

Enacting Containers for Integral Transformative Development

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Abstract

We investigate the application and research in enacting new futures through the design, creation and evolution of integrally-based containers for transformative development, based on seven years of experience with PI's GTC program and organizational applications. We will review context, design principles and strategies, update the research presented at the 2008 ITC conference, with data from latest cohorts, current status and open questions. We will include 3rd-person observations, as well as 1st- and 2nd-person experiential processes that demonstrate the principles and approaches; and explore the lived experiences of attempting to enact our own integral future as a business and community.

Keywords: Action Logics, States of Consciousness, Adult Development, Emergence, Transformational Leadership, Integral Embodiment

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Introduction

Our Developmental Context

This paper describes the principles and practices that form the foundation of transformative leadership programs that Pacific Integral has offered for the past seven years, and discusses some of the results of the programs based on research with the Leadership Development Framework (Cook-Greuter, 2008) and theories extending this framework (O'Fallon, 2010). We will look primarily at our experiences with our flagship program, *Generating Transformative Change* (GTC), but will also draw some comparisons to organizational applications.

In this presentation we will provide some background and history on the GTC program, discuss our context and intentions with regard to supporting the development of participants, review key content in the program that relates specifically to participant development, and outline key principles and practices of the transformative container we create. We will also review our current research results, specifically our initial assessments of developmental stages before, six months after, and two years after the completion of the program. These findings begin to demonstrate the range of developmental trajectories of a group of participants in an integral transformative development program.

Exoteric and Esoteric Intentions

We describe GTC as a leadership development program, designed to “support people growing and expanding into transformative leaders.” Similarly, in a recent organizational application we described our intent to “increase the capacity to execute

against the complex and challenging vision and mission” that the company had taken on. While these descriptions create the context of leadership, a more complex set of intentions is at play. Participants bring explicit intentions for their own development: expectations, goals, plans, and visions for the future. These exoteric intentions are complemented by esoteric intentions arising out of the developmental impulse itself. As designers and facilitators of the program, we see each participant as a mystery in the process of unfolding. It is our intent to discover and serve this developmental process or pathway. Likewise, as the program progresses, participants reveal their own implicit developmental intentions through their own responses and actions in the program.

Ultimately, leadership is a construct through which we can see and engage in this developmental process. It offers one particular leaning, which forms both an emphasis in the program as well as stimulation for growth, with intentions to expand our creativity, impact, and service in the world. Through all of our programs, we engage in a continual attention to the question, “What greater form of consciousness and embodiment is emerging in the individual/collective and how can we participate in and support that emergence?” We can do so only through our particular “map of samsara,” which includes our present sense-making in models of adult development, state development, organizational and cultural development, and leadership. Nevertheless, it is the ever-present Mystery unfolding with which we attempt to converse through our limitations we place on it.

The remainder of the paper outlines specific curriculum elements intended to support development and a set of principles and practices that we employ in enacting the holding container for the program.

Curriculum Elements supporting Development

We can highlight certain elements of the curriculum as being supportive of development. GTC's curriculum weaves together several key themes: First, a theoretical and practical background in leadership, development, and the transformative change process, which seamlessly integrates several bodies of work: Leadership Development, Action Inquiry (Torbert, 2004), Developmental Theory (Loevinger, 1989a), (Cook-Greuter S. , 1999, 2003), Dialogue (Bohm, 1996) (Issacs, 1999), Integral Theory (Wilber, 2006), Spiral Dynamics (Beck & Cowan, 1996), Presencing (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004), Learning Organization Theory (Argyris & Schon, 1978), Subject-Object Theory (Kegan, 1994), Insight Dialogue (O'Fallon & Kramer, Insight dialog and insight dialog inquiry, 2008) and several others with flavors from many different Eastern and Western spiritual paths and traditions.

Although all of these works can support development, we favor several as key elements in our design and facilitation. First, we integrate theories of stages of development and an explicit observation of and inquiry into action logics enacted individually and collectively. Second, we integrate various practices of state development, including meditation, awareness practices, and subtle energy work. Third, we theorize that our relationship to polar opposites is a key dimension of cognitive development (O'Fallon, 2010) and we exercise this capacity in the program by working with polarity and paradox in a variety of contexts. Fourth, we work with moral development by stimulating and reflecting on a wider span and depth of care throughout the program. Fifth, we stimulate a greater complexity of thinking by working with systems and their relationship to one another. Sixth, we work with various psychological

and interpersonal practices to develop capacity to work with shadow, projection, and relationship dynamics. Seventh, our participants engage in action learning projects to integrate, embody and practice what they have learned.

