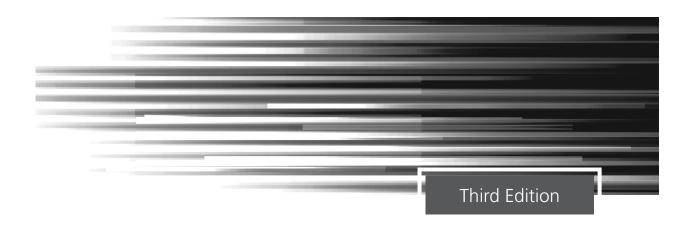
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The Integrating (Feminine) Reach of Action Research: A Nonet for Epistemological Voice

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Since the first *Handbook of Action Research*, many action researchers have begun to use the concept of 'first, second and third person action research/practice'. The term originates with Bill Torbert in his articulation of the practice of action inquiry (Torbert, 1997, see also Erfan and Torbert, Chapter 6, this volume) and we see a number of chapters in this volume also that refer to and illustrate the concept. The potency of the concept seems to lie in acknowledging the interdependence and the legitimacy of three voices of epistemology - objective knowledge (third person action research), subjective (first person action research), and inter-subjective (second person action research). This chapter explores the implications of developing a more integrated way of practicing action research with attention to all three.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL VOICE

When we see three epistemological voices side by side and understand how only third person, objective voice, has been privileged by conventional social science, we are prompted to consider if the voices of first, second, and third person action research can be better integrated. I wish therefore also to explore whether and how first, second, and third person action research/practice can be better integrated in action research, which typically privileges only second person action research practice. It seems unlikely that the answer is a simple yes or no and indeed rarely do we see reports of action research that actually integrates all three epistemological voices. This inquiry is therefore necessarily sensitive to the context of the intentions of those involved in particular action research, as in the case of the Los Angeles Port sustainability roundtable research project presented below. Considering that research/intervention project through the lens of the three voices and three temporal tenses (present, past, and future) turns out to be useful both for explaining the influence/ power of the interventions and also for showing what is missing (and therefore a potential future opportunity) in that research. Therefore, I present a three-by-three 'nonet' heuristic as potentially of use in other action research projects.

Action research is an orientation to knowledge that privileges practice and the knowledge co-created in practice in contexts where change is desired. We are less about offering accounts of reality based only on data from the past (although this voice continues to be important). Our work aims more to be practically decisive in present action settings and in shaping future vision, aspiration, and commitment. My assertions about action research reside also inside a certain epistemological worldview. Let's call it an integrated pragmatic worldview, in which theory and practice are intertwined. Practice gives theory what William James famously called its 'cash value' (i.e. demonstration of its usefulness) from which, in turn, the quality of action research is shaped (Bradbury-Huang, 2010a). In this way action research is unlike conventional theory of change developed at a distance from change efforts. As anyone knows who has tried to introduce good practice ideas (e.g. 'smoking is really bad for you'!), and been surprised at others' 'resistance to change', ideas and practice do not have a simple or unidirectional relationship. New ideas and practices are indeed linked, but always within a specific and emergent socio-material context, what Lewin called a forcefield of social obstacles and enablers to change. Action research moves among the different truth claims that are part of all change efforts and are expressed as a mix of epistemological voices, e.g. objectivity in its meeting with subjectivity, may become new and useful knowledge to be tested in practice. This movement among epistemological voices is itself a practice of inquiry, in search of practical, technical, and emancipatory outcomes. The value placed on continuous processes of inquiry is then a refusal to accede an elevated position to objective (third person) truth alone. We are activists calling for changes, where those changes must also be internal, emotional, and embodied in

personal, professional, and scientific practice. Speculative statements of theory and principle are not the goal of action research. Generally speaking, first person practice concerns paying attention (no simple matter!) and thus broadening the reach of what and who is attended to in our action research settings (e.g. Bradbury-Huang, 2013). Second person practice is the key to speaking and listening in our efforts to coordinate action in 'during the act' research (e.g. Bradbury-Huang, 2010b). Third person efforts allow for organizing to evolve and become protoinstitutionalized. In the end we need inquiry that is adequate to the complexity and emergence of human change and development necessary at this moment in time (see also Burns, Chapter 42 and Lichtenstein, Chapter 43, this volume). Bringing quality to this inquiry is a process, ever ongoing as there is no easy prescription for what needs to be included.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL TENSE

