The Wonder of Interpersonal Relationships VId: Sustaining Relationships Midst Differences

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It seems that neither money nor achievement--or even good health—are the primary factors that enable us to lead a good life. The key ingredient appears to be interpersonal relationships. This is the conclusion reached in a major longitudinal study done at Harvard University over a lengthy period of time. Here is this important finding as reported by Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz, the most recent leaders of this study (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023, p. 10):

> For eighty-four years {and counting), the Harvard Study has tracked the same individuals, asking thousands of questions and taking hundreds of measurements to find out what really keeps people healthy and happy. Through all the years of studying these lives, one crucial factor stands out for the consistency and power of its ties to physical health, mental health, and longevity. Contrary to what many people might think, it's not career achievement, or exercise, or a healthy diet. Don't get us wrong; these things matter (a lot). But one thing continuously demonstrates its broad and enduring importance:

> Good relationships.

> In fact, good relationships are significant enough that if we had to take all eighty-four years of the Harvard Study and boil it down to a single principle for living, one life investment that is supported by similar findings across a wide variety of other studies, it would be this:

> Good relationships keep us healthier and happier. Period.

These clearly articulated findings hold many implications concerning the way in which we live our life—and for my inquiry in three essays about relationships being sustained despite profound differences among those in the relationship. If relationships are central to our life, then it is understandable why people sustain important relationships midst differences. However, before leaping to the implications of these Harvard studies, we need to pause and find out more about what Waldinger and Schulz are telling us.

It is All About Relationships

First, we need to ask if findings from the Harvard Study can be generalized to a broader population. After all, this study is limited to several populations in the Boston area (including a highly nonrepresentative population of late 1930s Harvard undergraduates).

Wide-Spread Confirmation

Waldinger and Schulz (2023, p. 21) are fully aware of this concern about representation, resulting in their brief review of other major studies conducted in many societies throughout the world. These studies represent "tens of thousands of people:"

All of these studies, as well as our own Harvard Study, bear witness to the importance of human connections. They show that people who are more connected to family, to friends, and to community, are happier and physically healthier than people who are less well connected. People who are more isolated than they want to be find their health declining sooner than people who feel connected to others. Lonely people also live shorter lives. Sadly, this sense of disconnection from others is growing across the world. About one in four Americans report feeling lonely- more than sixty million people. In China, loneliness among older adults has markedly increased in recent years, and Great Britain has appointed a minister of loneliness to address what has become a major public health challenge.

If we can accept Waldinger and Schulz's findings—with some justification—then we can turn to the potential reasons why interpersonal relationships are so important.

Evolution and Eudaimonia

For Waldinger and Schulz, the reasons for relationships being of central importance seems to reside in two factors: evolution and eudaimonia. I turn first to the matter of evolution. Here is what Waldinger and Schulz (2023, p. 28) have to say about the evolutionarily adaptive function served by interpersonal relationships:

> Prehistoric humans were threatened in ways we can hardly conceive of today. They had similar bodies, but primitive technology gave them only minimal protection from the environment and predatory animals, and virtually no remedies for injury or other health problems. A tooth-ache could end in death. They lived short, hard, and probably terrifying lives. And yet they survived. Why?
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> One important reason is a trait that early Homo sapiens shared with many other successful animal species: their bodies and brains had evolved to encourage cooperation.
>
> They survived because they were social.

At this point, Waldinger and Schulz directly relate these evolutionary biology studies to their findings at Harvard (Waldinger and Schulz (2023, p. 29):

> We are often asked to summarize the findings of the Harvard Study.
>
> People want to know: What is the most important thing we've learned? Both of us are by nature resistant to simple answers so these conversations are often not as short as the questioners might like. But when we really think about the consistent signal that comes through after eighty-four years of study and hundreds of research papers, it is that one simple message:
>
> Positive relationships are essential to human well-being.

There is a second factor involved in the important role played by interpersonal relationships. This factor is a bit more ephemeral that human survival. It concerns human happiness—the reason why we want to survive! This factor is *Eudaimonia*—a term and concept to be traced back to ancient times (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023, p. 18):

> More than two thousand years ago Aristotle used a term that is still in wide use in psychology today: eudaimonia. It refers to a state of deep well-being in which a person feels that their life

has meaning and purpose. It is often contrasted with hedonia (the origin of the word hedonism), which refers to the fleeting happiness of various pleasures. To put it another way, if hedonic happiness is what you mean when you say you're having a good time, then eudaimonic happiness is what we mean when we say life is good. It is a sense that, outside of this moment, regardless of how pleasurable or miserable it is, your life is worth something, and valuable to you. It is the kind of well-being that can endure through both the ups and the downs.

I find this second factor to hold more immediate implications than the first factor when considering the reasons why the Bach sons continued to support the "outdated" music of their father (Bergquist, 2023a) or the reasons why Carol Gilligan sustained a relationship with her mentor (Lawrence Kohlberg) while refuting his theory (Bergquist, 2023c). In the case of Abraham Lincoln and team of rivals, the matter of survival (conducting the Civil War) was probably relevant—though the war was being fought not for survival of specific human beings (in fact many people did not survive the war) but the survival of a fundamental principle (abolition of slavery) that was more eudaimonic in character (Bergquist, 2023b).

21ˢᵗ Century Challenges

This is all well and good—to know that survival may have depended on interpersonal relationships in times past and that Aristotle got hold of a fundamental truth about happiness—but what about human survival in mid-21ˢᵗ Century society? Waldinger and Schulz address this question (2023, pp. 28-29):

> The human animal is not much different today, though the project of survival has taken on new meanings and complications. Compared to centuries past, life in the twenty-first century is changing faster than ever before, and many of the threats to our lives are of our own making. Along with challenges related to climate change, growing income inequality, and the vast complications of new communications technologies, we must deal with new threats to our internal states of mind. Loneliness is more pervasive than ever before, and our ancient brains, designed to seek the safety of groups, experience those negative feelings as life-threatening, which leads to stress and sickness. With each year that passes, civilization is presented with new challenges that were unimaginable even fifty years ago. It also presents new choices, which means life paths are now more varied than ever. But regardless of the pace of change and the choices many of us now have, this fact remains: the human animal has evolved to be connected with other humans.

