Foundation, gathered a team together (including Freeman Dhority, who is now active in Germany) and founded the Dialogue Project. Glenna Gerard and Linda Ellinor founded their own socalled Dialogue Group. Out of this ferment of a search for forms of practice which could be applied to organizations, numerous tools and skills have been recognized, developed and practiced in the dialogue process. The lists of skills and behaviours being practiced are long and various but there are some common patterns. (Freeman Dhority lists ten 2001:21: the Attitude of the Learner, Radical Respect, Openness, Speak from the Heart, Generative Listening, Slowing Down, Suspend Assumptions and Judgements, Advocate Productively, Inquiring with Genuine Curiosity, Observe the Observer.)

First (A), I shall give an idea of dialogue is as a form of practice, relying on the collective attempts of the socalled “experts”. Second (B), I’ll choose just a few of the dialogue skills, which are commonly used by the practioners above, and concentrate on them to show how they can be related to the discipline of intercultural and diversity communication (specifically “Third Culture”). Third (C), I’ll give a short summary of the socalled “entry points” between intercultural communication and dialogue training.

A. Dialogue has many facets. Lee Nichol, the editor of *On Dialogue*, describes Bohm’s view of dialogue as “aimed at the understanding of consciousness, *per se*, as well as exploring the problematic nature of day-to-day relationship and communication. This definition provides a foundation, a reference point...for the key components of dialogue: shared meaning; the nature of collective thought; the pervasive-ness of fragmentation; the function of awareness; the micro-cultural context; undirected inquiry; impersonal fellowship; and the paradox of the observer and the ob-served.” (in Bohm, 1996: xi) Chapter one of Bohm’s little book (1996) is entitled “On Communication.” He maintains that implicit in the communication process is the experience of

difference and similarity.\* “In such a dialogue, when one person says something, the other person does not in general respond with exactly the same meaning as that seen by the first person. Rather, the meanings are only *similar* and not identical. Thus, when the second person replies, the first person sees a *difference* between what he meant to say and what the other person understood. On considering this difference, he may then be able to see something new, which is relevant both to his views and to those of the other person.” (Bohm, 1996: 2) Notice the similarities of this view with some of the assumptions about practicing intercultural competence. Following the Third Culture model, the first step in attaining such a competence is to recognize the differences which then supply the intercultural contrasts necessary to start the search for similarities. Both disciplines view communication as central and both disciplines highlight the creative tension between perceiving differences and similarities. In practice, however, exactly how these differences and similarities relate to one another at the moment and how communicators are attached to or detached from these perceptions and constructions, take on primary significance.

Dialogue, like intercultural and diversity communication, becomes increasingly complex the more one practices. Let us start with Linda Ellinor’s and Glenna Gerard’s attempt at a simplification, just enough to start the conversation moving on the entry points between dialogue and the intercultural. They define dialogue in terms of a contrast between dialogue and discussion/debate, called appropriately “The Conversation Continuum” (2001: 2) (The only things missing are the nonverbal—but then it becomes too complex too soon.)

### *The Conversation Continuum*

<u><i>Dialogue</i></u>	<u><i>Discussion/Debate</i></u>
Seeing the <i>whole</i> among parts	Breaking issues/problems into <i>parts</i>
Seeing the <i>connections</i> between parts	Seeing <i>distinctions</i> between parts
<i>Inquiring</i> into assumptions	<i>Justifying/defending</i> assumptions
<i>Learning</i> through inquiry and disclosure	<i>Persuading, selling, telling</i>
Creating <i>shared</i> meaning	Gaining agreement on <i>one</i> meaning

Both of these, dialogue and debate, have appropriate situations for their application and both have their strengths and weaknesses. To see them as a continuum allows for shades which may be difficult to place on one side or the other. For example, Glenna Gerard once told me that critical thinking is actually more in the area of dialogue. I was quite surprised because I had assumed that critical thinking was more the German way of the “negation of the negation” and that it was more analytical (like in the German word “Auseinandersetzung”, literally “to set out and apart”). She emphasized that critical thinking is careful discerning of what is. Perhaps we just represent two views of critical thinking. On a continuum we don’t have to decide who is right; both views can take their places on it.

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\* We already have our first entry point from dialogue to Hall’s view of communication (Hall 1998: 53-55). Compare also Lakoff’s view of commensurability in his attempt at a reformulation of Whorf’s ideas (Lakoff 1987: 322-324)

In this contrast between dialogue and discussion/debate another entry point to intercultural communication becomes visible. That is, both can be considered *communication styles* with different basic assumptions about reality. From both, the observer can detect different conversation behaviours and patterns. Different nonverbal can be expected as well (ex. receptive gestures and body position vs combative gestures and body position). Both can be found in different cultural traditions. Discussion/debate is a major stream running through the European Enlightenment, the revolutionary tradition of the West, also an intrinsic part of science. The dialogue tradition can also be found in a minority tradition in the West (ex. Martin Buber, the Quakers, some rituals among the Native Americans, constructivism and systems, strewn throughout the arts and sciences, hermeneutics, etc.) as well as in many of the Eastern traditions (especially Buddhism).

It is easy to be caught being ethnocentric in either tradition; however, since discussion/debate presumably can be considered more mainstream, it is more likely to be considered the “natural”, “scientific” or “universal” and implicitly superior way of communicating. Being ethnocentric in dialogue may be the product of too much homogeneity in a dialoging group. For example, it is conceivable that a group of social workers between the ages of 30 and 40 may be so used to harmonizing, listening, sharing and smoothing over conflict before it arises, that they may not see that their kind of dialoging is simply that, their kind, and it may be based more on ignoring the differences rather than recognizing them. In contrast, the original dialoging project from the William Isaacs’ group involved steel workers and employers who in the beginning were very hostile toward one another. They needed lots of patience and persistence to finally understand the difference between their traditional arguing style of communication and the dialogue style. Participants within a particular culture, profession, ethnic group, gender, etc. may not notice that their particular kind of debate or dialogue is colored by their basic assumptions and experiences arising from their diverse cultural and co-cultural backgrounds. In the spirit of Deborah Tannen’s (1994) proposing different gender communication styles (at least in America), a group of women dialoging may be confusing dialoging with “sharing”, being very personal and sympathetic, smoothing the rough edges of the flow of conversation, etc. The implication here is that not only may there be different cultural and personal communication styles, there may also be different dialogue styles (See Kazuma Matoba). Sometimes it may be difficult to determine whether it is one or the other. Keeping this in mind on the part of the participants can lead to an enrichment of both dialogue and the particular cultural communication styles visible in the patterns of the group communication.

B. Ellinor and Gerard, in their attempt at an introduction to dialogue and its applications in organizations, list five skills.\*

1. Suspension of Judgement
2. Listening
3. Reflection
4. Assumption Identification
5. Inquiry

These five skills fit neatly into a structured whole, at least at the beginning of the process. A major basic assumption for this communicative, social interactive whole is that a person (people) cannot

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\* There are many more skills. Dhority lists ten. I have counted up to sixteen. But these first five are enough to see the logic of the communication style.

*not judge, think or communicate.* If this assumption is true, then the precondition for people coherently thinking, communicating or operating together is to be able to “*observe*”, *experience* or *perceive* their own judging, feeling and thinking processes. (This was what Bohm meant by proprioception, the ability to observe one’s bodily processes—including thinking.)

