



JOURNAL *of* DIALOGUE STUDIES

Special Issue

**Critical Dialogues:
Dialogue and Conflict Resolution**

Guest Editors:

Dr Mustafa Demir

Prof Deborah Dunn

Prof Simon Keyes

Prof Ian Linden

Prof Oliver Ramsbotham

Dr Oemer Shener

Prof Paul Weller

2019

Volume 7



**INSTITUTE
for
DIALOGUE
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The Journal of Dialogue Studies is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed academic journal published once 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.

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Editorial Introduction

We are delighted to present a special issue of *The Journal of Dialogue Studies* to our readers. This special issue addresses dialogue as a means of conflict resolution under the title of '**Critical Dialogues: Dialogue and Conflict Resolution.**' As a tool of conflict resolution, dialogue can take on many different shapes and can be moulded to respond to each conflict. In some cases, it becomes a tent that gives shelter to both sides, creating an environment of peace and security; in some other cases, it becomes a ship that saves the parties from the results of the conflict. In all these shapes and forms, dialogue constructs an aura facilitating parties to settle their incompatible differences.

In this issue we have 15 papers critically addressing the role of dialogue/s in resolution of different types/forms of conflicts, from military to inner (psychological and psychosocial) conflicts of individuals. This special issue highlights four themes related to the concept of *dialogue*. These are:

1. Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict
2. Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding
3. Dialogue, Conflict and Education
4. Dialogue and Conflict in a Changing World.

In **Part I** we have four papers addressing the theme of **Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict**. Mike Hardy and Serena Hussain's paper focuses on Intercultural Dialogue (ICD) in relation to practitioners' understanding of the concept. The paper, based on structured interviews conducted with 52 delegates at the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue held in Baku in 2015, critically examines the main concern of the critics whether 'ICD contributes towards unequal platforms for exchange between minorities and the majority group and can reinforce exclusion.'

Michael Ogunnisi's paper is an attempt to find a solution to violence in dialogic encounters of young people. He utilises a praxis which he calls 'Young People Peace & Change'. It is drawn from community-based research conducted in two different cities in England. The article introduces a new concept called 'Photovoice' to 'provoke consciousness and action...that actively seeks to help young people identify, understand and transform pressing issues and challenges of peace in their everyday lives.' The paper argues that solution to violence between young people lies in 'common concerns and aspirations for peace, which can be elicited by bringing them safely into dialogue.'

Michael Atkinson in his paper sets his sight on ‘intergroup dialogue.’ He focuses on the concept of ‘difference’ and ‘bridging of difference.’ He mainly benefits from the ideas of Paulo Freire and critically applies this emerging frame to some conflict situations and underlines that the frame ‘fails to appreciate and interrogate difference and its role in the dialogue process.’

Lisa Gibson’s paper explores ‘the role of citizen apologies and forgiveness in citizen diplomacy efforts in transnational conflicts.’ She critically approaches the assumption that conflicts and efforts at resolutions are exclusive to the state and highlights the role of non-state actors and ‘citizens.’ She also underlines ‘citizen apologies and forgiveness,’ as opposed to apologies by state leaders, as ‘important tools of citizen diplomacy and peace-making efforts.’ Through this frame she looks at cases involving Bosnia/Serbia and Libya/America.

In **Part II** we have four papers addressing the theme of **Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding**. Among them, Professor Ramsbotham’s paper is on Hans-Georg Gadamer and ‘philosophical hermeneutics’ that inspired the United Nations millennial ‘dialogue of civilisations’ initiative. In this paper he comes up with a constructive critique of Gadamer’s approach and makes suggestions about how it can be supplemented and become more effective ‘in circumstances where otherwise it does not yet gain purchase.’ The second part of the paper aptly and critically looks at the attempts to apply what he calls ‘Gadamerian hermeneutic conflict resolution’ to some existing ‘intense asymmetric and intractable conflicts,’ such as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. He finally concludes by suggesting how hermeneutic conflict resolution can be supplemented and revised in the light of this critical approach to ‘Gadamerian hermeneutic conflict resolution’ so that the ground can be prepared even in the most intransigent phases of conflict for its initiation or revival.