In allowing that there is a never fully realizable truth as destination, we instead imagine a future of ongoing inquiry. This is not to suggest 'analysis paralysis', i.e. inquiry ongoing, without testing for its 'cash value' in practice. It is simply to recognize that our context often calls for timely action in response to a particular circumstance. But even timely actions remain in inquiry, ongoing, meeting yet another cycle of inquiry and action. Therefore a time horizon, or temporal tense, must be held in mind as we practice our research. Chandler and Torbert (2003) encourage us to think of the three epistemological voices as happening across time: past, present, or future. Including other tenses concerns us with the ongoing present, and how our future intent and specific goals are to be met, conditioned as they are from the past. This contrasts with conventional science which is only about controlled tests done in the past.

For heuristic purposes we can describe the voices meeting tenses as a 'nonet' (similar to duet from music, but when nine voices come together) which allows us to discover which voices drown out others and which, if invited, could make for an integrated harmony. But let us turn now to an account of living practice, which can serve to flesh out the predominantly third person epistemological speculation so far.

THE EVENT

I convened a roundtable of corporate executives to collaborate on reducing carbon dioxide and other climate change emissions in their companies' shared system of cargo transshipment from Pacific Rim factories through the Port of Los Angeles (more detail in Bradbury-Huang, 2010b). I acted as lead facilitator and designer of the action research effort that included geography and engineering faculty from my university. I found myself with a lot at stake one day in what felt like a battle of wills with an executive from a leading toy manufacturer. Seated at a distance across the large conference table from me, he loudly accused my facilitating of 'too much talk and too little action'. Ouch! Thankfully I come emotionally equipped for verbal combat having been raised in an Irish household. While there was anxiety, this confrontation also felt 'at home', offering as it also did a refreshing burst into potential 'storming' together, before we could really start 'performing' - these terms refer to a well-known understanding that teams must move in and out of conflict (storm) before they can really be productive (perform). I diffused the difficulty and reestablished the 'accuser's' commitment by inviting others to reestablish theirs. Soon my erstwhile accuser became my collaborator and the energies began to pick up as we clarified the potential for our collaboration; after all, the executives gathered had businesses arrayed along a supply chain and had never met before in any learning endeavor or outside 'sales' conferences. From this we moved quickly into conventional action planning as if the inquiry about collaboration could be bracketed for a while.

I might have forgotten this interaction had I not been so stunned by what happened next. My erstwhile detractor, and now new and improved collaborator, dropped dead! We later learned that our whole collaborative effort was happening just as news about leadinfused toys made in Chinese factories was becoming public. My collaborator had taken the full blow of the media frenzy and had died of a massive heart attack. He was 54. It took me a few more years before I could see the ways in which I had colluded in the efficiency drive 'better, cleaner, faster' with which my deceased colleague had become entirely consumed.

Our collaborative group agreed to continue and to dedicate our work to his memory. We argued to ourselves that at least we were 'doing something helpful with regard to a greener environment'. Somehow our concern for collaboration and sustainability made us 'better', at least in our minds, than business as usual. And yes we used the language of efficiency and meeting business goals, but only to make the work attractive to those people whose everyday tasks are to work within the efficiency paradigm of market capitalism. Anyone who has facilitated action research with executives in business can't be naïve enough to believe that a postcapitalist sustainability paradigm is going to catch fire overnight. It's a journey which requires a lot of 'conversion' and conversation. Nonetheless in many executive minds, no doubt, our work was in fact only about delivering more and cheaper goods, if with less carbon footprint. And quicker too. It was never about asking whether kids in the USA ought to be showered with toys made in conditions their parents don't wish for them. It was never about linking the pollution that results from imports to the effect on the lungs of kids along the supply chain and into the polluted LA air basin.

Certainly our work bore the hallmarks of quality in action research; we were developing useful knowledge, practice, and tools. But where was the emancipation? And to get to the point that really matters: where was the first person work that brings increasing levels of awareness, where was the effort at emancipation? Why did we (I) privilege some forms of epistemological voice and keep others unacknowledged? Why did we leave first and second person interiority sidelined? Even recognizing such questions as important to be asked, rather than taking them for granted as mere naïve distractions, took some reflection.

