JOURNAL *of* DIALOGUE STUDIES

INSTITUTE
for
DIALOGUE
STUDIES

The Editors appreciate comments and feedback from readers. They also value any help in increasing circulation in order to fulfill the Journal's objective, which is to bring together a body of original scholarship on the theory and practice of dialogue that can be critically appraised and debated.

Aim and Scope

The Journal of Dialogue Studies is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed academic journal published twice a year. Its aim is to study the theory and practice of dialogue, understood provisionally as: *meaningful interaction and exchange between people (often of different social, cultural, political, religious or professional groups) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding.* The Journal is published by the Institute for Dialogue Studies, the academic platform of the Dialogue Society.

Submission and Editorial Correspondence

Manuscripts submitted to the Journal for publication must be original, meet the standards and conventions of scholarly publication, and must not be simultaneously under consideration by another journal. Manuscripts should be presented in the form and style set out in the Journal's Style Guide. For further information and Style Guide please visit www.dialoguesociety.org/journal. To get in touch please email journal@dialoguesociety.org.

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Journal of Dialogue Studies

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The Journal of Dialogue Studies is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed academic journal published twice a year by the Institute of Dialogue Studies, a subsidiary body of the Dialogue Society, which undertakes the Society's academic work including research, codelivery of the MA in Dialogue Studies, academic workshops and publications.

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities, empowering people to engage and contributing to the development of ideas on dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through discussion forums, courses, capacity building publications and outreach it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

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Editorial Introduction

Paul Weller
Academic Editor

It is a privilege and a pleasure, as Academic Editor, to be able to write the introduction for this new biennial, multidisciplinary and peer reviewed Journal of Dialogue Studies.

The journal is looking to provide a forum for authors who are ready critically to engage with, and to reflect upon, an approach to dialogue understood with some reference to the working proposition in which dialogue can be understood as a meaningful interaction and exchange between people (often of different social, cultural, political, religious or professional groups) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding.

It is important to understand that, as a working proposition, this is not intended to be an intellectually policed border in terms of what is acceptable content for the pages of the journal. Thus it is expected that some scholars will want to question the range of such a working description of dialogue, while others may be sceptical of dialogue's effectiveness a mechanism for producing increased understanding, and still others may wish to evaluate dialogue more in terms of how far it promotes common action. The journal welcomes vigorous discussion and debate on these and other fundamental questions.

But the working proposition above is offered as one approach that provides at least a common point of reference for, and stimulus to, debate. It also suggests some possible contours for the 'shape' that a potentially emerging field of academic study, research and practice might eventually take, and in the evolution of which this journal might have at least a part to play. In doing this, the journal will bring together a body of original scholarship on the theory and practice of dialogue that can be critically appraised and debated. It will publish conceptual, research, and/or case-based works on both theory and practice, and papers that discuss wider social, cultural or political issues as these relate to the evaluation of dialogue.

The journal will look for the theory or practice of dialogue to be in the foreground of

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papers that it publishes, but it does not seek to privilege any particular disciplinary background for contributions that might be made. Indeed, it is a central part of the vision of the journal that 'dialogue' should not be seen as 'belonging' to any one kind of dialogue or existing academic discipline. Thus, while the journal may include work relating, for example, to inter-religious dialogue, its intended scope is in no way limited to this now quite well known form of dialogue, although neither is it intended to exclude this. In addition, contributions will be welcome from a variety of disciplines including, for example, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, and the study of religion, politics, international relations or law.

The papers in this first edition of the journal have a special focus on 'dialogue studies' as a concept, with a particular emphasis on its boundaries, viability and usefulness as an academic field. Thus contributors to this first edition were asked to engage with one or more of the following questions:

- What arguments might there be for (or against) developing 'dialogue studies' as a distinct academic field (or perhaps even emerging discipline)?
- What are the implications of doing so?
- What do we mean by dialogue, dialogue theories and dialogue practices?
- How might 'dialogue studies' be of use to academics, policy-makers and practitioners?
- Where along the spectrum of fields is this field best placed?
- What does the discourse of one or more thinkers, philosophers, activists on dialogue tell us about the viability of a 'dialogue studies'?
- Is dialogue valuable in itself and/or by virtue of its outcomes?
- How far should the field of 'dialogue studies' extend? Can one field encompass cultural production and intercultural communication?
- What might be the implications, if any, of a distinct field in dialogue for peace-building and conflict resolution studies?
- What can policy-makers learn from dialogue theory or practice that would benefit the development or implementation of policy?
- Can/should dialogue be measured or thought of in terms of effectiveness?
- Would a distinct field on dialogue focus attention on the instrumental outcomes of dialogue as a practice?
- What is the relationship if any between dialogue practices and government policies on multiculturalism, social cohesion, shared values and developing a sense of belonging?

The first three papers in this edition – those by Donal Carbaugh 'On Dialogue Studies'; by Fern Elsdon-Baker on 'Future Directions and Discipline Formation for "Dialogue Studies": Reflections on Critically Analyzing "Dialogue" in Theory and Practice'; and by Ute Kelly on 'Studying Dialogue – Some Reflections' – deal with the question of whether or not 'dialogue studies' can or should be considered as a distinct academic field, and what kind of field it could or should be. The last two papers – by Michael Atkinson on 'Intergroup Dialogue: a Theoretical Positioning' and by Peter Emerson on 'Debates and Decisions' - respectively scrutinise the theoretical underpinnings of understandings of dialogue and explore the way in which the decision-making processes we use affect the character of the discourses involved in them. Two book reviews examine books that have relevance to the journal's overall concerns.

In scoping the overall concept of the journal and in working towards the publication of this first edition, it has been good to work with colleagues and friends from the Dialogue Society. The Society has made possible the existence of this journal, as also a range of other initiatives that are related to its own organisational raison d'être. These include facilitation and co-delivery of the MA in Dialogue Studies at the University of Keele. They also include publication (2013) of the recent book *Dialogue Theories*, by Frances Sleap and Omer Sener, which explores the thinking and practice of a range of key individuals whose biographies, thought and practice can be considered as having contributed in significant ways to understanding of, and engagement with, dialogue across different religious, philosophical and practitioner stances and within a wide variety of fields of human activity.

As member of the Dialogue Society's Board of Advisers, I am always impressed by the energy that is evidenced in the scope of its commitment to facilitating dialogue with a wide range of individuals and groups, and to promoting reflection on the meaning of dialogue. With the publication of this new journal, the Society's academically-related initiatives are also now grouped together within the new Institute for Dialogue Studies which provides an umbrella for the academically engaged work of the Society. Importantly, this academic work continues to be developed in tripartite articulation with the Society's continuing community engagement and policy oriented work. Within this, the new Journal of Dialogue Studies is looking to play a specific part by providing a forum for the pursuit of practically rooted, policy-engaged and critically informed debate on 'dialogue' that is open to participation from the wider academic community, and which might itself make a contribution to the future 'shape' of that community in terms of the possible emergence, in due course, of a new field of research and study.

On Dialogue Studies

Donal Carbaugh

The study of dialogue is a way to open several intellectual arenas for investigation while at the same time offering insights into multiple scenes of practical yet culturally diverse human practices. This article reviews several such arenas including studies of dialogue as a culturally distinctive form of communication, dialogue as an approach to understanding social practices, dialogic ethics and also dialogue as an integrative view of not only cultural practice but also natural environments. Throughout, dialogue studies are cast as a broad field with distinct disciplines within it, as holding deep value for understanding diversity in peoples' practices, as a potential aid in helping diverse peoples coordinate their efforts together through policies, government actions, and other institutions, and as a way of monitoring not only interactions among people but also their ecological environments. In the end, the promise of dialogue studies must proceed cautiously and humbly with the assumption that human endeavors are always limited to particular peoples and places. And move onward we will, dialogically informed.

On Dialogue Studies

Dialogue has become a powerful term and form of action in many academic, linguistic, and cultural communities. Over the past few years, several conferences have been convened to examine dialogue, intercultural dialogue, dialogic communication, or dialogic approaches to inquiry. Examples of these groupings are many including the Center for Intercultural Dialogue and the Dialogue Society, as are the conferences convened in the past decade by the European Union, the International Communication Association, and so on. All invite us to reflect upon and develop our notions of 'Dialogue' or 'Intercultural Dialogue.' As a key term

'dialogue' has assumed a prevalence, prominence, and potency in its meanings, and in its frequent declaration as a preferred form for human action. Who, indeed, would be against 'dialogue'?

In spheres of international activities, we have heard calls for a Dialogue concerning War or Peace, a Dialogue on Poverty, Violence, Climate Change, or a Dialogue on Globalization and Free Trade. Within nations, we have been asked to engage in a Dialogue on Race, or on Education, or here in America on, indeed, what it is to be an American. Similarly in Europe with the creation of the European Union, dialogue has been created among its participants wondering in one direction what it means to be a union and in the other what it means to be a nation, now, relative to the union. Dialogue can thus bring to the fore politics, economics, religion, history, ethnicity, medicine, law. Part of the plea is drawing these dynamics out, forthrightly, to place them into an arena for shared discursive scrutiny.

In various spheres of intercultural relations we have asked, as we have been at the above conferences and similar gatherings, to enact 'dialogue,' to engage each other as such, but further these spheres invite us to reflect upon new ways of thinking about dialogue, of actually doing it, especially with those different from or in conflict with us. These pleas, calls, and reflective capacities for 'dialogue' are important to consider and to heed.

Yet also, each specific call brings with it very specific ideas about 'dialogue.' What is it presuming as important or as particularly necessary as a form of human engagement, for communication? What is it as a valued type of social action? What is it targeting as a set of goals; what does it assume as various rules for conduct? What is presumably advocated as a proper tone, mode, and structuring for such a practice? In this social process, a variety of moral qualities are brought into play, often unknowingly, when pleas are made to 'Come and Engage in Dialogue.' Because of this, one plea for 'dialogue' may not match another, resulting at times in strained relations, misapprehension of social circumstances, mis-attribution of intent of one about another, and so on. Nothing may be as disillusioning as gathering under the umbrella of dialogue, to find a different sort of storm there, one gust of dialogue blasting against another.

So, we can ask: what indeed is Dialogue, exactly, as a form of action? What motives for such action are at play? What meanings does it activate? We ask further, how might this be studied? And what good might come of it?

This article responds to these questions by charting some terrain in a field of dialogue studies. It is only one modest move, a very early one at that, eagerly anticipating additional responses, but one nonetheless which seeks to say a few things about

dialogue as a subject matter and as an approach to subject matters. The remarks here are organized in four ways: to discuss dialogue as a specific form of human practice, to discuss dialogue as a general approach to various subject matters, to say a few words about dialogic ethics, and to reflect upon an oft neglected from of dialogue with nature. By the end, my hope is to capture and cultivate some of the excitement in the field of dialogue studies, to advocate for its utility in human and environmental affairs, and to invite all interested parties to join the conversation. There is considerable excitement and opportunity here, difficult labor intellectually, religiously, politically, but with a cultivation of our dialogic capacities, including the engagement of our conflicts, we may join together toward social betterment.

Dialogue as Culturally Distinctive Forms of Communication

As individual practitioners of dialogue, we tend to believe rather firmly in our intents and purposes. We trust our ability to act with others and to act with good will, with others' interests in mind. Yet, any such action always occurs in a specific social space, and every such space has its cultural tradition(s) and historical trajectory(ies). What happens when our presumed best ways are at play with others' in unknowing or invisible ways? It may be at times like bringing a cricket bat to a game of baseball without understanding how odd the bat looks and how it is ill-suited to the game at hand. At others, it may be less subtle, responding to a lob over the tennis net with a home run. In other words, the dialogic game we presume may not be the one being played by others. Let us consider only a couple of examples of this in a little bit of detail.

In Russian, there is a particular discursive domain being activated when something like 'dialogue' is being advocated. This can include several particular features only some of which are '*ponimanie*' (a kind of collaborative meaning-making leading to understanding), '*beseda*' (peaceful conversation which may include an admonition in a non-confrontational way), '*razgovor*' (verbal exchanges of information and opinions which are usually linked to serious and sometimes difficult discussions on issues important for the participants), '*razgovor po dusham*' (communing with an open soul or soul talk) or Bakhtin's formulation of '*dialogicheskoe obshenie*' (turning in talk to other people), '*peregovori*' (negotiation or official exchanges of opinions in order to reach a common goal), and '*dogovarivatsya*' (a way of settling matters down verbally or any official, or unofficial, exchange which has sought a common goal, or reached a common purpose through negotiation). Each Russian term brings with it its own features or meanings to an understanding of dialogue.

A dialogic dynamic that can get particularly complicated is when a bi- or multi-lingual participant assumes a discursive sphere for dialogue – like the above

Russian one – when using a second language, frequently English. As a result, we have introduced dialogic dynamics in two directions, one is between languages – in this case between Russian meanings through English words; the other is between participants within the dialogic event itself as when, for example, Russian and Japanese speakers interact in English. A Russian who values '*razgovor po dusham*' ('open or soul talk') can easily activate its Russian features, its expectations and preferences, even when using English with a second party. And of course the example goes the other direction as well. Assuming the second party is a native Japanese speaker, preferred features and expectations for proper dialogic interaction can and do vary from the Russian's, as we will see next.

In Japanese, there are two principal terms which come close to the meanings of 'dialogue' in English, *taiwa* and *hanashiai*. To a great extent, these are interchangeable when used colloquially. Their implied meanings include mutual understanding, agreement, and a particular type of social arrangement. *Hanashiai* literally means talking together with each side's talk matching the other. *Taiwa* literally means people facing each other and talking about particular issues. *Taiwa* is hanashiai in which harmony, mutual understanding, and respect are promoted. In Japanese, *hanashiai* is a form of communication with roots in the Edo Period (1603-1886). *Hanashiai* includes a premium on face-work or relational work, facing each other about particular issues but doing so within the group's goals. The specific cultural premises in this activity involve the virtues of collaborative action, a charming personality, sincerity, magnanimity, caring, and respect. Interactional goals are harmony, shared understanding, and cooperative trust. The form spans various social, political, educational, and historical contexts.

The particular Japanese features including the considerations of harmony, charm, and matching talk, may play less than harmoniously into others as Russians preferring an 'open soul' or 'soul talk.' The all too brief introduction of Russian and Japanese features of dialogue, and their hypothetical play together, demonstrate, I hope, the degree to which dialogue as a form often activates locally or culturally distinctive expectations, motives or preferences for conduct; I hope further to have illustrated how this sort of dynamic can get quickly complicated.

Several colleagues and I have been studying cultural forms and meanings of dialogue like these in several languages over the past few years (e.g., Carbaugh, Boromisza-Habashi, and Ge 2006; Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Saito, and Shin 2011; Wierzbicka 2006). The languages include Blackfoot, Chinese, English, Finnish, Hungarian, Korean, Japanese, and Russian. We have also begun study of others including Arabic and Turkish. There is certainly plenty of work to do. We were motivated to such work by the important practical task of having different people sitting together to achieve some goal, but their best manners and intentions for

doing so were being frustrated. Our studies have suggested there is of course some common ground possible when coming together in dialogue, but also there can be important – socially enacted, culturally distinct, individually applied - differences. How do we understand this?

Our preliminary analyses of these interactional dynamics, in these languages, reveal what we call cultural discourses of dialogue (e.g., Carbaugh 2005; 2007). In our inquiries we have asked: is there something like 'dialogue' in each language, as a cultural concept and as a form of practice. For each cultural discourse we explored both the relevant terms relating to dialogue AND the practices being referenced with those terms. Our findings are that these discourses, considered together, reveal a wide variety of possible features that are active when 'dialogue' is being advocated, mentioned, translated, or conducted.

I will briefly summarize those here as we look across these discourses on dialogue. In the process, I will make several observations which reiterate and slightly revise our earlier findings cited above (especially Carbaugh, Boromisza-Habashi, and Ge 2006, 41-42; Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Saito, and Shin 2011, 100-104)[1]. The summary is intended to identify the general range of features potentially active across languages and communities when 'dialogue' or something like it is an interactional concern. The summary is structured by the theoretical framework we used to study such 'terms for talk' and the practices they reference. We have used this framework to identify possible similarities and differences across discourses (e.g., Japanese hanashiai and Korean daewha share meaning about verbal face-to-face, verbal co-production between participants, but differ in the meaning about channel of communication and structuring norms). The findings are useful as questions to ask in each case: of these features, which – and what further - is being assumed here, by these people, for dialogue?

That framework is itself an empirically derived finding based upon the study of fifty cultural terms for communication in eleven societies (Carbaugh 1989). What I discovered when studying such terms, in a nutshell, is this. As people use terms about their talk, like dialogue, they are saying something explicitly about communication itself, how it is expected to be structured, its presumed tone, how important it is,

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1   My observations here are based upon our earlier studies (Carbaugh, Boromisza-Habashi, and Ge 2006; Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Saito, and Shin 2011). The formulation here follows closely the wording of the earlier formulations as it both confirms the findings we presented there, yet it also slightly revises the earlier findings based upon subsequent dialogic studies especially Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Saito, and Shin 2011, 87-88, 101-106 . The process is evidence of the cumulative and collaborative possibilities of ethnographic work into discursive dynamics of dialogue as discussed by Hymes (1996) with each case providing a point for reflection of the earlier findings.

and whether certain subject matters are to be discussed directly or less so. This is clear enough on the face of it. But what I also discovered was this: these terms can be very rich in their meanings. As people use terms for communication, they are saying much more, rather implicitly, about social identities, social relationships, and social institutions. They are also saying much more about proper conduct as a person, what motives are being targeted, and its preferred styles for action. What is the upshot of the findings? As people talk about talk like dialogue, they not only say something about communication as such, they also say much more about sociality and personhood. In diagram form, this can be put in this way:
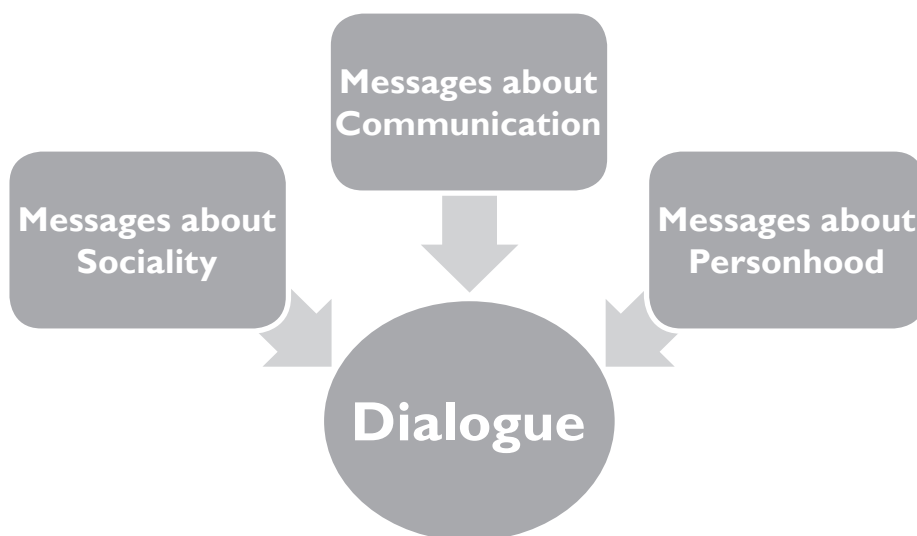
Figure 1. Modeling a Term for Talk, Dialogue, and its Range of Meanings

What follows is a summary of each part of the model applied to 'dialogue' in some detail, across various languages, with additional bracketed examples following from the above in Japanese (J) and Russian (R).

