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Hilary Bradbury
Case Western Reserve University

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Hilary Bradbury
Case Western Reserve University, USA

Abstract

I treat the dynamics of interorganizational collaboration from a dialogue perspective. This extends the â exploitativeâ and â explorativeâ approaches that currently define scholarship on interorganizational collaboration. A dialogue perspective is argued to be particularly useful in understanding interorganizational efforts to tackle systemic issues that are technically as well as behaviorally complex, e.g., global warming. The concept of â dialogic capitalâ is then introduced to theorize how, and by whom, the interorganizational dialogue is shaped in a context in which there is little formal authority among the participants. The process of accrual, leverage and growth/decline of dialogic capital is presented and implications for empirical research offered.

Keywords: Interorganizational Collaboration; Dialogue; Dialogic Capital; Global Warming.

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Dynamics of Dialogic Capital in Interorganizational Collaboration

"Dialogue and dialogic thought are the closest that human beings can come to imitating the life force," (Grudin, 1997: 214).

A growing number of interorganizational collaborations (e.g., The Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies [CERES] or The Society for Organizational Learning Sustainability Consortium) increasingly bring executives from across industries into dialogue with Non-Governmental Organizations and academics, thereby forming 'bridging' or 'partnership' organizations (Brown, 1991; Waddock, 1989). The goal of these cross-sectoral, collaborative, bridging organizations is to tackle 'systemic messes' (Ackoff, 1974) or 'metaproblems' (Trist, 1983), such as global warming. This new type of interorganizational collaboration is on the increase (Elkington, 1998) because the seriousness of global 'indivisible problem domains' (Gray, 1985; 1989) is being recognized as a threat to the economic, environmental and social sustainability of our organizations.

Organizational theory defines collaboration as a cooperative, interorganizational relationship that relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control (Ouchi, 1980). The research agenda to date on interorganizational collaboration has outlined three areas for evolving study of collaboration: antecedents, dynamics and outcomes (Wood & Gray, 1991; Lawrence, Phillips & Hardy, 1999). There is consistency about what defines the raison d'etre of interorganizational collaboration, namely its capacity to generate learning (Powell, Koput & Smith-Doerr, 1996) in a time of turbulent complexity in which pooling of resources both speeds up and offers access to better resources than any organization alone can marshal (Sharfman, Gray & Yan, 1991). However two perspectives, the 'exploitative' and 'explorative,' to use labels from March's (1991) review of interorganizational learning, have bifurcated the approach to the three arenas of interorganizational collaboration (Lawrence, Phillips & Hardy, 1999; Powell, Koput & Smith-Doerr, 1996).

The explorative, also called social construction approach, explores 'indivisible' problems (Gray, 1985) of which environmental issues are particularly common, such as urban waste management (Turcotte, 1997), the whale watching industry (Lawrence, Phillips & Hardy, 1999), promotion of biological diversity in zoo populations (Westley & Vrendenburg, 1991). This approach reflects efforts to negotiate new behaviors that will ameliorate the problem among a diverse set of players. The exploitative approach, on the other hand, reflects concern with issues of technical complexity such as biotech development or internet use or electronic commerce (Romulo & Stofberg, 2001). According to the exploitative, also called strategic (Powell, Koput & Smith-Doerr, 1996) approach, a basic antecedent to collaboration is a desire among focal organizations that join the collaborative to bring fruits of the collaboration 'back home' so as to help innovations and market competitiveness. Few empirical papers describe what actually occurs in interorganizational collaborations. Among those that do the ongoing communicative process emphasized is one of negotiation (Lawrence, Phillips & Hardy, 1999).

The explorative and exploitative approaches that define organizational scholarship on collaboration do not readily allow us understand newer efforts to ameliorate 'system messes' (Ackoff, 1974) which are replete with need for both technical and behavioral innovation across multiple organizational and system boundaries. An example of a 'system mess' is global warming, which combines the need for technical collaboration, evident within the technological

field, with behavioral collaboration that is evident in efforts on environmental management. Such metaproblems present an important challenge to the organizational world and to theory of organizational collaboration generally. Global warming is widely agreed to be on the increase as a result of human activity (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2001: 2-7). First mover organizations who publicly acknowledge the link between business activity and global warming, perhaps most notably the oil company BP (Browne, 1997), are engaged in redesigning organizational practices and technologies to offer sustainable energy technologies by which global warming can be ameliorated while simultaneously allowing mainstream businesses remain competitive in the long term. Bradbury, Carroll, Ehrenfeld and Senge, (2000) point out that attempts to address issues of sustainability are a practice ground for addressing systems innovation more generally because of the degree of collaborative, multistakeholder learning as well as the management of technical and behavioral complexity indicated.