FUNDAMENTALIST ASSUMPTIONS OF THIRD PERSON ACTION RESEARCH

What is 'taken for granted' has tremendous power for it does not have to explain itself, it just 'is'. All deviations from what is taken for granted must therefore explain their divergence, substandard or secondary status. In the realm of social science, it is taken for granted that 'real' science (that is conventional, i.e. science that seeks objectivity rather than integrating different epistemological voices) cares only for distanced description of current reality. Thus, all action researchers confront (or perhaps merely at best sidestep) the epistemological question of how to bring more active and interpersonal inquiry to the task of learning. While it is becoming more common to have learning be seen as an active and participative process, this happens against a backdrop, over a millennium old, in which knowledge has been transmitted from European (male) priests to their acolytes, though later secularized in Euro-centric universities. The remnants, e.g. the lecture format, remain ubiquitous despite new and many more diverse (e.g. female) bodies in the benches. As diversity is increasingly recognized and celebrated, power is unmasked and the implicit dominant rules that uphold the status quo become more discussible, rather than just taken for granted.

The gendered perspective may be particularly useful. Research conceived as morally neutral, rooted in an ideal of scientific rationality, rather than as a set of social and human relations based on ethical intentions and relevant obligation and values, unconsciously assumes abstract spheres of action. Feminist theory encourages us to see how this impersonal rationality may be helpfully understood as a masculine discourse, anchored in powerful psychic roots of the child's (both male and female) desire to become an active agent, one who must eschew the dependency associated with the private, feminine sphere to act in the masculine world experienced as beyond the family (Benjamin, 1988).

Thus, the increasingly techno-rational third person perspectives come to seem unintegrated with the worlds of interiority and subjectivity. And here we see old dichotomies at play – the natural versus human and social sciences, male/female; Euro-centric versus southern hemisphere, men and women. Masculine and feminine discourse.

The world of subjectivity, what Husserl and since then the Frankfurt School calls the 'Lebenswelt' or lifeworld, refers to a collective inter-subjective pool of perceiving (see also Kemmis et al., Chapter 44, this volume). Here, for shorthand I will use the term, the Feminine. The term Feminine is admittedly problematic, arising for its current usage from the work of Carl Jung, and therefore necessarily tainted by the Victorian assumptions of that time. Nonetheless as shorthand the Feminine stands for what has been exiled from modernist science: interiority, reflection, gentleness, vulnerability, inconclusiveness, zest – qualities that, in their absence, diminish us all.

In the collaborative consortium that I facilitated, the engineering scholars aggregated confidential data from each participant's organization, into a shared 'birds eye' view of the system that all organizations participated in, namely the cargo transshipment supply chain from China through LA. For example, we worked with system dynamic scenarios based on these data. This allowed us to see and manipulate systems optimization at a

shared level that had been impossible before. The power of the experimental scenarios we created was in catalyzing conversations about the future we might not otherwise have. While overt challenge was allowed, and perhaps even seemed encouraged, because I am a woman in a mostly male environment, other types of conversation or collaborative dialogue were not allowed (see also Stephens, Chapter 57, this volume). Conversation about subjective values, meaning, and purpose, or conversation about the use of power in the present conversation, were entirely absent. In its unspoken way only one goal was allowed, i.e. to increase efficiency of the current system while making it also 'green'. Stated so baldly, and in safe retrospection, it is easy to see that the single loop learning was prohibiting more innovative ways of tackling the issue. This was compounded by the sense that because we cared about 'greening', it simply followed that the values of the conventional economic system were in inquiry. In retrospect we were not really seeking the revolution we might have thought we were. Perhaps all we could aspire to was to keep 'business as usual' while also 'greening' it a little. Change in the conservative business arena is necessarily incremental.

As critical theorists have suggested, the more we use objective, techno-rational language, the more the interiority of the 'lifeworld' is exiled by its opposite, technorational 'System'. Our work in the Port of Los Angeles roundtable was admirably practical, technical, objective, and inter-subjective. It did not dare, however, to enter the world of interior subjectivity. Thus, in its way, the collaborative was classically reproducing a techno-rational, masculine discourse.

FRAMEWORK FOR REACHING TOWARD INTEGRATION

The following nonet summarizes the three epistemological voices to which is added the dimension of time (past, present, future). This orienting framework can be applied to many domains of knowledge and is useful for allowing us to see the richness, or better yet the poverty, of what we allow to be integrated in our work. To speak of integration then is to reach toward inclusion, where appropriate, of all types of knowledge where useful in the inquiry.