In Dialogue: Messages About Communication Itself

First, multiple features about communication practices are being expressed through the various linguistic terms for, and cultural discourses about, dialogue. Our summary begins with the most literal and explicit meanings about communication action at play in this discourse:

1. The terms refer primarily to face-to-face, verbal co-productions, between two or more participants or parties [as in Japanese (J), *hanashiai*; Russian (R), *dialog, beseda, razgovor, diskussia, peregovori*];

2. The practices being referenced range from cooperative interactions which share a common goal, to competitive debates [J *hanahsiai* but not 'competitive debate'; R *dialog, beseda, razgovor, diskussia, peregovori*];

3. An ethos of mutuality of exchange (or motivated interdependence) pervades these practices [J *hanashiai*; R *dialog, beseda, razgovor, diskussia, peregovori*];

4. The predominant tone or feeling is social cooperation, but this varies from being serious and formal to informal [J *hanashiai*; R *dialog, beseda, razgovor, diskussia, peregovori*];

5. While the predominant channel is face-to-face verbal exchange, this may also include other channels such as writing, scripted and spontaneous practices, as well as various electronic media (e.g., digital, newsprint, internet, radio, television) [J *hanashiai*; R *dialog, beseda, razgovor, diskussia, peregovori*];

6. Structuring norms include speaking in a sincere, informative, and ably expressive way about one's views; and listening in a way that is open to learning additional information, including to the emotions of others [J *hanashiai*; R *dialog, beseda, razgovor, diskussia, peregovori*];

7. Goals of the practice vary widely from producing harmony, to winning a verbal contest, to informing participants about issues, problem-solving, clarifying the nature of the issues, presenting a range of views, developing shared understanding, mutual trust, resolving a conflict in a mutually satisfying way, transforming social circumstances, establishing a common goal, affirming and/or repairing social relationships, establishing future actions [J *hanashiai* except 'winning a verbal contest'; R: *dialog* except for 'winning a verbal contest'];

8. The practices of 'dialogue' are conceived as being of varying importance, but most are deemed highly efficacious, yet the locus or site of the practice varies: in some cases, the primary salient issue is the relations among the participants (as more important than the information exchanged); in others, it is in the topic being addressed (as presumably weighty e.g., societal issues, political or economic matters); in still others, the primary concern is the value of the form of the communication activity itself (and is not so much focused on relationships or the topic of discussion); or further, the primary salience is in the balance between clarity of the information expressed, the agreement being forged, and the emotion involved in its expression [J *hanashiai*; R *dialog*].

Messages About Social Relations, Institutions

In addition to the above meanings about the communication practice itself, the cultural discourses of dialogue also express more implicit meanings about sociality. These are meanings about social life and its organization which participants hear in these cultural discourses about dialogue and thus they are active in a more metaphorical or figurative way. In other words, as people call for and discuss 'dialogue,' they are not only talking about a kind of communication practice but also, as part of their meta-cultural commentary, they are saying something about social identities, relations, and possibly institutions. We formulate these features as follows:

1. The dialogic form of practice activates multiple possible social identities: some are political or social opponents; some are high status participants, for example scholars or official representatives; others are guests and hosts, disputants and intermediaries, employers and employees and so on [J *hanahsiai*; R *dialog*];

2. The form may presume social relations are already in an important way equal, or are moving towards equality along some dimension;

3. The form can activate various social institutions: These can be political-governmental, religious, educational, medical, legal, friendship, therapeutic, related to entertainment media (hosts, guests, and radio, television, theater, opera organizations) [J *hanashiai*; R *dialog*];

4. The dialogic form is designed to balance relations among people including, within social scenes, their social and emotional self; and within relationships rational and emotional concerns [J *hanahsiai*; R *dialog, razgovor*].

Messages About Personhood

Finally, cultural discourses pertaining to dialogue offer a range of meanings or premises about personhood. As with the meanings above concerning sociality, these features are largely implicit, taken-for-granted, and as a result are being expressed rather metaphorically. The first three formulations, below, operate as an interactional exigency, or as an occasioning antecedent condition for dialogue as a social form of action itself. We introduce the three here as a way of capturing a sequential movement or flow in cultural meanings about persons which can motivate dialogue as a form.[2] These can be formulated as follows:

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2   An analogous set of premises could be introduced above yet these would require more careful attention to other folk forms of communication which would unduly complicate the focus on dialogue I wish to maintain in this paper.

1. Persons can act poorly, be insincere, conniving, or inappropriately (in)expressive [J many terms; R *dialog*];

2. Persons can act on the sole basis of selfish interests, or on the basis of an imbalance of power, or in other unbalanced ways – as in being too individualistic or too socially constrained [J many terms; R *dialog*];

3. The above are ultimately of limited value, immoral, or bad [J '*hanashiai ni naranai*' does not become '*hanashiai*'; R *dialog*];

4. Persons need a form of social interaction which is sincere, informative, expressive of their views, AND, receptive to the views of others [J hanashiai; R dialog];

5. Persons need a form of social interaction which is educational (disseminates information widely) and socially productive (thereby advancing mutual interests, and social relationships in socially productive ways) [J *hanashiai*; R *dialog*];

6. Persons need a form of social interaction which balances informational needs and social care or individual and communal concerns [J *hanashiai*; R *dialog*];

7. These needs are attached to distinctive philosophical, literary, and cultural traditions (on the bases of axioms of particularity and of actuality) [J, *hanashiai*, Buddhism and Shintoism; R, soulfulness, potential for 'understanding' if '*obshenie*' is properly done].

The meanings above help us identify a range of general features that are potentially active when any one plea is made for 'dialogue.' When doing so, one is inevitably using, working within, or between specific cultural discourses, each with its own distinctive features about what is being advocated both in the practice of dialogue being requested, and the meanings that are activated when conducting oneself in that way, or in those ways. As we find, a mention of 'dialogue' may motivate, and foreground one form of communication here (e.g., matching talk in Japanese, agreement in Russian), and another there (e.g., clarifying information in Russia; or a harmonious self-relational care in Japan). Combined with our earlier studies, we note that such a form can invoke preferred relations of equality, but not necessarily in any one cultural discourse (e.g., it is not necessarily present in Japanese and/or Russian). It can invoke specific aspects of multiple traditions within a society as Buddhism and Shintoism in Japan, or one in particular as in Korean. Further, the plea can signal change within a society in what is deemed proper as public dialogue. This is evident explicitly in the Russian case and its recent importation of 'dialogue.' In contemporary Finland, also, we earlier noted movement from the more traditional Finnish '*vuoropuhelu*' (taking turns in talking about an important

topic) to '*keskustelu*' (where value in the interactive quality of the exchange is amplified over the clarity of the topic being discussed) (see Carbaugh, Boromisza-Habashi, and Ge 2006, 38-39).

One arena for dialogue studies could productively explore actual local cases of 'dialogue' in this way. Such studies are crucial for understanding how human action is being cast in each particular communal scene, region, or nation. This sort of knowledge may help each understand the specific conditions being presumed or advocated for engagement. Knowledge as this is useful for any human institution from the United Nations to each particular institution of law, education, or medicine. Policies for each can be better advanced on the basis of such local knowledge, and by knowing what action is not possible. In any case, some of our works can, along the dimensions discussed here, productively explore dialogue as a distinctive linguistic and cultural form of action.

Dialogue as an Approach to Understanding People and Their Practices

Dialogic study has also been advanced not only by studying particular forms of communication in communities, but also by studying human discourse dialogically. In this sense, the focus of study moves from a unique form of human activity (i.e., dialogue itself) to an approach to any human activity (i.e., a dialogical view of human practice). To illustrate the approach I will discuss some of the ideas of Mikhail Bahktin, although other theorists or philosophers could be used as well such as John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, and Gerry Philipsen, or Karl Otto Apel, Hans Georg Gadamer, Plato and Socrates, respectively, among many others.

One focal concern of Bahktin was the study of spoken action or speech genres, what he called 'relatively stable types of utterances' (1986, 60). With a focus on 'utterances' Bahktin was proposing that we examine actual uses of language in contexts, rather than sentences or other abstract formulations. But the utterance cannot be considered alone; it is a 'real unit of speech communion' (67) and as such, it is in an 'active response position' (86). In other words, each utterance is, knowingly or not, responsive to some set of prior utterances while at the same time each utterance anticipates future responses to it. Bahktin conceptualized the former responsiveness as 'dialogic echoes'. With this concept, we are invited to hear in utterances echoes of prior conditions, discussions, or stories. Similarly, each utterance is potentially consequential as it anticipates responses, a kind of 'actively responsive understanding' (86). Approaching human action as such equips one with a dialogic stance, hearing in utterances echoes of previous actions and the anticipation of future responses. In this way, a dialogic approach is taken to spoken action.

Bahktin develops his ideas in multiple ways, one involving a principle of addressivity, that is, the idea that an utterance is designed not simply for everyone, but is 'being directed to someone' (93). As we formulate what we say, we have an audience in mind, and we shape our utterances by directing them to some people and not to others. This is a way of acknowledging a situated constraint, or a socially interactive event, as central to a dialogic understanding.

Furthermore as we utter, we do so in anticipation of certain broader sorts of understanding. This brings into view a whole-part relation between a specific utterance (the bedrock concern) as a situated activity among participants, and, 'a particular sphere of communication' (e.g., concerning science, law, or religion). In other words, our utterances work dialogically in at least three ways: they echo prior concerns, they project forward into others, and they activate particular spheres of meaningful practice. For Bahktin, the latter meaning of an utterance or spoken word reflects an 'echo of the generic whole' with this meaning being active because of a larger semantic value understood in the use of the utterance. In this way, our utterances, knowingly or not, are responsive to what came before, (and what after), with each attached to practical spheres of meaning or 'dialogic overtones' (92).

Through such a process of dialogical analyses, we can begin hearing how utterances usher forth from socio-cultural conditions, how they play into the flow of societal actions, and how spheres of cultural meanings are in dialogic action, so conceived. Bakhtin was keen to emphasize that such action does not simply replicate what has come before, but is a primary site of 'changes of speech subjects' (93). As utterers we are not only played by our social and cultural conditions, we can be reflective players in their change.

Bahktin understood diverse meanings to be part of our formulation and interpretation of utterances, with each playing more broadly through dialogic echoes, possibly into multiple spheres of communication. His interest in heteroglossia or heterogeneity in speech genres embraced diversity in meaning and style (60). He treated matters of the boundaries of utterances (76-77), as well as stylistic variation and compositional structure (63-64). He distinguished primary genres of simple and routine utterances from secondary genres which are more complex, deeply grounded in history, and ideologically loaded (61-62). In so doing, he provides us with an exemplary dialogic approach, one which insists upon understanding utterances largely by considering their prior and subsequent actions, as well as spheres of conduct drawn upon in producing them.

In an intriguing moment he wrote, each epoch is characterized by its characteristic primary and secondary genres with this being a process of 'restructuring and renewal' (66). A fascinating demonstration of this point is provided by Tamar

Katriel (2004) and is focused on 'dialogic moments' in contemporary Israel. If not Bahktinian explicitly by design, this study is so in practice. Dialogic moments, understood indeed as such, can reveal much about epochs of prior times as well as our own (see also Baxter 2011).

Whether one takes a Bahktinian view of matters, or another, there are key perspectival moves at play in implementing a dialogical approach in our studies. One such move is a commitment to situating knowledge in the flow of social practice. Any act has some prior action that has come before it as a 'precipitate' of it. Or in a different term, an action has an 'exigency' which makes it relevant as something to do. And on the other side, an action has potentially some consequence, or some framing of subsequent action. A commitment to understanding practice as socially situated and interactive, as Bahktin does, demonstrates some of the key moves in a dialogical approach. And further, as Linguists might remark, our perspective on such study need not be only focused diachronically (across time) or as Ferdinand de Saussure wrote, focused on an axis of succession, but it should focus also on an axis of simultaneity as well; it should explore the radiance of meanings into spheres which are immanent in our utterances. In other words, our dialogical perspectives can work horizontally across time as well as vertically into semantic space.

Studying through these sorts of theoretical 'moves', our dialogic approaches can listen carefully to the flow of social interaction, to prior and subsequent utterances, and to layers of cultural meanings, explicitly in and implicitly of the utterances. In these ways, a dialogical approach offers much in developing an understanding of peoples' practices together, their assumed models of personhood, their sociality, and their cultural meanings. Such dialogic studies carry promise as a way of contributing to our social betterment together.

Dialogue and Ethics

A positive thought about an ethic might follow Aristotle as a 'way of fulfilling moral virtues.' In this sense, there are goods such as courage, gentleness, truthfulness, justice in a society, social group, or community which are to be considered when acting and one's actions, one's ethical actions, should seek to fulfill them. In this sense, an ethical stance provides a positive sense of what to do. Another side of the ethical coin suggests what not to do and is in this sense a negative view. When his Holiness the Dalai Lama says an ethical act is one 'which refrains from causing harm to others,' or when the Hippocratic oath declares to health practitioners, 'keep them from harm and injustice,' we hear a negative form of an ethical stance, of what not to do, not to create harm or injustice.

Theorists and practitioners of dialogue can be understood as espousing an ethic in

positive and in negative form, as statements of what should, and what should not be done. Two such theorists and practitioners were Martin Buber and Carl Rogers. Examining their views about the ethics of dialogue, as many others like them, as well as those in the culturally distinctive forms and approaches introduced above, should contribute to our understanding of the various ethical commitments that can be associated with dialogue.

In 1957, a now well-known exchange took place in the United States at the University of Michigan between these two famous intellectuals. Both scholars' works took shape through the term 'dialogue'. The conference between them was designed to celebrate the one, the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber who was well-known internationally for his conceptualization of an 'I-thou' relationship – rather than an 'I-it' relationship - as an ethical possibility in human social interaction. Conference organizers wanted to bring Buber together with another theorist of dialogue, American psychologist Carl Rogers, who was also well-known internationally for his theory and practice of 'person-centered therapy'. Both saw dialogue as an ideal worthy of considerable human effort, but also as perhaps difficult if not impossible to achieve. The famous exchange between the two has been recorded and discussed in a book nicely edited by communication scholars Rob Anderson and Kenneth Cissna (1997).

In examining this exchange, one can ask, as I have in an earlier paper (2005b), what is dialogue in this exchange, as practiced by these famous participants?

Listening carefully to the American therapist, Carl Rogers, we hear him say these words, '[dialogue is] an effective moment in a therapeutic relationship.' His way of characterizing participants is as 'individuals' who are 'equal' and are, as a productive result of dialogic interaction, moved to 'change'. When he elaborates effective qualities of dialogue, he says each person should be speaking as a separate and whole person, who hides nothing. One should be immediate, in the moment, attentive to one's relation with another. One strives to accept the other, giving permission to the other to be the person she or he is. Both views - the therapist's and the client's, in therapy – are, according to Rogers, given equal authority. The objective is to gain clarity in order to change one's self to a better person.

The philosopher, Martin Buber, speaks in this exchange with a different accent on dialogue. From his view, participants are inevitably a part of social circumstances which are somewhat beyond a person's control. These conditions are relatively stable and as such operate to constrain what can be done. He indicates that persons can speak as two separate persons, yes, but do so within a common social situation, in which both should be heard. His view in this exchange with Rogers, is that, in the social situation of therapy for example, the roles of therapist and client are different

from each other, limited in what each can do, and are in some sense unequal. In Buber's view, the roles to some degree rightly dictate and constrain the interaction. As in all such social situations, Buber acknowledges that there are limits – from history, social structures, and cultural positions - that cannot be readily changed. Constraints as these must be acknowledged as part of any dialogic situation. Put in terms of our theory above, Buber makes the point that every act of dialogic communication has its own structuring norms, its own standards of sociality and personhood, each being active within a socially situated, culturally distinctive form.

For Rogers, ever the optimist and perhaps exemplary of some American ideals, dialogue can be a way to conquer problems, personal, societal, and political. A stance toward the other, according to Rogers, was to be one of 'unconditional positive regard'. The other is assumed to have moral worth and in treating him or her in this way, and listening to each person empathically, this enables the possibility of change. For Buber, ever the realist and perhaps an exemplary reminder of devilish anti-Semitic constraints, dialogue is a meeting between people with this being done in rather exacting circumstances which allow some movement, but does so within limits. Nonetheless, one tries to dialogue within an 'I-thou' relationship as an empathic turn to another given the constraints of current social and cultural circumstance.

In this recounting of the exchange, both Rogers and Buber champion an ethic of personal integrity, empathic understanding of another, engagement for mutual benefit, and enduring commitment to action, that is, in targeting these goals we enact proper dialogic action. In the process, Rogers represents a voice of optimism, of personal betterment, and psychological clarity, just as Buber reasonably reminds us of the constraints of social, personal, and historical circumstances. Both exemplify important historical trajectories in understanding discourses of dialogue, the ethical standards at play within them, the effort to move toward something better, and the fact of doing so within the practical constraints of specific circumstances. Certainly the study of dialogic ethics, those espoused and those enacted, hold a crucial place in our dialogue studies.

Dialogue as Integrating Culture and Nature

Contemporary uses of 'dialogue' are predated by other ancient based forms which are prominent, potent, and powerful for some today in their daily routines (e.g., Basso 1996). This ancient form of dialogue extends communication of participants beyond human to other means of expression, including nonverbal channels or instruments of communication (Carbaugh 2005; Carbaugh and Boromisza-Habashi 2011; Scollo 2004). Through this sort of dialogue, not only humans, but the world speaks, making itself expressively available to us, if we 'just listen'

(Carbaugh 1999).

This sort of dialogic practice is active among many indigenous communities, like the traditional Blackfeet people in northern Montana, USA. Let me give an example. A Blackfeet elder, a cultural ambassador, stood on a prominent hill-top, gesturing to the plains, mountains, stream, cottonwood trees, and cawing raven. He had agreed to show several people around his homeland. We stood with him. The winds softly blew across our bodies, the sun warmed our faces, and the sounds of the water and raven rose to our attention. As we stood together, we could notice the cliff across the meadow in front of us, the valley bottom by the stream, and the tranquil scene invited our minds to reflect upon this place, its history, and the moment before us. Then he softly said: 'we listen to all of this.'

The elder invoked in his few words a form of dialogic action which is deeply familiar to him and those who practice traditional Blackfeet ways. It involves a complex range of activities: a short verbal statement is referring to a nonverbal form of being-with-nature-and-others; this nonverbal form presumes a way for people to be in-place and to learn from that place; this way is deeply tied to feelings of identity; this way opens features of the natural world and the environment as spiritual participants in a dialogic process. Let me say a few words about this latter part.

There is an ancient story from the time before time which is deeply familiar to traditional Blackfeet people. The narrative says: if you are troubled or experiencing difficulties, go away by yourself, or if you would like, cry aloud for help; then you must listen. A participant in the world before you may reply, such as an eagle, a bear, a buffalo, the water, or the wind. If you listen, an answer may come, and in this way, you may receive comfort in a troubled time or an answer for your difficulties.

Note how the active form of participation here is based less upon speaking and words, more upon listening and nonverbal sounds; note how the focus on one's consciousness is turned more to an immediate physical place or nature and less to one's internal thoughts; note how helpful revelations may come through attentiveness to non-human agents in addition to other humans. Further activated in this deeply historical form of communication is a sacredness of 'mother earth' and 'father sky', in how the world nurtures and guides us. All of this can operate in mysterious ways. For these and additional reasons, we all should listen carefully.

This dialogic form is somehow not quite brought into view with the above discussions of dialogue. Without it, we lose sight (or sound), I think, of a communicative potential many of us may risk losing, if we have not lost it already. Such a form cultivates our deep abilities to be vigilantly observant of the world around us, to

what it is saying to us, a wise sort of attentiveness which may help address problems and difficulties in ways we cannot without it. It reminds us that we share a world and need its air, water, soil and so on to survive together.

This sort of addition to the arena of dialogue studies may stretch the boundary too far for some readers, and I can understand that reaction. However, if that is your thought, please reserve closure on the matter until you have studied this possibility seriously. The arena of dialogue from culturally distinctive practices, from Buber to the Blackfeet, and Thoreau to Tolstoy, includes such a practice. It offers correctives we cannot quite access so well in any other way.

Uses of Dialogue Studies

There is a rich range of studies which may be brought together in the study of dialogue. Only some are treated here in a rather broad way by focusing on culturally distinctive versions of dialogue, a dialogic approach to practices, dialogic ethics, with a bid to include dialogic forms which link people to nature, place, or the environment. A variety of academic disciplines can and should be involved in our efforts including anthropology, communication, linguistics, literature, as well as professional studies in education, law, medicine, religion. Many theoretical perspectives can contribute to our efforts including Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Historiography, Narrative Studies, and so on. There are key features however, across such disciplines and perspectives, which make studies dialogic. These involve the focus fundamentally on social interactional dynamics, multiple means of expression, motives presumably in that action, meanings being presumed by participants in those actions or practices. Following the findings summarized above, we might anticipate in actions called 'dialogue,' co-participation, common goals, an ethos of mutuality, and so on. Some configuration of these features offers an entry into, or limited scope to dialogue studies.