Lucía Mesa-Vélez in her paper puts conflict in Colombia and related peacebuilding efforts under the microscope. She particularly focuses on the works of *Rodeemos el Diálogo* (Embrace Dialogue, ReD), the Colombian peacebuilding organisation. After discussing causes of violence, she turns her focus on ReD’s notion of a ‘culture of dialogue.’ From a critical perspective she explains how ReD understands the ‘culture of dialogue’ and why it has the potential to resolve conflict in a non-violent way and resolve ‘colonial-inherited inequalities and oppressions.’ She finally suggests that ‘to resolve Colombia’s violence it is necessary to address the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being taking place.’

Rafael de Araujo Arosa Monteiro and Marcos Sorrentino contribute to this special issue with a paper focusing on dialogue between a non-governmental maritime conservationist organisation and artisanal fishermen from the coast of São Paulo (Brazil). The paper examines how this dialogic process between these two parties

developed into an environmental education process. The paper benefits from a synthesis of the ideas of Martin Buber, David Bohm, William Isaacs and Paulo Freire on dialogue and draws on analysis of documents and semi-structured interviews.

The emerging theme in **Part III** is **Dialogue, Conflict and Education**. The first paper in this part is Owen Logan's article. Owen Logan focuses on children caught in conflicts between parents. He critically analyses the concept of 'parental alienation' for 'children involved in high-conflict divorces or separations.' The paper 'locates practical issues associated with parental alienation in the historical desire of eighteenth-century enlightened despots to win the inner consent of their subjects.' Looking at some empirical cases and data the paper argues a 'vertical power axis transmitting and perpetuating despotism at the family level'. He further argues that 'problematic professional responses to parental alienation (PA) which subordinate truthfulness to the goal of reconciliation call for vertical and horizontal reforms to ethically strengthen the role of dialogical truth.'

Adam Peter Lang contributes to our issue with a paper on the 'Prevent Duty,' Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, and its impact on English secondary schools. He examines 'what has succeeded and what has not yet been succeeded with the "Prevent Duty" in English secondary schools.' In analysing education policy, the paper adopts a Foucauldian approach and contextualises this at global level by reference to Pankaj Mishra's book, *An Age of Anger*.

D. Beth Macy's article referring to David Bohm looks at 'aspects of effective dialogic interventions' into problems/conflicts. The paper highlights three aspects of effective dialogic interventions, 'dialogue, whole-system involvement, and identification of systemic issues' and argues that '[w]ithout partnership of these three aspects, the real problem often hides in the crevices, leading interveners to focus on the wrong problem and to further solidify the original conflict.'

The last theme in **Part IV** is **Dialogue and Conflict in a Changing World**. As the first paper of this part, Angela Marcela Olarte Delgado's article is the second paper overall that focuses on the Colombian conflict. Angela scrutinises 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' initiatives that emerged followed the peace agreement signed between the government and the largest guerrilla group in 2016 to contribute to the peacebuilding process. Marcela successfully and critically examines 'the different characteristics that have shaped dialogue-based practices when they are produced under a top-down and a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding.' She finally concludes that 'in a post-conflict society, dialogue coming from the top down will take longer in accomplishing positive peace, rather than the dialogues that have emerged from the bottom up, which could be the engine to social mobilisations and the way to capitalise on social skills in achieving justice, truth, and reconciliation.'

David Goldberg in his paper titled 'Prophecies of self-determination and the authority of the word: The era of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance', takes the issue of self-determination in the context of the Holocaust, international law and human rights. While dealing with sensitive issues regarding the 'inhabitants of Israel/Palestine', the paper discusses the relevance of the IHRA definition in the current political climate, by utilising concepts such as 'myth' and 'tropes'.