Figure 58.1 outlines the epistemological voices that were most forcefully present at the

Voice	Past	Present	Future
First Person	Sharing of subjective concerns that motivate personal desire for collaboration.	MISSING: Explicit exploration of how collaborative forum is continually experienced at subjective or objective levels (e.g. event evaluations).	MISSING: Explicit exploration of interior subjective intentions or personal vision of those involved.
Second Person	Dialogue for finding interpersonal interests/connections.	We collaborate in the present using objective past data.	We design future scenarios based on sustainability concerns.
Third Person	Sharing objective data about the past systems activity. Sharing of impact of (subjective) corporate culture.	We share data about experimental interventions, compared with past activity. Objective.	Executives experiment with select improvement interventions in their own system.

Figure 58.1 The action research nonet

Exploration of epistemological voice and tense based on Chandler and Torbert (2003).

roundtable. I mark as missing those that were absent and notice that the event described was one example of the type of dialogue that was otherwise mostly missing. This type of dialogue makes possible double loop change at the level of intervention design.

HOW USEFUL IS INTEGRATION?

If we apply this nonet to a project and find no activity in some of the boxes, we may, upon reflection, conclude that the project is none the worse for it, or that including new activity described by that box may be helpful at a later stage in the future. But at least we are aware of the research processes so far absent in the project and have more choice about what they can do.

Returning to the event described, and reflecting on the possibility of better integrating first person practice, I look more closely at the choices made. First person reflection can happen through journaling, dialogue, systematic guided inquiry, meditation, therapy, contemplation, or a mix of all of these where broader awareness can result (see the Skills section of this volume for an in-depth description of these). I recall that in the event described, standing someplace between combative and defensive in front of my detractor turned collaborator, the subjective, interior was exiled as invulnerability was called for. Power in that room accrued to those who shaped the agenda to move forward in single loop mode, a form of 'mystery-mastery' (see also MacLain Smith, Chapter 14, this volume). Vulnerability, and indeed all feminine attributes – the essence of the receptive mode of the subjective interior - were taken for granted as exiled, forbidden. Perhaps, being situated in a female body allows me to feel more of how diminished the feminine is in our rational systems that uphold the status quo. Many enlightened men will feel similarly.

So when I asked more deeply why hadn't I emphasized more 'first person' work, I see now it is because I was afraid to stretch that

far in public and that my fear was unacknowledged by me. That the recollection of the event was one that reminded me of my family's arguments holds a key in this uncovering, this lack of acknowledgement, this 'shadow'.

Shadow is a term from psychoanalysis used to explain repressed unconscious material in the human-social psyche that negatively effects how we live in daily life. Over time it siphons off our psychic energy in unconscious selfprotection, decreasing our zest for life. Shadow material is usually forced underground because it is too threatening to our experience of fitting into the status quo. Jung (1967: 262) who offers the term, believed that 'in spite of its function as a reservoir for human darkness or perhaps because of this - the shadow is the seat of creativity', so that for some, it may be, 'the dark side of his being, his sinister shadow ... represents the true spirit of life as against the arid scholar'. Action researchers are rarely described as arid scholars!

In reflection I see I was, at least in part, stuck in the defensiveness of my own childhood, responding to challenge with dominance and effectiveness (rather than overtly acknowledging the need to regroup), a place that skillful facilitators and consultants need to be aware of (see also McGonagill and Carman, Chapter 67, this volume). My skills at debate, cajoling, and seduction worked too well; they allowed for no breakdown of our process. After all, the participants were paying for the opportunity to work together. There was no invitation to inquiry about the values we were enacting in the system. Values appear a given in the objective third person domain. While they can become discussible in the second person, inter-subjective domain, they are nourished or reimagined only at the first person, subjective level. By not inviting this first person, 'interior' inquiry I merely corroborated one of the taken-forgranted rules of the conventional, essentially fundamentalist techno-rational (masculine) System: keep a division between private and corporate life. Conventional/fundamentalist mind sees things as either/or. A straightforward way of inviting such reflection would

be to signal that a breakdown was happening and asking more about what that really meant. Perhaps more daringly I might have declared that the verbal challenge had put me on the defensive, personally, and I'd admit that my too quickly wanting to appease the challenger could avoid inquiring further which might be detrimental. Easy enough to say, but all facilitators know that timeliness of inquiry is key – and answering a challenge hurled across a room with an invitation to a picnic may work, but not always. The more I thought about the kind of assumptions being taken for granted, the more I could see the potentially revolutionary inquiry in action we might have undertaken. Next time!

