

A Post-Pandemic Perspective Using "Warm Data"

A process to address our emotional and relational needs.

By Dr. Kenneth Silvestri

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KEY POINTS

- Our world is an ecological process that is more than the sum of its parts.
- It may not make sense to go back to business as usual given lessons learned from the recent pandemic.
- "Warm Data" is a relational process that encourages us to recognize our interdependency.
- Through mutual dialogue we can experience the advantages of diversity within safe environments and understand our ability to make adjustments.

"Collaboration is the readiness to show up and do what needs to be done, in improvisation and mutual learning" —Nora Bateson

If you believe or at least can relate to our world being an ecological process, one where we and all non-human entities are interdependent, then it makes sense to view our world and the totality of nature as being more than the sum of its parts. All of which have a role in supporting our planet. It is quite different than what I was taught at P.S. Tensies in Paterson, NJ, which was that the whole was equal to the sum of its parts. However, this paradigm, still very dominant, is mistakenly based on the theory that we function separately.



"Ebb and Flow of Nature" © Kenneth Silvestri

This unfortunately has been made implicit in our culture, exacerbated by the pandemic, and is sustained by institutions whose ethos is characterized by ego, power, and competition. It is further perpetuated, by certain politicians and media outlets that focus on those who are easily manipulated, to deny existing painful emotional issues, and societal atrocities such as pollution, educational standardization, misguided health services, disproportionate wealth, discrimination, and the current polarization of our society. Does it make sense to go back to "normal" or business as usual when these

injurious patterns have not been resolved and have been made more obvious during this past year?

Those who espouse the use of ecological and systemic interventions struggle to resolve the resulting isolation, stress, and pain sustained by these patterns. This is due to being pushed into a constant double bind that is the result of untruths and misleading generalized fears i.e., "socialism" will take away your rights and guns. **At this moment the institutional psychologies of our culture are for the most part antithetical to supporting interdependency and this may very well be the root of our problems.**

What can we as parents, teachers, healers, and responsible members of our communities do?

We can make a commitment to a communicational framework based on relationships that can dissolve those injurious double binds. Gathering "Warm Data," for instance offers a human framework that differs from the standard collection of cold content-driven information that has little room for empathy. Warm Data is a process that helps us understand how all our interactive parts form patterns that connect and are based on relationships that are interdependent. It was coined and developed by Nora Bateson, of

the International Bateson Institute. She describes it as "Information about the interrelationships that integrate elements of a complex system."

What this means is that through mutual dialogue, we can experience the contexts of our interdependency in safe spaces. This takes place without cultural constraints of hierarchical power structures. **Our relationships are complex and much more than the result of mere cause-and-effect actions.** It takes two to know one and many to know many. This includes the multitude of parts that make up our world. When we focus on and pay heed to what is occurring in between these parts, we can avoid falling prey to imposed opposites or dichotomies that perpetuate separateness, solipsism, and fragmentation. This is how the yin and yang of nature function. It is messy and beautiful at the same time, but most importantly it provides many contexts in which to be creative.

It is within understanding the contexts of our relationships that evolution occurs. Who could deny our need to move into a healthier world? The key here is to create wider perspectives that celebrate our complex interactions by having a lens that uses all our senses to zoom in and out, to avoid being static. Each context is at the same time part of wider contexts resulting in the recognition of how we and everything in our world is interdependent. It is here where we can have mutual dialogue and share stories that expand possibilities from what was thought to be impossible. These are "transcontextual" descriptions allowing us to produce new perspectives from novel inquiry. We can then use these improvisational explorations to resolve injurious situations.

It is essential to respect and actively participate in our ecological existence. We can accomplish this by:

- Supporting small diverse communication forums that through questioning and mutual learning can produce changes in the narratives of our institutions that educate. This can occur through inquiring about dominant views that have produced inequitable and hurtful situations. It also includes having a systemic wider lens that is driven by interaction, and the resulting Warm Data that celebrates our interdependence and dissolves polarization.
- Starting with your significant multigenerational relationships as well as dialoguing with children, their caretakers, and other community members, emphasize that

communication can be a win-win volley that explores the interactive actions and behaviors that give new personalized meaning to such words as empathy, care, respect, trust, sharing, and being non-judgmental.

- Creating safe environments to explore all possibilities, especially at these liminal moments when aesthetic resources can motivate us to improvise and better navigate inevitable paradoxes. Utilize caring touch where appropriate that produces comfort, happiness which helps release the "cuddle" hormone oxytocin, something we can never get enough of and will help with transitioning out of the restrictions that the pandemic has imposed on us.
- Understanding our fallibility and ability to adjust by learning to learn and unlearn. As in the harmonious martial art of Aikido's "thousand years" techniques, like the ebb and flow that nature offers us, it is something we may never totally master, but it is worth trying every day.