Preston Evangelou discusses how the Biblical chapter of Lamentations conceptualises the concept of the 'abstract comforter.' He does this by utilising the Winnicottian notion of a holding environment. The paper argues that Lamentations becomes the locus of catharsis through the expression of grief and solves the problematic of losing the 'abstract comforter.' By making use of both Winnicottian notions and the Hebrew Bible, the paper establishes a dialogue between the two.

As the final paper of this part, Kate O'Lone contributes to the discussion from a different angle. From a psychological perspective, she explores the concepts of dialogue and 'transfer' in conflict settings and examines the issue of 'effectiveness of dialogue interventions', questioning 'why positive dialogue effects at an individual level (i.e., the micro level) sometimes fail to motivate future positive behaviour in the local social milieu (i.e., the meso level).'

We hope these papers and the critical application of relevant theories will help to provide new and useful insights for theorists and practitioners of Conflict Resolution and contribute to peace building efforts.

Dialogue in a Rapidly Changing World: Practitioner Assessments of the Potency of Intercultural Dialogue for Improving Social Cohesion

Mike Hardy and Serena Hussain

Abstract: In 2008, the Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs set out a new framework for approaching ethno-religious diversity within member states. As a direct response to expressed concerns about the failure of multiculturalism, or at least of multicultural policies, Intercultural Dialogue was promoted as a better way of connecting communities. However, critics claim it is unclear how the approach differs from previous integration frameworks; furthermore, they argue that ICD contributes towards unequal platforms for exchange between minorities and the majority group and can reinforce exclusion. This paper examines such concerns by exploring practitioners' understanding of the concept. Structured interviews were conducted with 52 delegates at the *World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue* held in Baku in 2015. These distinctive findings demonstrate that participants frequently discussed ICD interchangeably with other concepts and frameworks, most commonly multiculturalism and inter-faith dialogue, supporting claims that it has been difficult to define, even among practitioners attending a global summit on the topic. In addition, delegates from outside of Europe were more likely to highlight issues related to power imbalance when engaging with dialogue processes. The paper provides an important addition to empirically informed literature on both the conceptualisation and utility of ICD as a framework for engaging with diverse societies.

Keywords: Interculturalism, Multiculturalism, Diversity, World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, Cohesion

Professor Hardy is lead adviser to the World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue in Baku and directs the RISING Global Peace Forum at Coventry. Professor Hardy was appointed a Companion of Honour of St Michael and St George (CMG) in the Queen's Birthday Honours, June 2010, for his work internationally in Intercultural Dialogue. He is a trustee of Faith and Belief Forum and Chair of the Board of Directors of the US-based International Leadership Association. Prior to 2011, he was with the British Council with responsibilities for the Council's cultural relations programme for intercultural and interfaith dialogue, youth engagement and so-called 'soft-power' global strategic partnerships; his diplomatic work included postings, in Egypt, East Jerusalem, and Indonesia. His current work focuses on human security and peacefulness, specifically on living with difference and with inter- and intra-community relations.

Dr Serena Hussain is a Sociologist and Human Geographer. As Associate Professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, she is the Course Director for the MA in Global Diversity

Introduction

In 2008 the Council of Europe Ministers for Foreign Affairs published the *White Paper of Intercultural Dialogue*. It is commonly referred to for its definition of Intercultural Dialogue (ICD), an approach promoted for dealing with the ethno-linguistic and religious diversity in contemporary Europe (Lee, 2016). The Council of Europe (CoE) describe ICD as

an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. [...] It operates at all levels – within societies, between the societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world. (CoE 2008, 10-11).

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue also took place in 2008, demonstrating a commitment to the ideas and proposals within the White Paper.

In many respects the European Union (EU) has been concerned with core elements of the ICD framework since its very inception. During the post-World War II era, Europe has prioritised dialogue among its representative nations as a means through which to secure peace and maintain goodwill (Phipps, 2014). Furthermore, encouraging what Hansen (2000, 53) describes as ‘popular cohesion’ across EU member states and their populations has been crucial for the success of European cooperation. Aman (2012, 1012) identifies, ‘the disappearance of the Soviet bloc, Germany’s reunification and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty’ as driving forces in reinvigorating the objective of European social cohesion, of which ICD became the most recent promotional instrument.