A collaborative venture is bound by honor to safeguard a good outcome for all. Yet, as in any process, the individual and the collective are deeply and structurally entwined.

RELATIONAL FIELD OF MASCULINE AND FEMININE DISCOURSE

As key progenitors of our field, Kurt Lewin and Jacob Moreno (see also Greenwood, Chapter 41, this volume) suggest, the self is, and therefore must be seen as, a 'relational field' with much more interdependence and far less separation than we are led to assume. Clearly the self is not separate when each moment requires an exchange of material (oxygen) and ideas (language) with others. Yet the forces that compel us to operate from the avowed truth that there is a separate self are powerful. The suggestion here is that this self figures as primarily masculine in the context of social science with its conventional practices undertaken independently with a gaze that seeks to objectify.

In *Man and his Symbols* Jung (1964) explains that new and unfamiliar territory of 'consciousness' or the practice of first person awareness will be repudiated not least because the human brain is set up to resist what is unfamiliar. So too must one expect resistance to the suggestion that integrating

feminine qualities into inquiry is necessary at this time. Perhaps it is worth insisting on the importance of developing this awareness capacity, because the very possibility of developing our capacity as relational beings is at issue. For Jung, the power of Eros is the psychic force needed for integration of consciousness. The Greeks saw Eros as divine and chaotic energy, the channel by which the soul ascends. Today it refers most to the dance between poles on the spectrum of gender, or as a partnership between masculine and feminine, yin and yang qualities in subjective-interior terms.

If integration is about including more of what is present in an inquiry, then looking to include the feminine is key. Typically, action researchers, indeed most social scientists, have avoided confronting directly the thorny question of what constitutes the integrated or relational self. Yet it seems an elephant in the room that only one type of epistemological voice is welcome; no wonder conventional, objective-exterior inquiry is so arid and not even that useful!

By looking more deeply and inviting reflection on experience among co-researchers/ participants of what constitutes the self, we locate seeds of a useful contribution to inquiry as integrating-action research. Such a theory of relational practice suggestively would help us move away from an atomistic-objectivist understanding of what happens 'in the space between' action researchers and participants (Bradbury and Lichtenstein, 2000); and in the time between action and inquiry (see also Scharmer and Kaufer, Chapter 19, this volume). How might we encourage action researchers in integrating those interior spaces, where gentleness and vulnerability may also be esteemed?

CONSTRUCTIVIST ADULT DEVELOPMENT

In psychological terms, seeking integration within oneself requires a movement that makes what is subjective more objective and what is objective, subjective. In reaching cognitive complexity, according to Bob Kegan (1994), one of the foremost articulators of adult development, people reach the limits of conventional mind and can become self-authoring, a capacity to see through the status quo and proceed against the stream, where needed. For this integration the self works with its own qualities of creativity and destruction, allowing and inviting rather than vilifying, our 'self-authoring'. Self-authoring mind is one that can see and choose from, but is not in unconscious service to, its socialization. It is post-conventional, in the sense that conventions are seen through. This is an area of intense interest in scholarly and consulting circles these days, showing up most evidently as action inquiry among action researchers (see Herdman-Barker and Erfan, Chapter 64, this volume). It seems that only post-conventional mind is truly adequate for the complexity of systems breakthroughs needed in so many domains of application these days - from sustainability to health care, development, etc. Yet the complexity of response called for may also lead to our avoiding it, and as in the case above, unconsciously choosing single loop over double loop pragmatism. Action research in service to 'more, better, faster' is not enough. Integration of epistemological voice, and with it, psychological demands, is required to go beyond the accomplishments that the conventional mind demands.

What lies beyond the conventional desire for accomplishment? Who would even want to go beyond conventional high achievement, rewarded as it is with high salary and organizational status? Clearly my accuser-turned-collaborator at the Los Angeles Port roundtable sought colleagues to help generate more profit in a more complex environment. What we did not see was that that entire paradigm of achievement needed to come into question if we were to truly embrace a sustainable paradigm. It is, frankly, not an easy thing to countenance.