While in organizational applications we bring the same base of theory, practice, and principles, their depth is necessarily limited. In all contexts there is a degree of reframing and contextualizing the learning to the participants extant point of view. In organizational applications, this reframing seems of greater degree, as we adapt the concepts and language to the organizational context. Probably the most significant difference between a GTC program and an organizational application, however, is that that organizations are existing groups with pre-formed culture, practices, intentions and with an existing history. With organizations' focus on collective, outward results, the focus is necessarily less on individual and interior concerns, so to some degree developmental intentions are less in the forefront and must be made explicit and highlighted throughout the process.

Principles and Practices of a Transformative Container

What do we mean by “Transformative Container?” The metaphor of “container” extends beyond the curriculum in which the participants engage, to describe the environment created for transformative growth and the qualities and ways the participants are held and engaged in the learning process. The quality of intention, attention, strategies, and actions we take to hold, support, and guide the participants through these collectives form the transformative container. We might see an analogy with the notion of holding environment and its impact on early childhood development. (Winnicott, 1965)

The purpose of this container is to support the transformative development of its participants. To do so, it must provide a balance of safety and stimulation for growth; work with the states and stages of the participants in a consistent way that stimulates new perspectives; support integration and ownership of new perspectives and identities; and account for the varying life contexts, paths and evolving gestalt of each individual.

Following are some principles and practices we have distinguished as part of our approach to enacting the transformative containers found in GTC and other applications including our shorter seminars and organizational consulting. It is important to note that the following sections describe the desired stances, approaches and actions we take. As in all human endeavors, we live in constant recognition of the gap between intent and manifestation, and to some extent one could say a constant state of “failing forward.”

The container itself is co-created. While we bring these principles and practices to bear, we attempt to make them as explicit as possible and to invite the participants to individually and collectively be responsible for enacting the container. In organizational applications this is especially important, as participants will tend to assume their existing culture as an implicit agreement, along with whatever limitations it brings.

Participant Permission and Readiness

We recognize that development is supported by the qualities of permission, invitation, and attention we receive from our participants. Before a program even begins, we find ourselves in deep respect of a person’s readiness to enter such a transformative container. Where are the edges of a participant’s readiness and self-structure? We all learn very early how to act and look like a learner. We ask questions, we take notes, and

we engage in learning processes. It is the underlying stance we take as a learner, revealed through dialogue and actual engagement, which determines our readiness and willingness to learn. This is most clearly illustrated in the Zen story of the student whose master filled his cup to overflowing, in order to demonstrate to the student that he could not be taught if his “cup is full.”

To enact this principle, we attend to and inquire into the motivation and assumptions behind the participant’s questions and actions. How is he or she seeing the material? What is he or she truly looking for? What is he or she asking of us? Is there a real openness to receive? Where is there resistance, however subtle? The real honest answers to these questions form the starting point for learning and must be dealt with as a foundation for learning, on an ongoing basis.

Continual In-the-Moment Practice Begins with Ourselves as Facilitators

A fundamental transformative element in all of our work is our own presence as practitioners and human beings. There is a surrender or alignment to what one might call the source, another might call naked awareness, and another might call collective intelligence. We intend nothing short of being awake and paying attention in the moment to what is arising within ourselves as facilitators, among ourselves as a collective of faculty/staff, the individual participants, the group as a whole and any outside and inside forces at play. Part of this intention of clear seeing, being and expressing includes exposing our own vulnerabilities and truthfulness as human beings while remaining as clear and aware as possible of our own human shadow. As faculty we are continually checking our own resistances and biases to what is arising, so that we remain in a state of open mind, open heart and open will in order to let come that which wants to emerge

through the evolutionary life of the collective will in our alignment with the Source. (Scharmer, 2007), (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004). As facilitators, this willingness to see and act from the Source is essential to the entire process, for it transmits subtle intentions and causal being, and models an openness, a curiosity and a willingness to experiment, which opens the field to the exploration of as yet undiscovered territory within the mind, relationships and their concrete manifestations in the individual and the group. From this way of seeing and being, we intend to model the very consciousness, relational capacities and actions that we are attempting to teach (including the humanness in our limits in our ability to do so).

Continuous Attention to Participants' Developmental Process

In addition, we continually attend to the participants' processes individually and collectively. This attention involves making ongoing observations and assessments in relation to the developmental edges of each individual and of the group as a whole, and taking these assessments into account in choosing strategies and actions as we engage. The continuous nature of this attention brings a kind of awareness on the other side of meditation to the process of development. We pay attention in the most holistic way possible to the lives and learning process of the participants as they are held in the container, and reflect through our models individually and collectively as a faculty on what is occurring in the developmental process.