Although establishing and maintaining long-term functional relationships within the continent may have been the initial motivation for ICD, even before it was coined as such, concerns at the forefront of public and policy debates on managing Europe’s diversity have shifted within the last twenty years. The changing demographics of member states, with their increasing numbers of non-indigenous ethnic-European citizens, coupled with concerns over security have fuelled debates on how to encourage

Governance. Her principal research interests are Muslim Societies and South Asian Diasporas, with a focus on Jammu and Kashmir. She completed her PhD in Sociology at the University of Bristol and went on to obtain an ESRC Research Fellowship in Geography at the University of Leeds. She then held a post-doctoral Fellowship at the University of Oxford, where she remained a Visiting Senior Research Associate in the School of Geography until 2013. Before joining the Centre for Trust Peace and Social Relations, she acted as the Principal Scientist on International Migration and Multiculturalism at Charles Darwin University in Australia.

popular cohesion. In light of porous borders within Europe, intra-state dynamics become the concern of all EU countries.

The White Paper and accompanying Year of Intercultural Dialogue took place at a time when previous models for diversity governance came under increasing scrutiny. Multiculturalist policies had fallen out of favour with many politicians, who asserted that these had allowed and encouraged minorities to engage in behaviour deemed to be un-European. Such accusations about multiculturalism ranged from the direct discouragement of migrants from learning English in Britain, to the promotion of terrorism (Wright, 2011); one result was Angela Merkel publicly announcing the 'death of multiculturalism', producing a watershed moment in European integration policy (Sarmiento 2014, 607).

The White Paper was very much in line with this narrative, stating, 'The breakdown of dialogue within and between societies can provide, in certain cases, a climate conducive to the emergence, and the exploitation by some, of extremism and indeed terrorism. [...] Only open dialogue allows us to live in unity in diversity' (CoE 2008, 16). Therefore, the promotion of ICD within Europe was a response to a political climate in which a new form of diversity governance was thought to be necessary.

The framework also received attention elsewhere. In 2008 the Government of Azerbaijan at a conference of Ministers of Culture with participation of both European and Islamic states initiated what became known as the 'Baku Process' based on the 'Baku Declaration on the promotion of Intercultural Dialogue' – to promote dialogue between civilisations. In September 2010, at the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of Azerbaijan declared the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue to be held in Baku, the first in 2011, then every two years (2013, 2015 and 2017). This was primarily developed as a means for promoting greater understanding and cooperation between historical empires and contemporary challenges associated with globalisation. Azerbaijan saw itself as being uniquely positioned to develop a platform for ICD between continents and world religions. Sitting at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, Russia and the Middle East, Azerbaijan is part of the CoE; as a majority Muslim nation it is a member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation; and as a former Soviet state it has the legacy of a cultural association with Russia. At the first World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue (WFID), ministers from some 20 countries were present alongside more than 500 foreign representatives. It has continued every two years, increasing in size with each forum.

Yet despite the enthusiasm with which ICD has been promoted as a method firstly for dealing with complex issues related to intra-state diversity and secondly for considering the challenges posed by globalisation for inter-state dynamics, it has come

under criticism. A key concern when discussing the currency of ICD is the difficulty its proponents have in articulating exactly how it differs from previous models; both in terms of its definition as well as its practical implementation (Hardy and Hussain 2016).

This paper for the first time draws on fresh evidence and discusses findings from research conducted as a direct response to such criticisms. In 2015, interviews were carried out with 52 attendees at the 3rd WIFD in order to explore how ICD was understood as a concept, as well as its perceived utility among policy makers and practitioners. In doing so, the paper provides a very distinctive insight into how actors with an interest in the framework understand ICD and whether it complements or competes with more well-known approaches such as multiculturalism. The next section provides an overview of the developments that led to ICD's promotion as a tool for integration, before going on to discuss findings from the study.