> To say that human beings require warm relationships is no touchy-feely idea. It is a hard fact Scientific studies have told us again and again: human beings need nutrition, we need exercise, we need purpose, and we need each other.

Waldinger and Schulz seem to be fully aware of challenges inherent in what I have identified in this series of essays as the VUCA-Plus world (vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, turbulence and contradiction) (Bergquist, 2023a). They write about the "haze" of competing priorities (the ambiguity and contradiction of VUCA-Plus), as well as the challenge of forecasting what makes us happy (the complexity and turbulence of VUCA-Plus) Waldinger and Schulz, 2023, p. 30):

> . . . .the good life may be a central concern for most people, but it is not the central concern of most modern societies. Life today is a haze of competing social, political, and cultural priorities, some of which have very little to do with improving people's lives. The modern world prioritizes many things ahead of the lived experience of human beings.

The second reason is related and even more fundamental: our brains, the most sophisticated and mysterious system in the known universe, often mislead us in our quest for lasting pleasure and satisfaction. We may be capable of extraordinary feats of intellect and creativity, we may have mapped the human genome and walked on the moon, but when it comes to making decisions about our lives, we humans are often bad at knowing what is good for us. Common sense in this area of life is not so sensible. It's very difficult to figure out what really matters.

As I have suggested in my analysis of VUCA-Plus conditions, the challenges identified by Waldinger and Schulz (2023, p. 30) leaves us in a condition of confusion.

These two things--the haze of culture and the mistakes we make in forecasting what will make us happy—are woven together and play a role in our lives every single day. Over the course of a life, they exert significant influence. The culture we live in leads us in particular directions, sometimes without our even noticing, and we follow along, outwardly pretending that we know what we're doing, but inwardly in a state of low-grade confusion.

This "low-grade" confusion (or is it sometimes "high-grade"?) is attended by diverse anxiety (angst). The confusion and anxiety, in turn, make the establishment of sustained interpersonal relationships that much more difficult—especially if there are major differences in the perspectives and practices held by those seeking to sustain the relationship.

Nature of the Differences

To add further to the list of challenges inherent in sustaining relationships midst differences in our mid-21st Century society, I wish to identify some of the differences that are commonly found in our VUCA-Plus world. Among others, these differences concern the old and the new (generational differences), the left and the right (political differences), and the West and the East (cultural differences). I will dwell briefly on each of these three kinds of difference.

New and Old

J. S. Bach were not alone in supporting a new musical style (his son's) that challenges what he has been composition and performing all his life. I personally witnessed something similar when visiting New Orleans and enjoying not just the food but also the music of the "Crescent City." I always enjoyed going to a club on Bourbon Street that featured Wallace Davenport, a legendary jazz musician of the "old style" ("Dixieland"). I was distracted by the very loud ("screaming") music coming from across Bourbon Street, while listening to Davenport play his trumpet alongside other gifted musicians. I went up to Davenport during a break and let him know that I didn't appreciate the hard rock music that was overwhelming Davenport's much subtler and low volume music.

Davenport interrupted me and stated with considerable passion that the music coming from across the street represented the future of New Orleans culture and was performed by gifted young musicians. He was pleased that I appreciated his music but also encouraged me to appreciate what was being offered across the street. Like Papa Bach, Wallace Davenport could appreciate and support the new, while continuing to play the old.

With my colleague, Gary Quehl (Bergquist and Quehl, 2019), I have written about the multiple forms in which Generativity (deep caring) is manifest in our society and over our lifetime. One form of this

generativity (guardian of the old) is to be found in the work done by Wallace Davenport, as is a second form of generativity (support and mentoring of the new). I suspect that both forms of generativity were found in the work of J.S. Bach and the sustained support he offered from the "revolutionary" compositions of his sons.

The alternative to the multiple forms of generativity embraced by Davenport and J. S. Bach, is a condition that Erik Erikson (1980) identified as Stagnation. As middle-aged "curmudgeons," we complain (as I did) about the "new music" or that *&%^*%* Roku or Tik Tock. We view the successful younger member of the C Suite with envy and provide them with absolutely no mentoring. We even envy the success of our own daughter or son, while feigning enthusiastic support for their achievements. Our life seems to have passed us by and the world is facing forward without us. We are stagnant and can't deal with the contradiction of accepting the new while safeguarding the old.

Left and Right

We are all aware of the great gap that exists in mid-21st Century societies between differing political viewpoints. There is not only a major difference in perspective and practices among those of the left and those on the right, passion and even violence often attends this difference. The political polarization in not just the United States but also many other nations in the world impacts on the way in which experts and expertise are viewed (Weitz and Bergquist, 2021; Weitz and Bergquist, 2023), and information is distorted (Weitz and Bergquist, 2022a). The polarization proves to be fodder for conspiracy theories (Weitz and Bergquist, 2022b) and for anti-democracy movements on both the right-wing and left-wing (Bergquist and Weitz, 2022; Bergquist and Weitz, 2023).

What are some of the reasons for expansion of the gap between people with different political viewpoints? Several of these reasons existed when Abraham Lincoln served as president and brought in his political rivals as members of his cabinet. Some of his political opponents represented different economic interests (the rich versus the poor), while others represented different cultural values (North versus South).

These differences certainly still exist in most societies. There were also differences in Lincoln's world of an even deeper and irrational source – such as belief in the morality or immorality of slavery. We have similar differences in our contemporary world—ranging from divergent viewpoints regarding the fundamental viability of democracies (versus autocracies) and the "goodness" and "rightness" of specific religious beliefs (and attendant values and versions of reality).

There is even the profound difference to be found in the belief that there is or is not an afterlife. We find that brutal behavior and indifference to death is often found among those who believe in an afterlife and believe that some people are rewarded in this afterlife for their belief and their actions on this earth. Other people believe that what happens on Earth is important and that no religion or after-life reward system justifies the indiscriminate killing of innocent people. These profound differences in both perspective and practice deeply divides humanity in the 21st Century and seems to regress people and countries to a primitive (and nonviable) state of affairs.