Self-integration invites a resurgence of the lifeworld into the increasingly techno-rational

System. The taken-for-granted nature of power in the system can be called into question, can even be engaged with through collaborative action that makes the power of what is taken for granted discussible. This energetic resurgence may properly be called the force of Eros, a fundamentally relational force, that brings masculine, objectivizing (system) and feminine, subjective (lifeworld) together into an integrated, inter-subjective, and inter-independent whole. It is important then, that action researchers learn to cultivate Eros in personal, interpersonal, and impersonal/institutional domains.

ACTIONABILITY OF THE RELATIONAL SELF

I reflect back to the event I describe as the catalyst for this reflection. How might the acknowledged presence of Eros, or relational self, have made a difference in the event? I start with the intuition that allowing Eros means allowing things to unfold and knowing when to act when the time is right. Already, the event functioned to allow more collaboration and rich reflection. The unfolding was necessarily curtailed by an untimely death. Could the death have been prevented if (somehow) I had managed to invite more vulnerability with myself and him in that room? If somehow we had managed to get to a place of seeing how profoundly sacrificial and exploitative of self and other is the system we were devoted to improving? If somehow we saw the rapaciousness of capitalism and cried 'enough'? Would that have made a difference for him, for me, for anyone?

It is a good question and may influence my future action, but I will not flagellate myself with it. My colleague's death was overdetermined and our collaboration had likely released rather than added to his burdens. I imagine how it might have been possible to meet him where he was and somehow invite inquiry beyond the single loop we found

ourselves in. I believe that would only be possible by establishing a deeper relationship of trust. He could trust that I could continue to deliver value on 'business tasks' and I could trust that his desire to work in an action research process was an (unconscious) aspiration to go beyond instrumentalist partnership to invite ways of knowing that we could not actually know in advance. Eros calls for releasing control.

I have noticed in a few (limited run, art house) films that make social research part of their subject matter, e.g. the Swedish Kitchen Tales, or the Irish Run and Jump, the theme is that the conventional (male) researcher. working over time with his (female) stakeholders, is transformed through human connection. Eros turns conventional researchers into action researchers, as it once did John Dewey, whose development as a pragmatist brought more dialogic methods to education, and almost certainly Jacob Moreno with his concerns for spontaneity and love as integral parts of his action research. Certainly the acknowledgement of the open quality of learning and collaboration, the necessity for reflection as part of the gift of that ongoing openness, the need for first person work as the foundation for emancipatory action research, all of that is inherent in the movement of Eros even in that event from some years ago. Moreover there is a conscious attending to what I/we are feeling with and for one another, and for the task and larger purpose we share.

The specifically gendered quality of the Eros (and I am not blind to the fact that I, the lead facilitator, a woman, played a highly masculine role in the event!) invites the question of how to allow the feminine with its grace and charm to arise among us in the work of action research, whether men or women. This naturally leads to the question of how the dance of the masculine and feminine can be cultivated in organizational settings. Future plans for such elaboration must go well beyond the exiling of Eros that is organizationally and scientifically dominant.

CONCLUSION: CULTIVATING INTEGRATION IN ACTION RESEARCH

I find myself confirming the importance of integrating the three epistemological voices of objectivity, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity, what action researchers call first, second, and third person action research voice and their relationship to action research approaches and practice. This self-legitimating alternative to conventional social science comes from a desire to take up where objective knowledge leaves off. I hope the nonet can be useful as a way to bring deeper reflection to what is present and absent in our work, especially where it allows recognition that the absence of subjective, interiority is the result of an exile, kept in shadow. As we bring shadow to awareness, we experience more ability to pay attention to what is actually present. Thus, our research can address more of reality, more of life. Eros is re-invited to our inquiry.

Additionally I confirm the need to retrieve and emphasize the relational perspective from which the work of action research arises and which reminds us that we are always in relationship to people and to the larger socio-material context that in turn shapes us. The original field theory of Lewin articulated a relational understanding of self that has since intermingled with the more objectivist perspective of systems thinking but is also now enriched by tenets of Western and Eastern thought. When the self is experienced as residing in a field of interdependence, collaboration is a natural outcome.

Finally, there is confirmation of the need to cultivate the creativity that comes from combining feminine and masculine modes of knowing and practice. Transformational knowledge creation can then arise and we can become more responsive to the stakeholders we wish to serve. From this rich, humane-ecological work, better explanatory theory with better future possibilities emerges.

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