The logic for the skills is as follows: In order to view the whole and reach a higher level of control of the interaction with the other(s) and in the spirit of collaboration with the other(s), I, as one participant in this communicative process, suspend judgement. Ellinor and Gerard maintain that “suspension of judgement, a skill key to dialogue, isn’t about stopping judging—we couldn’t do that if we tried. Rather, it’s about noticing what our judgements are and then holding them lightly so we can still hear what others are saying, even when it may contradict our judgements.” (2001: 7).

Now come the metaphors. We “hold” the judgements “lightly” so we can continue to listen and gather more information to construct the whole. The meaning of “suspend” in English refers to the mental picture, for example, of “hanging” the judgement or thought “on a hook” or from something. This is difficult in our fast culture and therefore we need more time; we have to slow down. We may have to “look” at our experience again by remembering and reflecting. Through reflection hopefully we can recognize basic, tacit, often subconscious assumptions—which very well could be related to our deep cultural assumptions--underlying the whole communication (my own and those of the others). If we don’t recognize our assumptions, we can ask for more information (Inquiry!). If we think we have an idea of what is going on (the whole), then we ask for confirmation if our understanding is correct. I test my imagination, my fiction. Then, in the spirit of Philip Roth, we are more likely to get it wrong than right. We correct our view of the whole. And the process or procedure continues, seemingly never ending and complex.

The corporate doubter here may be sceptical and say that this is not relevant to the fast reality of her/his daily life. He/she is right—this is respected in dialogue. Dialogue is not the only reality and not the only way of communicating—which implies that e.g. a leader or manager can consciously make a choice to dialogue or not. If and when a decision has to be made, then, as Glenna Gerard in her talks often pointed out, the responsible individual or group have to converge, make a decision and act, with the real possibility that they--again this sounds like Roth--didn’t get it quite right, but perhaps right enough in the total process to make the back and forth process of dialoging/diverging and converging worthwhile for the group dynamics and operations in the “hard” realities of corporate life.

C. Notice some of the entry points already appearing between intercultural communication and dialogue. First, dialogue and discussion/debate can be considered communication styles. There are serious attempts to construct communication styles in the areas of gender, ethnic and national cultural differences. Second, recognition of the your own and others’ basic assumptions in the communication process is the first step toward recognizing, with some help from reflection and inquiry, the cultural or diversity aspects of those assumptions.

Third, both interculturalists (like Dodd) and dialogue trainers place a major focus on practicing the skill of suspending judgement. Also, by recognizing how we use our language (in particular, metaphors) in picturing “suspending judgement” in our minds, it is very suggestive to look at other languages and metaphors to stimulate our perception and thought process from different angles. For example, the Germans think “in der Schweben halten” (hold in a hovering position). The point

here is not to be right about the way the Germans think but rather to ask ourselves if it is worth talking to Germans about what they mean when they hold a thought, judgement or feeling “in der Schwebe.” Could the discussion be a “rich” discussion about cultural or personal differences? The only way to know is to try it.

A fourth entry point involves William Isaacs’ dialogue project at MIT when they first attempted to use dialogue in organizations (1999). As already mentioned, dialogue was applied to a tense situation at an iron and steel company; employers and the employees (unionized) when they started the negotiation process were nearly at each others’ throats. After two years of meeting regularly they could both support the idea that dialogue had made a major impact on how they viewed one another, how they communicated and how the identity of the company had changed. They used a metaphor in their dialoging which was taken from their work environment; it was the “container”. The “container” was a reference to those big, sturdy containers which hold the hot, molten iron. They felt the “fire” or “heat” of the judging and the feelings but they all made an effort to keep the fire within limits. The container created a “safe space” in a tense communicative, interactive environment. If we add the need for slowing down the process, then we can add time to space and view them as a unity of space/time (which is a key element in Bohm’s philosophy of science, Bohm & Peat 1987: 74-75).

Notice the comfortable fit between the container metaphor in dialogue and Third Culture metaphor in intercultural communication.\* Notice also the connection to the needed space or , as Casmir pointed out, the construction of a “mutually beneficial interactive environment” as a key component of the Third Culture. Again, we are here concerned with space (including ritual space) and context (including ritual context). Space (or space/time) and contexts need frames in order to perceive them. Without some circumscription or border, even if it is only blurry as in patterns, perception is not possible.

### **3. Frames of Discourse**

A fruitful way of talking about intercultural communication, dialogue and their mutual entry points is to introduce the use of the term “frame of discourse” (or just “frame”). Michael Agar defines it as something which “sets a boundary around the details and highlights how these details are related to each other.” (1994: 130) Frames “stretch language beyond the circle (beyond language’s limits, S.H.), and frames take language and culture and make them inseparable.” (132) Meaning is created in the framing of our “expectations, not certainties.” (134) I find the term “frame” useful because of its tool-like, spacial (or time-spacial) character and because, according to Agar, it can be stretched; the space and time within it can be expanded to include more people, views, factors, diversity, cultural and personal differences, etc. This stretching also implies its opposite, i.e., to constrict and converge the perception and thought onto the moment of a decision and act, a gesture toward the realism of daily life and getting results.

Frames here can be considered etic and emic. Both terms etic and emic reflect the communicative and scientific needs to develop a vocabulary to describe as many as possible particular cultures, co-cultures, age groups, genders, etc. Etic frames start with clearly defined universals (ex.

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\* As far as I know, Kazuma Matoba and his research team at the University of Witten/Herdecke were the first ones to recognize this near perfect overlap and consciously tried to develop forms of training.

Hofstede's universal definition of individualism and collectivism) and apply them to reality. People confronted with these categories can then measure their proximity to these definitions. The emic approach is quite different. It does not offer any universal human behaviours except that all cultures need "space", ritual space, communicative space, building and operational space, which of course are in a process (implying time). An emic frame is kept as empty as possible so that when it is applied, for example, to people and cultures, then those people and cultures have as much space and time as possible to express themselves, to define who they are. The emic view can also be fruitful when we ask, e.g., how a particular culture use their own frames to explain, ritually perform or manifest their own world view, no matter whether they can present themselves as an identity (a system) or not. Whether we think in terms of etics or emics, the important question is whether the term "frame" can help us in our efforts at successful communication and operation, across cultural boundaries or interfaces. I will argue that it can (with a definite bias in favour of the emic approach). In order to support my argument I shall explore what it means to participate in a "rich" frame, whether the term "communication style" can be a kind of frame which is also helpful for communication, whether being playful with metaphors and a closer analysis of them can make our frames "richer", and whether the study of asymmetric frames from a higher metacognitive position can enhance mutual understanding (ex. when one wants to dialogue and the other doesn't).

### 3.1. "Rich" Frames

According to Michael Agar (1994: 135)\*,

When the frames coherently organize several rich points that work with people of a particular social identity, be it nationality, ethnicity, gender, occupation, or social style, then you've built a lingua-culture of the identity, from your point of view. I have to add "your point of view," because culture isn't something that "they" have; it's something that fills the spaces between you and them, and the nature of that space depends on you as well as them.

I support Agar in his argument that a "frame" is a "useful metaphor, not because culture is really made up of frames, but because frames work to guide me toward a coherent understanding of differences in terms of similarities, and that is what I want to do to understand rich points." (138) For example, let us say I approach my German friends on an informal occasion gathered around the table drinking a glass of wine and ask them when I am supposed to use "Sie" and when "Du" (second person, like "you" in English). If a hefty, animated discussion or perhaps long reflective thought follows, then we can say this is a "rich" frame (the situation plus the topic, a space where the richness can be expressed in some way, and enough time to let it happen). The rich frame should give us some indication about the German culture. But if we try to define this as a cultural characteristic in the form of some generality, with little reference to the frame of the moment, there is again the danger of reification (ex. stereotyping). If I include my American, male self in this frame, then the cultural reality is not just German but rather an American/German hybrid, which may not have a name. It is nameless. Nonetheless, this interaction is culture. We all have deeply embedded habits which we learned somewhere throughout our biographies. I have lived in

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\* Another approach very similar to Agar's is that of the Australian linguist, Anna Wierzbicka (1997), who works with the idea of key words or phrases which if researched, can also help us to understand the cultural „other“. See her example of the German discussion of "Heimat" (156-161).