As a deep psychological level, we can point to a pull toward the splitting of reality into the good and bad—especially under conditions of profound anxiety (such as we find with VUCA-Plus conditions). Wilfred Bion (1961) writes about the regression of people in collective settings to a basic assumption that there is an enemy "at the gate" that requires absolute allegiance to one's own group or tribe. More

recently, William Perry (1970) has described a basic epistemology stance ("Dualism") that requires all elements in the world to be categorized as good/bad, right/wrong, real/unreal. A host of researchers have reaffirmed this "dualistic" perspective in their study of the authoritarian personality (Bergquist, and Weitz, 2022; Bergquist and Weitz, 2023).

Once again, we return to the matter of VUCA-Plus and the accompanying anxiety that is prevalent and diffuse. Political polarization will continue to be present as long as the challenges of VUCA-Plus are ignored or reframed as products of the "others" in our world (Oshry, 2018) --- those who hold differing political perspectives and support counter actions. Could Lincoln have been an effective leader under these 21st Century conditions? Can anyone be successful in sustaining relationships with and asking for advice from "rivals" who stand on the other side of the political gap?

East and West

The gap between societies (and cultures) residing on each side of the Pacific Ocean is quite deep and wide. There is even some speculation that the Pacific Ocean was formed in the life of our planet when a chunk of our near-molten Earth spun off to form the Moon. The big hole left our world with two quite different realities. There might have been one reality when homo sapiens migrated from Africa to lands far away, but by the time culture had been solidified in Europe and in Asia, there were at least two realities.

Furthermore, these two realities have colliding for many years in the region of the world (Middle East) where East and West meet. We find, for instance, that an Eastern culture was represented in the Baalite's nature-based worship of the calf (and in the sense of time as being cyclical), while a Western culture was represented in Moses' formulation of the Ten Commandments and confrontation of the "pagans" Baalites (accompanied by an orientation to time as moving forward and toward some end point) (Bergquist, 2023hl).

The differing viewpoints to be found in traditional Eastern and Western cultures are represented in and reinforced by the divergent semantics (meaning of words) and syntax (structure of language) to be found in European and Asian languages (Bergquist and Weitz, 2023b). Areas of importance in our life tend to be accompanied by a rich assortment of differentiating words (the classic example of multiple words for "snow" among the Innuits/Eskimos) (semantics). Importance might even be influenced by and reinforced by this differentiation) (Whorfian hypothesis). Similarly, our use of active or passive voice tends to influence the way in which we view causal relationships (Syntax). (Bergquist, assumptive world). My colleague, Sharon Ma (2022), has even noted that the layout of images that form polysyllabic words in the Chinese written language may influence basic attitudes regarding societal assumptions about the traditional role played by women in society.

How do we bridge this great gap across the Pacific Ocean (or be land via the Silk Road)? Can an organization such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum provide this bridge—at least with regard to economics? What about the recent blending of East and Western religious practices—such as is found in the interweaving of Judaism and Zen Buddhism (Kamenetz, 1995)? We might also reference the rich intermingling of Eastern and Western culture, notions about governance, and strong global economic presence in large Asian cities like Singapore and Hong Kong—along with mental health issues in these cosmopolitan urban communities that have been inherited from the West. We see the

same intermingling of culture, economics (and perhaps some intermingling of perspectives on governance) in cities on the other side of the Pacific—such as San Francisco, Seattle and Vancouver.

We can enjoy Mozart being performed by the Singapore Symphony, Western-style high rise corporate offices being constructed in Ho Chi Min City (Saigon) and Phong Pang (Cambodia, and a thriving Baseball League in Japan. Chinese music is being played by major American orchestra. Asia landscaping and architecture are to be found in abundance in Western American cities. The beauty of a Japanese garden is hard to match. Schools teaching the Martial Arts of China and Japan are to be found in many American communities—alongside the practice of meditation and promotion of mindfulness as a pathway to health. Richard Rodriguez (2003) writes about the "Brown" world of contemporary America in which we now live that is rich with the intermingling of "Black", "Brown" and "White" skin perspectives and practices. Yet, the Gap still exists and presents a challenge of profound differences. Can we sustain important relationships while extending our head, heart and hands across the Pacific?

I have just identified several major challenges regarding differences in perspective and practice. There are many more to be identified and faced. The dominant, Western-based narrative has collapsed under the weight of a flat global environment (Friedman, 2007) that is threatening in many ways (Smick, 2008)). Can we learn anything from the three exemplars that I have identified and focused on in the three previous essays—or are these exemplars to far away in terms of time and space (Bach family and Lincoln) – or simply too limited (academic) in scope (Gilligan)? While these are legitimate concerns, I believe that several important lessons can be learned from each of these exemplars—and these lessons can be applied to the challenges associated with old and new, left and right, and East and West.

The Bach Family: What Did They Teach Us?

In our first essay (Bergquist, 2023a) attention was directed to the way in which several of the sons of J. S. Bach helped to preserve the music composed by their father, while moving forward with a quite different approach to their own compositions of "classical" music.

Guardian of Value

I related their orientation to preservation to the concept of Guardianship that was offered by George Vaillant (2012). Motivated by a strong desire to safeguard the past, Bach's sons recognized that something old can be revered (and performed in the case of classical music) because it has lasting relevance even though musical tastes may change. Even today, we appreciate classical music of all eras—the repertoire of our symphony orchestras and classical music radio stations spans more than five hundred years (from the pre-Baroque music of Palestrina to the minimalist music of 21st Century composers such as John Adams and Arvo Part. The collection of fine art that is to be found in contemporary museums spans an even greater length of time and even greater diversity of materials used and visual images presented. These collections include statues of ancient Greece and Rome alongside 21st Century representation of urban debris by Mark Bradford and Ethiopian-American visual representations offered by Juli Mehretu.

We guard the past because it offers profound insights regarding not only our heritage but also the contemporary times in which we are living. The sons of J. S. Bach recognized that this was true of all great art—including that which was produced in abundance by their father, the simple organ player who composed for God.

Deep Caring

There is a second perspective on guardianship that I wish to offer. It concerns the four types of generativity that are to be found in the lifespan of most "generative" human beings (Bergquist and Quehl, 2019). At its heart, generativity is about deep caring: we discover those things that we care about and then invest extensive time, energy and talent in making sure that these things are cared for.