One way this principle is enacted, for example, is through our observations of the online dialog that occurs between retreats in GTC. We may, for example, notice a conversation between someone who is writing from a *Strategist* perspective and someone who is writing from a *Construct Aware* perspective (Cook-Greuter S. , 2008), notice the

ways they interact, how they make sense of each others words, and how this may indicate new learning over time by each of them as they are affected by one another. As faculty, we may then exchange offline observations with each other to support meaning-making, which informs further action in relationship to the two participants. We may engage in the conversation with the participants to stimulate new modes of perception, or we might coach the individuals in various practices based on our observations.

Observations of the participants span a wide array of aspects: we take into account, for example, their language and other actions in the course; their relationships they develop with other cohort members; their actions in relationship to their field projects; life events; developments in their work, love, family, and living situation.

Transformative Process

One of the frameworks we integrate throughout our design is the U Model (Scharmer, 2007). For example, we encourage an exploration of the “self” while pointing out and questioning automatic limitations of the mind, assumptions, habits, and autopoietic processes as they occur. A common inquiry is, “Where is the self located?” Through their attempt to answer this question, participants begin to see the illusory and constructed qualities of the mind and the self, while examining through various perspectives the nature of those constructions; and if they are ready, limiting structures which have prevented their own evolution of consciousness, begin to dissolve in favor of a wider, deeper, more spacious field of awareness. Thus, participants begin to experiment with opening their minds, and questioning their own concepts of self, their habitual behavior, and unexamined beliefs about the nature of reality. Through our work with the MAP (Maturity Assessment Profile) (Cook-Greuter S. , 1999, 2003) and levels

of development, deep listening, truthful disclosure, and work with subtle energies, we encourage participants to meet in (i.e., become sensitive to) a heart field (McCraty, 2004) in which a shared subtle interior, empathy and communion co-arise. We model and practice integration of the individual will, as needed, with the collective will, to emerge and align with the Source, from a place of emptiness. We enter these states through guided visualization, group processes, insight dialogue, silence and a variety of exercises designed to elicit the sacred and to present disorienting dilemmas which throw closely held worldviews into question. Wilber speaks of the challenge of developing past one's cultural center of gravity (Wilber, 2007). What we find is that once individuals are placed within a culture or community of practice where everyone has this permission to explore the outer reaches of themselves, then development is more fluid as the cultural hypnosis that tends to bind development and hold it back is lessened.

Pointing Awareness to What is Happening

Throughout the program, we bring the attention of the group to what is happening and how it is happening. For example, we will stop in the middle or end of a process and ask, "What do you see happening here?" or "How is your group forming itself?" We might ask, "What patterns are already emerging and setting themselves as norms?" "Is this what you want?" Or we'll inquire, "How do you remain open to experimentation while establishing stability?" "How can you belong, while expressing your authentic, autonomous self?" (Smith & Berg, 1987) Eventually, group members will begin to ask these questions on their own until the inquiry becomes a new norm of ever-perceiving, individual and collective awareness.

Many of these pointers to awareness, behavior, culture and systems within the group can be generalized to gain greater competence as leaders in organizational and social systems. We spend an entire retreat and succeeding intersession on organizational and/or family assessment from an integral perspective. We also bring attention to larger systems at play in the world through conversation, videos, participation of members from other parts of the world and through field applications. Each intersession, participants design and enact a prototype that extends from, and draws them into their larger, deeper, broader self as it meets and interacts with the evolving needs of the world. As members of our communities, our nation and our planet, when we become aware of what is happening, we are moved to step into positions of visionary leadership no matter what form that takes. And through GTC, participants often find the place in themselves where awareness of what is happening in the world, awareness of their unique self expression, radical responsibility, the ability to see and take action as it reveals itself, and the capacity to allow a larger process to unfold without assurance of an end result, all come together in an authentic form of being. In this way being and leading are enfolded into one expression of an evolving self in an ever-evolving world.

Audacity of vision

Another significant element of the transformational process involves our appreciation and value of an audacity of vision from the participants and from ourselves. Each of us brings to our work desires that range from the most gross-level, egoic desires to those that arise out of our highest Self, where we allow our desire to be a divine desire working through us. We practice to continually make space for us to presence and express this higher desire working through us as it takes shape as visions and actions.

Audacity of vision supports development in numerous ways. First it allows for the innate evolutionary impulse to expand and develop in order to express itself through the participant. It inevitably stimulates us to broaden our awareness, span of concern, time horizon, and complexity of perspective – all levers of development. It challenges us to see beyond current egoic self-imposed limitations. Finally, it brings about a greater orientation to service as our vision inevitably connects us to others in an act of love.