Germany just as long as I have in America. We may be a mixture of men and women, homo- and heterosexual, disabled and “normal”, different ages, etc. Some of us may have lived in other countries and learned different languages during our lives, others of us not. If there is any homogeneity in our group, it is something empirically discovered—and perhaps even a novelty. It is not a given, which we have, a priori.

### **3.2. Communication Styles as Frames**

The term “communication style” is drawn from the discipline of intercultural communication and understood as a recognizable set of patterns in communication. By necessity, communication styles cannot be considered hard facts; they are rather “loose” (another metaphor) as in the patterns in a piece of art or music, nevertheless, empirical and observable. Patterns, however, also have limits. A painting has the limits of its frame and materials; a piece of music has a limit in a score or a theme as well as the acoustics of the setting; both art and music are limited by the performers’ abilities. The painting or the performance, however, is what communication is all about. (A score without a performance is dead; a performance without a score is conceivable (ex. Jazz), but without a style it is inconceivable. There must be patterns in any piece of art or music. And a style is recognized on the basis of patterns.

A communication style, consequently, can be depicted as a set of patterns with limits and these limits indicate a frame. Just as a person’s interest, experience and her/his study of painting can enhance the understanding of it, so the interest, experience and study of communication styles as frames can improve the likelihood of an expanding understanding and more coherent communication and dialogue. Examples of communication styles might be in relation to gender: separate (more male) and connected (more female) (Belinsky, et.al., 1997: ch. 6). There might be a German (Nies, 2000: ch. 4), American (Stewart & Bennett, 1991: ch. 8), or Japanese (Barnlund, 1989) communication style, along the lines of national culture. And finally dialogue and discussion/debate, as described by Ellinor and Gerard earlier, can be considered communication styles.

Furthermore, if people become aware of these different styles, then they can practice applying them in different situations and contexts. Sometimes these situations and contexts are more or less prescribed by culture, co-culture, gender, age, etc. Sometimes not. If not, people actually have choices. If one particular style, in this case, dialogue, already has built into it the stretching of the communicative space (being inclusive and feeling safe) and time (slowing down), then there is something special about it and it is not just one of the many styles on a long list. It can be applied in order to improve the communication with more diversity of the “other”; it is the only communication style which consciously focuses on understanding the whole of the social interaction.

To make it more complex but realistic, these styles may be embedded in various organizational contexts like meetings, interviews, presentations, negotiations, buying/selling, planning, conflict resolution, explaining procedures, describing processes, talking about trends and statistics, small talk, etc. A context, as Deborah Tannen (1994: 15) in her study of men’s and women’s communication at the American workplace utilizes effectively in her research, can also be a ritual context; she is interested in the “‘ritual’ character of interaction.” In my view, a ritual, like a piece of art or music, is circumscribed by borders thereby making it a frame. In fact, rituals are often performing wholes themselves, which allow for many forms and styles of communication in

diverse combinations and hybrids (music, dance, poetry, drama, art, architecture, etc.), further expressed in different media (exhibitions, live performances, television, film, books, etc.), and in various settings (stage, museum, concert hall, street, football field, church, recording studio, etc.).

To appreciate our observations and experiences of cultural communication patterns someone needs to record them and implant them into an extended memory (like writing or a score, or the piece of art). When people collect the rich intercultural experience and gain recognition of cultural patterns, take these patterns and connect them up into larger patterns, then these larger patterns at some point become communication styles. When extended descriptions are recorded, when the observer deepens her/his description, then “thick descriptions” are the result. An example of how this term is being used in the organizational context is in the work of Nigel Holden who advocates the collection of “thick descriptions” of companies’ histories and identities in view of their intercultural, global experience. From a business point of view, these descriptions become a source of knowledge which can help a company store, pass on and improve on its intercultural knowledge from generation to generation of their managers and staff. Knowledge here becomes an advantage for the bottom line; it is based on experience of cultural patterns, patterns woven together to create communication styles. As these styles take on firmer borders for the sake of recognition and application, they take on a frame like character, thus the term frame.\*

Giving an example of a cultural communication style is not an easy matter in this article because by the very nature of it, it is usually “thick” with lots of “rich” patterns. Even though Stewart & Bennett’s eighth chapter of their book American Cultural Patterns (1991) is the key part of their description of an American communication style, the whole book is about American communication patterns. Furthermore, the book is admittedly limited to some perhaps somewhat “fictional” mainstream white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant man. For a construction of an African-American communication style, another “thick” description by Kochman (1981) will have to be drawn on. And for American white Anglo-Saxon women, e.g. Tannen (1994), Wood (1999) and Belinky, et.al. (1997) have to be added to your reading list. Notice there are no shortcuts. It is more a matter of long-distance running. The priority here, however, is not to show what a long journey we all have ahead of us, if we want to acquire practical knowledge, but rather to point out that high quality description is the product of experiencing the moment in a mindful way over a longer period of time. Such an awareness skill is central both to dialogue and intercultural communication.

In spite of the impossibility of giving an example of a particular, cultural communication style in its thick description format in this particular article, let me refer to a chapter in Greg Nees’ book (2000: ch. 4) about the Germans, used to prepare Americans for doing business with Germans. Generalities are necessarily involved in his discourse on the German style of communication; for example, Germans tend to value clarity more than Americans do and this tendency also means that they often expect direct communication (72-75). The difference between this kind of generality and a “dysfunctional” or a “bad” one is that it is not necessarily good or bad and therefore, even if a person makes it into a stereotype, the stereotype is relatively harmless. Nees also proceeds amicably as much as possible, referring to German expressions like, *Jetzt werde ich mit ihm Deutsch reden müssen*, or *Jetzt reden wir Klartext* (both announcing the desire for clarity and directness). There

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\* It is tempting to borrow from Christoph Alexander’s idea of the “pattern language” (1979), i.e., that, as in architecture, which he is concerned about, we also need to develop a pattern language for culture, a way of talking about cultural communication patterns—without turning them into reified identities.



seems to be something empirically valid about Nees' judgement that such expressions are frequent and relevant parts of German speech. A German can disagree and perhaps argue against it. She/he may also convince Nees and myself that we are wrong. And here we are again, back to Roth's point: Life is getting it wrong. Nonetheless, if a lively discussion among the Germans and the "foreign" born expatriates, who may also have an opinion about it, results from this generality, then we can draw on Michael Agar's idea of the "rich frame." A "rich frame" does not tell us who is right; it only tells us if the content of this frame is somehow meaningful to the people thinking and speaking about it.