What good would such studies do? My first thought on this matter would be: how can we do without them? I will mention here only four diverse applications of such work knowing there are hundreds of others that could be mentioned. Following the lead of Derek Miller and Lisa Rudnick, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in Geneva designed a dialogic procedure for understanding 'security needs' in local communities. The procedure was called the Security Needs Assessment Protocol (or SNAP). This general approach included listening to local participants to understand their meanings about such matters, then working with an understanding of those ways in moving forward to enhance their security (Miller and Rudnick 2008; 2010). When applied in Ghana, one Ghanaian said about the SNAP team, 'you were the first [outsider] to listen to us.' The approach can help advance common goals of the UN and local communities, help enhance the

effectiveness of workers in achieving those goals, can help create practices more satisfying to local communities, and can help those practices endure longer.

A second use of such studies involved the study of Native People and non-Native people who inhabited the eastern Rocky Mountain front of Montana. While living in the same geographic location together, these people made sense of their landscape in deeply different ways. By exploring dialogic acts of place-naming and storytelling, and putting these in dialogue with each other, we were able to make visible differences in where people thought they were, the moral guidance they assumed for living there, the affective charge of the landscape to them, and the consequences of the one largely ignoring the other. Studies as these introduce new ways of designing policy and practices so to achieve mutuality in future practices (e.g., Carbaugh and Rudnick 2006).

A third use is perhaps less morally laden but illustrative of a rather unique application. It involves the study of the ways humans interface with machines (e.g., cell phones, computers), exploring the culturally diverse ways people conceive of and use their automobiles. In this case, with colleague Ute Winter from General Motors, we explored diverse cultural ways people interact with their cars including their ideas of what would be the best ways for the 'dialogic flow' in the car to be designed, and if it was deemed a flaw, how it could be corrected. On the face of it, such study appears perhaps beyond the boundaries of dialogue studies, yet when one considers machines are used by people in interactive ways, that these ways are based upon local conceptions of dialogic action, that these ways influence how we live alone and with others, and these ways are subjected to our own sense of good living, they come into the purview of at least some sorts of dialogic studies (e.g., Carbaugh, Winter, van Over, Molina-Markham and Lie 2013).

A fourth use illustrates the value in understanding cultural foundations of education, or knowledge, in human dialogic practice. Where some might see in educational practices traditional knowledge, others can see their cultural identity and tradition being supplanted or even subjugated to imperialist powers. Certainly such dynamics as these, sometimes advanced in the name of 'higher education' need our utmost attention and scrutiny (e.g., Carbaugh 2005; Covarrubias 2008; Witteborn 2010).

In these ways, and in many others, in all sorts of human institutions including education, government, law, medicine and religion, our dialogic studies can help develop better practices and policies because this type of knowledge builds on the bases of interactional dynamics, an ethos of mutuality, and an understanding of cultural variability in the world today. A one-size fits all, or a general mono-design simply will not do.

One more point, I believe, is crucial. In our interactions together, we can come to difficult points because our preferences (or requirements) are not being met immediately. At one grand level, this can occur when an absolute requirement for speaking truthfully (and the firm belief there is a truth to be told) confronts another absolute requirement for people to get along (and the firm belief that getting along together is foremost among other objectives). This can result further in confrontations not only about what truth needs to be told, or how relations are to be managed, but also in which of these should be given priority, the truth of the matter, or the relational need of getting along together. If one cannot work with another in such a situation, dialogue, and its features of sociality and personhood, can break down. What, then, can we do? I think it is a mistake to claim one knows the answer for certain, in an abstract or general way. In a real and pragmatic sense, it comes down to the particulars of peoples' practices in places. That is where dialogue happens. There is much, here and there, about such dialogic processes to indeed study. And there are many distinctive forms, approaches, ethics, and natured places to consider. Let's learn together how best to keep our dialogues going!

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Future Directions and Discipline Formation for 'Dialogue Studies': Reflections on Critically Analyzing 'Dialogue' in Theory and Practice

Fern Elsdon-Baker

In considering the need for a newly formed research area, or emergent discipline, of 'dialogue studies' this paper will explore three interrelated themes: the concept of 'dialogue studies' and its parameters and framing as an emergent discipline; the potential benefits of such a discipline to practice and policy; and the importance of critically understanding the cultural and epistemological context of 'dialogue' and its role in living with not only diversity, but difference. Whilst recognizing that there is a clear practice-driven need for the development of an area of research under the banner of 'dialogue studies' and that there are existing bodies of research, which such a field can effectively build on, this paper argues that the development of dialogue studies as a field cannot simply bring together and augment existing discourses, but needs to create new perspectives by adopting a multidisciplinary approach. It is also postulated that there is a need to develop an internal critical discourse within 'dialogue studies' which builds reflexivity into future research development and that ultimately any research undertaken in this area has to be both beneficial and supportive of practice, whilst also clearly articulating its successes *and* failures.

Introduction

The primary question posed by the editors of this journal for its first edition is to ask whether or not there is a real need for the emergence of a discipline under the banner of 'dialogue studies'? It is laudable, and highly appropriate, that the process of developing 'dialogue studies' as a field of research should involve a form of dialogue from the outset. The primary dialogue that is needed however is not that between differing academic discourses (though this is indeed also necessary), but more importantly between the spheres of research, theory and practice. The perceived necessity of 'dialogue studies' is arguably driven predominantly by

practice and not by scholarly need. It is driven by the need of practitioners, and the policy makers who fund such practice, to understand the true impact of their interventions in what are often highly complex, fragile or sensitive situations. If 'dialogue studies' is indeed a relevant field of research, or even as suggested an emergent discipline, then it is at its very heart an applied one. It is this intersection of scholarly discourse and practical need that this paper will reflect on. In responding to the editors' questions, the concerns and propositions raised in this paper in part reflect my day-to-day concerns in previous practice based roles running large scale intercultural dialogue programmes and projects, and in part it is the concerns of an interested party who returned to academia because of a recognized need to develop adequate research into the role and effectiveness of dialogue in intercultural, cross community and interfaith dialogue. In order to ask what are the benefits, or potential pitfalls, developing a 'dialogue studies' approach and to explore avenues for potential research this paper will explore three interrelated themes: the concept of 'dialogue studies' and its parameters and framing as an emergent discipline; the top level benefits of such a discipline to practice and policy; and the importance of critically understanding the cultural and epistemological context of 'dialogue' and its role in living with not only diversity, but difference.

'Dialogue studies' as an Emergent Discipline

Do We Need a Distinct Field or Emergent Discipline of 'Dialogue Studies'?

Before we even ask what we mean by 'Dialogue Studies' we need to ask whether there is a need for better understanding of how different community tensions or conflicts can be tackled, ameliorated or prevented. There has clearly been growing interest in – and perhaps most especially since 9/11 and 7/7 an increasing policy focus on - creating opportunities for intercultural or cross-community dialogue. Where once was a disparate group of organizations undertaking intercultural relations now we see a veritable industry of intercultural, or intergroup, dialogue in policy and practice (Stephan and Stephan 2013; Nss 2010). If we were to seek a defining paradigm for this area of work it would most likely be that there is a benefit in bringing groups or individuals who are currently in differing forms of 'conflict' together in order to build understanding and reduce prejudice between these groups. There is a growing and extensive body of work within social psychology – intergroup contact theory – that supports this model (for a good overview see Pettigrew 2008; Pettigrew et al. 2011).

However, this paper argues that whilst intergroup contact theory provides us with an excellent basis for some forms of dialogue practice it can only take us so far – it is after all primarily concerned with understanding the role of 'contact' in reducing prejudice. However, the political, societal and cultural backdrop

to conflict or tensions between communities is not simply based on prejudicial understanding of the 'other'. Living with pluralism and difference means that we don't just need to reduce prejudice, we need to manage, engage with, negotiate between and understand multiple worldviews – some of which play a role in what is seemingly intractable conflict. Therefore whilst 'dialogue studies' will greatly benefit from incorporating the paradigm of intergroup contact research, it needs to move beyond it.

What then should the study of 'dialogue' encompass and is a process of discipline formation necessary to achieve this? Discipline formation is surely more a social process of collaboration and finding shared research interests than an epistemological process of the categorization of knowledge. The, in some cases, seemingly arbitrary divides we place on academic knowledge production can in many ways hinder cross-fertilization of ideas or effective cross-boundary collaboration, at worst it has historically created duel lines of questioning which results in disconnected or parallel tracks of research or questioning, competing forms of 'consensus', methodological dogma and the use of undifferentiated terminology or jargon that can quite literally lead to researchers talking past each other (Elsdon-Baker 2009). At a time when funders and members of the academy are beginning to scrutinize the nineteenth and early twentieth century legacy of discipline formation and specialization that is still embedded in the structure of our university systems, is it helpful to start to develop areas of inquiry that seek to define themselves by drawing boundaries between other areas of inquiry? So questions of whether the newly emergent 'discipline' of dialogue studies should, or can, encompass extant areas of research or discourse, for example cultural production or intercultural communication should perhaps be abandoned from the outset. Rather than asking if there is a category of work that has grown out of recent trends in practice that then necessitates the need for the specialization 'dialogue studies', we should be asking: is there enough shared ground and interest between extant areas of research that when brought together can meaningfully add real value to our understanding of 'dialogue' in theory and practice?

This might seem like a minor point but there is a fundamental difference in each approach: the first builds the nature of the disciplinary approach through defining what it is not - what is in and what is out; the second, however, has more porous boundaries which seek to pull in interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary ways of working between those with a shared interest understanding dialogue, explaining and predicting its impact and applying theory to practice, or indeed utilising practice in the development of theory. It is surely important in a field that is seeking to employ applied research approaches, and that seeks to understand dialogue across cultural or worldviews, not to start out by creating its own distinct and

segregated research culture, with all the methodological constraints and hegemonic processes that this can engender. The raison d'être for 'dialogue studies' is that practice of dialogue is often difficult to negotiate, highly complex with multiple external drivers, moderators and mediators for its effectiveness or impact, and there is little real understanding of what works well or why. It is therefore important not to exclude any methodological or disciplinary approach that can benefit this area of research – a point this paper will examine further below.

A perhaps more pertinent question is to ask if this is an area already served well within other scholarly discourses. Whilst there are areas of research that have benefited from much time and considerable discussion within the academic literature, for instance intergroup contact theory, there are other areas where there is a lacuna of scholarly research relating to policy or practice based approaches, e.g. intercultural dialogue. Given then the increasing interest in modes and methods of reciprocal engagement that can come under the umbrella of 'dialogue' in both policy and practice, it is arguably important to create a focused field of research in this area which is both applied and practice-led, but also draws on other theoretical and critical traditions to explore the need for 'dialogue' and its role in contemporary social relations.

Defining **Meaningful** *Dialogue?*

The working definition of 'dialogue' by which this journal has been framed is as follows:

> a meaningful interaction and exchange between individuals and/or people of different groups (social, cultural, political and religious) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding.

The types of work that might be classed as forms of 'dialogue' in a practice or policy setting are broad and numerous – ranging from school linking activities, interfaith projects, localized community level conflict resolution, right through to large scale international forums or conferences, and many other activities in between. It is no mean feat then to try and define 'dialogue' as part of the process of defining an area of research. The statement above has no doubt been hard won in the process of its formation and also no doubt others will critically analysis various aspects of its meaning, application and implications. This paper will suffice with one word – *meaningful* - to provide a word of caution when it comes to notions of discipline formation. This is not, one hopes, a vainglorious attempt at semantic pedantry, but more an opportunity to explore some of the fundamental questions that will need to be addressed in the creation of a new area of research under the banner 'dialogue studies'. The use of the word *meaningful* could imply that the interactions being

studied have some inherent significance, importance or purpose. This is slightly problematic from both a research and practice perspective.

It is important that any attempts to define the field (or emergent discipline) of 'dialogue studies' do not make implicit value judgments from the outset. Research questions, or the paradigmatic frame for areas of research, should allow an open-ended inquiry led approach and not presuppose the 'positive' benefits or outcomes of the focus of study for that entire discipline. In short it should provide a frame for future research not a solution. Our understanding of paradigmatic development in research draws heavily on the philosophy of science and the work of Thomas Kuhn (1962). As part of the process of discipline formation, there is process by which consensus within a nascent research community is achieved on an open-ended framework of concepts, methodologies and results. A research paradigm is not a value judgment or position statement, nor does it allow for dogmatic positions or cut off avenues for open-ended inquiry into differing mechanisms or processes. And perhaps most importantly paradigms shift over time – a process that is most usually under Kuhn's model brought about by the emergence of anomalous data sets. To move back to the proposition of 'dialogue studies' as an area of research or emergent discipline, I want to ask is there a consensus that 'dialogue' is always *meaningful* and is this a useful way to frame a research area? Can the study of 'dialogue' in practice really tell us what is *meaningful*?

Meaningful in a Research Context

If we are to take an empirical approach (which encompasses all disciplines from sciences, arts and humanities) to this newly formed area of academic inquiry we need to be very careful not to presuppose the outcomes of research or to deny other possible mechanisms or processes. The term *meaningful* does both of these things – it presupposes that all dialogue is *meaningful*, or implies that it is desirable or inherently positive, and it also denies the opportunity to create new modes of positive engagement that do not include 'dialogue'. Most importantly it does not allow us to critically engage with the question of whether 'dialogue' could sometimes have negative impacts or, in which case, when it may not be the most appropriate approach to engage individuals or groups in 'dialogue'.

From both a theory and practice perspective these are fundamentally important questions. As Pettigrew summarised in his outlining of future directions in intergroup contact theory 'a greater focus upon negative contact is required. Cross-group interaction that leads to increased prejudice has not been studied systematically' (Pettigrew 2008, 187). In his subsequent 2011 paper reviewing the recent advance in intergroup contact theory Pettigrew further suggests that:

> Not all intergroup contact reduces prejudice. Some situations engender enhanced prejudice. Such negative intergroup contact has received less research attention, but renewed consideration to the issue has shed light on this phenomenon. Negative contact typically involves situations where the participants feel threatened and did not choose to have the contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). These situations frequently occur in work environments where intergroup competition exists as well as in situations involving intergroup conflict. (Pettigrew et al. 2011, 277)

Do we need to take the possibility of negative intergroup contact seriously in 'dialogue studies'? Pettigrew qualifies the above statement by outlining three reasons for the seemingly positive response to contact that is found in meta-analysis of intergroup contact theory and surmises that 'the role of negative intergroup contact may not be as crucial as some critics have assumed' (Pettigrew et al. 2011). This may well be the case, however it is possibly an area that deserves further analysis when it comes to 'dialogue studies' as one of the three reasons Pettigrew cites is that:

> the effects of negative intergroup contact are moderated by whether the participant has entered the contact freely' (Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). 'When the contact involves voluntary contact, the effects of negative contact are far smaller than when the contact involves involuntary contact – again suggesting the key importance of threat. (Pettigrew et al. 2011, 277)

Given the nature and cultural or geopolitical context of many dialogue interventions which incorporate both the local micro-level of inter-group contact and macro-level discourses that are part of wider societal drivers for conflict, we cannot assume in practice – with the best will in the world - that all participants will enter dialogue interventions either 'freely', with positive expectations, a true feeling of equity and voice, or without feeling threatened by their own perception of or very real power imbalances. Therefore, whilst the impact of negative contact may be potentially negligible and overridden by the positive impact under certain conditions it does not necessarily mean that it is negligible in the context of the practice of 'dialogue'. What I am suggesting is that we need to factor in a better understanding of how to mitigate negative impacts in the management and practice of dialogue – which is often artificial and, by the nature of its funding or the organisations that initiate 'dialogue', may have inherent bias towards one group over another or carry with it real or imagined political agendas. For example, non-belief or agnosticism is often not factored into interfaith dialogue, which by its very nature tends to be run by religious or faith organisations or groups. It can therefore act to exclude those who are lapsed or those who are non-believers – even when it is actively seeking to engage these groups. It is hard given the context of interfaith activities to provide an atmosphere of equity to non-believers when the paradigm of interfaith dialogue has for obvious reasons in the past actively excluded them. This leads

to not inconsiderable suspicion of interfaith activities most obviously within hard line atheist communities, consequently effecting narratives in public discourse. It can in my experience also leave some moderate atheists feeling that they do not have equal voice in dialogue that they feel should include them – even when they are participating within it. That non-believers and agnostics also have a stake in, and a role within, interfaith dialogue is however thankfully becoming more widely recognized within some interfaith organizations or initiatives.

It should therefore not be assumed that all modes of 'dialogue' or community intervention are positive, or even necessary; though there is valuable evidence of the benefits of intergroup contact, this theoretical work is often not as relevant or as applicable as one would like in the field of practice. The defining research paradigm for 'dialogue studies' clearly cannot be that 'dialogue' is something that is in and of *itself* desirable. Moreover, we should recognize that, whilst there is a clear policy and practitioner focus on 'dialogue' based interventions, where there is 'dialogue' theory it can be patchy or localized to certain disciplinary methods or approaches that are not applicable in all circumstances – hence the clear need for the formation of a more holistic multidisciplinary research field: 'dialogue studies'.

Furthermore, even where there are strong traditions of scholarship there can often be a considerable disconnect between theory, policy and practice. The frame for research then should be that 'dialogue' in practice is happening and given that those who take this approach range from the large to the small, the powerful to the grassroots – the potential for well intentioned but poorly articulated or managed policy or practice to damage already fragile relationships between individuals or within and among groups is hypothetically fairly significant. Therefore, work in this area should be focused not only on truly assessing the impact and effectiveness of 'dialogue', but also understanding the context of 'dialogue' both geopolitical and cultural, comparative and definitional work exploring the differing modes and means of 'dialogue', and critical examination of perception of the need for 'dialogue' given its current status as a preferred means of community engagement or management of community/intergroup tensions or conflict.

Meaningful in a Practice Context

A second issue with the term *meaningful* in the context of this definition of 'dialogue' from a practice perspective is that it implies two things:

1. That dialogue is necessarily a *goal driven* process, here outlined as being to increase *understanding*.

2. That dialogue interventions must be *significant,* which can imply a sense of scale or a hierarchy within societal structures.

Taking the first point, tacit practice based knowledge would suggest that it is not always helpful to frame interventions as being goal orientated as it can either imply a deficit model approach i.e. the assumption that it is only through engaging with the 'other' or experts in dialogue that one can gain an increased understanding or fill a supposed deficit in ones own knowledge. The goal of building understanding implies an information or knowledge exchange which can often, however well meaning an intervention is, be inadvertently or uncritically seen by participants and organisers alike as a unidirectional transfer of information, not necessarily a reciprocal process. Implying a goal orientated approach could thus potentially create problems with participants perceptions of the existence of unequal power relations – that it is 'they' not the 'other' that is there to learn. This is most evident in concerns that can be voiced within broader communities that those who are engaged in 'dialogue' are somehow being 'duped' or unduly influenced by the 'other' they are in dialogue with. The impact of these concerns or perceptions of 'deficit models' of engagement has been the subject of systematic discussion in science communication discourses, and perhaps this would be a useful starting point to explore the impact with regards the role of dialogue in community or social relations. Clearly knowledge exchange or building *understanding* is not a value free exercise and any goal-oriented approach needs to have both a sound ethical and epistemological underpinning as discussed later in this paper.