Reflection and Embodiment

As has been stated, we endeavor to balance reflection and embodiment in the container. We explicitly design reflection into our processes while balancing the need to move and immerse our selves in the process. This reflection is brought closer and closer to the moment, encouraging in-the-moment awareness. Reflection may be directly on the learning material itself, or may be on individual and collective experiences and actions in the learning process. For example, while in a learning process about the *quadrants*, (Wilber, 2007) we might observe the process itself through the lens of the *quadrants*, or identify *quadrant* perspectives that are showing up in faculty and participant comments.

We explicitly bring an intention and orientation to embodiment of learning. Cognitive learning is the necessary preliminary step towards mastery of the material, however, it is not the full process. Embodiment of learning might be defined as the “being and enacting” of the values and concepts themselves. To facilitate embodied learning we tie conceptual learning to the participants’ own life context and trajectory – how is this relevant? How might you apply it? Intellectual understanding and discussion is encouraged but moved into embodiment as part of a reflection of the participants’ integrated understanding and action in the world. We distinguish and encourage an

integration of cognitive stance and the participants' energetic/somatic awareness. A practice of "taking perspectives," for example, must be sustained not only in the mind, but also must include the body; when we truly reveal where we stand, we and others experience a somatic resonance that rings true as well.

Participants also practice embodying and integrating their learning through their field projects - prototypes or experiments - during each inter-session. It is through these actual projects that they learn by trial and error, new ways to integrate their learning into their lives and futures, and are forced to confront and form the relevance of the learning to their lived experience.

Truthfulness and Intimacy

Another important doorway to embodiment and a principle in its own right is an emphasis on truthfulness and intimacy. Individually we practice working with one's authentic being, transcending intellectualism and abstraction as a defense, while not eliminating intellectual insights, which may be the ground for further embodiment. We assume there is a personal ontology that is a determining factor in authentic expression. A person is being who he or she is, and an important dimension of transformative growth is to operate in a commitment to the truthfulness of one's being. This brings to light a practice of awareness, shadow practice, and a practice of dialogue, in which all parties operate in a commitment to the truth. This commitment to truth reveals very quickly where learning is and is not embodied, as the real condition of one's stance in the world is disclosed and any misalignment between theory, practice and choice is brought to light.

Truthfulness leads to authentic, open relationships, which are both a condition for a transformative learning container as well as an orientation of ethical, post-conventional leadership (Legault, 2010). These authentic, open relationships provide nourishment, support, and safety to our participants who, already accomplished in their own right, are ready to find new avenues of growth and have much to offer and receive from one another in the learning process. What it means to be in an authentic, open relationship evolves as we develop, but some of its aspects are truthfulness, mutual vulnerability, openness, boldness, and care. These attributes are explicitly valued and encouraged in the GTC program.

Research Results

With our third GTC cohort, we began testing our participants using the MAP (Cook-Greuter S. , 1999, 2003) before and six months after the end of their GTC program. We are now conducting a longitudinal study in which we continue testing participants every two years. In the following section, we summarize the results of our ongoing research into the development of the participants, using the Leadership Development Framework. First, we look at the question, Did people grow through stages of development during the program?

Table 1

Individual Stage Changes Over a Two-Year Period for Participants of GTC 3, GTC 4, GTC 5 and GTC 6

Pretest levels	Stage changes						
	-2	-1/2	0	+1/2	+1	+2	+3
18 Achievers			5		5	4	4
14 Individualists			2	1	10	1	
6 Autonomous s			1	1	3	1	
2 Construct Aware			2				
1 Unitive			1				

Table 2

Total Test–Retest Levels

Test	Achiever	Individualist	Autonomous	Construct Aware	Unitive
Pretests	18	14	6	2	1
Posttests	5	9	16	9	2
Percent Change	-36%	-15 %	+37%	+22%	+50%

In summary, 40 people in four cohorts were tested and retested. Of the 18 Achievers, five stayed the same, six grew by one stage, six grew by two stages, and four grew by three stages according to the retests. Of 14 Individualists, two stayed the same, one grew by a half-stage, ten grew by one stage, and one grew by two stages. Of the six Autonomous, one stayed the same, one grew by a half-stage, three grew by one stage, and one grew by two stages. Two participants began at Construct Aware and remained there. The one Unitive participant, having tested at the latest stage, could not show growth in the retest and did not lose any stages.