In addition, empirical research can also simply count the number of *downgraders* and *upgraders*. "Linguists use the term *downgraders* to denote words that make an expression weaker and less definite, while *upgraders* do just the reverse." Examples of downgraders in English would be "sort of, kind of, pretty much, maybe, well, an so on." Upgraders would be "words and phrases such as *definitely, absolutely, totally, without a doubt*, and so on, which strengthen an expression." (Nees: 73) Germans typically are more likely to use upgraders, for example when they are complaining or criticizing (*Das ist unverschämt! That is unashamed!*). Also, they tend to "use unqualified yes or no statements" (74) which can be offputting for Americans. For example, in my experience as an American expatriate in Germany, I have often heard Germans arguing with a back and forth verbal pingpong: *Nein,...doch...absolut nicht...doch*, etc. (No!...Indeed!... Absolutely Not!...Indeed!). To make this generality does not tell me anything about the moral character of Germans or Americans. It simply gives me some indication of the importance to them of a particular topic or frame. It is rich. And if understood in the right spirit, an awareness of it can lead to improved communication, fewer unnecessary feelings of irritation or at least to the use of less destructive, more creative defence mechanisms such as humour. After having lived in Germany for 35 years, when I read this chapter by Nees, I laughed because I somehow knew it but no one had ever put it into words. Furthermore, my German students who are assigned to read it generally react reflectively. We discuss the danger of stereotyping but the accusation that Nees is just offering more sophisticated forms of it has seldom been a reaction. Sometimes I get an effect which is not desired, when a few feel confirmed, yes, that clarity is always good! It is great! Then I have to work on making them see that as is the case of any basic value, there is a dark side. For example, there is nothing very clear about the beautiful wave patterns in white water rapids and people's exhilaration about running them. Beauty has to have some lack of clarity or some imperfection. A crass example on the dark side, of course, is the clarity and functional purity of a concentration camp.

The example of the value of directness and clarity in the German culture does not make up a thick description but the experience can form a rich frame, which can be a building block for constructing larger patterns which could form styles. The sequence is from the particular to the general. A rich moment of communication leads to constructing a frame with enough space and time in it to facilitate a good, inclusive view of the whole. This frame sets up expanded parameters to allow for coherence. To expand these parameters, we must suspend our judgements because judgements, by their very nature, constrict. During this constriction while in a tension with its suspension, recognition of these judgements, thoughts and their underlying assumptions and values is a core competence. This recognition can only be realized through contrast with the other. Observation of the other, the self and the total interaction is a precondition to the setting of the frame. A particular frame can be set aside for the eventual further combining with other frames (ex. the German tendency to criticize or complain) to form larger patterns which can be framed again.

To enhance this process the dialogue skills of generative listening and inquiry are very useful. Generative listening means we open up, receive the information from the “other” and keep suspending judgement. Inquiry means we ask questions in order to receive enough information to construct our picture of the whole “other” and to check to see if it is right. We reflect in order to construct our own whole and then we attempt to construct a whole for the total interaction. It helps to be playful, to play with the patterns and wholes, like playing with a dance, in order to lose the sense of its initial awkwardness. At some point in this process, if and when we have enough patterns and enough of a picture to be framed, we can probably risk considering constructing a style. An exact procedure for this movement from the particular to the general probably does not and can not exist; if it did, it wouldn’t be alive; it would not be a process. Being in a boat in the whitewater rapids still holds here as an appropriate operational analogy; there are techniques or methods you can learn to prepare yourself to steer the boat down the river. Once you learn them, you let them go and forget them. There is technique and then there is the feel for it, which is based on experience. This “feel” again is never exactly explicable and we do not have a good name for it. It again approaches the nameless. But, just as in much of art, music and sports, those who have experienced it can confirm it. There is nothing unreal about it.

Another example of a communication style related to culture and diversity can be found in the gender research in the US. Sometimes the terms separate (more male) and connected (more female) communication styles have been accepted theoretical frames. Other times the genders themselves have been the point of reference. For example, Julia Wood (1999: 123-129), in her textbook on gender communication, presents the frames “women’s speech” and “men’s speech”. Wood lists seven patterns in women’s speech; here I would like to use the vocabulary of patterns or frames; in effect, she lists seven patterns or frames related to the research on American white women’s speech. She lists six patterns or frames on the men’s side. Similar to Nees’ reference to Germans’ using more upgraders and fewer down-graders in their communication style, here in the two American gender speech styles, women are found to use more downgraders than men. Instead of the term “downgrader” Wood uses the terms “hedges, qualifiers and tag questions” (125), which for all practical purposes are kinds of downgraders. In one of the patterns found in the research, women seem to be more “tentative” than men are. They “use such verbal hedges like ‘I kind of feel you may be overreacting.’ In other situations they qualify statements by saying ‘I’m probably not the best judge of this, but...’ Another way to keep talk provisional is to tag a question onto a statement in a way that invites another to respond: ‘That was a pretty good movie, wasn’t it?’ ‘We should get out this weekend, don’t you think?’ Tentative communication leaves open the door for others to respond and express their opinions.”

On the American white men’s side of the patterns, of course, they do not use such downgraders as much; they “express themselves in fairly absolute, assertive ways” which tend to “close off conversation”. (128) A further deduction, if Nees’ propositions about Germans and Americans are accepted, is that German men use more upgraders than American men and women. What about German men and German women? As expected, yes, like American men and women, German men use more upgraders than German women and German women use more downgraders than German men. Renate Rogall (2001) cites the research of Barbara Schlueter who gives examples of German downgraders more often used in German women’s speech:

1. *ich glaube, ich denke, ich meine* (I believe, I think, I mean or I am of the opinion)\*

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\* Translation by the author S.H.

2. *man könnte sagen, man würde sagen* (one could say, one would say)
3. *mein Eindruck ist..., könnte es sein, dass...* (my impression is..., could it be that...)
4. *ich überlege, ob..., es scheint mir, dass...* (I am considering if or whether or I am thinking about the possibility of..., it seems to me that...)

Here I maintain that linguistics can give intercultural and dialogue communicators frames to help them understand better the role of their culture, gender or some other aspect of their part in the diversity. There is serious theory and research on communication styles or frames (as in the examples taken from Nees and Wood) which can be held lightly in the minds of those involved in here-and-now communication or operations. Holding them lightly, however, is not an easy task. It involves letting go of our need to be right, getting detachment from the discipline or method of creating the frames in the first place. Christoph Alexander (1979) expresses this injunction but in a different discipline, building and architecture:

But as things are, we have so far beset ourselves with rules, and concepts, of what must be done to make a building or town alive, that we have become afraid of what will happen naturally, and convinced that we must work within a “system” and with “methods” since without them our surroundings will come tumbling down in chaos. (14)

Letting go of our frames and prejudices is plagued with fears and anxiety. When fear is “frozen”,\* it becomes rigid and “numb”.\*\* Alexander persists in urging us to let go:

To purge ourselves of these illusions, to become free of all the artificial images of order which distort the nature that is in us, we must first learn a discipline which teaches us the true relationship between ourselves and our surroundings.

Then, once this discipline has done its work, and pricked the bubbles of illusion which we cling to now, we will be ready to give up the discipline, and act as nature does.

This is the timeless way of building: learning the discipline—and shedding it. (15-16)

The steps are clear enough. First, we learn the discipline. We learn the frames and generalities the best we can. Then in the communication or operational event in which we are participating, we let go of them, get some distance from them. They have not disappeared. We have just suspended

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\* For further elaboration on the question of fight/flight and a variation in which the animal “freezes” its fear by playing dead and on how this question relates to the “intolerance for ambiguity” or what I would describe as the rigid part of prejudice, stigmatization, etc., see the introduction to Constance Perin’s *Belonging in America: Reading between the Lines* (1988: 8-17).