With regard to the second point we need to collectively ask ourselves does this framing of 'dialogue' also imply that some forms of dialogue are more *meaningful* than others or are we interested in all forms of 'dialogue'? *Meaningful* is as a category something that is subjective, not objective – how do we measure *meaningfulness* or indeed who decides the *criteria* according to which one intervention is *meaningful* and another not? Is the world forum on intercultural dialogue more important in terms of research and practice than a small-scale grassroots project that reaches only a small, localized targeted group, who have little or only micro-level influence beyond their own immediate circles? Are leaders or varying elites our primary target and does it really matter if we change the perception of one individual? Do the micro-level processes involved in localised grassroots dialogues have any influence on policy or the reduction of macro-level conflict? Some have argued in relation to intergroup contact theory that the micro-level may not be as influential on the macro-level conflict as we might like to assume (McGarry and O'Leary 1995; Pettigrew 2008). As Hewstone (2003, 355) states 'there is plentiful evidence that contact does not prevent people massacring former neighbours. It is important, then, to acknowledge that contact cannot offer 'immunity', and we should not have unrealistic expectations of what it can achieve.' Whilst I am not advocating focusing on certain forms of dialogue over others, it is perhaps appropriate for us to reflect carefully on these points in relation to 'dialogue studies'.

On the other hand there is also a growing body of literature on intergroup contact and relations that show that vicarious or indirect forms of intergroup contact can play a positive role in reducing prejudice. (Dovido et al. 2011; Gomez et al. 2011; Mazziotta et al. 2011; Hewstone and Swart 2011). It is clear then that we need to be aware of the impact of 'dialogue' interventions on the groups beyond those directly involved, but it is important to recognize that this may only be a localised 'positive' effect. In a world that is increasingly more interconnected and whose extant power structures are changing in ways that we cannot necessarily predict we perhaps need to clearly position research into 'dialogue' within the broader social and political context – taking a multi-level network approach that does not solely focus on discrete interventions as exemplars of the whole. Pettigrew has similarly argued that within the study of intergroup contact theory:

> to argue that prejudice has little or nothing to do with intergroup conflict is an extreme position, to say the least. Rather extensive findings to date reveal that *intergroup contact is a necessary but insufficient condition by itself to resolve intergroup conflict.*

> A more valid criticism, however, would be that social psychologists have as yet not placed enough emphasis on transforming intergroup contact theory into an easily applied remedy within specific institutional settings. In particular, practical applications require multilevel, structural context for intergroup contact policies. (Pettigrew 2008, 196)

Towards a Sociology and Social History of 'Dialogue'

The unique, and often artificial, way and settings in which 'dialogue' practice takes place means that a potentially very beneficial area of sociological research within 'dialogue studies' should be focused not only on the interplay between the micro-level and the macro-level impacts of 'dialogue' interventions, but also on research that seeks to understand dialogue in practice itself through a sociological frame. The practice of 'dialogue' does not happen in a vacuum, therefore we should not see 'dialogue' only as discrete set of activities or interventions, but as networks of actors, organisations, interventions and activities. Quite often specific actors are playing different roles in the practice of 'dialogue'; the same faces grace various events, boards, and advisory committees – as with any area of practice and policy or even research, the usual suspects abound at senior professional levels of 'dialogue' practice. Therefore, a meta-analysis of not only the societal impact of 'dialogue' practice, but also the social history or sociology of 'dialogue' as a movement or discipline – examining the key players, organisational structures and networks - would be beneficial in helping to build an understanding of the role, impact and *meaningfulness* of 'dialogue' interventions in society. Kulich and Zhang (2012) have already begun this process for intercultural communication by constructing

a theoretical and analytical framework for a social history and sociology of the intercultural fields. This may seem an early juncture to suggest similar for 'dialogue' studies, however as Kulich and Zhang argue:

> Though, a historical project by definition looks back, it most helpfully does so if the recollections and framing of the past leads us to reflection, reframing, and creative refocusing for moving forward. Any review of where we have we been should conclude (or re-begin) with where we should or could be going. (Kulich and Zhang 2012, 899)

'Dialogue studies' potentially covers a range of disciplines and practices including some that are emergent and others that are relatively well established, such as interfaith dialogue or work that draws on Allport's contact theory. Therefore, it would be timely to develop a similar sociological and cultural/oral history mapping of the understanding of, and influences on these fields of work to inform, or help to reframe, future research or practice in this area.

Benefits of 'Dialogue Studies' to Practitioners and Policy Makers

Whilst there is an element of the usual suspects at the senior professional level in the field of dialogue practice a lot of the work undertaken in the delivery of dialogue is undertaken by volunteers, interns or those in lower paid roles at the beginning of their careers – there is, as with many professions these days, a precarious nature to the working life of many individuals in this field of practice and it is not unreasonable to suppose then that the actors within these groups are highly transient. This potentially creates two interlinked problems, which the creation of the field of 'dialogue studies' could effectively counter.

1. 'Reinventing the wheel' in the design, delivery or development of dialogue practice.

2. Little or no effective 'institutional memory' of frontline delivery.

It is important to remember that we do not live in an ideal or equal world and often those who are delivering, developing or maintaining the practice of dialogue projects or interventions for various reasons do not necessarily have access to, or may not even be aware of, the scholarly discourse or even online resources that focus on 'dialogue' related research or practice. The processes at play in this observation are an area that merits study in its own right. The individuals delivering 'dialogue' practice in its broadest sense come from a variety of cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, comparative studies exploring the approaches, expectations, and the modes and means for dialogue in practice across these contexts would be not only interesting from a scholarly perspective but also very valuable

in developing a sociological understanding of the cultural and social context of 'dialogue' processes in terms of behaviours and practice. It would also potentially add to the growing discourse in intergroup contact theory, which challenges the idea that the benefits of contact are possibly culturally contingent. As Pettigrew (Pettigrew et al. 2011, 276) highlights, 'we do not observe wide discrepancies in mean contact effects across the thirty-eight nations in which intergroup contact research has been conducted'. However, it would be interesting to explore if the success of varying modes or methods for the practice of 'dialogue' are culturally contingent. Experience and anecdote suggests that it may very well not be the case that modes or methods are culturally contingent, rather that the expectation or assumptions that certain interventions will not work within different cultural contexts impacts on delivery of or choice of 'dialogue' projects internationally – clearly this would be a useful area for more systematic study or a meta analysis of existing research.

A contributory factor to the lack of institutional memory in dialogue practice is the reporting bias in terms of the evaluation and monitoring of dialogue projects or interventions. We may have scholarly debates about the merit of publishing negative results or replication of other results in prestigious journals, but as many who have worked in the non-HE context will tell you the reporting of negative, or null impact, in project delivery can be the death knell to funding streams – it is not in many organisations' best interests to report too widely that their projects have been less than successful. This is not to say there is not institutional learning, more that the impact of lessons learnt might be incredibly localised to networks of close collaborators, individual organisations or even specific teams within larger organisations. Furthermore, approaches to evaluation and monitoring can be highly variable or in some cases non-existent. Often evaluation and monitoring of 'dialogue' interventions is based purely on feedback form style data collection and is an after thought, not something which is embedded into the design of interventions or activities. Though as more systematic research in this area, such as that of Stephan and Stephan (2013), is beginning to demonstrate an evidence-based approach based on effective quantitative and qualitative assessment of dialogue interventions, which can then inform the design and delivery of intervention programmes is plausible, possible and desirable – though there is still a long way to go in this area of work. Conversely, where evaluation and monitoring is competently done there can often be a lack of research resources to effectively analyse or disseminate the data sets. This is perhaps one of the most valuable benefits to both policy and practice that the creation of the field of 'dialogue studies' can contribute – a practical and scholarly 'institutional memory'. The proviso, of course, is that for such approaches to be effective they have to be developed inclusively with practitioners, and that any resulting resources have to be open access and accessible to practitioners at all levels.

Whilst there are some useful resources in the public domain, it is important to remember that these are static, or worse dogmatic, unless linked into not only the more recent critical discourse or research, but also shifts in geopolitical or societal changes (e.g. changing use of technologies); toolkits and guidelines all have a shelf life.

The disconnect between theory, research and practice is not a unidirectional issue, however, it is important that those developing theory take a more applied approach to understanding the pressures and constraints of working at the coal face of delivery and policy implementation. For example, within intergroup contact theory a number of researchers have built on Allport's original four optimal conditions for contact: equity of status between groups; shared or common goals; intergroup cooperation or sustained contact; and authority, law, custom or institutional support for contact (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998; Ron et al. 2010). There have been other conditions that have been added including use of a common language or voluntary participation (Pettigrew 2011; Ron et al. 2010). These conditional factors are implicit in intergroup contact theory – though as Hewstone (2003, 352) observes these 'and many other conditions considered in the literature, should be thought of facilitating rather than as essential conditions'. In the complex world of 'dialogue' practice it is often not easy to actually achieve many of these. Within intercultural dialogue in particular you may be operating in conditions where nearly all of these facilitating conditions are absent – what is needed then is more research into the opportunities for positive engagement in less than ideal circumstances. For example, it has become fairly common practice to engage in intercultural dialogue through the use of translators and with little opportunity for sustained contact – as otherwise any form of 'dialogue' would be impossible. It may in fact be the hardest groups to bring together that are the most important to enable dialogue between and as Evanoff (2004, 443) argues ultimately 'it is not the similarities but the differences which are problematic in intercultural communication and must be worked through'.

'Dialogue Studies' in its Cultural Context

Ethics, the Co-construction of Cross Cultural Ethics and 'Truth' Claims in Intercultural or Cross-community Dialogue

It is impossible to ignore or deny that the most pressing cultural divisions in the world today are often related in part to differing perceptions on the role of faith or belief in society. The prejudices we experience against individuals' or communities' beliefs are often part of a far more complex set of interacting cultural or societal drivers, rather than simply a prejudice against one religious stance or another. There are of course many other factors we need to take into account – for instance,

inter-generational conflict, economic circumstances, migration, gender, ethnicity - among many others. However, some of the fundamental aspects of these conflicts are related to ethical or epistemological stances – differing perspectives on how we should live our lives and indeed on how we even view or understand the world around us. How can we then engage in 'dialogue' between not simply differing cultural practices, but *differing worldviews*? How do we deal with *difference*, not just diversity?

For example, the seeking of 'common ground' through sacred text interpretation or scriptural reasoning is an approach that is adopted in some forms of interfaith dialogue, but whilst this has no doubt been a useful approach it has its limitations. By finding common ground in one group are we actually just changing the parameters of the group with which we identify by creating a shared 'other'? And whilst intergroup contact theory studies have shown that decreases in prejudice through contact can generalize and that reduction in prejudice can be transferred from the immediate out-group to other out-groups (Hewstone, 2003) – how can this possibly work when common ground is in part formed against the background of distinguishing a shared out-group or 'other' based on worldviews or beliefs? For instance, Muslim, Christian and Jewish approaches to finding scriptural common ground can intrinsically, and epistemologically, exclude non-Abrahamic faiths, polytheistic or animistic believers, agnostics or non-believers – as they incorporate fundamentally different worldviews or ways of understanding of the nature of 'truth'. Hypothetically, in this instance could seeking 'common ground' create a larger 'in' group and potentially more starkly draw lines between the 'in' and the 'out' groups than those that existed at the outset?

Conversely, if we are to include all faiths and none in interfaith dialogue then perhaps the only 'common ground' we could find agreement on is that we all have an interest in finding a commonly shared view on morality, or in other words that we all share an interest in living a 'good life', though acknowledging this (which is a useful start) would really not tell us much about what a good life is or how to live one. And as that dialogue has been underway from at least the development of ancient Greek philosophy onwards we cannot necessarily expect to find a resolution. How then can we identify common ground or shared interests in these contexts where there either is none or where the seeking of common ground becomes an exceptionally or nonsensically reductionist approach, or it fails to adequately acknowledge clear, and to some extent, immutable differences?

As a practitioner of intercultural dialogue one of the issues that one has to deal with on a daily basis within both the personal and professional realms is how to navigate the twin icebergs of imperialism and cultural relativism. On the one hand, how can you effectively create spaces for dialogue without either being seen to

be (or actually) promoting one culture's value systems, worldviews and beliefs as more acceptable or preferable to another, an approach which ultimately frames any activity with an implicit value judgment and can inevitably lead to a power imbalance between participants? On the other hand, how can you create spaces that do not inadvertently imply a relativistic stance, which may reinforce, mitigate criticism of or even endorse practices, political systems, regimes or elites to which you as an individual, your organisation or dialogue participants are fundamentally opposed?

As Evanoff (2004, 440) has argued, 'an adequate framework for intercultural dialogue on ethics is provided by neither universalist nor relativist approaches.' Instead Evanoff proposes a 'constructivist approach' that eschews cultural relativism and adopts a co-creation approach to universalism, suggesting that norms and principles can be actively *produced* through the joint effort of particular individuals engaged in the process of dialogue. Tolerance, from this perspective, means that the participants in a dialogue acknowledge the limitations of their own particular perspectives and remain open to the differing perspectives of others. (Evanoff 2004, 454)

The author argues that through this process there is the opportunity to create new perspectives on ethical debates, for example human rights. Whilst this is a compelling argument for a dialogical process to navigate the choppy waters between differing cultural norms or values, it is not necessarily the most appropriate approach when is comes to dialogue that seeks to find a path through different cultural perspectives on truth claims, epistemologies, beliefs or world views. Hypothetically for instance, how does a UK based scientist maintain mutually beneficial dialogue with an Iranian Ayatollah – when one is versed in western empirical philosophy, the other in Islamicised versions of Aristotelian logic? They have quite literally incommensurable viewpoints and ways of seeing the world. Yet there are indeed circumstances when this dialogue may be necessary and desirable. However, it is hard to find common ground when to do so one must reframe ones entire worldview and capitulate to another, or alternatively when one must concede to a world view that one cannot understand or find a way to accept as reasoned or reasonable for oneself. How do we negotiate or maintain reciprocal dialogue around issues of fundamental importance to us all when the point of contention is actually concerned with the nature of 'truth'; especially when the 'truth' claims, for example certain areas of scientific knowledge, are in and of themselves viewed as imperialistic? Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for 'dialogue studies' is to explore how one can effectively reciprocally engage groups that have conflicted epistemological worldviews in 'dialogue' without implying a value judgment and respecting differing cultural perspectives, but without sacrificing necessary empirical 'truth' claims that are fundamental to the well being of us all e.g. that climate change is caused by anthropomorphic factors or that use of condoms can reduce the spread of HIV.

Neither from an ethical or epistemological perspective is it always possible or desirable to find a lowest common denominator common ground or easy resolution. It is more a case of complex negotiation of shared vested interests, values and agreed pathways. At best we can hope for a continual negotiation of our meta-level shared interests - living without want or fear - of which 'dialogue' is one process. This is perhaps going to be one of the biggest challenges in coming years. How do we negotiate the challenges and changes ahead of us – climate change, rising global populations, increasing divisions between the 'haves' and 'have nots', scarcity of resources including fuel, food and water, technological advances that at once bring us closer together (and also conceivably further isolate us) and perhaps most importantly for 'dialogue studies' the increasing need to effectively live with and manage 'difference', not just diversity. To achieve this, perhaps one of the defining characteristics we need to articulate is not that 'dialogue' should always seek common ground, but that it may be through 'dialogue' that is not afraid to tackle contentious issues that we can learn to *accept*, if not always truly *understand*, difference.

Historical Approaches to 'Dialogue Studies'

Further to examining the social history of dialogue in theory and practice, another aspect of 'dialogue studies' that would perhaps provide a beneficial engagement with the humanities would be to study of the use of historical narratives or oral history within 'dialogue' interventions themselves. There are a number of projects that engage in intercultural, interfaith or cross community dialogue utilizing historical narratives as a resource. There are a number of projects that have adopted this approach in recent years for example the British Council's *Our Shared Europe* project or the Open University's *Building on History: Religion in London* project. This can be a valuable approach to contextualizing micro- or macro- level conflicts or conflict narratives with 'dialogue' participants. However, in a similar way to the ethical and epistemological factors discussed above, we have to remember that history is not simply a tool for retelling or relating the 'past'; it is a process of critical engagement with a range of sources and often differing discourses. It is not simply another 'value neutral' tool in the dialogue toolbox. There are a number of problems we can encounter when using historical narratives in 'dialogue' activities, interventions or projects.

The first, and perhaps most obvious, is that we can sometimes by using histories of past conflicts to discuss contemporary tensions actually alert participants to past conflicts that they were unaware of – thus inadvertently stoking contemporary tensions or conflict narratives. The second issue relates to the way history is written or interpreted – especially when it comes to political or epistemological debates. It is important to critically analyse the source of, or possible agenda behind, a historical

discourse or historiography, as it is very easy to create a historical narrative through the lens of contemporary thought. This implies either a subjective framing which does not take into account the broader social context or differing perspectives, or adopts a progress model approach which suggests that history is part of an inevitable 'progress' to contemporarily significant concepts e.g. enlightenment or democracy (often referred to as Whig history). The problem of 'Whig' history is clearly problematic when one is seeking to engage across cultures where there is a long history of conflict or for instance where the post-colonial legacy is most apparent.

The third caveat to utilizing historical approaches relates to our understanding of the impact of trauma on oral history accounts and collective memory. There is a fairly significant body of work that has been done to critically explore the role of personal testimony and collective memory in the writing of the history of traumatic events, perhaps most notably in relation to Holocaust survivors' testimonies (Roth and Salas, 2001). The last two points are perhaps the most compelling reasons to bring historical research into the arena of 'dialogue studies': firstly to understand the processes at play in the construction of historical narratives in relation to historical events and the role that this plays within dialogue interventions; secondly to better understand the processes of, or potential for, co-construction or even reconstruction of historical narratives within 'dialogue' activities or projects. It would be really very interesting and beneficial to practitioners to build a better comprehension of how these different historical narratives interplay or impact within the practice of dialogue; and thirdly to develop a more thorough understanding of how these processes could inform new modes or methods for dialogue practice.

Possible Impacts of 'Dialogue' Interventions on Wider Conflict Narratives

Another area that would merit further study is to examine the broader societal context of 'dialogue' practice and the role that 'dialogue' itself could play in wider conflict narrative formation or re-enforcement. How does the representation of dialogue or the inclusion of certain groups impact on public perception of conflict between groups or relate to public levels of trust between communities? Can this have both negative and positive impacts?

One of the conditional facilitators for the reduction of prejudice within intergroup contact theory is the need for group salience or clearly defined categories, in terms of the identities of participants within an activity (Pettigrew et al. 2011; Hewstone 2003). As Hewstone outlines:

> Recent research has accumulated evidence that group salience is a key moderator of the effect of intergroup contact on criterion variables (Hewstone 1996). The salience of group boundaries should be maintained

> during contact (e.g. by making participants *aware* of their respective group memberships) to promote generalisation across members of the target outgroup. The importance of group membership salience during contact has been demonstrated both experimentally (e.g. Brown et al. 1999; Van Oudenhoven et al. 1996) and in correlational studies (Brown et al. 2001; Brown et al. 1999). These studies provide evidence that the generalisation process (from the judgements concerning single individuals *to* the whole outgroup) is favoured by the presence of a link between those individuals who have actually been encountered and the group as a whole. (Hewstone 2003, 353)

Whilst this is clearly supported by the research that has been done from a social psychological perspective, it leaves us with some interesting theoretical questions that are perhaps beyond the bounds of intergroup contact theory and more within the bounds of 'dialogue studies' – the most important being the need to build an understanding of the impact of 'dialogue' activities on those who are not engaged with them or part of the immediate circle of participants. In a nutshell, what are the unintended micro and macro level consequences of 'dialogue' interventions?

It is arguable that one of the drivers for conflict are the polarizing narratives, or overt propaganda, we see at play within public space discourse at large. One example would be the assertion that there is a necessary clash between 'Islam' and 'Western Values'. If we are to accept that these narratives drive conflict, it is clear that we need to work to deconstruct or challenge binary positions between groups that are in 'conflict' or 'clashing' in order to deconstruct monolithic or prejudicial narratives about the 'other'. And contact through 'dialogue' is one possible route to achieving this aim; indeed some of the evidence from research in intergroup theory has shown that contact can act to ameliorate monolithic representation of out groups with those who engage in contact or their circle. However, both the direct and indirect impact from this kind of contact is limited to those who participate or their associates. What impact does framing of group salience or binary group identities within dialogue activities have on those not involved even by proxy, or indeed those who are actively hostile to these forms of dialogue? Whilst there may be positives in promoting group salience or identity within dialogue activities, might it actually be working to reinforce binary or monolithic representations within wider society?