Table one presents the elements of the explorative and exploitative approaches to collaboration. It also presents a third approach, namely a 'dialogic (capital) approach.' The purpose is to extend the explorative approach by adopting some of the elements of the exploitative approach thereby overcoming critical dichotomous assumptions, i.e., that organizational self interest and a pro-social common good are mutually exclusive or that technical and behavioral complexity are separate issues.

Negotiation has been the presumed dynamic of interorganizational collaborations. In seeking to deal with issues like global warming which are both behaviorally and technically complex, and in which organizational self interest and a pro-social common good are mutually reinforcing, a negotiations lens, however, falls short. As Isaacs states,

> *Dialogue fulfills deeper, more widespread needs than simply "getting to yes." The aim of a negotiation is to reach agreement among parties who differ. The intention of dialogue is to reach new understanding and, in so doing, to form a totally new basis from which to think and action…We do not merely try to reach agreement, we try to create a context from which many new agreements might come (Isaacs, 1999: 19).*

Dialogue refers to a language exchange which occurs over time in which people seek to think together thus enabling collaborative activity to emerge from their mutual understanding. Dialogue, which in contrast to negotiation, tends toward informality in process (Schinke-Llano, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978) is aimed at mutual alignment of action (Isaacs, 1999). Dialogue evolves out of respectful and often playful reciprocity (Buber, 1970) and is a foundation of relational practice (Fletcher, 1998). This lens is most easily applied to collaborative endeavors which actively foster a dialogue approach. However it also has applicability to those collaborations in which negotiation is the formal process used with dialogue occurring on the informal margins of the formal negotiations (cf. Turcotte & Pasquero, [2001] description which underscores the importance of allowing ambiguity among participants. Their paper offers a rare empirical description of collaborative processes and one sees that collaborative activity occurs beyond, and perhaps in spite of, the formal negotiation process).

	Exploitative Approach	Explorative Approach	Dialogic (capital) Approach
Illustration	Biotech firms seeking to leverage learning from among peer organizations to 'home' organization.	Collaboration among organizations to alleviate an environmental issue.	Collaboration among multi-sectoral organizations to tackle complex systemic problems such as global warming or sustainable development more generally.
Antecedent	Technical complexity facing firms.	Need to align behaviors of different organizations.	System complexities that are both technical and behavioral
Dynamic	Trust, power, networks	Negotiation, Discourse	Dialogic capital
Primary interest	Organizationalself interest	Pro-social system interest	Pro-social interest is served while organizational self interest is served.
Focus	Individual 'home' organizations making up the collaborative bridging organization	Collaborative 'bridging organization' itself.	Collaborative bridging and individual home organization are mutually constitutive.
Outcomes	Technology innovation	Alleviation of the problem	Break through technologies developed by individual organizations can be extended synergistically in the collaborative as a whole.

Table 1. Expanding the Exploitative and Explorative Approaches to Interorganizational Collaboration

In introducing the dialogue lens to better allow us understand how collaboration occurs, I also introduce the concept of 'dialogic capital,' linking expanded notions of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; 1991) with the practice of dialogue (Bohm, 1990; Buber, 1970; 1984; Habermas, 1984/87; Isaacs, 1999; Vygotsky, 1962; 1978) to theorize dynamics of interorganizational collaborations. I specifically theorize the way in which dialogic capital is accrued within the bridging organization, is leveraged back to the home organizations where it grows or declines. My coinage of the term 'dialogic capital' confers attention on people's open-ended coordination of activity through dialogue. I define dialogic capital as the resource that accrues to persons (groups) as their input to the dialogue shapes the interorganizational coordination of desired activity within a collective in a way that accords with their interests.

The paper proceeds by presenting a logic for the premise that dialogue is a particularly useful lens on the coordination of technical and behavioral alignment across multiple organizational and system boundaries. This is followed by exposition of the concept of 'dialogic capital' to analyze how dialogic interaction helps produce new institutional structures.