\*\* For indirect support for Perin’s research see Robert Jay Lifton’s research and theory related to emotional “numbing” due to extreme adult traumas as, for example, was experienced by the Hiroshima survivors. According to Lifton’s theory, the numbing is a normal bodily and emotional reaction to “death immersion” (1979: 8-9, 144-145).

them and they are still part of us. The difference is that we are now detached enough to observe them and place them in the right perspective.

There is sometimes a fine difference between a frame, an operational or communication style, or a mindfully, carefully induced generality about a culture, co-culture, etc., on the one hand, and a stereotype or prejudice, on the other. The first have the positive connotation of science, the other the negative connotation as something that only bigots have.

Should we find that we have just formed another prejudice (“Women are more tentative” or “Germans speak in more absolute terms.”), then what? You can act as if it isn’t there. Through the act of your will power, you can imagine that you are not prejudiced and hope that you are not guilty. According to dialogue, however, one cannot not judge, which means it is not a matter of making prejudices disappear magically through one’s own will power in the self-injunction “I shouldn’t have this prejudice.” Rather, it is a matter of recognizing the prejudices we actually have and getting them out in the open. According to Paul Ricoeur (cited in John Stewart 1983: 388),

(The) relation between the self and the other gives the concept of prejudice its final dialectical touch: only insofar as I place myself in the other’s point of view do I confront myself with my present horizon, with my prejudices. It is only in the tension between the other and the self...that prejudice becomes operative....

Stewart maintains that what he calls interpretive listening (!) includes the affirmation and “use (of) my prejudices as I co-produce with the other meanings that we share.” Notice the similarities of Ricoeur’s/Stewart’s ideas, in an apparently separate philosophical discussion, to the frameworks of intercultural communication and dialogue. The recognition of our prejudices, followed by the co-production of the “meanings...we share”, help us in the communication process to co-produce or co-build a Third Culture (IC) or a container (dialogue), frames which circumscribe a whole social interaction which include all the basic assumptions and prejudices of the group.

### **3.3. Playing with metaphors and pursuit of metaphoric depth**

Anyone tuned in to the use of metaphors in descriptions and explanations could not have missed the fact that in this article many metaphors have appeared (“third” in “third culture”, container, frame, “rich” in “rich frame”, “thick” in “thick” description, “suspension” in suspension of judgement, “building” a “third culture”, etc.). What I did not mention when paraphrasing the ideas of Stewart/ Ricoeur above is that Stewart included these ideas within a heading called the “fusion of horizons”, two metaphors which taken together are very close to the “third culture” and the “container” metaphors. Now we can recognize different metaphor concepts from three different traditions: TC from Intercultural Communication, Container from Dialogue, and now Fusion of Horizons from hermeneutics. Stewart also refers to Gadamer to support his use of the phrase “fusion of horizons” (1983:387):

The term both Gadamer und Ricoeur use to characterize the event of understanding that occurs between an interpreter and a text is “fusion of horizons”. Gadamer defines a horizon as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.” In philosophy he says, the term is used “to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite

determination, and the nature of the law of the expansion of the range of vision. A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him...A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon...". One's horizon is constituted by his or her prejudices, but this does not mean, says Gadamer, that an horizon is a static or closed thing. "The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving."

When one understands another, one does not disregard oneself in order to place oneself in the place of the other. In Gadamer's words, the process of understanding "is not empathy\* of one individual for another, nor is it the application to another person of our own criteria, but it always involves the attainment of a higher universality that overcomes, not only our own particularity, but also that of the other."

In short, the recognition and respect for the differences between one's self and the other(s) in this view of hermeneutics as well as in one of the mainstreams of IC (ex. Third Culture) and Dialogue (ex. building and maintaining the container), in all three traditions this seems to make up the first step in communication across cultural and personal interfaces, especially if the participants in the communication event are not familiar with them—or are in the habit of first looking for the similarities. The key to depth is recognizing differences. The key to cooperation and operation is to discover the similarities; this is the second step. Sequence is important.

These three traditions, I maintain, use different clusters of metaphors and through the play and ordering of these metaphoric clusters, more depth of understanding and more creativity will result. In line with George Lakov and Mark Johnson, I share the working assumption that the "most fundamental values in culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts of culture." (1980: 22) Playing with one's own and others' metaphors, ordering them and probing their structure can help communicators construct a deeper, more multiple, holistic point of view of whatever the focus might be, be it on peace negotiations between two conflicting, political parties, be it on resolving conflict in a multicultural team in a corporation, or on creating synergy within a team of researchers.

Lakov and Johnson (1980: 3-13) propose that metaphors often entail a degree of "systematicity". A cluster of metaphors may revolve around the same theme like "Argument is War," a "metaphor concept" which is quite prevalent in American culture. This concept includes a list of many warlike expressions in everyday American English (like "Your claims are *indefensible*." "He *attacked every weak point* in my argument." "His criticisms were *right on target*." etc.). In the following I would like to *play* with a metaphor concept which can be found in both IC (Third Culture) and Dialogue (container) traditions. This will be called *Building Bridges*.

There is also some philosophical foundation for the necessity of play. John Stewart (1983: 386-387), relying again on Hans-Georg Gadamer, proposes *play* as a metaphor for the "essential

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\*The use of the term empathy here is actually more like the use by intercultural communicators of the word sympathy which they find is not very useful in intercultural communication. In the word sympathy the separation and the differences between one's self and the other are not respected enough. In contrast, Stewart and Bennett (1991) maintain that **empathy** "assumes that the self is different from others; therefore, the shared qualities of subjective individualism upon which Americans build their interface of sympathy is not available." (152)

form” of language. Gadamer does not mean “structure or rules, but speech, living conversation.”

It is not surprising...that Gadamer uses the term “play” to refer not to an “attitude” or “state of mind,” but the “mode of being” of a work of art and later, of discourse. The fundamental dynamic of this mode of being is “the to-and-fro movement which is not tied to any goal....”

According to Gadamer, play “has no goal which brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition.” Stewart qualifies this by emphasizing that Gadamer does not mean, for example, that a football game never ends but rather that people never stop playing football games. They never seem to get tired of it.

If we apply this to IC and dialogue, then I am maintaining that the more we can play with our ideas, judgements, feelings, messages, interpretations, operations, etc. the more we can gain enough detachment to turn potentially very serious affairs into a very creative to-and-fro process.

Consequently, playing with metaphors when examining key metaphor concepts like Third Culture (in IC) and Container (in Dialogue), combined with an attempt at deepening these concepts, I hypothesize, can facilitate interesting frames (or fictions) which can be applied by the participants in any training in which suspending judgement and viewing the whole are central. Or in more metaphoric terms, if you want to build a bridge or a container, let’s play with it more systematically, like an architect or engineer would do.

Let’s play and enquire, in order to pursue depth. The theme or cluster of metaphors I want to use as an example is a metaphoric phrase often heard and espoused, at least in the English-speaking Western world, *building bridges*. This metaphor has proven to be powerful in touching people’s hearts. To support my point, in a Google Search I found 6,170,000 entries under the item “building bridges”. I could only sample the first few entries but at least 50% were not related to real bridges that engineers build. *Building bridges* was used as a rich metaphor for something social/cultural or communicative. In the German Google Search I found 220,000 entries for “Brücken bauen” and in the sampling I found easily that 80-90% of them were used metaphorically.

To borrow on Lakov’s and Johnson’s theory, *building bridges* could be a so-called “metaphor concept” which fits into the category of a “conduit metaphor”(1980: 6-13). Both “third culture” and “building bridges” bring up the image of a constricted conduit of communication from Person, Group or Culture A to Person, Group or Culture B. Or another way is to start with a conduit between Person A and Person B trying to communicate or operate and then to proceed by adding one person after another, gradually building something more like an umbrella, a tent or even a building. Whatever metaphor one prefers one of the purposes of this paper is to show that investigating metaphors or a metaphor concept more thoroughly can bring new insights into the communication process.