For example – a Christian/Muslim interfaith project, which adheres to enhancing the identification within and between each group as either 'Christians' or 'Muslims', will act to reduce prejudice between participants and their friends, family or colleagues. However, these events don't occur in a vacuum. What role could this binary framing of interventions or events have in maintaining binary framing in public space discourse? However, by promoting the need for 'dialogue' are we in

fact reinforcing that there is something intractable and oppositional at play between two groups, or that there is a precedence or preferential treatment for one, or both, of those groups within the public domain? This might seem a negligible, or slightly provocative, point, but it is one that is important to grapple with when we consider the role that we as researchers and practitioners can play in fueling or framing conflict narratives. For example, there has been little academic research done to understand the acceptance or understanding of evolutionary theory within 'Muslim' communities, yet there is a growing (mis)-perception in public discourse that there is a necessary clash and that most Muslims are anti-evolutionist 'creationists'. In seeking to discover the real perception within these communities or to engage in dialogue in this area a number of public events have been framed in a binary way – 'Evolution' and 'Islam'. This has thus in turn potentially further fueled the public space discourse, through discussions in the mainstream media or social media, that these are oppositional world views and that there is a monolithic 'Islamic' response to modern science. Whilst the activities or events themselves have been potentially productive for these involved, outside in the realm of wider public space discourse they may have inadvertently exacerbated the notion of a clash.

Conclusion

In response to the question of whether or not we should develop a distinct academic field of 'dialogue studies', I advocate that given the practice and policy focus on 'dialogue' as an approach to some of the most pressing problems of our time, it would be remiss not give this area more scholarly focus and attention. With that endorsement come some caveats. In the process of developing a distinct field of research we need to be careful to frame 'dialogue studies' in an open ended and flexible way that allows for three underpinning principles:

1. Dialogue studies by its very nature is led by practice – as this is where the principle need for research in this area comes from. Therefore, research in this area that seeks to identify relevant theoretical frameworks or concepts needs to either be practice-led or aware of the limitations and needs of practitioners. Where possible research and resources should be aimed at enabling more effective practice as well as helping to better articulate the impacts of that practice in order to shape future interventions, policy and implementation in this area.

2. Dialogue studies cannot be constrained by existing research traditions in relevant areas but should build on the evidence that already exists and add value to this by bringing new perspectives from interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches from across the social sciences, humanities and arts. This will allow us to revisit some of the fundamental axioms in other fields e.g. whilst 'contact' might always be beneficial under certain

conditions we do not have to assume that 'dialogue' will also *always* be beneficial. We should be aware that 'dialogue' often plays a different role within a broader societal or cultural context and it is not, for instance, always, or only, about seeking to reduce prejudice.

3. Dialogue studies thus needs to actively take into account the broader societal and cultural context of dialogue interventions; and this includes taking a reflexive approach to understanding the role of dialogue practice and policy in shaping or impacting upon societal issues or discourse. There is clearly a significant need for an area of research that can encompass both the micro- and macro- level factors at play within community tensions or intergroup conflict in relation to the effectiveness of dialogue interventions. Second to this is the need for a sociological and historical understanding of the nature of 'dialogue' itself as a both a movement and an emergent discipline. This research should seek to provide a critical account of any feedback between the overlapping areas of theory, policy and practice, which will in turn help to inform future practice and research - shaping the field itself.

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Studying Dialogue – Some Reflections

Ute Kelly

In this paper, I would like to share some thoughts provoked by the idea of establishing 'dialogue studies' as a distinct academic field, as suggested in the inaugural call for contributions to the new journal. These are not meant to be exhaustive of all the relevant questions that could be considered under this heading. I do not, for example, consider the question of disciplinary contributions or boundaries. My emphasis, rather, is on questions to do with ethos and coherence. In particular, I am interested in exploring the possibility, and the challenges, of cultivating a dialogic approach to the study of dialogue itself. My reflections begin with a look at the tendency, within academia, to privilege debate as a form of communication and the question of whether we might conceive a *Journal of Dialogue Studies* as a forum for a different kind of exchange. I then reflect on some of the difficulties of studying dialogue itself, particularly where this involves outside observers. The final section raises some issues around 'studying dialogue' in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. My overall intention here is to share some current, tentative thoughts in the hope that this contributes to a dialogue on the idea, and perhaps the practice, of 'dialogue studies'.

I

The idea of establishing 'dialogue studies' as a distinct field of enquiry, and a new journal to provide a forum for scholarship on dialogue, raises some interesting questions. One of the aims for this journal, as stated on its website, is to 'bring together a body of original scholarship on the theory and practice of dialogue that can be critically appraised and debated'. Is there a tension in this statement between the intended subject – dialogue – and the suggested style of communication – debate?

Debate does tend to be the default form of exchange for academic journals, and arguably for academia more generally. We talk about 'academic debates', not 'academic dialogues'. At the same time, one of the most common ways of teasing out what we mean by dialogue is to contrast it with debate – and dialogue tends to emerge from these comparisons as a style of communication that is constructive, reflective, and oriented towards fostering understanding and building relationships, while debate is characterised as combative, unreflective, and oriented towards winning an argument rather than deepening understanding (for examples, see

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Escobar 2011, Herzig and Chasin 2006, Kelly and Cumming 2010, Yankelovich 2001). The claim in these comparisons is not that dialogue avoids disagreement while debate relishes it. Indeed, many people are attracted to dialogue not because they want to escape disagreement but because they are hoping for a more meaningful way of exploring differences. These comparisons do, however, suggest that debate is problematic if the aim is to reach enhanced understanding, both of why we ourselves think and feel in certain ways, and of why others may hold different perspectives.

Despite these observations, dialogue is challenging and perhaps even countercultural to many in academia. Many students and staff, consciously or not, still tend to assume that academic study involves a neutral or objective vantage point, that personal details are irrelevant, and that rational argumentation backed up by evidence, rather than story-telling based on personal experience, is the most appropriate form of communication aimed at increasing knowledge. Moreover, the assumption that 'the best way to demonstrate intellectual prowess is to criticize, find fault, and attack' (Tannen 2000) is widespread if not necessarily articulated as such.

My suggestion here is neither that there is no role for critical debate, nor that there are no alternatives to it – academic study does encourage a multiplicity of perspectives and approaches. What I would like to reflect on, however, is what it might mean to take more dialogic forms of communication seriously not just as a subject of study but as a means of interaction between academics, students and practitioners.

The experience of the 'Programme for a Peaceful City' (PPC) at the University of Bradford suggests that this is not easy – the PPC's attempts to open up spaces in which academics, practitioners and interested citizens could come together to explore some of the difficult issues facing the District faced a number of challenges (Cumming 2012):

> For academics, used to adversarial debate, often in written form, involvement proved … a challenge and it became obvious that participation in face to face spaces to explore disagreement presented a counter cultural challenge to norms of academic engagement. Some of this was exposed when we hosted a discussion on multiculturalism (PPC Annual Meeting 2006). The speakers were Dr Ludi Simpson, known for contesting the very notion of segregation and Professor Ted Cantle, famous for the 'parallel lives' concept and subsequent influence on the 'cohesion' agenda. During the discussion, one academic angrily questioned how we could have invited Dr Simpson, on the grounds that his argument was 'just wrong' and another said he had 'brought things to throw at Ted'. …

One of our responses to these dynamics was to deepen thinking about how to 'challenge ourselves to hear the "other"'. A key reflection from our first five years was that we needed more listening and less talking. Despite using safe space groundrules at the start of every discussion which included 'listening', it was clear that not everyone found this easy. … Many of the discussions that we hosted were on issues where there was clear disagreement, particularly in relation to the key challenges facing Bradford. It became clear that many people, including academics, had personal stories and lived experiences behind arguments that were articulated in discussions and decisions about what research was needed. One academic who repeatedly argued that communities were polarised in Bradford framed his understanding of social divisions in a social psychology perspective looking to 'in group, out group theory'. But in smaller discussion spaces he described very personal struggles with changes experienced in his own locality. His stories included being intimidated by groups of young men in the inner city where he lived, and of feeling inhibited from sunbathing in his garden for fear of causing offence to devout neighbours.

Trying to unpack and understand what lies beneath apparently rational argumentation reveals 'how judgment occurs on several registers, and how much more there is to thinking than argument' (Connolly 1999, 148). I would suggest that to the extent that engaging in dialogue can help to open up more of these registers to understanding and reflection, it is more likely to enhance the capacity for critical analysis than to diminish it – and as Tannen (2000) suggests, it could also counteract those academic tendencies that are 'corrosive to the human spirit'.

This suggestion is not new: There is a wealth of existing thought and experiments that are trying to foster more dialogic modes of education and scholarship, and that can offer both inspiration and the opportunity to learn from experience. Ideas and practices of 'integrative education', for example, encourage both students and academic staff to view themselves and each other as whole human beings, to see education as a multidimensional experience that also engages personal experiences, emotions and values, and to cultivate communities of inquiry and spaces for conversation that allow for the expression and exploration of uncertainty, confusion and genuine disagreement (Palmer and Zajonc 2010). And as Barnett (1997) makes clear, an academic culture that integrates different dimensions of what it means to be human is not about abandoning rigour, but about enabling meaningful and committed critical engagement with knowledge, self and world. The reason these arguments need to continue to be made, however, is that mainstream academic institutions and structures remain far less conducive to dialogic forms of exchange and practice than they could be.

Against this background, it would be interesting to explore whether, or how, the

Journal of Dialogue Studies could experiment with more dialogic ways of being a journal. Rather than defaulting to debate, the journal might try to encourage a more dialogic style of communication. It could, for example, feature dialogic exchanges between theorists and practitioners on a particular theme. The question of what it takes for such exchanges to have dialogic qualities itself needs further reflection.[1] Contributors could, for example, be encouraged to talk about their own assumptions and values before critically unpacking those of others (Yankelovich 2001), and to get away from 'a formula that requires scholars to frame their work in opposition to their predecessors" (Tannen 2002, 1667). More broadly, allowing space for more reflective forms of writing, even if they don't conform to conventional academic formats, might also help to encourage this ethos.[2]

II

My first idea for a submission for this journal was to try doing something along these lines: with colleagues who are themselves experienced dialogue facilitators, we recorded a dialogue between ourselves that would then be transcribed. We did have an honest, stimulating conversation that we all valued. And yet we did not, in the end, feel comfortable submitting this conversation. Reflecting on why we felt this way, I think, throws up some wider questions not just about academic conventions (Tannen 2000; 2002), but also about the idea of 'dialogue studies' as a field of enquiry. Can and should dialogue itself - what happens in conversations that we might call 'dialogue' – be studied?

It could be argued that what an emerging field of 'dialogue studies' now needs is precisely that - in-depth analysis of conversations that qualify as dialogue. There are interesting questions to be pursued here: What actually happens when people come together to engage in dialogue? To what extent do real dialogue processes live up to the hopes and expectations associated with the idea of dialogue? On a micro-level, what are the key factors that shape the direction a conversation takes, the extent to which it does in fact open up new understandings, or its success in developing relationships? How do different facilitation styles and/or different processes shape what interactions take place between participants?

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1   It is interesting, in this context, to note that the Berghof Foundation runs a 'Dialogue Series' that takes the format of a lead article on an issue, followed by responses focused on the same theme. Alongside the framing of these exchanges as 'dialogues', however, the tendency to characterise them as debates (and the tendency for authors to set out their positions as critiques of those of others) remains. See http://www.berghof-handbook.net/dialogue-series/.

2   For an interesting example of experimental writing in an academic journal, see Fetherston (2002). Also worth looking at is Peter Reason's project 'Writing the World' (http://www.peterreason.eu/).

In the field of deliberative democracy, a shift from theoretical arguments for deliberation to practical experimentation and the empirical study of actual deliberative fora has contributed to enhanced understanding of the nature, significance and challenges of deliberative processes (for examples, see Black 2008; 2013, Edwards et. al. 2008, Felicetti et. al. 2012, Fishkin 1997; 2009, Gastil et. al. 2010, Mansbridge et. al. 2006, O'Doherty 2013, Stromer-Galley 2007, Wilson 2008). Similarly, scholars in communication studies[3] have carried out a wealth of empirical studies of patterns of communication as they occur in real life. Should we be aiming to take 'dialogue studies' in a similar direction? In thinking about this, I feel a tension between the sense that a greater emphasis on the empirical study of specific dialogue processes could be helpful in developing our understanding of the factors that encourage or limit dialogic interactions on the one hand (see for example Halabi 2004), and the fear that studying dialogue in this way actually risks undermining the potential for dialogue.

Dialogue, by its nature, is a type of conversation that challenges people to enhance their understanding of themselves and others by sharing and reflecting on deeply held beliefs and values. This, perhaps, is what differentiates dialogue from debate most clearly. For this to become possible, participants need to be able to trust in the process, and to feel that their attempts to articulate what can be very personal thoughts and feelings will be respected as what they often are – tentative and uncertain expressions of thoughts-in-progress rather than fully formulated views.

What happens to the possibility of dialogue if an observer enters into the picture – if dialogue becomes something to be studied? Observers who are not also participants are likely to affect how a conversation feels to those who are in it. The awareness that what you say might end up being analysed and possibly published introduces an additional dynamic that might, I think, run counter to the conditions that encourage genuine dialogue. In our attempt at recording a dialogue for this journal, the 'observer' initially was a voice recorder placed on the table between us. Its presence, though unobtrusive, made it harder to relax into the conversation, and we remained conscious of it throughout. It did not prevent dialogic interactions, but it did, I think, introduce a consciousness that we were 'performing' a dialogue, and that we were carefully considering what to share. Looking at the transcript of our conversation, we felt that it did not capture the richness of our conversation, that the written record of words that were originally spoken, and often spoken

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3   I have come to dialogue via the field of deliberative democracy and am less familiar with communication studies. There are, however, a number of relevant journals, including (but not limited to) *Communication Studies*, *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Research*, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, *Communication Education*.

tentatively and with pauses, did not do justice to what we were trying to articulate and think through. The thought of our conversation, as it was, ending up in a published format wasn't comfortable, partly because this might then be analysed – 'studied' – by an outsider. This set of issues, of course, is not unique to studying dialogue. Versions of it appear in any qualitative research process, raising the need for ethical guidelines. Anonymity, for example, can help to mitigate the sense of vulnerability participants may experience. My personal experience, though, was both that recording a dialogue for a wider audience introduced a dynamic external to the dialogue itself that wasn't helpful, and that a transcription of the recording did not do justice to the conversation. What this suggests, perhaps, is that testing research methods on ourselves, and reflecting on the experience, and on the extent to which we feel happy to be represented in the 'products' of such research, would be a valuable exercise for those of us interested in empirical research on dialogue.

In the conversation we recorded, though, we did talk about dialogue – our understandings of it, our experiences of it, and our learning from experiments with dialogue. We were doing this mostly from the perspectives of facilitators and/or dialogue participants. From these perspectives, it is certainly possible – and valuable - to reflect on dialogue, to identify opportunities and challenges, and to learn from experience. Some approaches to dialogue explicitly encourage participants to observe and reflect on their interactions with others – David Bohm's idea of dialogue as an opportunity for individual and collective observation of thought processes clearly involves the additional step of analysing the experience (Bohm 1996). Bohm and his collaborators (1991) acknowledge that in this process, 'changes do occur because observed thought behaves differently from unobserved thought'. The observers in his proposal, however, are simultaneously participants, not outsiders looking in. Similarly, framing this paper as a piece of communication with readers feels better to me than the idea of readers 'observing' a dialogue from the outside.

The study of dialogue does, in fact, often seem to take the form of sharing experience and reflection. Quite a few of the existing resources that I think are helpful to those who want to engage with, and in, dialogue, are attempts to systematise and share learning that has emerged from practice (e.g. Bhari et. al. 2012, Cumming 2012, Escobar 2011, Halabi 2004, Herzig and Chasin 2006, Holloway 2004, Dialogue Society 2013). Similarly, many dialogue facilitators have an ongoing commitment to reflecting on dialogue practice that comes close to action research. In this sense, there clearly are people engaged in 'studying' dialogue, in reflecting on its possibilities, challenges and limits.

Could we envisage 'dialogue studies' as an invitation to dialogue facilitators and participants to share their observations and reflections on dialogue? Intuitively,

this possibility seems to me to be closer to the spirit of dialogue than the idea of academics specialising in 'dialogue studies' from the perspectives of non-participating observers. As a forum for sharing and reflection, 'dialogue studies' itself could also take the form of an ongoing dialogue or cooperative inquiry (Heron 1996, Reason and Bradbury 2008) that encourages reflection and exchange of learning. It would thus be distinguished from the much more common academic tendency towards debate, argumentation, and the idea of neutral observation.

III

The theme of what it might mean to study dialogue also connects to experiences of teaching and learning in relation to dialogue. When we attempt to engage students in the study of dialogue, are we trying to increase their knowledge of dialogue theory, their capacity to analyse the challenges of dialogue, their ability to contribute to key debates within the field? Or are we also trying to give them opportunities to experience how it feels to participate in – or to facilitate - dialogue, to reflect on their own deep-seated assumptions, and to grapple with the messiness of attempts to promote dialogue under non-ideal conditions?

These possibilities are not, of course, mutually exclusive, and ideally, we might want to develop all of them. After all, engagement with theory and research can inform and enhance reflection on personal experience, and vice versa. In practice, though, there can be tensions between different assumptions and expectations that both students and those teaching them bring to their interactions, and to intended learning opportunities. This was brought home by a recent experience on a module that included three sessions on dialogue. Following an overview of the key characteristics of dialogue and different approaches to how they might be approximated in practice in the first session, the second was intended as an opportunity to experience facilitated dialogue. In the third session, students engaged with a number of scenarios around the dilemmas and challenges of hosting, designing and facilitating dialogic spaces.

The critical incident occurred in the second session, when a few students expressed discomfort and resistance to the invitation to enter into dialogue as participants, stimulating a wider discussion of their expectations of higher education. One student articulated their preference for studying why other people might struggle to discuss difficult issues over discussing difficult issues themselves. In a later debrief, this student suggested that it might have been more useful to have a dialogue simulation in which students played roles rather than a dialogue that they participated in as themselves (and in which they found it very challenging to discuss personal concerns and responses) – in other sessions of the same course, students had taken part in simulations of negotiation and mediation.

My instinctive response to this suggestion was a feeling that dialogue cannot be simulated. The reason I felt this is because I think the idea of dialogue implies sharing, and reflecting on, personal assumptions and values, and the stories and experiences behind those assumptions and values. My own assumption here is that to be meaningful, dialogue needs to be 'genuine' or 'authentic'. The implication is that learning how to engage in dialogue is experiential and reflective – in other words, that it cannot be learned from the outside or at a distance. Seeing dialogue as genuine engagement also means that I am inclined to think of dialogue as antithetical to 'performance', and therefore also as an antidote to the tendency and pressure, not least within academia, to perform – both in the sense of playing roles, and in the ambition to achieve.

Against this background, encouraging students to enter into dialogue – and entering into dialogue with them myself - feels both important and challenging: Important because deeper understanding of ourselves and others might enhance both our ability to engage in future dialogue and generate more thoughtful and reflective academic work (Diaz and Gilchrist 2010, Palmer and Zajonc 2010, Thomas 2010). Challenging because engaging in dialogue entails trusting others with personal experiences and reflections (and it was the risks involved in this, I think, that made it difficult for the students in the incident described above). Challenging, too, because doing this in an educational setting means that pedagogical roles and relationships, and the educational process itself, become 'uncertain' and open to question by any of the participants (Barnett 1997, 110, Burbules and Bruce 2001). In addition to these challenges, the current context and organisation of higher education also mitigates against sharing honest reflections on our own experiences within our institutional settings: As Barnett (1997, 54) observes, '[t]he new managerialism, being concerned to promote each university and to project the university beyond the competition from other universities, and being sensitive to market perceptions of negative publicity, is nervous about academics who speak out about university matters'. Sadly, 'speaking out' can, in practice, include attempts to engage in genuine dialogue with students and colleagues about personal experiences that could and should inform our reflections about the relationships, processes, culture and values that we might aim to embody. The performance of an institutional or professional identity can thus be an obstacle to a dialogue that is real rather than simulated.