We care for our children (generativity one), the people with whom we work (two) and the community in which we live (four). We also care about the past and wish to extend it into the future (generativity three). We preserve stories from our childhood, family heirlooms, photographs, and awards from our own past. Our bookshelves are filled with memorabilia. They become vertical "alters" representing what we truly care about in our life (Ruesch and Kees, 1969).

With all of this, we can discover in the sons of J. S. Bach a desire to care deeply about their father's work. While his manuscripts might not be placed on Philip Emanuel Bach's bookcase, they could be stored in one of his trunks (to be retrieved years later and performed by other composers such as Felix Mendelsohn) (Wolff, 1983, p. 263). Generativity Three is fully manifest in the actions takes by the sons of J.S. Bach and we are benefactors of the preservation completed by these men in the midst of their own abundant compositional work.

They Might Be Right

There is one additional lesson to be learned from the Bach sons. This lesson concerns our sustained regard for the potential relevance of the past in addressing our present-day realities. We might just find that those in the past better understand our current world than we do. As Orson Welles declared: "They might be right!" He offered this declaration in "Is it Always Right to Be Right?" (Schmidt, 1970) a cartoon feature he hosted many years ago that won an Academy Award. What if "they" are right even if they are "not contemporary" but instead come from the past?

What if someone who is now "out of date" happens to offer a perspective that is still relevant today (or perhaps that is even more relevant and insightful than present day perspectives). Can people have something important to say even if they come from a different time and lived under different societal conditions? I am aware of a graduate school of psychology that doesn't allow their doctoral students to cite any reference more than 10 years old. Apparently, there is nothing to learn from the past. We are now "smarter" than we were eleven years ago. I will take the challenge even further: what if someone from the past is right even coming from a different political or religious perspective?

Even more generally, there might be a good idea or there might be a valuable insight contained in something from the past. Those who engaged many years ago in something called Spectrum Analysis suggested that there is a kernel of truth or the seed of a good idea to be found in any statement being offered in a problem-solving group. The real talent is engaged when seeking to discover and articulate this kernel or seed.

It might have been one of the great musical talents of J.S. Bach's sons to fully appreciate the contributions made by their father. Their own success as the composers of some of the first "classical" music of the Western World (preceding Haydn and Mozart) might be attributed at least in part to their appreciation (and use of) musical elements and structures found in their father's work. It is from these

men that we discover one of the key lessons to be learned regarding retaining relationships in the midst of differences: the differences are to be honored across different generations.

Abraham Lincoln and His Team of Rivals: What Did They Teach Us?

We can turn to a somewhat more recent example of someone who preserved (or actually established) relationships in the midst of major differences of perspective and practice. This exemplar was Abraham Lincoln. Though admittedly he was leading American more than 150 years ago, the lessons he taught us are particularly important because they concern a gap that is particularly difficult to cross. This is the divide between Left and Right political perspectives and priorities—a divide that not only exists in mid-21st Century America but is particularly wide and filled with mutual distrust and even hatred.

Valuing Mutations

Lincoln seemed to have crossed this divide by inviting (even requiring) his colleagues from the other side of the divide to create new perspectives and practices on behalf of a shared goal: winning the war (Kearns Goodwin, 2005). In the second essay I prepared for this series (Bergquist, 2023b) I brought in several concepts from evolutionary biology as a way to make sense of the adaptive role played by new ideas (and new ways of governing in the case of Lincoln and his cabinet of rivals. While most new ideas are dead on arrival—because they are not very good or because they are ahead of their time (or behind times)—there are a few (mutations) that offer a fresh approach to an existing issue. This issue is typically not a readily solved puzzle—rather it is a multidimensional problem, opposing perspective-filled dilemma or completely complex "mess."

As Thomas Kuhn (2012) noted in his widely cited (and often misused) concept of "paradigmatic revolutions", there are always existing issues (problems, dilemmas, messes) that can not be readily solved inside the existing, dominant school of thought (paradigm). Kuhn identifies these as "anomalies" A new approach must be taken to solve the presenting anomaly—and subsequently to successfully solve many other related anomalies, as well as other pervasive and elusive issues. While most of the alternative approaches are of little use, there is one approach (mutation) that does a good job with the anomaly. Based on this success, a new, dominant paradigm is installed (paradigmatic revolution) that builds on this specific approach—only to be replaced at some point in the future by another school of thought (paradigm).

Though Kuhn's analysis is itself based on a paradigm regarding historical analysis that could be replaced by a new paradigm, we can tentatively accept his analysis as well as the evolutionary biologists' description of mutations--and trace out the implications of these perspectives for our understanding of the way Lincoln used differences (competing mutations) to achieve success. Specifically, there seems to be some value in promoting a diversity of ideas when seeking not only to get at the "truth" of a specific situation (Gergen and Gergen, 2004), but also to generate the best (and most creative) solution to the issue being addressed (Page, 2011). As I noted in the second essay (Bergquist, 2023b), collective IQ seems to increase when any group values differences.

Abraham Lincoln exemplified the valuing of differences and shows how diversity can lead to successful guidance when faced with a profoundly challenging issue (conducting a civil war). Thus, there is a first lesson to be learned from Abraham Lincoln and his team of rivals: be sure to appreciate and protect diversity of perspective and practice. As I noted earlier regarding the use of spectrum analysis, we might find a kernel of truth and seed of a good idea in everything (all mutations) that is offered.

Breaking the Set

Paradigms are hard to break. The institutions that promote and fortify existing paradigms are powerful and not easily confronted. When the matters are quite serious (such as conducting a war) then the existing paradigms are particularly resistant to change. There is no room for the playful exploration of alternative perspectives or practices. Yet, Abraham Lincoln somehow managed to invite in and explore alternative viewpoints. This exploration was often accompanied by heated debates and long stormy meetings. Yet, Lincoln hung in there. He even found his rustic, "frontier" humor and story telling to be of some value in not only toning down the emotions but also allowing him to offer some gentle, "down to earth" views that opened the vista (allowing new mutations to emerge).