Dialogue: Languaged Coordination Of Activity

The traditional account of language is that it represents or describes reality. However since the 'linguistic turn' has swept the human and social sciences, by noting the hitherto underestimated role of language in the constructions of our world (Van Maanen, 1995), language is increasingly treated as a vehicle through which reality is communicatively enacted (Habermas, 1984). The two perspectives, the representational and the coordinating (or pragmatic), can be contrasted with the simple sentence "I am hungry" (Rorty, 1999). From a pragmatic, communicative, action perspective such a statement is understood as a preface to coordinating dinner plans, whereas a representational perspective interprets this statement as a person's attempt to describe their internal reality of hunger. Building on the insights of language as a pathway to coordination, theorists have noted different ways in which one 'gets things done with words' (Austin, 1962). Speech act theory (Searle, 1969), integrated into organizational change theory (Ford & Ford, 1995), brings attention to the power of illocutionary acts to create new realities in which words effect activity. For example, a CEO may say "we will have a TQM program" whereupon this speech act actually engenders activity, be it from design to reward systems, to bring TQM into the organization (Ford & Ford, 1995). The application of speech act theory to the field of organizational activity leverages the common practice of unilateral 'command and control' which underscores the on-going perception that organizational activity relies on the power of a small set of executive change agents who 'roll out' a change agenda through 'cascading communication' efforts, that is then adopted or resisted by others. So while language may be fruitfully understood to coordinate desired reality, speech act theory as applied to the organizational realm relies on presumptions of unilaterality of language, or monologic rather than dialogic engagement. However, as interorganizational collaboration has been noted for a lack of formal authority which would permit such monologic engagement to have much effect, and negotiation has been noted for falling short of the type of thinking together that is required, the alternative of dialogue broadens the repertoire of communicative activity in a way that is particularly appropriate to collaborative endeavors of a bridging organization.

Table two identifies types of language exchange and equates them with the potential for coordination rendered possible. In turn this is related to a particular quality of relational interaction. Where dialogic engagement is systematically under-utilized, lesser capacity for coordination is engendered. Three basic categories of language exchange are described moving from monologue to negotiation to dialogue. These terms are not exhaustive, e.g., debate might be placed between monologue and negotiation. Each is illustrated and a category of interaction assigned to each from unilateral through negotiated to relationally mutual interactions respectively. In turn each of these relational interactions is assigned a value with regard to the degree to which interlocutors necessarily engage with each other. This runs from low to high as a function of the amount of interaction that is required in the different types of exchange. Where the interaction is one way and unilateral, the capacity for coordination is necessarily low because coordination requires the input of both interlocutors. At the other end of the spectrum, where interaction is characterized by reciprocity, the capacity for coordination is much higher because the collective who will carry out the activity is one and the same as the collective who decides what the activity will be. Dialogue may therefore be thought of as an innovation in organizational collaboration commensurate with meeting the demands of complex issues. Dialogue is particularly appropriate in a collective because of the absence of formal authority.

	Monologue	Discussion	Dialogue

Illustration	Speech	Negotiation	Naturally occurring in the organizational world in impromptu meetings; also occurs when consciously facilitated as organizational dialogue (cf. Isaacs, 1999)
Category of interaction	Unilateral	Reciprocal	Relational-mutual
Capacity for engaging others	Low	Medium	High
Capacity for coordination	Low. Unidirectional flow of information can explain what someone requires the listener to do. Assent to the dictates of the message is not facilitated, nor is possible confusion, or improvement, addressed.	Medium. Reciprocity of exchange can clarify confusion thereby facilitating informed action that can (potentially) embrace both what the speaker wants done and what the listener wishes to contribute.	High. Future steps are co-generated thus there is high clarity about what to do and assent to do it together.

Table 2. Language Exchange And Coordination

Dialogic Capital: Structuration Between Individuals And Larger Systems

While dialogue may be a collective phenomenon, it presupposes no less than two interlocutors, in this case interorganizational collaborators. The participants in the collaboration, i.e., 'boundary role persons' (Currall & Judge, 1995) who make up the 'bridging organization' (Brown, 1991), attend in a dual capacity, both as representatives of their organizations' interests and as individuals in their own right. Focus on the individual-in-relation is important even within so 'macro' an issue as interorganizational collaboration because within the bridging organization the participants relate to each other as people, on a personal level. For example Turcotte & Pasquero (2001) describe the importance of a thaw in relations between an industrialist and an environmentalist which emerged over the course of time, and numerous coffee breaks, in aiding the process of an urban waste management stakeholder dialogue. The resources that a boundary role person's organization bestows on the issues dealt with in the collaborative, (e.g., as measured by a budget line and the representative's access to the budget) may confer organizational legitimacy on that person, though others may sometimes simply not know what organizational resources are at play in each others organizations.

There is a recursive influence between people and structures, referred to as structuration by Giddens (1984) and analyzed as 'theory of practice' (Bourdieu, 1977). This recursive pattern frames the relationship between individual and larger system and helps explain how social reality is constructed by its members beyond their (conscious) interests. Numerous vehicles connect individuals' activity with the larger system in a recursive way which helps explain how structures are produced and reproduced by individuals without force being brought to bear (Bourdieu, 1977).