But does the idea of 'dialogue' as the antithesis of 'performance' actually stand up to critical scrutiny? In the conversation we recorded, another participant challenged me to reflect on this assumption more carefully. Do participants in a dialogue not consider what to say, how to (re)present themselves and their ideas, what risks to take or not to take, just as much as in other forms of communication? What kinds of contributions are made possible – and which kinds are rendered impossible – by

framing a conversation as 'dialogue'?

While these questions have wider relevance to our understanding of dialogue, I want to explore them here in relation to what might be involved in 'studying dialogue' in the context of teaching and learning. If we are aiming to engage students not just in learning about dialogue, but in learning how to participate in and/or facilitate dialogue, good practice suggests that these learning outcomes need to be assessed alongside knowledge of the field (Wiggins and McTighe 2005). There seems to be a tension here between dialogue as a non-instrumental opportunity for personal and social learning on the one hand, and a set of skills that can be learned, performed, observed and assessed on the other hand.

In my own experience, an experiment with assessing a module on dialogue and deliberation partly through an online dialogue between the students worked fairly well, but suggested that while students did seem to be engaging in dialogue, the quantity and nature of their contributions were also driven by the awareness that they were being assessed – another example where the question of the impact of observation on dialogue becomes relevant. Does this undermine the possibility of 'genuine' dialogue – or, on the contrary, might the additional focus on good 'performance' enhance the quality of conversations? In this context, it is interesting that students noted how the expectation of weekly contributions to the online discussion forum meant that they had worked harder for this module than for others – something that undoubtedly improved the quality of their engagement with each other and with the themes of the course. At the same time, the fact that I was assessing their contributions also made it difficult for me to be a participant, something that further illustrates the challenges of building dialogic qualities into teaching and learning strategies.

Is assessment and certification of facilitation skills likely to improve practice, or might it lead to formulaic performances of sets of skills or particular processes? How can we make space that encourages the freedom to experiment and to acknowledge, and learn from, mistakes? To what extent can the qualities needed to engage in, and/or to facilitate dialogue, be learned or taught? And do moves towards professionalization undermine the recognition of practitioners who have come to dialogue through practice and experimentation rather than certified training?[4]

As 'dialogue studies' develops as an academic field of study, and as dialogue facilitation becomes professionalised, it would be helpful for educators, students and practitioners to reflect on these sorts of questions together – this too, I would suggest, could be one of the functions of a *Journal of Dialogue Studies*.

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4   This is another issue that came up in my conversation with dialogue facilitators.

In this paper, I have raised some questions for reflection on what it might mean to 'study dialogue', and in particular on some of the challenges this involves for those of us working in academic settings. These have included the question of whether and how the styles of communication that are valued, practiced and encouraged in a field of 'dialogue studies' could and should themselves approximate dialogue, a reflection on some of the risks involved in studying dialogue itself, and some thoughts on the tensions educators and students might experience in teaching and learning (about) dialogue in academic settings. For myself, as perhaps for others, the thoughts and experiences I have tried to share throw up more questions than conclusive answers. Like most contributions to dialogue, then, these reflections are intended as open-ended thoughts-in-progress, with an invitation to others to turn this into a conversation.

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Intergroup Dialogue: a Theoretical Positioning

Michael Atkinson

It has been premised that group based dialogue may be viewed as a face-to-face facilitated conversation between members of two or more social identity groups for the purpose of new levels of understanding, relating, and action. Beyond this superficial meaning however intergroup dialogue exhibits a number of definitional and thereby theoretical inconsistencies leading to confusion and lack of clarity regarding the term. Concerns regarding what constitutes a group and of dialogue vie with issues of power to create a diversity of approaches towards multivocal conversation. This paper suggests that a useful approach to understanding intergroup dialogue is to acknowledge that meanings will always be contested. Drawing on academic and empirical examples this paper explores and unpacks different influences and epistemologies that underpin conceptual understandings of both dialogue and of the group. It is noted that group membership may be classified according to positivistic, critical or constructivist orientations while dialogue, although not so epistemologically differentiated, nevertheless draws on diverse scholarly conceptualisations from which it is defined and presented. The paper concludes through acknowledging that our understanding of dialogue itself is an ongoing project involving meaningful interactions across difference.

Introduction

It has been premised that group based dialogue may be viewed as is a face-to-face facilitated conversation between members of two or more social identity groups for the purpose of new levels of understanding, relating, and action (Moore Sociological Inquiry 2003). Such an orientation, which reproduces standard understandings of dialogue, nevertheless presents two conceptual problems.

The first area concerns the manner in which we define a 'group'. It is acknowledged that labels based on religion, sexuality, ethnicity or profession are convenient identity markers. Beyond the confines of clear social division however such terms can come under challenge. Not only are the boundaries difficult to define; they are also frequently crossed amongst the plurality of contemporary multicultural society. The second challenge lies in defining what is meant by 'new levels of understanding'. What understandings are valued and how such understandings are defined are two immediate areas of inquiry. These conceptual challenges are not

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simply academic. If we are to make progress on facilitating group based dialogue we need to be consistent with the terms that we are using or at the very least be cognizant of the positions from which terminology may be used.

This challenge is taken up in this paper. Rather than a single, definable entity, this paper suggests that intergroup dialogue may be seen as a collective and flexible term that nevertheless may be characterised according to epistemology aligned with different understandings of dialogue itself. Such an approach is of particular benefit in the academic context as it introduces a means of comparison between different intergroup dialogical contexts. It also serves as a means to unpack the position taken by academics and researchers of their understanding of what can be a nebulous multidimensional term.

A Lack of an Agreed Definition of Intergroup Dialogue (IGD)

A review of the literature reveals that group based dialogue is not one approach or process but rather an evolving set of ideas applied to diverse contexts following diverse models and pursuing diverse aims. Rodenborg and Huynh (2006) for example, have embedded their understanding of IGD according to a psychological model framed by intergroup contact theory. Nagda (2006) has utilised critical education theory to formulate his model of IGD while Abu-Nimer (1996) has taken a largely conflict resolution approach.

Adding to the development of intergroup dialogue as a concept is the fact that research in the area is 'new and evolving' (Nagda, Zúñiga, Chesler and Cytron-Walker 2007, 59). The relatively short time in which IGD has been subject to conceptual theorising and the very different fields which have contributed to this area have led to a plethora of insights and understandings complete with their own disciplinary biases, limitations and methodologies. The complexity in the field is clearly in evidence in the literature. Communication based theories (Dougherty et al. 2010; Unsteady 1994), theories of dialogue (Burkhalter et al. 2002; Gastil, Black, Deess and Leighter 2008), critical pedagogy (Turner 2006) and theories concerning social behaviour and identity utilising or adapting Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis (Barrett 2012; Pfister and Soliz 2011; Rodenborg and Huynh, 2006) are all utilised in theorising IGD.

As a consequence the field of IGD is characterised by a diversity of approaches and conceptualisations and a lack of clarity with regards to both praxis and theory. As Wiesand states (2008, 9) in reference to the subsidiary expression of intercultural dialogue 'the term and concept ... is by no means understood and/or used in a homogeneous manner.' Aligned with this statement Anderson (2010, 7) notes that

the 'diversity of meaning [of group based dialogue] inevitably dilutes [its] practical value'. Such viewpoints have led some to argue that the concept is equivocal (Maalouf et al. 2008) in terms of interpretation and vaguely defined and lacking clarity of purpose (Anderson 2010).

In order to come to an understanding of the relationship between different perspectives on dialogue, the defining features of IGD aligned with contrasting epistemological positions are briefly presented. This is followed by disaggregating the two terms 'group' and 'dialogue' as a vehicle for positioning IGD within a clear conceptual framework. The paper shows that a 'group' may be defined differently according to the epistemological framework of the research while dialogue can differ according to context and scholarly influence. The paper ends by utilising the framework so developed in order to unpack two substantive empirical examples from the literature.

Positioning Intergroup Dialogue

As in the social sciences generally, studies in the area of IGD may be categorised according to the epistemological paradigm that they are aligned with. As Bennet (2005) notes, unless these epistemological assumptions are clarified paradigmatic confusion regarding both practice and explanation can compromise credibility leading to ill-informed or even biased understandings of the field under study. The approach taken here is to follow the lead of Davis, Nakayama and Martin (2000) who have categorised the related field of intergroup communication according to the constructivist, positivist and critical paradigms.

Positivist approaches seek definitive understandings based upon the viewpoint that truth may be objectified. This approach has been particularly prevalent with regards to linguistic and communication based theories to group based interactions during the 1980s and 90s in order to explain (and thereby reduce) the perceived dissonance and uncertainty that occurs between members of different cultural groups (Chuang 2003). Although such approaches have been valuable with regards to highlighting measurable outcomes in terms of adaptation, identity changes, networks or acculturation they have also drawn criticism. Bjerregaard, Lauring and Klitmøller (2009) for example raise concerns regarding this perspective in terms of presenting a somewhat homogeneous understanding of difference. As Wiesand also notes (2008) such an approach potentially reduces intergroup dialogue to an activity with fixed ends rather than an interactive communication process whose parameters are constantly evolving and will sometimes produce interim or 'hybrid' results. Further criticism of the positivist approach concerns the manner in which communication (and dialogue) is defined and how it is understood from the perspective of contrasting cultural positions (Carbaugh et al. 2011).

In contrast to the positivist paradigm a critical perspective is more concerned with power and social justice. As Nagda points out (2006) criticality in intergroup dialogue emphasises the manner in which intergroup issues are related to further issues of inequality and the injustices which frame difference. Research on IGD bounded by a critical paradigm focuses on the social structures that construct and maintain difference, highlighting issues of power in the dialogue process both towards the other and to oneself (James 1999). Esteva, writing in a UNESCO report for example, charges that dialogue between cultures must be 'a dialogical dialogue, transcending the planes of the logos of each of the interacting cultures, their conceptual systems, their reasons and values' (2005, 100). The implication, as Esteva makes clear, is that dialogue is always contextualised by power which must be addressed before 'authentic dialogue' can take place. Sorensen, Nagda and Maxwell (2009) support this view highlighting the importance of recognising power and differences in power for the successful facilitation of dialogue between members of different cultural groups. Others who take a critical view include Abu-Nimer (1999), James (1999), Kanata and Martin (2007) and Maoz et al. (2002). The importance of the critical paradigm for understanding IGD is particularly strong where dialogue is contextualised by conflict or in areas of structural inequality. In these instances, as suggested by Mollov (1999) and others (Nagda 2006; Pace 2005; Swiss Academy for Development 2011) a recognition of social justice issues is imperative if IGD is to move beyond the superficial.

The constructivist paradigm contrasts with the two aforementioned paradigms by emphasising knowledge and reality as a construct rather than rationality or perceived differences in power (Vygotsky 1978). As Escobar (2009, 46) notes 'The idea that reality is co-constructed through personal interaction is the fundamental tenet of social constructivism.' Accordingly meanings, identities and perspectives on the world are socially contextualised and may be viewed as co-constructs by the co-ordinated actions of persons in conversation (Pearce and Pearce 2000). Interaction is paramount in social constructivism because it is the process of sharing that results in individuals refining their own ideas and shaping those of others in the particular society. This results in a dynamic interpretation of both identity and of group based belonging which are seen as being continuously undergoing change. As a consequence, dialogue cannot be reduced to communication acts or be solely contextualised by symbols of power but must also include the constructs which emerge out of such communication.

A constructivist positioning to dialogue has received favour both publicly and academically. The Anna Lindh Foundation, for example, a foremost proponent of ICD in the European Mediterranean region takes a predominantly constructivist position. As one of the key authors of its 2010 Report notes, 'intercultural dialogue

is about learning how to tell a shared story' (Silvestri 2010, 48) thus emphasising the importance of shared meaning constructions to the dialogue process. Baraldi (2006, 62) notes that '[intergroup] dialogue is a creative, co-constructed form of communication, based on active participation and empathy'. Likewise Ganesh and Holmes (2011, 85) charge that 'intercultural dialogue requires approaches that examine the cultural co-production of knowledge'. Hoover (2011, 214) also notes that dialogue itself is centred upon 'the creation of meaning in "the in-between"', a position shared by Dallmayr (2004), Flower (2003) and others (Gadamer 1989; De Turk 2006; Eguren 2010).

Arguing for the merits of one position over another is not the prime purpose of this paper. The different frameworks have both merits and shortcomings and may potentially be applied to any intergroup dialogue setting depending upon the observer. Through pointing out that IGD is positioned within an epistemologically, theoretically and practically contested terrain however the ground is laid for identifying the different realities and influences that underpin its various conceptualisations. This in turn can facilitate if not a shared language concerning IGD, at the very least a shared understanding.

A useful approach to this challenge is presented by Otten and Geppert (2009). These authors charge that theory applied to communication across difference needs to be located within a transparent epistemological framework based upon informed understandings of both 'the group' and of 'discursive communication'. By disaggregating the two terms that make up IGD, namely that of 'dialogue' and that of 'the group' and clarifying the influences in the definitions of each, such an approach, at the very least, adds a means of determining the manner in which dialogue itself is determined and thereby useful theoretical constructs which may underpin its empirical presentation.

The Concept of the Group

Otten and Geppert (2009) categorise perspectives on a group according to three major theoretical themes. These have been identified and operationalised as a) shared group membership through the expression of identity b) shared set of social values and knowledges which reside in a person's subjective feelings and operationalised through negotiation and emergent cultural processes and c) contestable codes based upon a resource for meaning making and of power through constructed symbols and signs. Although admittedly there may be other ways of categorising 'a group' the alignment between the orientations presented here and the three epistemological paradigms discussed above suggest at the very least a symmetry in terms of approach.

As Otten and Geppert (2009) suggest, if a study on IGD operates with a strong community understanding of what constitutes a group through drawing sharp distinctions between cultural in-groups and out-groups (e.g. nation, territory, ethnicity etc.), it makes sense to anticipate group-based norms and scripts as potentially meaningful for communication. Furthermore, the communicative and symbolic expressions of group identity can act as useful indicators to explain intergroup interaction. On the other hand basing an understanding of a group upon shared social values and the production and reproduction of knowledge is likely to be more useful in exploring how groups change and evolve in interaction with others. Communication between these groups is more likely to be based upon learning processes as people attempt to understand the other. By way of further contrast an understanding in which group based belonging is seen in terms of structured symbols and signs is open to questions concerning who benefits from constructs of identity and of constructs of the group itself. Such a perspective would view any dialogue as contextualised by and through power.

An example of group based norms which Otten and Geppert are referring to may be seen in Geerd Hofstede's work *Culture's Consequences* (1980). Admittedly this is a somewhat extreme example but one which nevertheless has been enormously influential in the related area of intercultural communication and has spilled over to the field of intergroup dialogue. Hofstede explored business based relationships in forty different countries and on the evidence garnered, developed four (now expanded to six) dimensions that may be attributed to national based membership. These initial four dimensions are associated with power, reactions to uncertainty, orientations towards individualism or collectivism and the degree of caring in a culture. They are principally based on the assumption that national culture itself is homogeneous across both space and time. Notwithstanding the criticism which has been directed at Hofstede's cultural model the approach nevertheless illustrates the connection, whether real or imagined, between identity and membership with an identified group based upon normative ideals. Examples are not of course limited to national identity. Skin colour, religiosity, ethnicity and sexual orientation can all be considered markers of identity which suggest both a sense of group belonging and an identifiable border between members of different groups.

Such a view of a group based on normative ideals and diverse cultural belongings varies considerably from defining a group in terms of shared knowledge and values. Frederick Barth's orientation to the nebulous area of culture is informative here. In Barth's knowledge based perspective on a group, differences are viewed in terms of knowledge asymmetries between interacting persons where knowledge is seen to include feelings, attitudes, information and skills. Likewise interconnections between people are due not to shared belongings but rather to shared knowledges.

Such a viewpoint highlights a number of important areas in the way we may view group membership and consequently intergroup dialogue. Firstly, as noted by Barth (1995) it views different cultural groups in terms of fuzzy boundaries with their own inner contradictions (Anderson 1983; Cohen 2001) rather than discrete and singular units. In support of this position Emberling (1997) has noted that a single person may have many social identities and hence draw connections with members of other groups despite a strong sense of ethnic, religious or political difference. Secondly it lays stress on interactions across groups as an ongoing facet of group membership rather than being an unusual occurrence. Thirdly it situates the group in terms of ongoing change bringing to the fore more dynamic features of interactive cultural exchange in the form of ongoing creativity, co-construction of meaning and negotiated repositioning of the other. By emphasising its transitive nature within a context of indistinct boundaries such an orientation focuses not so much on predetermined identities but rather the experiences and knowledges of people themselves as they move within and across groups.

The concept of group membership based on issues of power presents a further perspective. It foregrounds the manner in which structural inequalities impinge on the life chances of people who self-identify with minority or less privileged social groups. As a consequence group membership is not seen in terms of normative values such as nationality, class or religiosity, nor does it focus on the fuzzy boundaries between groups and corresponding interactive processes. The focus is directed instead to the personal experience of difference. Such a viewpoint encompasses systems of meaning as they relate to individuals as well as systems of social domination that categorise class, gender or education (Eckersley 1989).

Although there may be nuanced understandings of a group that lie between the demarcated normative ideals, social constructions and critical understandings that are discussed above the point is that concepts of a group will generally be aligned with the three aforementioned paradigms. Each will present a vastly different understanding of group belonging and will consequently present markedly different conceptual contexts for understanding dialogue. Group based dialogue where the group is defined by the outsider, for example, is going to differ markedly from such dialogue where a group is formed through self-identification or different levels of access to power. If we are to define intergroup dialogue it is necessary to define at the very least how the group itself is constructed and defined.

The Concept of Dialogue

Unlike the concept of a 'group', the concept of dialogue is not so epistemologically differentiated. Rather it is situated largely (though not exclusively) in terms of a constructivist or a critico-constructivist position alongside a transformative agenda

(Stewart and Zediker 2000). This has been presented in diverse ways including the foregrounding of multivocality (Ganesh and Holmes 2011), ethical well-being (Dallmayr 2009), respect and reciprocity (Baraldi 2006), open listening (Eguren 2010; Pace 2005) trust (Lopez and Monterrey 2004) and dignity (Ignatieff 2001).

Despite this diversity of focus a common trait has been a recourse to the understandings of a number of classic theorists. In this section I discuss four of the most cited classic theorists illustrated through recourse to substantive empirical research. Buber's (1947) concept of relational mutuality, Bakhtin's (1981) internally persuasive discourse, the rational dialogue of Habermas and Freire's (1993) critical reflective discourse are all different with regards to how dialogue is framed and thereby used in order to position. This does not represent an exhaustive list. Rather it is illustrative of the different influences and understandings from which conceptualisations of IGD may be formed.

Bakhtin

Bakhtin primarily focuses on the notion of dialogue as a human condition, as an ethical imperative, and even as a prerequisite for thinking (Pace 2005). In particular his notion of dialogue is directed towards the social nature of dialogue, and the inherent struggle within the dialogical space (Pace 2005). According to Bakhtin human thought becomes genuine thought only under contact with another thought, a thought from a different person. This however requires an acceptance and a unity of the self in order for people to accept the other. Keaten and Soukup (2009), in their modelling of interfaith dialogue, favour the reciprocity, vulnerability, and subject-other relationship conceptualized by Bakhtin. As they note:

> In our review of dialogue theory in communication,... we found Bakhtin to be the most influential to contemporary understandings of dialogue across cultural differences. From Bakhtin's conception of dialogue, reciprocity is an inherently ethical concept emphasizing mutuality, honesty, responsibility, and difference. The dialogic participant must relinquish self-driven control (i.e., monologue) and embrace vulnerability or 'humility'. (2009, 168-187)

Buber

The perspective of Buber (Abhik, 2001) who views dialogue at the heart of every human existence, is closely aligned with that of Gadamer. According to Buber (1970), there are two primary attitudes and relations between human beings. These may be classified as the 'I-Thou' relationship and the 'I-It' Relationship. The former is characterised by qualities such as 'mutuality', 'openheartedness', and 'love' in the sense of responsibility of one human for another (Johannesen 1971, 375). Buber (1970) sees the dialogic relationship in terms of helping humans attain their

completeness by understanding one another in a spirit of authenticity. As LaFever (2011, 128-129) argues Buber's approach is especially useful due in a large part to the manner in which it is contextualised by the social context:

> Buber's (1972) definition…emphasizes the embeddedness of dialogue in social context. … Buber posited that meaning constructs not only the interpersonal relationship but also the societal institutions that govern human action.