Context: The Emergence of the Intercultural Approach

The United Kingdom has provided a useful context for observations: an important shift has taken place from state multiculturalism to a discourse on interculturalism (Lentin and Titley 2011) as part of what are framed as 'social cohesion' agendas. In the United Kingdom, multiculturalism had become a coded way of discussing the promotion of racial difference. Events such as 9/11 and the UK 'race riots' of 2001 were seen as the tipping point at which the (superior) liberal majority could no longer accept racial minorities deviating from their norms (Lentin and Titley 2011, 30) and thus, multiculturalism, as articulated by then-current multicultural policies, was deemed a failure for not adequately integrating minorities. As a response to this perceived failure, politicians scripted a new set of non-negotiable 'British values' which would promote nationhood in the face of the alleged racial crisis (Kundnani 2007). Thus, British values were intended to promote common ground over ethnic/religious/racial differences.

Liberalism had thus been presented as the universal to which everyone should assimilate (Kundnani 2007). Depending on how well racialised minority cultures were able to do so, groups were ranked and judged on their level of integration. The approach was developed as a direct response to UK New Labour's recommendations for 'community cohesion' following disturbances in northern English towns and cities in 2001. These involved angry local conflicts across cultural divides.

The concept of community cohesion had become the centrepiece of British policy as reports had identified a lack of community cohesion as the critical factor in the disturbances. The central argument for this self-segregation thesis, was based on evidence from Bradford, Burnley and Oldham that identified peoples who lived

together in communities but without exchange or contact – living so-called ‘parallel lives.’ It had first been articulated in the Ouseley Report and was incorporated into the 2001 Report, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*, as well as subsequent government reports into the 2001 disturbances.

The reports drew conclusions about the benefit of contact and meaningful interaction and led to the development of a new approach to race and community relations.

Community cohesion is widely criticised as crude and divisive not least because, as Lentin and Titley (2011) demonstrate in their comprehensive study, the burden of integration lay on minority communities evidencing their adoption of the so-called British values.

While the events of 9/11, the 2001 riots, and later the 7/7 London bombings provide some context for the perceived need for a new integration framework, several other developments led many politicians and academics to question whether multiculturalism was still relevant for Europe’s contemporary challenges. The increased rate and speed of migration within the twenty-first century has led to new ways of explaining population trends, such as superdiversity, which is both quantitatively and qualitatively different from previous eras (Vertovec 2010, 83). The new speed at which both people and information travel has led to a more diverse range of individuals and communities coming into contact in person and virtually. Näss (2010, 3) explains, ‘the level of public awareness concerning cultural exchange on a global scale has entered a new stage’. Consequently, stakeholders are also becoming more interested in divergent ways of living with and experiencing the world.

Increased contact and interest in cultures has also led to the growth of academic enquiry into what is meant by culture and what constitutes cultural identities (Brubaker 2004; Jenkins 2008; Wimmer 2008). One notable area of development within this is ‘interculturalism’, influenced by the work of Brah (1996) and Gilroy (2004) who have stressed the impact of diasporic identities, and Parekh (2000) who helped understanding of how a diversity dividend can result from the coexistence of different cultures. Interculturalism is discussed as a process of moving cultures into a space for joint experience and learning, which deemphasises and even rejects rigid distinctions. This idea of identities and cultures being constituted through social (inter)action, and therefore multiple and fluid rather than singular and bound, is pivotal to the transition from multiculturalism to interculturalism.

Xu (2013) argues that by disrupting the notion of essentialised identities and cultures, the focus shifts from boundaries, where difference is articulated, to a shared space of interaction and knowledge production. He writes,

Intercultural dialogue and relation, rather than the ontological difference between cultures, should be the focus of the intercultural communication research. It is not the difference between cultures, but the situated dialogue, relation, and interculturality between them, that makes better understanding of each possible. (ibid., 385)

This is not to say that difference is ignored, but that the emphasis is not just on encounter, but importantly on exchanges and co-engagement; these together provide the opportunity for co-learning. Therefore, the intercultural space is one which transgresses cultural identities.