What needs to be kept in mind is the goal of breaking an existing, dominating viewpoint—what psychologists call a "cognitive set" (the fancy German term is "Einstellung"). Once this set is broken, the vista expands--and new ideas can be considered. Ironically, it is often the most rigid and fortified cognitive set that is most vulnerable to being shattered. We see this in the fore-mentioned cartoon narrated by Orson Welles. It took just one person to declare "they might be right" for those on both sides of the gap to rethink their position and begin to listen to those on the other side. We seem this same vulnerability in the confrontation of "true believers" with a "black swan" that challenges these beliefs (Taleb, 2010).

Social cognitive theorist (led by insights offered by Kurt Lewin) propose that human beings find it hard to live with "cognitive dissonance" (Festinger, 1957) They will do anything (including changing their position on a specific issue) if they are locked into a rigid sense of self (good, thoughtful, consistent, etc.) alongside a rigid point of view about a specific issue (this viewpoint being "stupid" or "cruel"). The point of view is more likely to change then the self-perception.

I suspect that Kurt Lewin would have loved to sit down with Abraham Lincoln in order to share stories about rigid members of Lincoln's cabinet changing their firmly held views on political and military matters. From their dialogue would have emerged a second lesson to be taught by Abraham Lincoln: by sustaining a relationship in the midst of major differences of viewpoint (cognitive set), one opens the possibility that one's own cognitive set, as well as the other person's cognitive set will be challenged and even set aside in favor of a new viewpoint that differs that which either party brought to the relationship.

I offer a more contemporary example of the breaking of set being engaged in a constructive (and often highly creative) manner. It results not in the successful conducting of warfare on a battleground. Rather, it results in a different kind of "warfare"—that which takes placed among those who prepare scripts for a television show. This example concerns the creative mayhem that was found in the meeting of writers for Sid Caesar's *Show of Shows* and (later) *Sid Caser's Show* during the early days of television (1950s). Along with such extraordinary writers as Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, Neil Simon and Carl Reiner, Sid Caser presided over heated meetings where chairs were thrown around (often by Sid), people were swearing at one another, and, most importantly, voracious disagreements were voiced regarding jokes to be told and skits to be enacted during the show. Cognitive sets (along with furniture) were being broken all over the place –as is appropriate in the production of jokes (which at their best involve the presentation of something that is unexpected and set breaking).

In his tribute to Sid Caesar and the Jewish comedic writers of mid-20th Century America, Michael Auslin (2014) describes this creative mayhem:

> The mischief inside the Writers' Room was legendary. Desks were set on fire, screaming matches were common, and discarded paper full of pitches littered the floors, while the gravel-voiced comic Selma Diamond typed at a frenetic speed. Nor did the craziness end outside the office: The writers were constitutionally incapable of acting normally, making jokes to and about passersby on the streets or threatening each other after so many hours cooped up together. The very young Mel Brooks was a particular source of madness, often arriving hours late to work and making dramatic entrances such as pretending to slide into home plate while yelling "Safe!" Caesar sat imperiously at his desk while the writers clamored for his attention. A joke he didn't like would get shot down out of the sky as Caesar imitated a B-17 turret gunner. All this was later memorialized in Reiner's *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, the movie *My Favorite Year*, and a play by Neil Simon.

Differences of opinion prevailed alongside madness. The outcome was the production of cutting-edge television shows that revolutionized (and greatly improved) the quality of comedic writing during the formative years of television. I suspect that Kurt Lewin would like to talk not just with Abraham Lincoln but also Sid Caesar (and his band of mad writers).

Self-Organization

There is a third, closely related lesson to be taught my Abraham Lincoln. It concerns the remarkable process called "self-organization" (Prigogine and Stengers,1984) , – a process that I mentioned in a previous essay in this series (Bergquist, 2023b). One must loosen the reins of control in any group that is seeking to solve a complex issue or coordinate a complex task (such as conducting a war). When hierarchy is rigidly enforced and power resides at the top of a pyramid of control, then the outcome of any deliberation is likely to be constrained, self-reinforcing and of low collective intelligence. We can leap over to an insight offered by Carol Gilligan—who suggested that patriarchies have prevailed in restricting viewpoints about moral reasoning and ways of knowing (including her own) (Gilligan, 2023).

Abraham Lincoln had a way of allowing the dialogue among cabinet members to remain uncontrolled for lengthy periods of time. To the consternation of some cabinet members, he often restrained from making a decision (or even offering his own opinion) until all viewpoints were shared and animated dialogue occurred. Somehow, he continued to have faith in the wisdom to be found in unleased conversations (including the unleashing of emotions that are often "Irrational").

Along with the meeting with Kurt Lewin, Abraham Lincoln might have enjoyed meeting with Iyra Prigogine or might have welcomed an invitation to the Santa Fe Institute—so that there might be a collective exploration of the self-organizing knowledge that emerged from Lincoln's cabinet meetings. Lincoln and these thought leaders of chaos and complexity would have agreed on a third lesson to take from these meetings: control and creativity do not co-exist. In sustaining and protecting an open expression of differing perspectives and opinions about different practices, the leader of a group is likely to find that valid and useful ideas emerge (often in unexpected ways) from this unrestricted forum.

Challenge and Support

Throughout the analysis in four essays of sustained relationship midst differences, two fundamental themes have been repeatedly identified. First, *Challenges* abound whenever any relationship is

sustained by two people who disagree with one another regarding specific perspectives and practices. Second, *Support* must be offered by both members of the relationship for one another and for the beliefs that each hold (despite disagreements regarding these beliefs). The greater the challenge, the greater must be the support. This is quite a bit to ask of anyone: not only must we allow another person to give voice to the viewpoint(s) with which we disagree, but we must also provide them with encouragement and even a helping hand in articulating their viewpoint.

I personally find this to be difficult when publishing essays with which I disagree in this *Library of Professional Psychology* (where I serve as curator) and in the *Library of Professional Coaching* (where I serve as co-curator). I don't want the perspectives that are being offered to "win the day" in fields about which I care deeply (psychology and professional coaching). Yet, I know that a diversity of perspectives makes for a viable and vibrant system--as the evolutionary biologists teach us (Bergquist, 2012).