The metaphor from dialogue, the *container*, is a metaphor concept which would fit into what Lakov and Johnson call a “Container Metaphor”. The container of molten iron, which was derived from very “hot” negotiations between workers and employers in an iron and steel company in one of the first dialogue projects, has become generalized into a metaphor concept for dialogue training. The danger in this generalization of the “container” of “heat” is that the container walls are not suggestive of flexibility, resilience or expansion. The strength of the metaphor is that it came from the people involved and it probably accurately reflected how they felt. There are definite limits to

negotiations between workers and employers.

A container implies circumscribed space, a very important concept for any dialogue or intercultural training. David Bohm, being a physicist, spent considerable energy developing the idea of space (or space/time) in his works. He and David Peat once maintained that “time is space” (1987: 74). The study of space, called proxemics, is also a major area of research in intercultural communication. Dodd makes a distinction between three forms of communicative space: fixed, semi fixed and personal space (1998: 142-145). The third one, personal space, was first developed by Ed Hall (1959: ch. 10; 1966; 1998, 60-61), the founder of the discipline Intercultural Communication. Deborah Tannen (1994: 14-15), in her studies of gender communication, bases her whole endeavour on the study of ritual interaction which implies the central importance of ritual context and ritual space. In my training by Martina Hartkemeyer and Freeman Dhority, we received a list of ten dialogue skills expressed in terms of space, a safe space where creative things can happen. Multiple views of space and space/time circumscribing social or ritual interaction seem to be worth reflecting on.

The question which concerns me is what is the nature of the space and its circumscription in these various metaphors which often appear both in dialogue and intercultural communication—and in a third area, hermeneutics.

The metaphor from hermeneutics “fusion of horizons” offers a mixture of images. A “horizon” gives an expansive feeling but it does have a natural boundary; therefore, it also belongs to Lakov’s and Johnson’s category of the container—but expansive. The “fusion” indicates a merging of perception, a sharing of experience.

In sum, what does space and circumscription have to do with building bridges and maintaining the “heat” of a container? A bridge is a conduit which connects up two circumscribed realities with a space in between them. A container sets limits to space; it circumscribes it. What kind of space is the bridge bridging? What kind of space and content is the container containing? What is the nature of the bridge to make it a good bridge? What is the nature of the container which makes it a good container, a container which makes the interaction within it safe?

Let’s start with the bridge and the process of building a bridge to determine if by pursuing more rich discernment of the metaphor we can learn something about improving the communication process, aside from the fact that it is related to the Third Culture creation.

When an engineer builds a bridge she first has to examine the two points which have to be bridged and the space in between. She has to examine differences and diversity of space and embankments, etc. Without investigating these points carefully she may commit the terrible mistake of just building a bridge single-mindedly and spontaneously in order to get to the other side. She may build a well-functioning bridge, at least for some time; however, the bridge may not last long. It may be ugly and not fit well into the landscape, all because she didn’t take the time to ponder the whole (space, points of connection, materials, proportions, landscape, plans for future environmental changes, etc.). Homework and reflection are needed.

This is often what happens in dialogue and intercultural communication. In order to relieve the anxiety of a surplus, unexpected difference to the “other(s)”, Person A (and perhaps Person B as well) searches spontaneously for the things they have in common. Especially in America, as

Stewart and Bennett (1991) point out in their thick description of American identity, equality is often assumed from the outset. Unconsciously many Americans tacitly assume that deep down inside we are all the same. The American spontaneously looks for something which bonds her/him to the foreigner. Consequently, the American in this case looks for a sympathy relationship and may be shocked to find that there are differences indeed. According to Bennett (1993: 24-25), cultural sensitivity is just the opposite in its focus: Rather than being sensitive to that which is in common with the “other”, cultural sensitivity reflects a person’s ability to recognize difference. “In other words, *it is the construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes development...*” (24) Bennett implies that this way of viewing cultural sensitivity is a precondition to developing and maintaining intercultural competence.

This view is consistent with the engineer’s procedure of first looking at the gap to be bridged. Like a good engineer, the space to be bridged and the differences between the two points which need to be bridged are examined first. Then she can talk about what kind of bridge is to be built, what kinds of materials, shapes and proportions are needed to make it strong and beautiful. Sequence is important not only for building “real” material, tangible bridges but also for practicing Third Culture building and/or developing dialogue competence. First, the space and differences have to be recognized and pondered; people may have to slow down to do this (time). (In dialogue training people are encouraged to slow down and reflect before they talk.) Second, we can consider how to connect with the other side, how to invent or build the Third Culture. Then, as the engineer has to consider how to build without disturbing the natural identity of the environment, the communicators have to make sure they are not deluded into thinking that they can or have to change their cultural and personal identities. They couldn’t do it if they tried. They can, however, learn to observe their thought processes and self which, paradoxically, are different than thought processes and self which are not observed. An observed self is a changed self—and yet the self has not changed.

In Deborah Tannen’s description (1990: 26) of women’s ways of intimate talk, she also notices more of a pingpong of searching for mutually bonding experiences. American women in their communication rituals tend to “minimize differences,... try to reach consensus, and avoid the appearance of superiority, which would highlight the differences.” This is one aspect which makes it possible to talk about a women’s communication style. A further question worthy of researching would be whether this kind of communication style can influence dialogue so much that we can also talk about a women’s style of dialogue. If there is and if the participants can become aware of it, then a higher level of bridging (or higher metacognitive level) can be attained, than, for example, between a more particular male or female style (and/or any other styles like national cultural, co-cultural, styles reflected in different languages, etc.) of communication which may be recognized in a particular group. But this is the key point. If the participants do not notice that the dialogue is taking on the form of a style, then some may unwittingly start to withdraw and not know why.

The pursuit of depth in the container metaphor of dialogue can enhance the pursuit of more depth in the bridge building metaphor in Third Culture. For example, if we build a container, what will the limits of the container be like—more like a hard wall or more elastic (My favourite is a semi-permeable membrane). (The Germans refer to the oak tree standing sturdy; in much of the Eastern philosophy the metaphor is the bamboo which bends with the wind. Both signify strength. An example of language differences is the lack of a good German equivalent for the English word “resilience”, which is another expression of strength in English.)



When conflict and struggle arise in the dialoging (the heat in the container), reflecting differences in deep, basic assumptions and values, the metaphor of expanding space is useful. How can we expand or stretch the container or frame in order to include the conflicting views? There is no general answer to this question because the answer can only be found in the details of the situation. It may be decisive at this critical moment for the participants to be able to ask themselves the right question as to how to expand the container or to modify the bridge in some way. What can we modify or change in our creation of a Third Culture in order to maintain it? A couple of points may help us to search for ways to actively expand the container or modify the bridge. There is no reason to assume that the self is not expandable and contractible; after all, where is the evidence on the fixation of limits?