Habermas

Habermas (1984; 1987) takes a somewhat different approach, claiming that conversation is a powerful regulative ideal based on a mutually constructed form of rationality (Kim and Eun 2008). From his perspective while dialogue does not necessarily require equality, it does entail some sort of reciprocity and symmetry. Habermas calls this the 'ideal speech situation'. In dialogue there exists always the claim to reason and through it the opportunity of resolving issues through rationality. His theory of communicative rationality may be viewed in terms of a sharing and a renewal of cultural knowledge and action directed towards social integration and solidarity. James (2003) theorises that those involved in dialogue do so strategically rather than on the basis of moral equality. As a consequence most understandings of dialogue are fundamentally flawed as they overlook the initial conditions which constrain actors involved in the dialogue process. As James notes in reference to Habermas, his framework 'can better initiate an examination of the strategic logics that enable and constrain inter-group dialogue' (2003, 158).

Freire

Freire (1993) focuses his pedagogical approach to dialogue on constructions (and deconstructions) of identity. Dialogue, in Freire's terms is always contextualised by power and acts to confront, expose and liberate (1993). However, Freire did not limit himself to structuralised power but also took on board concepts of empowerment. Accordingly a major barrier to dialogue is not simply power difference between people but also the inner barriers people place on their own belief that they are the equal to the other. As with Habermas, an essential aspect of Freirean dialogue is critical reflection. Freirean dialogue however extends beyond Habermasian logic to include faith in the other to negotiate their own way in the world. Thus at its core there is a sense of trust, dignity and a sharing of journey in dialogue, 'the permanent search of people together with others for their becoming more fully human in the world in which they exist' (Freire 1993, 95-6). Nagda et al. (2007) utilises a Freirean perspective on dialogue aligned with a perceived importance towards criticality and consciousness raising in their practices and empirical studies of intergroup dialogue programs in select college campuses. As Nagda et al. note:

> For a genuine dialogue to occur it is just as important for members of
> privileged groups to understand how they and others have been affected by
> privilege as it is for members of less advantaged groups to understand how
> they have been affected by subordination. (2007, 9)

Unpacking Intergroup Dialogue

Through utilising the aforementioned understanding of IGD it becomes easier to
unpack IGD and how it is used and presented in the literature. This section utilises
two examples in order to showcase this process. Nagda et al. (2009) sited intergroup
dialogue within a college setting between members of the college's white and black
communities. Fraser et al. (2011) have described a self-identified dialogue project
which specifically looks at development from the perspective of Masai women.

Nagda et al. (2009) state their reliance on Buber and Bakhtin for their understanding
of dialogue. They also refer to Freire's critical consciousness as influential in the
formation of what Nagda et al. (2009) term a critical-dialogic model of dialogue.
As they note:

> This model of intergroup dialogue, by combining both the critical and
> dialogic elements, differs from those that are focused more on deliberating
> about policy issues without in-depth relationship building and without
> informed structural analysis of inequalities.

The reason for the above quote is not simply to show the manner in which the
authors see their understanding of dialogue but also to highlight their understanding
(and mine) that dialogue can mean different things from different perspectives.
Highlighting this difference points to the need from an author's standpoint of
identifying the understanding of dialogue that their research project is aligned with.
Nagda et al.'s approach to identifying a group is similarly critically defined. In this
particular study a group was contextualised by differences in the manner in which
self-identified members of different groups have or are denied access to power in
society due to their race.

Critically looking at empirical studies of IGD through understandings of
dialogue and of the group is relatively simple when scholars clearly articulate their
understandings of both as Nagda et al. have done. It is at the margins however,
where scholars may identify their project in terms of dialogue but leave a messy trail
as to their theorising of such, that the articulated approach identified in this paper
becomes of value.

Fraser et al.'s (2011) paper raises a number of conceptual issues. Their understanding
of dialogue originates from two main sources. One is identified as Dutta and

Pal's dialog theory (2010) and the other as Baraldi's theory of intercultural dialog (2006). Dutta and Pal in turn draw selectively only on one source (Hammond, Anderson and Cissna 2003) largely reducing dialogue to a concept of 'listening to the other' (369) in the context of marginalised groups. Fraser et al.'s other main source, Baraldi (2006) is similarly devoid of broader dialogical concerns. Baraldi's understanding of dialogue presents rather as an aspect of cultural fusion aligned with the notion of dialogue as 'a creative, co-constructed form of communication' (2006, 62).

Despite this constructivist orientation to dialogue, missing from Fraser et al.'s formulation are discussions on broader concepts such as criticality, rationality, ethics and mutuality that are characteristics of scholarly understandings of dialogue as discussed above. Furthermore Baraldi draws on positivistic formulations of both communication and of a group to round off his basic theoretical framework. This is not to demean his approach but rather to point out that it appears less than adequate in terms of providing a conceptual framework for Fraser et al.'s project.

This ill-defined dialogical framework has important consequences. Fraser et al.'s concept of a group is, for example, an issue. One concern is that it presents the six rural Masai women participants as representatives of Masai women in general, a positivist portrayal which is not met in reality. The other concern is the neat division of the two groups into a research team and Masai women. The former is scarcely represented in the research report, undermining the central feature of IGD, that it involves at least members of two groups. Little mention is made, for example, of the long term involvement of members of the research team in the lives of the participants beforehand, nor of the inclusion of Masai members. This blurring of the two groups introduces a level of unmentioned complexity and suggests that dialogue may be a result of an ongoing cultural fusion rather than simply the research project itself. For this reason perhaps the project appears to concern itself more with voice than with dialogue. It outlines a mechanism for those on the social margins to express their views and their world. We get little understanding of the motivations of the Masai women participants for taking this step, however, beyond their involvement in a research project.

The portrayal of the research project as a dialogue needs to be at the very least circumscribed by a more definitive framework of how such dialogue is defined. This is not to question the value of the findings of this particular research project, nor their representation of an under voiced reality. Rather it points to the need to be definitive about our definitions and unpack the meanings that we use thus reducing rather than adding to nebulous nature of IGD as it currently presents.

Conclusion

All understandings of IGD are epistemologically differentiated and can draw on a number of influences in their formulation. Unless we, as scholars, are clear in how we arrive at our definitions of IGD, particularly in how we see both 'dialogue' and the 'group', confusion over the meaning of IGD is likely to continue. This is a cause for concern. IGD represents an important mechanism for bringing people together and building understanding. It becomes vital that at the very least we understand and can state our own position so that others may learn from both our successes and failures with regards to the ongoing project that is intergroup dialogue.

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Debates and Decisions

Peter Emerson

In any debate, the purpose of which is to take a collective decision, the decision-making process to be used at the end of those deliberations will determine the nature of that debate. If that process is dichotomous, participants are likely to take sides and divide into two opposing camps; thus the atmosphere in debate is likely to become (perhaps bitterly) polarised.

If however, the final decision-making process is non-majoritarian; if, in other words, the outcome is to be that option which gets the highest average preference (and an average, of course, involves every voter, not just a majority of them), then the debate may well take place in a more convivial atmosphere.

This article first considers some of the disadvantages of majority voting before then describing a more inclusive measure of the collective will. The latter, it is suggested, will facilitate not only a more constructive milieu, but also a more accurate and therefore more democratic outcome. Accordingly, the article goes on to describe the nature and structure of a consensual debate.

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Peter Emerson is Director of not-for-profit NGO the de Borda Institute. His latest publication – *Defining Democracy* – was published by Springer in 2012.

Abbreviations

AGM	annual general meeting
AV	alternative vote
BC	Borda count
FPP	first-past-the-post
IOC	International Olympic Committee
MBC	modified Borda count
OUP	Official Unionist Party
PR	proportional representation
SF	Sinn Féin
SMS	short message service (texting)
TRS	two-round system
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

Introduction

'Words like 'winning' and 'losing' have to be banished from the political vocabulary of a plural society.'
Sir W Arthur Lewis (1965, 66-7).

Be it in the local community or in a national or even international forum, the democratic process should be a means by which all may participate in coming to an accommodation. This may happen directly, in the staff meeting, company board, neighbourhood association or whatever; or it may happen indirectly, as in the political sphere, via elected representatives. In the latter scenario, the collective will of those elected should, in theory, be a fair representation of the collective will of their electorate.

The procedures may vary. Participants may rely on a purely verbal process, or they may resort to additional practices such as straw polls and votes. No matter what procedure is employed, however, given the fact that the collective consensus or public opinion (if one exists) is fixed, the outcomes of whatever procedures should be (roughly) the same. Accordingly, in any debate, among any one set of participants, if there is such a thing as a best possible compromise waiting, as it were, to be identified, the process by which it is precisely described and defined should not too severely affect its final character.

In today's world, many people use the purely verbal approach, and the outcome invariably enjoys a fair degree of *overall consent*; this is called their consensus. Such a process can, however, be very protracted and in many international gatherings, talks often continue well into the night. Furthermore, such a process inherently

limits the number of participants. In other settings, many politicians and others use a process which is its opposite: a (simple or weighted)[1] majority vote. This methodology, however, can *not* measure the degree of *overall consent*; in fact, it measures the very opposite – so many 'for' and so many 'against' – the degree of dissent. These two procedures might well, therefore, produce two entirely different outcomes; so at least one of them must be an inaccurate measure of the collective will.

What is needed, then, is a voting procedure (a) which can be used by groups no matter how large; and (b) by which can be identified, even in the most fractious of gatherings, the best possible compromise (if, that is, one exists), or, in more congenial scenarios, the consensus if not indeed the collective wisdom.

Having first defined the democratic process, this article talks about how a discussion, if it is to conclude with a divisive decision-making process, can deteriorate into an argument. Next, it describes a more inclusive voting procedure, the nature of its vote and count, the psychological effects on those involved, and then the means by which can be measured the degree of *overall consent*: the so-called consensus coefficient (para 3.3). Finally, it lays out the structure for and benefits of a consensus debate.

The Democratic Process

In conflict resolution work, the professional mediator tries to avoid questions which are closed. Instead, in talks with all concerned, via questions which are open, she first identifies all the possible options. Next, in that which in political circles is often called shuttle diplomacy, she seeks the co-operation of the protagonists to tweak these various options, so to cater for the other participants. And then she tries to identify that option which is the most acceptable for all concerned.

Now in theory, the democratic process is the means by which problems can be resolved without resort to war. Violent decision-making processes are invariably based on closed questions: are you communist or capitalist? Serb or Croat? etc.. In contrast with mediation work, politics often relies on questions which are equally closed – are you left or right? etc. – because unfortunately, many people are 'imbued with the mystique of the majority,' (Dummett 1984, 178). The consequences have sometimes been horrific: not only has the democratic process sometimes failed to facilitate the resolution of a given problem, in the worst case scenarios, it has exacerbated the situation and provoked some to violence. As Sarajevo's now famous newspaper *Oslobodjenje* (1999) commented '…all the wars in the former Yugoslavia

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1   For definitions of various forms of majority voting, see 'A More Inclusive Voting Procedure', below.

started with a referendum.'

In theory, democracy is for *all* the people. If such is indeed the case, everyone has a responsibility to engage in a process of give-and-take with their neighbours. So decision-making should be win-win. Alas, for various historical reasons, it has evolved into an adversarial win-or-lose process, which is then justified by such exclusive concepts as the rights (a) of a majority to rule, and (b) of a minority to veto. It is thus true to point out, as did Carl von Clausewitz, that 'War is a mere continuation of politics by other means.' But it need not be so.

The Divisive Debate

In any society which aspires to be plural, on any contentious issue, there will always be, or there *should* always be, more than two options 'on the table'. On all sorts of questions – on structuring the next AGM, on drawing up a policy document, on choosing an annual budget, or, to take an example from abroad, on accepting a new Egyptian constitution – there are bound to be more than two possibilities… if, that is, the question has been asked correctly. There are of course a few exceptions, like the question: "which side of the road shall we drive on?" Yet even here, there may be more than two ways of voting. The only country ever to hold a referendum on this topic – Sweden, in 1955 – had three options on the ballot paper: "left", "right" and "blank", so to enable those committed democrats who were actually indifferent on this matter to just "go with the flow" (Emerson 2012a, 15).

In a court of law, on matters of right and wrong, there is often a case for a majority vote: is the accused guilty or not guilty? In other settings, many issues are not so intimately concerned with moral values, and day-to-day business in community groups, company boards, local councils and national parliaments is often less so. In such instances, the use of a majority vote may be inappropriate.

Take, for instance, the debate held in the International Olympic Committee, (IOC), when it was choosing the venue for the 2012 Olympics. There were five options on the agenda: London, Madrid, Moscow, New York and Paris. In such a setting, any single option majority vote – Madrid, yes-or-no? – or any binary choice – Moscow or Paris? – would have been rather unwise, causing all New York supporters, for example, to consider perhaps some rather dubious tactics of tactical voting. In a plural society, in a plural debate, therefore, the decision-making process must be multi-optional.[2]

Or consider another example: the 1997 debate in Wales on devolution. There were

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2   The IOC uses a knock-out system. Given the mathematical frailties of such a methodology, the results of all but the final round are not published.

three options on the table: independence (*I*), devolution (*D*) and status quo (*S*). Tony Blair decided the question should be *D* v *S*? *D* won by 50.3% to 49.7%. If, however, there had been a three-option referendum, if *I* had also been on the ballot, and if just 0.7% had voted for *I*, then maybe *S* would have won. The only *logical* conclusion of that vote, therefore, is not that the Welsh people wanted *D*, not even that a majority wanted *D*, it is that Tony Blair wanted the (majority of the) Welsh people to want *D*.[3]

In effect, then, majority voting is often a means by which an electorate can be manipulated; in many instances, the agenda both of the decision-making process itself and of the debate which precedes it, is determined by those who write the question. (The obvious exception is the citizens' initiative, as in Switzerland.) Little wonder, then, that the two-option majority vote has been the chosen instrument of so many dictators, from Napoleon, Lenin, Mussolini and Hitler to those of a more contemporary notoriety, Gaddafi, Duvalier and Saddam Hussein (Emerson 2012a, 143-50).

Debates on any topics posed as binary questions can be very divisive: the Irish referendums on divorce and abortion were classic examples.[4] Furthermore, the prospective use of a divisive process tends not only to divide the given electorate into two opposing camps; in many instances, it also causes divisions within those camps. If the final choice of options to be voted on has not been pre-determined, participants often argue in the hope that their particular option will be dominant on one or other side of the argument. Hence, for example, the split amongst one or other set of protagonists. Perhaps the starkest example of this occurred in the inter-war years in Germany, when 'the split between the Social Democrats… and the Communists… paralysed the political strength of the German working class when it alone could have barred Hitler's road to power… Stalin must be held to bear his share of responsibility for… Hitler's triumph.' (Deutscher 1982, 400-1)

In summary, then, if and when the subject of debate is complex and/or contentious, any proposed use of a majority vote may either create division or exacerbate existing divisions. What's more, it may well render powerless those who do not support either of the two given options: in the Croatian referendum in 1990, partners in and children of mixed marriages, those of other ethno-religious groupings and, most importantly, all those who might have wanted to vote for compromise were,

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3   The same argument holds even when the majority is much larger. In 1991, 99% of the people of Kosova voted for independence; but maybe a majority would also have supported integration with Albania.

4   Prior to the referendums, 'the debate became bitter and polarised' (Irish Government n.d., 126).

in effect, disenfranchised. A further disadvantage of majoritarianism is that it does not encourage participation. As the saying goes, turkeys do not vote for Christmas. In the Northern Ireland border poll of 1973, the Protestants voted, but the Catholics organised a boycott. Similarly, in 1990 in Croatia, the Serbs abstained; in the *Krajina*,[5] the Croats stayed at home. This picture was repeated all over the former Yugoslavia and in the Caucasus (Emerson 2012b, 158-9).

A More Inclusive Voting Procedure

There are many ways by which an electorate may choose their representatives – the UK's first-past-the-post (FPP), the French two-round system (TRS), proportional representation (PR), or even mixtures of the two – FPP plus PR – as in Germany. All of these methodologies are regarded as democratic. When it comes to decision-making, however, nearly everyone practices majority voting. It may be a simple majority vote, in which case the winner is that option with more than 50% of the valid vote; it may be weighted, such that a higher threshold, 67% or whatever, is required; it may be qualified, as in the European Parliament, such that different countries have different numbers of votes with again a minimum weighting overall; or it may be consociational, as in Belgium and Northern Ireland, such that votes are held in more than one electorate, and that, for a motion to be successful, majorities are required among both the Flemings and the Walloons, both the Unionists and the Nationalists. Sadly, there is indeed a 'mystique of the majority' not only among the politicians, for there is also *'a surprisingly strong and persistent tendency in political science to equate democracy solely with majoritarian democracy and to fail to recognise consensual democracy as an alternative and equally legitimate type,'*[6] (Lijphart 1999, 6).

In other words, in decision-making, the process is nearly always dichotomous, and the question is nearly always resolved (or not, as the case may be) by a binary vote or a series thereof. Other more plural methodologies – plurality voting, which is like FPP; two-round voting, TRS, which is a plurality vote followed if necessary by a majority vote; approval voting, in which participants 'approve' of as many options as they wish (but obviously not all); the alternative vote, (AV), which is a series of plurality votes, each round eliminating the option with the lowest score; and two other methodologies, the Borda and Condorcet rules, both of which do not restrict the voter's choice but allow the participants to cast all of their preferences. 'There are [therefore] two defensible procedures for aggregating votes: the Condorcet rule and the Borda rule. The Condorcet rule selects the option (if one exists) that beats each other option in exhaustive pairwise comparisons. The Borda rule selects

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5   Three areas of Croatia which, before the 1990 war, were inhabited largely by those of the Orthodox faith.

6   Lijphart is here talking of a consociational democracy.

the option that on average stands highest in the voters' rankings.' (McLean and Shepherd 2004, WII)

In other words, if either the Borda or Condorcet rules are to be used at the end of the debate, everything is 'on the table'. The methodology is inclusive, so the debate which precedes a Borda or Condorcet count need not be restrictive; secondly, there need be no splits among the various protagonists. The two rules are a bit like a sports league. If people want to identify the best football team, or the most popular policy, they can ask every team to play every other team or, after a preference vote, compare the popularities of the various options. In a Condorcet count, the winner would be the team which wins the most matches or the option which wins the most pairings; under a sort of Borda rule, it would be the team with the most goals, or the option with the most points. In most sports seasons, the Condorcet winner, the league champion, is also the Borda winner, the team with the best goal difference, but not always. Similarly, in many ballots, the Borda winner is often the same as the Condorcet winner.

The Borda rule is non-majoritarian, and is therefore the chosen methodology of this article. It is indeed a 'voting rule that captures the will of the voters,' (Saari 2008, 170).

The Vote and the Count

In the Modified Borda Count, (MBC),[7] as it is called, everything is 'on the table' and also, if need be in a short list, on the ballot paper. If there are five options on that ballot, and if the voter casts her preferences on all of them, her 1st preference gets 5 points, her 2nd gets 4, her 3rd 3, and so on.

Now she may abstain, or cast a partial ballot, or submit a full one. The rule for a five-option ballot is as shown in Table 1.

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7   In a vote on *n* options, the voter may cast *m* preferences, where $1 \leq m \leq n$. Points are awarded to (1st, 2nd … m^{th}) preferences cast according to the rule (*m, m-1 … 1*). Research suggests that this formula is actually closer to what Jean-Charles de Borda actually envisaged, when in 1771 he proposed that which has come to be known as the Borda count, (BC). (Saari 2008, 197 and Emerson 2013, 353-8.)

Table 1. Partial Voting in an MBC

He who casts only a 1st preferences gives his favourite only 1 point;
She who casts two preferences gives her favourite 2 points (and her 2nd preference 1 point);
He who casts three preferences gives his favourite 3 points (his 2nd preference 2 points and his 3rd preference 1 point);
and so forth; so best of all:
She who casts all five preferences gives her favourite 5 points (her 2nd preference 4 points, etc.).