I read with distain and disappointment about a professional being drummed out of their professional circle because they offer a viewpoint that differs from those who control this profession (and protect the existing and dominant paradigm). I have written a set of essays about a psychiatrist (Wilhelm Reich) who faced expulsion from his profession because of "unpopular" and "unacceptable" perspectives and practices (Bergquist, 2023d; Bergquist, 2023e, Bergquist, 2023f, Bergquist, 2023g).

I return to the balance between challenge and support. I rely on the insights offered by Nevitt Sanford (1980) who suggests that all significant learning requires a balance between challenge and support, as well as the insights offered by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) who writes about the highly motivating state that he calls Flow which resides in the threshold between anxiety (excessive challenge) and boredom (excessive support).

All of this balancing, in turn, requires the kind of feminine leadership of the chalice (support) that Rianne Eisler (1987) proposes—leadership that balances off the more masculine leadership of the sword (challenge). By example, Abraham Lincoln teaches us a fourth lesson: it is possible for a male leader to provide a chalice of support that is needed to balance off a challenge of the sword which is required in leading any army into battle (including the battle for preservation of a union and abolition of slavery).

Collaboration and Truth

There is one final lesson that Abraham Lincoln seems to be teaching us. It concerns our access to "reality" in the midst of differing perspectives regarding reality that are held by people with whom we wish to retain a relationship. If Leslie Brothers (2001) is correct in proposing that our access to reality is found (or perhaps created) in our relationship with other people, then how in the world can we gain a clear sense of reality when interacting with someone who has a different take on the real world. This struggle regarding access to reality is likely to be particularly intense when seeking to grasp something about the reality of a war that is raging in our own backyard.

As we see in Doris Kearns Goodwin's (2005) account of Lincoln's leadership during the American civil war, it was particularly difficult to get a clear sense of what was occurring on the battlefields of Antietam or Gettysburg or in the cities of Atlanta or Charleston. Often relying on the brief written accounts coming over the telegraph located at his war office, Lincoln had no access to 21st Century media which better convey something about the "realities" of war. Furthermore, all of the in-person accounts he was receiving were inevitably biased—for no one was "neutral" about the war or about how best to conduct this new ("modern") form of warfare.

It was indeed an irony and a point of significant insight to find that Lincoln somehow got a grasp on reality by listening to the diverse realities of his cabinet members, his battlefield commanders, and other civilians with whom he interacted. Somehow, he gathered these different renderings together and found his way to a viable "truth." I reiterate a point made by Ken and Mary Gergen (2004) in my second essay in this series (Bergquist, 2023b). They describe how multiple versions of reality can be gathered together in a way that leads to a valid and useful version of reality. For the Gergen's truth is found within collaborative communities and specifically within communities that are filled with trusting relationships and sustained, meaningful and respectful dialogue—such as that which was built by Abraham Lincoln among those who were initially his rivals.

Perhaps this is the most important lesson to be taught us by President Lincoln: it is in a collaborative environment of respect and trust that we find the opportunity to learn from those who see a different reality. The world can present itself to us in many different ways – especially in an environment filled with the anxiety of conflict. We do best by taking in these many different versions of reality and constructing a reality for our self that seems honest and "truthful." This might be the best that we can do—and it might enable us to be the best we can be in a world (such as Lincoln confronted) that is swirling with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, turbulence and contradiction (VUCA-Plus).

Carol Gilligan: What Did She Teach Us?

While the physical distance between men and women living in the same household are not as great as John Gray (2012) rhetorically identified as living on Venus and Mars, there are significant differences in the perspectives of many men and women – it is as if they are viewing their everyday life from two planets.

While men and women living in the same community do not speak different languages as is the case with those living in Asia and those living in North America, the words being conveyed by men and women can retain quite different meaning or result in quite different actions even if they live next door to one another. As Carol Gilligan has "taught" us, there are some major differences in the way many women and men view situations that require moral judgements and subsequent actions. The epistemological gap can be wide even if the physical distance is narrow.

The Chalice

For Carol Gilligan (2023, the primary gap-producing agent is patriarchal power. The dynamic of up and own might dictate the dynamic of near and far. Men and women might be living on Mars and Venice because masculine power (Eisler's sword) has assigned them to two different planets. This might be the second (and perhaps most important) lesson that Carol Gilligan has taught us. As we have found with Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet of rivals, the retention (and even nourishing) of a relationship midst differences might require that there is a "level playing field" where all voices are heard and respected regardless of social or economic status.

A chalice rather than a sword brings people together in a successful manner who hold quite different viewpoints. It is the chalice that provides support and an environment that "holds" the anxiety which inevitably is generated when diverse perspective and practices are brought forth in a meeting. It is chalice-based leadership that produces conditions for the transformation of anxiety into constructive and creative energy. It is a chalice-based spirit of collaboration that enables diversity to produce creative solutions to elusive issues that exist in a VUCA-Plus environment.

Ethics of Care

Carol Gilligan (2023) provides us with an even more detailed description of what a chalice looks like and how it impacts the relationships between people. First, as we look at a chalice or any container, it holds all things—good and bad. The chalice is without judgement. Carol Gilligan makes this important point that we can't live our life without doing harm. There is no one, overriding set of principles that enable us to live a life without compromise or without the sorting of priorities. Carol Gilligan (2023, p. 52) puts it this way:

> Since moral dilemmas arise in situations where hurt is inescapable, there is no "right" or "good" solution. Rather than seeking justification, the moral imperative becomes "an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the "real and recognizable trouble" of this world."

Having recently published an essay with my colleague, Suzi Pomerantz, about the challenge of living a life without doing harm (Bergquist and Pomerantz, 2020), I was particularly taken by this statement regarding the critical roles to be played by discernment and a resulting attempt to alleviate trouble. Given what we have learned from Abraham Lincoln and those working at the Santa Fe Institute (Page, 2011), this act of discernment might best be done in an environment that encourages diversity; furthermore, alleviation is best done in a collaborative manner since it is hard to fight alone when confronting the "troubles" elicited by VUCA-Plus conditions. We need a "little help from our friends" (even when our "friends" are actually our rivals and those who see our VUCA-Plus world from a very different vantage point.