Capital is defined as the fruit of accumulated work (Marx, 1904). Bourdieu (1977; 1990; 1991) stresses the contrast between economic and cultural capital suggesting that activities and resources gain in cultural capital to the extent that they become separated from underlying

material interest and hence go misrecognized as representing disinterested forms of activities and resources. Individuals who are able to benefit from the transformation of self interest into disinterest obtain cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977: 227-47; 1990: 112-21; 1991: 163-70 and noted in Swartz, 1997: 43).

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital covers a wide variety of resources, such as verbal facility, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, and educational credentials. Expanding the notion of capital suggests that dialogue can become a resource and as such can expand our notion of the coordinative capacity in collaborations that rely on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control (Ouchi, 1980).

Using the analysis of the dynamics of capital, grounded in actors' self interest, and expanding that analysis to understand the collaboration in the interorganizational arena, we may see how a new status quo, or set of ideas carried in dialogue, renders certain action 'taken for granted.' Collaborative realignment, like the status quo, is created in dialogue. Its shaping occurs by the same mechanisms of capital acquisition: because it is in someone's self interest to bring change as a vehicle for their accumulation of cultural capital and that self interest is recursively related to the structuring of a larger system of behaviors.

It is in the self interest of any would-be capitalist to accumulate increasing amounts of capital. The 'dialogic capitalist' is motivated to have her/his ideas promulgated, thereby ensuring the succession of her his ideas in a battle of grabbing and holding overburdened cognitive attention spans. The dialogic capitalist accrues capital by successfully holding people's attention spans so that her/his ideas attract interlocutors as a result of meeting their self interest. Dialogic capitalists accrue their capital from social prestige coupled with their insight/vision which is promulgated with interpretive skill thus shaping dialogue to coordinate desired activity.

Those with dialogic capital use it to accumulate more dialogic capital which is used to create what accords with the interests of those in dialogue. The accumulation of dialogic capital thus presages a reinforcing system dynamic.

Accrual, Leverage And Growth Of Dialogic Capital

The dynamics of dialogic capital help to theorize how interorganizational collaboration occurs. As the focus here is the process dynamic (not the outcome per se) a life cycle running from origin, i.e., accrual, to its application or leverage, through to growth or decline will provide the framework for its examination.

Accrual Of Dialogic Capital To A Particular Person Or Subgroup Within The Collaborative

Dialogic capital is accrued within the bridging organization itself, the arena in which dialogue is shared and in which particular movements of dialogue occur. All words of a dialogue are spoken by someone. Thus the accrual stage focuses on the level of interpersonal exchange of the collaboration itself.

The core mechanism by which dialogic capital is accrued resides in the misrecognition of the dialogic capitalist as disinterested (Bourdieu, 1990; Swartz, 1997). Interests go misrecognized as representing disinterested forms of activities and resources. Those individuals who are able to benefit from the transformation of self interest into disinterest obtain cultural

capital, or, in the specific terms of this paper, dialogic capital. The cultural capital expresses itself as dialogic capital in the sense that the dialogue set in motion by a particular person defines the dialogue that the collaboration promulgates.

I present three mechanisms by which the misrecognition occurs so that dialogic capital is accrued by particular people in the bridging organization. Habermas (1984) defines the three validity claims of communicative action as sincerity, legitimacy and truth which refer to personal, interpersonal and collective or 'first,' 'second' and third person processes (Bradbury & Lictenstein, 2000; Torbert, 2000; Wilber, 2000). The work of Weber (1978) and Suchman (1995) on legitimacy and Cialdini (2001) on persuasion, is helpful in elaborating upon these claims which I present as *congruence, legitimacy* and *transparency*.

Congruence refers to interlocutors' perception of the dialogic capitalist as having 'seamlessness' (Argyris, 1996) between language and action, i.e., between espoused theory of action with actual theory in use. The alignment of language and action, i.e., capacity for "walking the talk," leaves interlocutors with a sense that the language exchange originating with the dialogic capitalist is sincere or congruent, an important element in social persuasion (Cialdini, 2001). A dialogic capitalist may be seen to slip out of congruence or seamlessness from time to time but have enough already stored that a lapse is negligible. On the other hand particular activities may be judged by some to be so egregious as to wipe out a large store of sincerity. To illustrate from the interorganizational domain, in a collaboration aimed at global warming amelioration attended by representatives from business, NGO's and academia, the leader of a bona fide NGO group is more likely to be seen as sincere than an oil company representative known for funding 'junk' scientists paid to foster public doubt about the mainstream scientific consensus on global warming. Micro behaviors that symbolically manage one's perceived image (Rafaeli et al, 1997) of sincere concern for the cause are also important. These can range from ordering the vegetarian selection at lunch to placing one own and other's soda cans in the recycling bin, in a way that signals one's ability to translate the dialogue about what technologies and human behaviors are more likely to lead to lessening of the problem into one's own behaviors.