In effect, then, the MBC encourages the voter to submit a full ballot. It can be used to identify the social choice or the social ranking, and the winning option(s) is (are) those with the most points. It should be pointed out that a voter's xth preference always gets one point more than his/her (x+1)th preference, regardless of whether or not he/she has cast that (x+1)th preference; there is no especial weighting.

The Psychological Benefits of Consensus Voting

No-one votes 'against' anybody or anything. Every voter votes only 'for', albeit with various degrees of enthusiasm. And if she does cast a full ballot, she definitely supports her favourite option in so far as she can, but she also states her compromise position. Even with her 5th preference, while admitting that she does not like it very much, she nevertheless acknowledges its validity and implicitly accepts, if this option is in fact the overall favourite, that she will support this outcome.

Meanwhile, in the debate which precedes the vote, the protagonist will know that success depends on getting a large number of high preferences, some middle ones perhaps, but very few low ones. It is therefore worth his while to talk to his erstwhile opponents, so to persuade them to give his particular option not a 5th but a 4th, a 3rd or even a 2nd preference. There is much to be gained, therefore, from being inclusive. Indeed, the MBC can be the very catalyst of consensus. That which, in a majoritarian milieu, is at best a dialogue, becomes a 'polylogue'.

The Degree of Overall Consent – the Consensus Coefficient

Consider an electorate of 100 persons casting their preferences on a ballot of five options. If all of them submit full ballots and all give option *A* their 1st preference, *A* will get a total of (100 x 5 =) 500 points. If at the same time everyone gives option *B* their last preference, then *B* will get a total of (100 x 1 =) 100 points. If all give *C* their 3rd preference, *C* will get a total of (100 x 3 =) 300 points, which is of course the mean. And if 50 voters give option *D* a 2nd preference while the other 50 give it a 4th, then *D* will get a total of (50 x 4 + 50 x 2 = 200 + 100 =) 300 points, the mean again.

Now consider another highly hypothetical scenario, again on five options. If all 100 voters give option *A* a 1st preference only, then *A* will get a total of (100 x 1 =) 100 points, with all the other four options getting a score of 0.

With the MBC, every option is given a consensus coefficient: for any one option, this is defined as the total score of that option divided by the maximum possible score it could have received. In the first example, option *A* gets 500 points which is of course, the maximum; so *A* gets a consensus coefficient of 1.0. Option *B,* meanwhile, gets a consensus coefficient of 100 / 500 = 0.2. While options *C, D* (and *E*) all get a consensus coefficient of 300 / 500 = 0.6.

In the second example, option *A* gets just 100 points, so *A* gets a consensus coefficient of 0.2, while the other four options get scores of 0. The consensus coefficient of any one option, then, is a measure, not only of the overall support shown for that option, but also of the degree to which the voters concerned have participated in the process of choosing that option.

With majority voting, as was noted above, people often tend to abstain, boycott or worse. With the MBC, in contrast, it is worth participating. If someone who detests option *A* abstains, the turnout is not as high as it otherwise would be, but the vote is almost always still valid, and the outcome still holds. If that individual participates and casts only a 1st preference for his own favourite, *B*, then *A*'s consensus coefficient will be less. So it is definitely worth participating. And, as noted above, if one is going to participate, to vote, then it is worth participating to the full.

The Analysis

If 100 persons are voting on five options, or even if only 10 people are voting, the chances of all five options getting exactly the same consensus coefficient are minimal. Something(s) will be above the mean, others below. If the winning option is way above the mean then, *ipso facto*, the others have much smaller totals, and so it is the winner. Indeed, if the consensus coefficient is very high, above 0.8 say, it may be called the 'near unanimous position'; if a little less, 0.75 – 0.8, perhaps 'consensus' is the better term; if less again, 0.7 – 0.75, then maybe 'the best possible compromise' is the appropriate description. And if it is even less, between 0.6 and 0.7, then obviously, some if not all of the other options have rather similar scores, in which case it must be assumed that there is no consensus. Accordingly, this last ballot may be regarded as a straw poll, and the debate resumed on those options on which it might seem an eventual agreement may be more likely.

There is one further advantage to the MBC. In a majoritarian milieu, options are sometimes regarded as mutually exclusive opposites – as in the closed questions

noted above, are you communist or capitalist? Serb or Croat? – (even though there is often much in common between the supposed opposites: in the words of A P Semenov-tian-shanski, the former dichotomy talks of two creeds both 'grounded in base self-interest', (Weiner 1951, 35); the latter refers to persons both Christian and Slav).

In consensus voting, when there are, say, five options on the table, not all five can all be mutually exclusive of all the other four. In which case, if two options are neck and neck but well ahead of the rest, then it might be possible to form a composite of the two (para 4.1).

As noted above, there is likely to be a degree of compromise from the protagonist, as he tries to woo his erstwhile opponents; there will often be acts of compromise from the voter, as she seeks to give her favourite the maximum score; and now here too, in the final analysis, there may well be further scope for compromise, an essential component, this author argues, of a successful inclusive decision-making debate.

A Consensus Debate

Consider the scenario: a problem has arisen, a decision needs to be taken, and so a meeting has been called. When the people gather, they take their seats in what is a three-sector circular or horseshoe arrangement, with a computer screen placed, as it were, at the horse's heel. The chairperson is seated in the inner circle in one of the sectors, a time-keeper is in a second sector, and a team of three consensors – three elected, non-voting and impartial 'referees' who are to assist the chair – are in the third. The chair opens the proceedings and reminds all concerned that, in order for a decision to be enacted, a minimum consensus coefficient of, let us say, 0.65 is required, as per standing orders.

If a draft resolution has already been submitted, and if any proposed amendments have been forwarded (in the form of complete policy options, even if the proposed amendment relates to only one clause), the consensors will display a summary thereof both on the computer screen and, if appropriate, on a dedicated web page.

After an optional moment's silence, the chair will ask for the first speaker to take the floor. Each speaker will be given a certain pre-determined time allocation, and the time-keeper will indicate that he/she is free to speak via a green light, that 30 seconds remain (amber), and that time is up (red). There will be one further light on top of these 'traffic lights', a question-mark light, (see below), operated by the consensors.

The debate commences. If a speaker proposes yet another alternative resolution, the

consensors will add this to the list, as long as it, like all the others, is relevant and complies with a pre-agreed norm such as the UN Charter of Human Rights.

If at any time the consensors feel that a speaker has erred on some historical fact, has misquoted another participant, or has been disrespectful to another person, they may switch on the 'question-mark'. The chair will immediately halt proceedings, seek a clarification if need be from the consensors, and then an explanation if not a correction and/or apology from the speaker. The advantage of such an arrangement is obvious: you cannot shout out a light. Such arrangements may only be necessary in really fraught circumstances;[8] there again, it is always advisable to have a 'fire-extinguisher'.

As the debate proceeds, the consensors' list may get a bit longer. That said, if there comes a time when all, including the original proposer(s), are agreed that a certain draft resolution may now be withdrawn, or that two or more may be formed into a composite, then the list might actually get smaller.

If, at the end of the day, there is only one draft resolution on the table and computer screen, this may be taken to be the outcome, a verbal consensus. In most scenarios, such a conclusion is highly unlikely. In the event, then, that there are still a number of drafts under discussion, the chair may call for a preference vote. The consensors' list of drafts will be presented to the participants, either as a full albeit edited list, or if the topic is very complex and the list quite long, as a short list to represent the full debate. In such settings, the optimal number of options on the ballot is between four and six.

The chair now asks all concerned if every party present is content that their particular proposal has been included in the final list, if not verbatim then at least in composite. When that is agreed, everyone proceeds to the vote which, in this day and age, could easily be done by SMS. On a five-option list, the options may be lettered *A, B, C, D* and *E;* so the voter merely zaps in his/her preferences: *A* 3, *B* 2, *C* 0, *D* 1, *E* 0, or maybe just 3-2-0-1-0.[9] The consensors now display both the voters' profile and their social ranking, and then, once they (the consensors) have come to a collective agreement on the outcome, the voters' social choice.

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8   They were first deployed in a public meeting in Belfast in 1986, just one year after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, when tensions in society were high. Over 200 participants were present; they included members of the Official (now Ulster) Unionist Party (OUP, UUP) and Sinn Féin (SF), as well as everything in between and even a few from outside that spectrum: the political wing of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA); and all this, still eight years *before* the cease-fire.

9   The author first used electronic preference voting in another cross-community meeting in Belfast in 1991.

Composites

To take a very simple example, if the debate were on the subject of dog licences, if the two most popular options were for £5 and £10, then the consensors might well decide on a composite answer of £7.50. This depends on two factors, however: (a) on whether the two most popular options, if placed on a 'cheap-expensive' spectrum, were adjacent; and (b) on whether the social ranking was a single-peaked curve, that is, on whether all the other options further from the peak were of decreasing popularity (Emerson 2007: 22-3).

As noted above, the Condorcet rule is also a very accurate measure of the collective will. Little wonder, then, that in many profiles, the MBC winner will also be the Condorcet winner; indeed, on some occasions, the MBC and the Condorcet social rankings will be similar if not identical. But not always. In order to ensure that the outcome of a debate is indeed an accurate measure, it is suggested that both a Borda and a Condorcet count should be undertaken. If the two outcomes do coincide, all concerned may rest assured, the outcome does indeed represent the collective will. If not, the chair might consider a resumption of the debate.

Conclusion

In the human condition, it sometimes happens that we ourselves determine that which then determines us. If the decision-making process is to be adversarial, the preceding debate will probably be equally adversarial, and the consequences perhaps even more so. If, however, the decision-making process is to be inclusive, then the debate itself will also be more inclusive, and civilised. Furthermore, the outcome of that debate and decision-making process will be a much more accurate representation of the collective will. That is, it will be more democratic.

The *principle* of majority rule is fair. As this article has shown, the *practice* of majority voting, however, both use and abuse, is often unfair. On uncontroversial issues, a majority vote may indeed be taken. If and when a minority expresses reservations, however, and/or when the topic is complex and/or contentious, a multi-option preference vote, MBC, may be the necessary catalyst of a successful debate.

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BOOK REVIEW

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Interculturalism: The New Era of Cohesion and Diversity
By Ted Cantle
Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, October 2012
Paperback, 264 pages, £19.99, ISBN: 9781137027467

Ted Cantle in his book *Interculturalism: The New Era of Cohesion and Diversity* argues for the need to re-evaluate and reconceptualise the current usages and understandings of the term multiculturalism, declared to have failed by a number of prominent politicians in Europe. Instead of clinging to the established but questioned term multiculturalism, he provides a critique of multiculturalism and argues for a relatively new term, interculturalism (first used by the Baring Foundation in 2008), and explains this fresh concept in the course of his book. In his work, Cantle emphasizes the increasing effects of globalisation on world states, seeing 'super diversity' as an inevitable effect of an increasingly globalised and multicultural globe. He argues that interculturalism 'provides the opportunity to replace multiculturalism... to develop... a new positive model which will underpin cohesive communities.' The chapters in the book include 'Globalisation and "Super Diversity"', 'Reforming the Notion of Identity', 'The "Failure" of Multiculturalism', 'The Contribution of 'Community Cohesion', 'Segregation and Integration—And Why They Matter', 'Interculturalism: Conceptualisation' and 'Interculturalism: Policy and Practice'. Before he defines the new term 'interculturalism', Cantle explains that the concepts of 'interculturality' and 'intercultural dialogue' were long in use, although they were mistakenly used in the past synonymously (143). He notes how interculturalism was previously seen as complementary and an addition to multiculturalism.

Cantle addresses a shortcoming of multicultural policy, namely the presumption that cultures are fixed and unchanging, arguing that interculturalism is and will be replacing these essentialist conceptions of culture and difference, and will utilise a language that will include concepts such as 'interaction', 'interdependency', and 'interconnectedness'. These words may allow interculturalism to be defined by a more 'practically-orientated definition', taking it beyond the debates in the academia, and potentially avoiding fears of it turning into a 'melting pot' scheme to assimilate cultures into a single homogenous cultural identity. In articulating what interculturalism entails, Cantle argues that while multiculturalism is tied to past debates about migration and defined by them, interculturalism should be

'clearly separated from the past'; it should be 'future-orientated', 'based upon a vision of what societal relationships we aspire to' (173). Another distinctive aspect of interculturalism is that it is not based on the premise that each individual has a single, unchanging identity; rather, interculturalism accepts that individuals should not be obliged to merely define themselves by their gender, nation, or religion, as it should be 'perfectly possible to hold several conceptions of ourselves' (174). These different but interlocking conceptions of our selves do not have to define us 'in equal measure', but they can definitely coexist simultaneously as components of our selfhood and identity.

If we look at Cantle's work from a critical angle, there are two key related questions that researchers in the field of multiculturalism may ask after reading *Interculturalism: The New Era of Cohesion and Diversity*. The first critical question that can be posed by proponents of multiculturalism is whether the belief is warranted that the notion of interculturalism will evade those pitfalls that Cantle associates with multiculturalism. Whether or not interculturalism will merely repeat the legacy of multiculturalism with its shortcomings under a new label will only become clear if interculturalism is indeed chosen as state policy in lieu of the multicultural model.

Secondly, academics who still support the idea of multiculturalism, both as a set of policies and as a lived reality, may argue for improving on the current level of multiculturalism, rather than starting anew with a concept such as interculturalism. They may enquire why we need to discard an established notion in favour of a new one. Again, Cantle explains his rationale for interculturalism very well, arguing that it addresses the need to understand and embrace 'super diversity' and the changing and heterogeneous identities of each individual in the globalised societies we live in. However, it still remains as an open question whether it is not possible to mend the inadequacies of the British multicultural model, given that Cantle himself praises other successful models, such as the Canadian model of multiculturalism.

Nevertheless, Cantle argues that interculturalism should not be thought simply as a 'set of policies and programmes'. He quotes Auckland City Council's report from 2006, saying that interculturalism 'is about changing mindsets, creating new opportunities across cultures ... to support intercultural activity ... it's about thinking, planning and acting interculturally.' He argues that interculturalism is more about 'the creation of a culture of openness which effectively challenges the identity politics and entrenchment of separate communities, based upon any notion of "otherness".' He further describes interculturalism as a 'dynamic process', in which 'diversity and globalisation are recognized as permanent features of society, to be embraced, rather than feared.' In the book's detailed analysis of the concept of 'interculturalism', Cantle explains the intercultural model from various angles, successfully presenting the reader with a vision of interculturalism.

BOOK REVIEW

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Democracy in Motion: Evaluating the Practice and Impact of Deliberative Civic Engagement
Edited by Tina Nabatchi, John Gastil, G. Michael Weiksner and Matt Leighninger
New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, November 2012
Paperback, 336 pages, $27.95/£22.50, ISBN: 9780199899289

This important book gives a masterful and manageable overview of practice and research in the increasingly extensive and diverse field of deliberative civic engagement, understood as 'processes that enable citizens, civic leaders, and government officials to come together in public spaces where they can engage in constructive, informed and decisive dialogue about important public issues' (7). It succeeds admirably in its goal of providing 'a concise, yet comprehensive summary of what we know, how we know it, and what remains to be learned' (6).

The book addresses a series of questions emerging from the 2007 Deliberative Democracy Consortium conference and ensuing discussions. Each question is addressed in one chapter by students, researchers and practitioners, on the basis of an extensive review of relevant literature. The book is presented in four parts. The first part introduces deliberative civic engagement and the book's project before going on to map the field, exploring who is doing deliberative civic engagement, for what reasons and in what contexts. The second part explores questions about the process and design of deliberative civic engagement, while the third looks at issues related to outcomes and evaluation. The final section comprises a chapter looking directly at key criticisms of deliberative civic engagement and responses to these, and a concluding overview of key findings from the previous chapters and directions for further research.

The authors unflinchingly examine criticisms of deliberative civic engagement, challenges faced by practitioners and gaping gaps in the research that might prove and enhance its worth. They affirm, though, that evidence shows that when well executed deliberative civic engagement can have educative effects, help mitigate inequality, considerably increase community capacity, and have impacts on policy. The promise of deliberative civic engagement, supported by the evidence to date of positive outcomes, is seen as ample reason to continue to explore and improve it via the diverse elements of further research proposed in the book.

The book offers an immensely useful overview of the state of the field of deliberative

civic engagement and of research into that field. The last twenty years has seen a great proliferation of case studies, primers, research articles and books in this area, but with this proliferation came a growing need for a piece of work to meaningfully draw these disparate findings together and identify the gaps. This book fulfils that crucial role. It is at once comprehensive and reader-friendly, with discrete chapters of a manageable length and helpful cross-referencing between them. It is based on comprehensive research into questions determined through an appropriately deliberative process. As you might expect given that process, the book deals with a good range of pressing questions; any practitioner working in this area will undoubtedly exclaim excitedly over the contents page. Highlights include a timely detailed consideration of online deliberation options and a subtle analysis of the multifarious evidence about whether deliberation makes better citizens. Chapter 10 is a particularly notable contribution: it proposes a detailed practical evaluation tool, suggesting methods for assessing key aspects of diverse deliberative civic engagement projects. The comprehensiveness and flexibility of this tool, which helpfully includes low-cost, minimal evaluation methods for low-budget initiatives, could make it an invaluable common framework for what will be a crucial element of future research. The authors are clear-sighted and comprehensive in identifying areas requiring further research. Useful identifications of gaps in existing research are given throughout (the book is positively bristling with potential PhD topics) and key research directions are helpfully drawn together in the closing chapter.

Because the field is so complex, the foci of existing research so various, and the book so concise given the ground covered, there are times when one feels in slight doubt over whether a criticism has been adequately answered by the counterargument provided, or a point convincingly demonstrated by the research cited. Happily the referencing is generally comprehensive enough to make it easy for the interested reader to follow these points up herself. While seeking to include examples from different contexts, the book has a pronounced focus on the USA and Canada. This is natural, since even such an ambitious project has limits of scope and much of the much of the most relevant research comes from those countries. In the 'Mapping the Field' chapter, though, international readers might have appreciated a little more geographical variety in the survey of relevant organisations, or further signposting to activities in other regions.

Inevitable imperfections aside, the overwhelming impression made by this book is that it is a unique and invaluable resource. It will be a great help to practitioners seeking to develop better-informed, reflective practice, and to those in the public sector new to deliberative civic engagement but intrigued by its possibilities. It provides an unparalleled overview of what has been discovered so far about what deliberative civic engagement can achieve, as well as helpfully mapping out the field, clarifying the different aims these practices might serve and exploring the complexities and challenges serious practitioners will encounter. It will also be an indispensable starting point for anybody considering research into deliberative civic engagement and offers much guidance and inspiration to those concerned with the intimately connected nascent field of Dialogue Studies.

The Journal of Dialogue Studies is a multidisciplinary, peer reviewed academic journal published twice a year. Its aim is to study the theory and practice of dialogue, understood provisionally as: meaningful interaction and exchange between people (often of different social, cultural, political, religious or professional groups) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding. The Editors welcome vigorous discussion of this provisional description, of dialogue's effectiveness as a means of increasing understanding, and of other fundamental questions. The Journal brings together a body of original scholarship on the theory and practice of dialogue that can be critically appraised and debated. It publishes conceptual, research, and/ or case-based works on both theory and practice, and papers that discuss wider social, cultural or political issues as these relate to the evaluation of dialogue. In this way, the Journal aims to contribute towards establishing 'dialogue studies' as a distinct academic field (or perhaps even emerging discipline).

The first issue is intended to help set the parameters for 'dialogue studies'. The call for papers raised questions including the following:

- What arguments might there be for (or against) developing 'dialogue studies' as a distinct academic field (or perhaps even emerging discipline)?

- What are the implications of doing so?

- How might 'dialogue studies' be of use to academics, policy-makers and practitioners?

- What do we mean by dialogue, dialogue theories and dialogue practices?

- Where along the spectrum of fields is this field best placed?

The Journal is published by the Institute for Dialogue Studies, the academic platform of the Dialogue Society. For further information and instructions for paper submissions, including the Journal Style Guide, please visit www.dialoguesociety.org/journal.