Trust

There is another important characteristic of a chalice. If it is of any value, a chalice does not leak. It's contents remain within the confines of the chalice's strong walls. Similarly, when anxiety is running amuck in a group, the chalice of leadership contains the anxiety and doesn't allow it to leak out. While the chalice of leadership has no physical walls, it does require the capacity for psychological containment. This in turn requires trust. In the past, I have been joined by two colleagues in the identification of three types of trust (Bergquist, Betwee and Meuhl, 1995): competence, intentions, perspective) I believe that all three are required when building a strong interpersonal and group chalice.

We have to trust that people with whom we interact to address issues are competent. Abraham Lincoln might not have agreed with his rivals, but he did respect their competence. I often use the example of an exercise called the "trust fall" to illustrate the importance of competence. Imagine that your dear aging mother was standing at the base of a platform from which you are asked to fall backwards.

You know that your mother is deeply devoted to your welfare, but you doubt that she can impede your fall. Both you and your caring mother would undoubtedly be hurt. Part of what Carol Gilligan is advocating relates directly to the matter of competence. She proposes that an ethic of care includes an articulate understanding of the complex circumstances surrounding any major moral judgement. It is not enough to be caring (devoted mother); one must also be discerning.

Then there is the matter of intention. Consider a situation in you have insulted participants in a trust fall exercise prior to standing on the platform. The people you have insulted are fully capable of catching when you fall. However, you can hear them mutter to one another about >getting even with you." You decide not to fall backwards given than you don't trust the intentions of these other participants. You

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are not sure that they are most interested in your welfare. The exercise might end with you hitting the ground and everyone around you chuckling.

A chalice is only valuable as a container of anxiety if it is being offered on behalf of the welfare of those in the relationship or group. A chalice should never be used to derail expression of anxiety or for distorting the source of and cause of the anxiety. As Abraham Lincoln displayed and declared, he held no malice for his rivals (even those leading the confederacy), and extended charity to all. Lincoln created a chalice of leadership with the clear intention "to bvind up the nation's wounds—to do all wh ich may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations." And then he was assassinated.

The third kind of trust is particularly important in a world that is becoming increasingly flat (and dangerous). This is trust in a shared perspective. Imagine again that you are standing on the platform. Those asked to catch you when you fall don't seem to really understand what this strange American ritual is really all about. They come from a society that is quite different from that found in the United States. You could fall off the platform and not be caught by these folks. They might be surprised that you chose to fall off the platform and would graciously ask you if you would like to fall off the platform again.

We might find something comparable when members of an organization enter into a problem-solving conversation with quite different perspectives on the nature of this problem or steps to be taken in finding a solution (Bergquist and Brock, 2008). Each of these participants in competent in their own field and come to the meeting with the best of intentions (these intentions being aligned with their own sub-culture in the organization). The challenge is to identify the differing perspectives to be found in each of the sub-cultures and to identify ways in which these differing perspectives can help rather than hinder this problem-solving endeavor.

This is where Carol Gilligan's ethics of care comes back into view. This ethic requires that we "discern" the differences in perspectives being offered by each sub-culture. We discern when we not only acknowledge the differences, but also identify the contribution to be made by each perspective (appreciation) and the way each perspective interweaves with the other differing perspectives (integration).

As introduced through an organization called S*ynectics* (Gordon, 1961), the processes of spectrum analysis can be of value here. I must do something unusual when participating in a Synectics session before offering my own idea. I must first provide a successful paraphrase of the idea that was just presented (to insure understanding) and identify three reasons why there is the seed of a good idea in what was just presented (appreciation). Did Abraham Lincoln offer something like spectrum analysis in providing his own chalice of leadership? Did Carol Gilligan offer some idea about how Lawrence Kohlberg's model of moral development was of value before offer her criticism of his model? Actually, she did and she retained her appreciation for his work and his mentorship of her as one of his students.

Connecting

There is one other lesson that Carol Gilligan has taught us through her continuing relationships with Lawrence Kohlberg. She has provided an example of staying connected with another person. It is not just a matter of telling someone that we still care about them even though we often disagree with them. It is a matter of caring about their continuing welfare and of listening to them in a "whole hearted" and

"while headed" manner so that our connection might itself produce new insights and a revised version of reality for both of us.

What then does it mean to be whole-headed as well as whole-hearted. I have suggested in my essay on Carol Gilligan (Bergquist, 2023c) that it is partially a matter of accepting multiple ways in which emotions are expressed and invitation to connect are delivered. I built on Gilligan's focus on voice when identifying one mode of expressing emotions and inviting connections. I have also suggested that sometimes actions can speak "louder than words"—especially for men. An offer to help change a tire or bake a cake can convey love just as much as can a statement that "I love you."

We can observe "true" emotions being exhibited at a football game just as we can find that someone really does have emotions when they express sadness at their son leaving for college. We need to be observant of and appreciative of all forms of emotion. We must similarly accept an offer to take our dog for a walk when we are on a business trip as an invitation to connect just as much as we accept a statement that "I want to work with you on this project" or "I don't agree with you but still want to meet every week to talk about our disagreements."

Kahneman and Tversky: What Did They Teach Us?

We can look beyond the Bach family, Abaham Lincoln and Carol Gilligan to learn about ways in which to work with someone who in many ways is quite different from us. Whole-hearted and whole-headed connections, despite personal differences, are exemplified in the productive and revolutionary relationship that existed between Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (two of the founders of the emerging field of behavioral economics).

Deep connection in the midst of diverse styles was fully evident in the insight-creating conversations of Tversky and Kahneman. Though neither Tversky or Kahneman were economists, they won the Nobel Prize for Economics having impacted in a major way on the focus of economic analysis. They brought psychological perspectives to bear on the "economic" decisions being made by consumers, psychological diagnosticians, politicians and a wide range of other people.

It is hard to imagine two human beings who were more different from one another than Twersky and Kahneman. One of them truly came from Mars and the other from Venus. Michael Lewis (2017) described their remarkable working relationship midst personal differences in *The Undoing Project*. Kahneman was "a nervous scholar" who always doubted the value of his own contributions, whereas Tversky was a confident, self-assured risk-taker.