Legitimacy is defined by Suchman (1995) as a "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, beliefs and definitions" (1995: 574). As a form of cultural capital, dialogic capital accrues to those whose purpose is not primarily (though often secondarily) the pursuit of economic well being. An important implication of expanding our notions of the dynamics of capital is that economic and cultural capitals are separate but can be converted.

While the dialogic capitalist is self interested in having her/his ideas spread (thereby increasing her/his recognition among valued peers and enjoying a certain prestige), for others to experience legitimacy requires that the dialogic capitalist not to be *economically* interested in the spread of ideas (Bourdieu, 1990), even if making money is a secondary by product of spreading ideas to the business realm. Primary attention to lining one's own pockets is an indication not of cultural capital (of which dialogic capital is a subset) but of preference for economic capital with which it is contrastable. Not all legitimate, sincere people are, or can be, dialogic capitalists. Many legitimate people are deemed too "radical" or too naïve about the business to have much influence on how the business is conducted and thus those who are both legitimate and influential walk a tenuous line in which reputation costs are high should they fall prey to actual or even rumored "selling out" activity.

To illustrate, a CEO who breaks rank with peers in admitting that their organization, be it as oil or car providers, contributes to the problem of global warming, has legitimacy. As a business person this admission must be coupled to economic interest for the legitimacy to be sustained, but the admission is not driven, at least in the first instance, by economic concerns.

Transparency. While since the postmodern turn we are increasingly conscious of the loss of standards by which to measure whether something is true (Lyotard, 1979), the concern with objectivity has not been abandoned. Concepts such as "dynamic objectivity" (Keller, 1984), "generative knowledge" (Schön, 1994), or "partial objectivity" (Haraway, 1994) offer approaches that grant the world its independent integrity, but in a way that remains cognizant of, and relies upon, our connectedness with that world. Thus the 'partiality' of objectivity refers both to the ways in which interests sway people to distort the truth while at the same time invites recognition of the distortion, so that a process of reasoned discourse can ensue in which positions can be made transparent and thereby discussible enough to be evaluated on their reasonableness. Habermas (1987) stresses the importance of pursuing a process in which all statements, regardless of the status of those who utter them, can be submitted to tests of reasonableness. Argyris, Putnam & Smith's (1985) 'Action Science' offers directions for how to make advocacy more transparent, e.g., through the sharing of observable 'data,' rather than interpretation of the data, thereby making one's opinions discussible. Thus the degree to which a dialogic capitalist can include concretely observable data and thereby balance advocacy with inquiry, the more capacity for acquiring dialogic capital.

To summarize, the accrual of dialogic capital is accomplished by the persons in the collaborative who are most perceived as being congruent in language and action, legitimate with regard to pro-social interests, and transparent in their advocacy.

The Leveraging of Dialogic Capital Back to the 'Home' Organizations

Having established that particular people within the collaborative emerge as carriers of dialogic capital, they may be called 'dialogic capitalists,' the leveraging of their capital occurs as others in the collaborative borrow this capital (capital is defined as the fruit of accumulated work and thus is accomplished by borrowing the dialogue) and bridging it back to their home organization. Westley & Vrendenburg, (1991) refer to the activities connecting home and bridging organizations as 'strategic bridging,' and stress the importance of these mechanisms by which the larger consortium of 'home organizations' align in their own behaviors and technologies.

Lots of ideas are picked up and social ties formed in the bridging organization, but the concern of this paper is with the core elements of dialogue around which alignment can occur.

Transfiguring profit, interest and market advantage. The core terms of conventional organizations must be transfigured, and not ignored, by dialogic capital. The dialogic capitalist initiates change through conversations that are (relative to the status quo) 'heretical' in that they break normal frames which program how someone in the economic realm normally sees the world. The dialogic capitalist must, in part, transfigure the notion of profit and market advantage, e.g., the oil company CEO might argue that profit is more likely to increase if the company invests in renewable forms of energy rather than staying with oil whose available peaked last decade and whose pollutant byproducts, e.g., lead etc., are increasingly regulated. In this way listeners can translate a concern for future competitive advantage into the new

vocabulary which encourages moving away from reliance on increasingly regulated and decreasing sources of input to their business. The dialogic capitalist thus both uncovers what is 'taken for granted' but importantly seeks to recreate a preferred state. In leveraging the dialogic capital, other boundary role persons are acting as dialogic capitalists in their own organization and carrying a network of dialogue with them that may spread following a path of viral epidemiology (Ford, 2000).