In Western individualistic cultures we tend to assume that the “I” is some intrinsically limited entity. Two areas of evidence contradict this: Schmidt (2003) has found in his version of systems and hypnotherapy, when clients make a conscious effort at seeing themselves from multiple viewpoints, this leads to self expansion and often immediate relief of some of their symptoms; they are able to dissociate from a narrowly associated self. Another area of evidence is the research and theory of Rupert Sheldrake (1995: 202) pointing to the presence of a conscious self which is not seen mechanistically as a “ghost in the machine”. Rather, he sees it as “interacting with motor fields.” It is much easier to imagine fields of consciousness expanding and contracting than it is to imagine an individualistic, authentic self, a hardnosed, rugged captain of his soul, head high, undaunted, doing the same, expanding and contracting. For intercultural communication and dialogue competence the ability to expand or stretch consciousness, however slightly, is a prerequisite to the inclusion of different views in one’s own self (I am like this and I am not like this.) and the relevant group (I am like this; he/she is not; they are not.), especially when it starts to heat up and the participants become anxious and aggressive. Contracting consciousness is needed for closure, also a need in any communication process, but a need which can vary from culture to culture, from individual to individual, and from context to context. From a metacognitive position communicators can decide to practice these expanding and contracting processes along with reflection on the factors influencing these processes.

It is no accident that William Isaacs has based a major part of his book on dialogue (chapter 3 “The Timeless Way of Conversation” and Part IV “The Architecture of the Invisible”) borrowing on the ideas of Christopher Alexander, the controversial but respected professor of architecture at Berkeley. Evidently Isaacs has found that by being curious about architectural theory he can find some applications to communication and dialogue. Above I imagined how an engineer approaches building a bridge. When I gave an example of communication patterns involving my German and expatriate friends, I mentioned that this event with its complexity is nameless. Nonetheless, it is culture. This quality of patterns is what Alexander calls the “quality without a name”(1979: ch.2, esp. p. 17) Isaacs turned to this major work in architectural theory presumably in order to find metaphorical insights for developing new forms of effective dialogue practice. As in diversity of cultures, co-cultures, organizational cultures and individuals, etc., in both dialogue and intercultural communication, diversity of perceptions is a precondition for creative cooperation as well as individual and group growth. Playing with metaphors and searching for metaphorical depth, as in the case of Isaacs’ borrowing from another apparently quite different discipline, architecture, or in my pursuit of an engineer’s procedure in building a bridge, are two activities of enquiry which both the participants and facilitators of dialogue and intercultural training might want to examine more closely.

### 3.4. Asymmetrical Frames

Often dialogue trainees ask the question: What if the other does not want to dialogue? What if I offer the dialogue frame but the other does not want to accept it? This is what I call the issue of the asymmetrical frame. Confronted with such a situation a person often feels disappointed. His/her expectations are not met. In intercultural or diverse situations the likelihood of such a disappointment will increase.

Isaacs (1999: 227-229) gives the example of how common assumptions about dialogue, when confronted with an intercultural, communicative event, can stand in the way of good communication.

At first glance, the work of dialogue seems to promote a dominantly open-system approach. Dialogue usually includes some form of open exchange among people. Many writers and practitioners portray dialogue as a form of people speaking openly together. This framing tends to alienate people who enter systems inclined toward either a closed or random approach. Many managers, for instance, use a closed approach, and therefore find dialogue to be “too soft,” not something that practical people will find compelling. Yet dialogue’s potential and aim, I would suggest, is to help create a climate of inquiry among all these elements.

Isaacs uses the vocabulary of systems here, i.e. that there can be different dialogue systems and by applying the principle of inquiry, communication on a higher level between systems is possible. Instead of the word “systems” here I would like to suggest cultures—which leaves the question of cultures being systems open. As an alternative to “systems” we might try the term “fields” of communication as well. Inquiry takes place in a field in which deep basic tacit assumptions about reality and value may be so different that it leads to higher levels of uncertainty or anxiety than would otherwise be expected. Above, the manager from a more closed system or closed field cannot find much relevance in dialoging which usually assumes an open system or open field. Inquiry is the key to building such a bridge across such asymmetrical fields (or here co-cultural styles).

To make this point clearer in the area of intercultural differences, Isaacs (1999: 214-217) cites the example in 1997 of the a group of Americans, led by Robert McNamara, who visited Vietnam with the intention of achieving some sort of reconciliation concerning their positions as opposing parties in the Vietnam War.

Attending with McNamara were military, diplomatic, and political leaders from both Vietnam and the United States who were involved in the conflict, as well as a group of historians from the United States. Their intention was to try to make sense of what they called the “missed opportunities” in the war. McNamara had already expressed his sense that the tragedy of this war was based on a set of mistaken assumptions and moves, and in the meeting he continued to reinforce these points. He was hopeful that the Vietnamese would also “come clean” about their thinking and admit their errors. But it was not to be. The Americans left

with the impression that they were more forthcoming in admitting their errors than the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese did not respond to specific requests about what they had done wrong. At the end of the event in a press conference, the leader of the Vietnamese delegation said, speaking of the war: “The opportunities were missed by the United States side, not by the Vietnamese side.”

Using Kanter’s vocabulary, Isaacs thinks this misunderstanding arises from the two groups’ different mindsets. One assumed an open system; the other, a closed system. I would say the two groups probably were not aware of their deep, tacit basic cultural assumptions about the ritual framework of the event. The Vietnamese lost over 500,000 people while the Americans 45,000. Maybe it was the ritual duty of the Americans first to enquire and listen attentively, then to look for cues as to what should take place next in the reconciliation process. The Vietnamese were still concerned about history; the Americans were willing to let go of it.

The American (and dialogue) expectation of open communication simply may not have been appropriate in such a situation. One could say that the Vietnamese were keeping up their cultural defences. A dialogue trainer can also be disappointed in the manager who maintains that dialogue is not relevant for her/his reality. Both a national cultural frame of differences, like the Vietnamese, and the apparent “other” or “strange” reality of a corporate culture, can mean that a person practicing dialogue has to maintain an attitude of learning, listening and inquiry, even though she/he may have to postpone any dialogue gesture from the other side. Or we may have to revise our concept of dialogue in view of the often unexpected degree of “otherness” across the intercultural or diverse interface. There may be a good reason for people hanging on to their defenses and deep habits and this may be a critical element of trying to grasp the whole interaction. The approach here is nonviolent. We don’t attack a defense with the injunction “Be open!” We practice accepting the defense, enquiring about it and observing it. Then we can only hope for grace.

Revising our view of dialogue as a system, field, frame or communication style may be the result of people practicing dialogue who consciously catch themselves in an ethnocentric or historicentric position. There is the common belief that dialogue is open communication everywhere in all cultures and in all individuals. Ethnocentrism is something very human simply by the very fact that most people find it hard to jump over their own shadows of long years of socialization. Experiencing such differences at a cognitive notch higher than we expect is a great opportunity to recognize how our own culture, history and personality may effect how we view dialogue. Dialogue can admit its weakness here and thereby, paradoxically, through self-reflection take another step in creative growth. In its weakness lies its strength.

Consequently, just as in intercultural communication where the most important skill is to learn to recognize your own and other different cultural communication styles and ritual contexts, also in dialogue it is crucial to learn to recognize different dialogue styles which may be due to different cultural or personality contexts. (Here my view of history is cultural and personal; history is understood as a cooperative attempt at a consensus in extended memory. Therefore, the Vietnamese concern with history was related directly to cultural assumptions.)

Other examples of the prospect of finding culturally different dialogue styles can be found in the work of Kazuma Matoba’s research team at the University of Witten/Herdecke (Germany). Matoba, often accompanied by his team, has facilitated dialogue workshops in Japan and Namibia

as well as in Germany. His team has also worked together with DaimlerChrysler on both a training and research level.