Furthermore, their differences were not kept in the shadows. There were on full display in the hollering that took place when they were working on a new essay. However, this hollering was inevitably accompanied by laughter. Humor (especially self-humor) has a way of making the hollering more tolerable. (Lewis, p. 154, p. 158) It was a bit like Sid Caser's writing room – though probably there was a higher proportion of laughter than hollering when Tversky and Kahneman got together.

Appreciation Midst Status Concerns

Along with laughter (and hollering) there was shared appreciation. Much as in the case of Spectrum analysis there were many moments when one of these two behavioral economists acknowledged and built on the strengths of the other person's ideas. Lewis (2017, p. 180) reported this observation made by Kahneman: "I would say something and Amos [Tversky] would understand it. When one of us would

say something that was off the wall, the other would search for the virtue in it. We would finish each others' sentences and frequently did. But we also kept surprising each other."

With all of this positive interaction between Kahneman and Tversky, there was also a major challenge that could have driven them apart. This challenge centered on the matter of Status difference—the factor we identified in the interaction of Abraham Lincoln with his rivals. While Lincoln was able to "flatten" the differences in status among his cabinet members, the issue of status difference was not so easily resolved between Tversky and Kahneman—largely because other people imposed differences on the two of them. Michael Lewis (2017,pp. 294-295) comments on this struggle:

> Danny complained at length about how different the public perception of the collaboration as from its reality. "I am perceived as attending him, which is not the case," . . . "I clearly lose by the collaboration. . . . Amos spoke, at less length,, about how the blame for their unequal status fell squarely on other people. " . . . Danny[declared "I am very much in his shadow in a way that is not representative of our interaction," he said" It induces a certain strain. There is envy! It's just disturbing. I *hate* the feeling of envy . . .. "

Later, there was a reverse of this status difference. Kahneman accepted a position at Stanford University, while Tversky was serving as a visiting scholar at the University of British Columbia (UBC). While UBC is a high-status institution, it does not reside at the top of the hierarchy where a university such as Stanford resides. Lewis (2017, p. 306) offers the following report: "One night as they talked, Amos [Tversky] blurted out that the difference he felt being at Stanford was the difference of being in a place where everyone was first-rate." I suspect that this struggle regarding status often accompanies two highly successful collaborators: one is often given too much credit and the other does not get enough. This can shatter a collaboration—but not in the case of Kahneman and Tversky.

Boundaries

The key, in part, seems to be about boundaries. For Tversky and Kahneman, these boundaries were found in the requirement that they were working in person with one another. They always met behind closed doors in a room that allowed for sustained privacy. It is poignant to note that their collaborative relationship broke down when they were no longer working together in person. Lewis (2017, p. 312) reported that things changed when they were no longer together:

> It wasn't that Amos had no interest in Danny's thoughts. It was that they were no longer talking in the same room, with the door closed. The conversation that he and Danny were meant to be having together each was more of less having alone. Because of the new distance between them, each was far more aware where the ideas had come from."

As I have noted, Eisler's chalice and Gilligan's ethic of care require that there is trust in a relationship— and this trust requires that the relationship is bounded in some way. It is in the containment of anxiety (associated with differences) that sustained, whole-hearted and whole-headed collections are sustained.

Bringing the Teachers Together

What does this relationship between Kahneman and Tversky mean with regard to the lessons being taught us by the Back family, Abraham Lincoln and Carol Gilligan? What they might have said to one another if brought together? I suspect that they would have much to say about similarities in addressing adversity, finding a safe place in which to interact, and committing to an ethic of care.

I think the relationship between Tversky and Kahneman exemplified a reliance on relationships despite status differences imposed from outside. This same challenge was found in the greater success experienced by Bach's sons than by Papa Bach. The relationship between Kahneman and Tversky also exemplified the commitment to a higher cause that we see in the life and work of Abraham Lincoln, and in the work of Carol Gillagan and Lawrence Kohlberg.

It seems that Tversky and Kahneman (like Carol Gilligan) had to navigate their own "civil war." In their case, the war concerned a radically different perspective on economic behavior. In Carol Gilligan's case it was a revolution regarding moral development. Kahneman and Teversky were able to offer each other important support as their "undoing project" was engaged. While they were not political opponents, these two psychologists did have to appreciate quite different ways in which their colleague addressed the professional challenges they were facing. Carol Gillian, on the other hand, had to find a way to support someone (Kohlberg) who was the recipient of her own "undoing project."

Finally, we see that Kahneman and Tversky exemplified Carol Gilligan's emphasis on connection as a basis for an ethic of care. They established a setting with boundaries that was conducive to creative and constructive production in the midst of stylistic difference. They taught us that connections are never fully a matter of either head or heart.

Both words (voice) and action are required to ensure trust. For Kahneman and Tversky this meant being face-to-face in a high-boundary setting. It was in this setting that they could confront one another, laugh at (and with) one another, build on one another's ideas, and genuinely merge any sense of personal contributions. Micheal Lewis (2017, p. 239) proposed that Tversky and Kahneman had established a unique intimacy while working together; "What they were like, in every way but sexually, was lover. They connected with each other more deeply than either had connected with anyone else."

Conclusions

As two ambitious males, Kahneman and Tversky manifest the caring "human" voice that Carol Gilligan suggested was potentially to be found among all people—regardless of gender—when working in a setting that minimizes differences in status and power (non-patriarchal). It is a setting that enhances our ability (and desire) "to communicate our experience and . . . our desire to live in relationship, not alone or walled off in silence." (Gilligan, 2023, p. 104). Such a setting should not be hard to establish, for as Gillian (2023, p. 105) notes, humans:

> are inherently relational and responsive beings, born with a voice and with the desire to engage responsibility with others. It no longer makes sense to ask how we gain our humanity. Instead, the question becomes: How do we lose it?

In this statement, Gilligan leaves us not with a lesson to be learned, but with an important question: how and why did we lose our capacity to care and relate. I have offered examples of specific people who did care, relate – and successfully collaborate—despite major differences of perspective and practice. Divergent viewpoints could be set aside and alternative solutions could be held in abeyance so that new ways of thinking and doing could emerge. Given Gilligan's question, we move to several potential answers in the next two essays. I introduce some preliminary ideas regarding how processes can be established and settings created in which those in a collaborative relationship can find safety and care (both expressed and received) despite significant differences in perspective and practice.

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