Pre-diction. Dialogic capital leverages the new ideas, or 'pre-diction,' (that is, an anticipatory future, that is literally, "dictated" by articulating it as a present course of action in dialogue). This prediction, it might be expressed as a vision or image of the future, counter poses the ordinary assumptions of the 'taken for granted' conversation which upholds the institutional status quo. The prediction must balance the paradoxical work of presenting a new future but without defining it so closely as to remove the need for creative engagement. In other words there must remain creative tension between prediction and action plan so that the latter will be filled in. More dialogue is engendered through the efforts of interlocutors to translate the meaning of what is being said into their everyday activities. Empirical work suggests that the use of image and metaphor may work particularly well as invitations to dialogue (Grudin, 1997).

For example a CEO who talks about her desire for a company that is "worthy of employees' lives" offers an inchoate vision that engages people's concern with serving a higher purpose as much as making a living (Rayman, 2001). Another may offer a more concrete image of companies forming a bio-friendly 'industrial ecology' in which the waste output of one factory is the energy input to another leaving a zero emissions system (Pauli, 2000) i.e., with outputs of potable water and fresh air rather than pollution.

To summarize, dialogic capital is leveraged when dialogue that transfigures images of profit, self interest and market advantage is carried into the home organizations.

Positive/Negative Growth of Dialogic Capital

Attracting fellow interlocutors. From the perspective of the dialogic capitalist, the more the new conversation is 'user-friendly,' or clear, the more likelihood of adoption of the new heretical conversation among people whose attention is otherwise assaulted by competing ideas. Demonstration of success leads inexorably to further success through social validation (Caldini, 2001). Engagement in the dialogue requires intrinsic motivation, i.e., love of the dialogue itself as much as for what it represents. Enough latitude must be possible so that the adoption of the new conversation can be shaped by its reproducers, who where possible may *playfully* engage in the new conversation thereby growing a 'word of mouth' dynamic which markets the dialogue (Gladwell, 2000).

Moving to the domain of enabling dialogue lies at the heart of the process described in this paper. Dialogue is characterized by a certain degree of informality which may well express itself as a use of abbreviations that would be inappropriate in more monologic engagement. The central defining characteristic of dialogue is that people think together rather than remaining in formal negotiation or conceptual combat with each other. This should not be confused with polite engagement in which real questions and confusions are not aired, such matters are indeed aired, but as a problem for all to solve. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), discussing knowledge creation, offer the example of the Japanese hot bath in which, along with copious sake consumption, engineers share ideas, developing some, while laughing other ideas down, etc. The issue of play is of relevance in engaging dialogic incorporation of a change precisely

because dialogue is far more likely to comprise and engender playful moments than does formal communication. Accelerated capacity can be tapped in play (or creative work) which keeps the workforce ahead of what is required in the future. The bigger the word of mouth dynamic among organizational interlocutors, the better given that those with local knowledge can apply their insights to support a change in behaviors.

For example, a CEO might report that in his company oil rig workers have developed a competition to see which crew can reduce the flaring off of global warming gases on the well-pipes on their shifts. Such a report is subtle in what it tells, namely that local knowledge is being leveraged willingly by committed employees who are able to make the connection between what is under their control and its connection to the larger issue of global warming that is being promulgated. This activity is both playful and local and acts to persuade others to the belief that 'everybody is doing it,' itself often a powerful persuasion (Cialdini, 2001).

To summarize, a positive growth dynamic of dialogic capital is accomplished as a growing number of fellow story builders engage in the home organization in shaping organizational activity coordinated in dialogue. The corollary is also true, namely that a negative growth dynamic in dialogic capital occurs as members in the home organization do not engage in organizational activities advocated by the dialogue associated with the dialogic capitalist.

Growth of Dialogic Capital as Organizational Change. A discussion of how a growth or decay dynamic occurs within individual home organizations falls beyond the purview of this paper and into the arena of organizational development and change that focuses on single organizations. However, in brief, one may say that approaches to implementing desired organizational change (cf., Ancona, Kochan, Scully, Van Maanen & Westney, 1999 for a concise review), be they structurated or punctuated (Weick & Quinn, 1999), likely facilitate change in accordance with dialogue that is being promulgated. Given the increased emphasis on a linguistic approach to understanding organizational life (c.f., call for papers to an upcoming special AMR forum, Ford, 2000), future work might better elaborate ideas of dialogic capital not just as a property of bridging organizations and interorganizational collaboration but also of planned change in single organizations.