Another question we had was whether people would continue to change after the first post test, so we applied a second post test with GTC 3, two years after their first post test, in our first foray into longitudinal research.

Table 3

Total Test–Retest 1 and retest 2 Levels for GTC 3

Test	Achiever	Individualist	Autonomous	Construct Aware	Unitive
Pretests	6	3	2	0	0
1st Posttest	0	4	6	0	1
2nd Post Test	0	2	4	4	1

All of the individual data are descriptive and we claim no causal relationship between the GTC program and the changes people have made. We are aware that each individual in the program has multiple influences in their lives and we are but one of them. We simply note the changes for now and continue to evolve the research and the program together.

The figures in tables 4, 5, and 6 depict the levels of the GTC 3, GTC 4, GTC 5 and GTC 6 groups, respectively, in the pretest and posttest, as calculated using the changes in the group total weighted scores (TWS).

Table 4

GTC 3 Collective Test–retest 1 and retest 2 Levels

Test	Achiever	Individualist	Autonomous	Construct Aware	Unitive	Group average
Pretest	4	4	2	0	0	Individualist Early fourth person TWS: 258
Posttest 1	0	2	7	0	1	Autonomous Late fourth person TWS: 285
Posttest 2	0	2	4	4	1	Autonomous Transitioning Fourth/fifth TWS: 292

Table 5

GTC 4 Collective Test–retest Levels

Test	Achiever	Individualist	Autonomous	Construct Aware	Unitive	Group average
Pretest	2	4	2	1	1	Individualist Early fourth person TWS: 257

Posttest	3	1	3	4	0	Autonomous
						Late fourth person
						TWS: 280

Each of GTC 3, 4, and 5 group retests indicated a one-level increase for the group, as measured by the average of score of the individuals. GTC 3 moved from Individualist to Autonomous, GTC 4 moved from Individualist to Autonomous, and GTC 5 moved from Achiever to Individualist. GTC 6 showed a two level group increase, from Achiever to Autonomous.

We have pretested GTC 7 and GTC 8; although GTC 7 has completed the program, it is too early for the post-test. GTC 7 began with a group average of Autonomous. Although GTC 3 and GTC 4 ended with an average of Autonomous, GTC 7 is the only cohort so far that has begun with an average at the Autonomous level and GTC 8 began with a Group average of Construct Aware. Thus, we have experience with two cohorts that have developed into a Autonomous center, as calculated by their combined scores, and one that has begun with a center at Autonomous, and one at Construct Aware. Autonomous is the first level that is commonly designated as Second Tier.

Summary

As facilitators, this work can bring us face-to-face with our hubris and identity as helpers. Therefore, we bring to the transformative container an orientation to consciously choosing our own intention, belief, and stance in the process that recognizes its innate

goodness and emergent nature of development. As we endeavor to support the individual and collective development of the participants we serve, we assume we are engaged in a process that is largely out of our control and essentially good – the evolution of consciousness. While we recognize that there is in some sense a process in time, we are careful not to merely reify lack through our own belief in development. While we recognize the participants may be dreaming that something is needed for their wholeness, we bring both a respect for their selfhood and an unwillingness to believe in that dream. We understand that who we take our selves to be and what we take to be real is determining in the learning process. A constant reflection on our attention, vision and identity is central to the health of the container. It is through this process that we can bring about a sense of Basic Trust (Almaas, 1998), which provides the freedom and safety for participants to let go and explore new ways of being.

To review and summarize the principles we have outlined: we practice moment-by-moment awareness of our evolving nature as individuals, as each other, as our collective, and as present reality. We endeavor to remain responsive to the alive and dynamic nature of each individual and to the group as a whole as it is situated in the larger context of our lives, and within the larger complex systems in the world through time and space. This presence, responsiveness and flexibility sets the field and the ground for participants to relax their beliefs, assumptions and filters, trust the emergent process, open into their own self inquiry and discover who they are at their edges, even beyond their own emergent sense of self. From this place of presence or naked awareness, we watch the participants and the field through which form and relationships arise. We sense into the subtle field, we sense into the causal field and we continually assess mood,

behavior, relational patterns, verbal interaction, body posture and even breathing patterns of the participants to remain as aware as possible of what is emerging in the heart, mind and body of individuals and through this particular group dynamic. We make connections to what is happening throughout systems around the planet. Eventually, when all is flowing at its best, the participants have loosened their own ego and self structures such that they are aware of the emergent evolutionary process as it is occurring in themselves, each other, the collective and the field of consciousness which extends out through the world. And something greater than the sum of the parts begins to work its magic as we surrender to the evolutionary impulse.

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