One doctoral candidate spent a year in China facilitating dialogue workshops. The results are still coming in but a few interesting experiences are worth considering in supporting the point of this paper. (These are derived from direct consultation between Matoba in the course of our cooperation in the years 2003-4.)

- a. The Japanese dialogue groups are quite different than the German. The Germans tend to focus on trying to be open, direct and “authentic”. They practice speaking from the heart. Empathy is practiced by listening and inquiry in order to gain more information about the person one is trying to empathize with. They, like the Americans, often mix up sympathy and empathy (using Bennett’s definitions). The Japanese from the outset already assume a whole group consciousness but since they are likely to be able to predict what their Japanese brothers and sisters are going to do and say, empathy seems very natural, with little effort. The Japanese do not have an expression for “speaking from the heart”; rather they focus more on “listening from the heart.” Matoba maintains that the Japanese have to learn more about thinking critically and taking an individual standpoint, something perhaps more natural to a Western European or American mindset. The Western mindset, conversely, can learn more about listening and paying close attention to detail from the Japanese.
- b. Matoba’s reporting on his experience with Namibian students is reminiscent of Isaacs’ example of the Americans and the Vietnamese. History, in this case colonial history and its injustices, was of central concern to the Namibian students. Past grievances were not easy simply to let go. Gender and AIDS were also of central concern to them.
- c. In a conversation with Matoba and his wife concerning role-play and its application to practicing empathic communication skills, they told me that role-play would never work with the Japanese. They laughed and said the Japanese would just sit and read what they are supposed to say. I had just been facilitating a dialogue workshop in which much role-play had been used. This workshop had been developed by an American consultant. The feedback from my Japanese expatriate friends forced me to do some rethinking about my presumption that role-play is good and realistic for everybody.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, much work needs to be done on understanding how dialogue training and the discipline of intercultural communication—here I include diversity management and operations—can coenhance one another. This paper has suggested that these two disciplines as forms of practice or training should be informed on what the other is doing. It started with the working assumption that culture has to be understood in terms of communication and interfaces and that frames or communication styles, which are fictions, can be useful in building communication or operational competence. Detachment from or suspension of the frames, however, is of central importance; otherwise, reification is the result.

The Third Culture model of Dodd and Casmir was introduced as a useful framework and as a metaphor concept. A further metaphor concept of Building Bridges was used as an example of the

working hypothesis that metaphorical play, in this case by thinking like an engineer building a real bridge, can lead to a deepening of practical understanding and knowledge. Following Isaacs' borrowing from architecture, like him I also looked at the ideas of Christoph Alexander, the architectural theorist *par excellence*, in order to attain more metaphorical depth and therefore implicitly a richer frame.

In order to synthesize from the direction of dialogue I had to introduce dialogue as a sophisticated training originating from the ideas of David Bohm. Some of the central skills of dialogue were contrasted to the discussion/debate style of communication on a continuum. Dialogue skills turned out to be basically the same kinds of skills needed to communicate and operate effectively across interfaces with culturally or diverse other(s). The metaphor of the container which originated from one of the first dialogue projects at MIT is also a metaphor concept and a rich frame which can be used to enhance communication. In the long run rich frames can be merged into communication styles (based on national cultures, genders, co-cultures, etc.) and built up into rich descriptions both of which deserve a place in the long term strategy to increase intercultural understanding and practical knowledge, knowledge also applicable to the very practical operations of business in the ongoing globalization. The metaphor concept of the Fusion of Horizons, which came from the direction of hermeneutics, was also mentioned in order to open up another direction for further dialogue and discussion with another philosophical tradition. It was also helpful in clarifying the role of prejudices in communication.

The strength of dialogue is that the skills are practiced in a carefully prepared setting, a setting which can, should and will include the necessary adaptation to growing cultural and other differences. The weakness of dialogue is that participants may not be able to jump over their own cultural or personal shadows. People participating in dialogue may not be aware of the influence of culture and diversity on their dialoging, thereby making it into a particular dialoging style, and finally resulting in a lack of awareness of ethnocentrism embedded in the whole process. The dialogue participants often do not realize that their kind of dialogue is inescapably influenced by their culture, co-culture and other aspects of diversity. For example, the injunction to be open and authentic is ethnocentric. Being open and authentic is always defined by each culture differently, so different that in the end, for example, Americans may not even recognize these words anymore. There are times when a person's defence has to be accepted and respected. If I have a woman in front of me who has experienced major abuse by important men in her life, I really doubt if it would be wise to banter too hard about the roles of men and women in society. Bantering is a ritual related to my culture and perhaps to my being an American man; it may not be appropriate for all contexts, cultures and co-cultures. Dialogue can be a creative, powerful ritual with different communication and operational styles related to culture. Consequently, I maintain that there are different cultural dialogue styles, a conclusion which is being confirmed by the Witten/Herdecke dialogue research group.

Also, William Isaacs' example of the Americans visiting the Vietnamese to reconcile their past in the Vietnam war shows that the American expectation of reciprocal openness was unrealistic. The asymmetry of past suffering was simply too great. It reminds me of some of my German friends who privately keep asking themselves when they can finally be rid of the stigma of World War II. After all, this generation of Germans are not responsible. On the other hand, history can be heavy. If the Jewish concentration camp survivor, who is still dealing with the trauma, is standing in their presence, then what else can be done but to respect the pain and perhaps be silent? Like the Buddhist saint Nagarjuna argued about 1600 years ago, the point is not to gain a higher

consciousness. Mindfulness is enough. After building our frames carefully and in a discerning manner, can we let our frames and prejudices go, even prejudices about what we might think is the right way to dialogue or the right way to communicate interculturally?

The strength of Intercultural Communication as a discipline is that it takes the construction of frames or communication styles seriously; it researches and practices every possible aspect of them in every possible pragmatic context. The weakness of IC is that the number of frames seems to expand infinitely to a point of an oversaturation and sometimes the emic approach, as in the case of Hofstede, is left by the wayside. Reification of frames seems to be inevitable (not only in IC). In terms of skills, intercultural communicators often make the injunction to suspend judgement or to become aware of differences. They, like the dialogue trainers, have a long list of skills which are encouraged in their writings.\* I suspect that they only stand to gain by searching for cooperation with this recent attempt to apply dialogue practice to organizations. Both disciplines need each other.

By Stephen Holmes, February 2005, Heidelberg, Germany (It has been copyrighted.)

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- I admit that there is a big gap in my knowledge of particular forms of intercultural training in the last 50 years. I have only had a sampling. I have undergone dialogue training here in Germany by Martina Hartkemeyer and Freeman Dhority. But in casual conversation with the Bennetts, inter-culturalists here in Germany and with the dialogue trainers and trainees, I haven't found any evi-dence that there was a strong awareness as to what the other side is doing. Milton and Janet Ben-nett are known to many interculturalists here; some interculturalists I have talked to only know about Hofstede, perhaps Hampden-Turner and Frons Trompenaars, and have never heard of Nigel Holden. Recently Kazuma Matoba, Daniel Scheible and myself gave an introductory one-day workshop on intercultural dialogue to members of SIETAR-Deutschland. Their reactions were positive and they understood the potential of cooperating with and borrowing from the dialogue training. Slowly, the number of dialogue trainees who are also interculturalists or diversity spec-ialists is rising. Part of this paper is aimed at the dialogue trainers and trainees, hoping that the intercultural skills will rise in demand among them. It just does not seem tenable that dialogue as practice can be ignorant of a fifty year tradition of systematic theory and practice in intercultural communication in the US and now about ten years in Europe (especially strong in the Skandin-avian countries).

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