Implications And Limitations

Theorizing the accrual, leverage and positive/negative growth of dialogic capital provides an empirical agenda for better understanding interorganizational collaboration. I started out by introducing dialogue as a lens on a growing number of interorganizational collaborations dealing with issues like global warming which are both technically and behaviorally complex. I then brought the lens of capital to help understand the dynamics by which dialogue bridges to the home organization and back. The dialogue of the bridging organization thus actively mediates the alignment among 'home' organizations. Dialogic capital elaborates the explorative and exploitative lens on collaboration and transcends some of the elements associated with each that have been treated as dichotomous, e.g., that self interest and communal good are mutually exclusive and that behavioral and technical complexity are separate. I concentrate on the dynamics of dialogic capital which play out at the level of 'individuals-in-relation.' In looking to dialogue as the process by which the level of coordination in the interorganizational collaboration can be effected, I use an expanded understanding of capital to theorize the dynamic

of dialogue to effectively connect the micro interactions of the representatives to the bridging organization with the patterns of interactions enacted by the consortium of home organizations which they represent. Future research must also investigate the nature of the organizational/personal overlap more fully, suffice it to say that the formal ties represented by the organizations exist within a "sea of informal ties" (Powell, Koput & Smith-Doerr, 1996).

The applicability of the dialogic capital lens is most appropriate when studying collaboration efforts that must include attention to behavioral *and* technical complexity. As such it may be a less useful lens for the 'exploitatively' oriented and purely technological collaborations in which companies seek to leverage communal learning back to the home organizations. These efforts are not (at least generally) marked by diversity of organizational actors, but instead comprise a 'monoculture' of technological firms in which plurality that is a hallmark of dialogue is not as necessary as when diversity of organizational actors are evident. The very complexity of 'systemic mess' issues such as global warming implies an invitation to a diverse group of stakeholders to engage in conversation. The diversity implies that the dialogue must appeal to a larger community for it to be successful and that its success is predicated on a pluralization of ideas, viewpoints and coordination of communal activity that serves communal, rather than only powerful actors' needs. Habermas avers:

> *The transitory unity that is generated in the porous and refracted intersubjectivity of a linguistically mediated consensus not only supports but furthers and accelerates the pluralization of forms of life and the individualization of lifestyles. More discourse means more contradiction and difference. The more abstract the agreements become, the more diverse the disagreements with which we can more non-violently live (Habermas, 1996: 140).*

One might argue that the approach taken in this paper, i.e., saying that a dialogic capitalist is self interested when s/he also appears to be promulgating a conversation of service to the common good (e.g., 'stop global warming'), is a cynical or crassly economistic interpretation. It is important to note that my argument draws on an analysis of the dynamics of capital which is expanded, not simply transferred, into the work of dialogue. Capital is not (as Marx insisted) to be simply equated with economic capital. Instead, the dynamics of capital exist in both cultural and economic life. Cultural capital is not to be simply subordinated to economic interests, but rather recognized as a product of self interest. Self interest, which is arguably an evolutionary requirement even at a biological level, is not antagonistic to altruism. It would be incorrect to argue that self interest suggests selfish behavior, favoring always individual needs above collective ones. As evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr writes

> *…Altruism, by furthering the survival and prosperity of the group, depends to a large extent on the harmonious cooperation of the members of the group, and this behavior must be based on altruism. Such altruism, by furthering the survival and prosperity of the group, also indirectly benefits the fitness of the group's individuals. The result amounts to selection favoring altruistic behavior (Mayr, 2000: 83).*

One might also say that my argument, especially about congruence, legitimacy and transparency as core building blocks of dialogic capital which focus attention for catalyzing collaboration, have already been associated with change agents by other scholars, albeit using a

different vocabulary. For example, Quinn (2000) notes the change-making capacity of the inner directed leader whose inner conviction, indeed compunction, with regard to the merit of the change, is elevated as a particularly important variable in generating the requisite followership devoted to realizing the intended change. Both explicitly, and in choosing examples renowned for their ethical impunity (e.g., Jesus and Gandhi), legitimacy and sincerity are elevated as central requirements in the extra-dialogic communication of the importance of organizational change (Quinn, 2000). The work of interorganizational collaboration described in this paper using a dialogue lens would appear similar to that of organizational change. However, situating the micro behaviors as recursively linked to macro structures within a network of dialogic activity is a contribution to thinking about organizational development which too often overly separates micro and macro issues. Moreover leading through non-unilateral, dialogic rather than monologic methods, is perhaps even more necessary in collaborative endeavors than it is in a single organizations because the former cannot be shaped by unilateral command and control activity.

It might be argued that dialogue is for just for 'nice guys' and its desirability predicated on a value-laden moral aversion to competitive practices of traditional business. By coupling dialogue with the dynamics of capital rooted in self interest, the desirability of dialogue is shown to be useful in bringing about otherwise difficult to accomplish levels of coordination. Thus its utility is derived from a pragmatic rather than (only) value-driven orientation. While I am not suggesting that dialogue should colonize all forms of organizational discourse even if that were possible, I am suggesting that the inclusion of dialogue broadens our options especially as we engage in the necessary redesign of organizational life which includes multi-sectoral partnerships in the work to align organizations with global societies and biosphere.

Dialogue is a form of "copious thinking that is open, generous, forgiving… a thinking through which includes hilarity, paradox and ambiguity" (Grudin, 1997: 193). The bulk of organizational discourse encourages thinking and activity that is less dynamic and much more linear than is required by the complexity of the global problems we face. Indeed Grudin, (1997) like Buber (1970), Bahktin, (1981) Bohm, (1990) and Isaacs (1999), all theorists of dialogue, have noted that dialogue mirrors life itself. Each raises the practice of dialogue to a transcendent level suggesting that speaking within a collective, where some ideas are built upon, others neglected in an organic way, requires an assumption that a transcendent 'other' exists to whom all speech is addressed (Bahktin's [1981] "nadrassat," Bohm's [1970] "thou") so that the outcome of the process may be trusted to result in the best possible collective coordination of activity. In a more post-metaphysical orientation Habermas (1996) suggests that the modernist pursuit of the "Truth" must disappear in favor of a concern with a process which, striving for the 'ideal speech situation' in which all participants may speak unconstrainedly, "truth" emerges. In their different theories these different theorists suggest that if offered an opportunity to really engage in dialogue that is open-ended and not self aggrandizing, participants can manage to think together to coordinate the best way forward.

In looking to the practice of social-organizational life we see that dialogue is beginning to be embraced, and with it the complexity and 'stop start' progress on various complex, large system problems. Dealing with the complexity of endemic war, John Hume, the Nobel prize winner and politician in Northern Ireland, explained that having exhausted all other forms of threat and negotiation in the midst of years of sectarian violence between Republican Catholics and Unionist Protestants, and while running out of options as the body count grew higher, "[he] thought it was time to try something else. Dialogue" (quote from Isaacs 1999: 22). The dialogic lens informs the interorganizational collaboration literature with a new lens that may allow

scholars and practitioners of interorganizational collaboration to better understand and support collaborative endeavor. Theoretical focus on negotiation as the taken for granted mode of collaboration deflects attention away from models of interorganizational collaborations which use an explicit dialogic, for example those associated with The Natural Step, (Bradbury & Clair, 1999; Natrass & Altomare, 2000) a global Non-Governmental Organization which has educated most, if not all, multinational corporations currently engaged in sustainable development efforts. As such a dialogue focus bodes well for developing theory in the "organizations in the natural environment" field, in which the emphasis has been on externalized examination of these problems, i.e., as policy concerns or technical issues. The dialogue approach brings attention to the more personal and interpersonal micro behaviors that can complement this work, by helping us understand how policy change is effected in the interorganizational domain. A dialogue perspective thus balances the focus on external 'third person issues' with reference to 'first' and 'second' person issues from which a more holistic understanding can emerge (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000). Concern for process dynamics of participation are particularly important if we aspire to attend to the complex system messes such as global warming (Roome, 1998) because society's many-layered systems need to be redesigned (Starik & Rands, 1995) in a way that no single person or group of powerful actors or even policy makers can accomplish without dialogue.

Conclusion

The paper contributes to theory about interorganizational organizational collaboration in four ways: 1. It introduces the concept of dialogic capital which extends the theory and dynamics of capital into the work of interorganizational collaboration. 2. It places human-relational processes, most crucially those of conversation and dialogue, at the heart of the boundary crossing work of coordinating organizational innovation in response to technical and behavioral complexity. 3. It expands our thinking about organizational resources to include artistry of relational/dialogic skills as a core resource in the work of organizational change. 4. It continues an important trajectory in organizational theory wherein scholars seek to address their theory to our pressing 'global problematique' (Cooperrider & Pasmore, 1991).

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