The shifts in both political circumstance and conceptualisations of culture and identity are at the heart of the ICD approach within European policy. Acknowledging that 'Identity is a complex and contextually sensitive combination of elements', the CoE's emphasis on the need for increased understanding of the complexity of individual and group identities through communication, encounter, and dialogue is indeed warranted (CoE 2008, 18). Yet in reality, any meaningful attempts at promoting open dialogue, particularly in the form of policy on integration, have simply not occurred. 'Community cohesion' was widely criticised for doing the very opposite, as discussed above.

Certainly, there has been a move away from the promotion of ethnic distinction through emphasising British values. However, this is argued to have disempowered minority groups rather than providing them with opportunities for encounter and open dialogue (Kalra and Kapoor 2009; Kundali 2011; Meer and Modood 2012). In keeping with this very apparent contradiction, much of the literature on ICD has grappled with how to ensure opportunity for meaningful exchange as equals, within what was essentially a framework developed to integrate ethnic 'others' into European values. The next section provides an overview of the key debates within the literature on the implementation of ICD as an approach for promoting intergroup exchange.

Discussion of Intercultural Dialogue As an Approach Within the Literature

Utility

A key issue discussed within the literature on ICD is the existence of power imbalances within dialogue processes. Given not all cultures are viewed equally, the dynamics of privilege are present during intercultural exchange between groups (Asante and Miike 2013). Furthermore, the intercultural approach is argued to be in and of itself a form of Western hegemony, promoting European values such as individualism and rationality. These criticisms have produced extensive academic inquiry into the

conceptual foundations of ICD, as well as its practical applications.

Ganesh and Zoller's (2012) paper provides a good introduction to the ways in which conflict and tension are incorporated into discussions on dialogue. They describe three features of dialogue: the first is collaboration, which views 'dialogue as a special form of communication involving consensus, collaboration, equality, and mutual trust' (p. 70). The second is dialogue as co-optation, which, 'warns about the possibility that dialogue can be manipulated, co-opted, and limited by state, corporate, and other powerful agents' (ibid., 74). The third is the agonistic approach, which views 'radical democracy' as emerging 'out of difference, conflict, disagreement, and polyvocality' (ibid., 77). In this view, a certain degree of disagreement facilitates, rather than impinges on, the potential for dialogue to create new meaning. Further, such disagreement can, in itself, help to address the power imbalances implicit in the dialogue (Ganesh and Zoller 2012, 77). It is this final approach that is meant to define ICD as different from others – exchange for its own sake, allowing for the accommodation of disagreement, without a need for consensus (Hardy and Hussain 2016).

Phipps (2014) supports Ganesh and Zoller through her work on ICD in conflict settings. She argues that it is crucial for dialogue to engage with power imbalances. If this is not a feature of ICD, any exchange will simply perpetuate global inequalities 'by focusing attention away from that inequality and onto perceptions of cultural difference in such a way as to avoid political and ideological issues' (ibid., 112). Here, Phipps argues that the EU's form of ICD is only applicable to situations of stability and peace, criticising the application of this approach in situations of enduring conflict, such as Afghanistan and Gaza. Viewing ICD as a political slogan, she discusses how it is attached 'to anything to give it a false aura of effectiveness' (2014, 110).

The question raised by Phipps' critique, then, is how useful ICD is if it cannot be applied to situations outside of Europe; and even within Europe, only to those in which power differentiation is minimal. Highlighting similar concerns are Asante and Miike (2013), who argue that ICD is distinctly lacking in non-European perspectives on, and approaches to, dialogue. Baraldi (2006) echoes such views by arguing that intercultural communication is not only Eurocentric, but a means of exporting European culture across the globe. If such concerns are to be taken seriously, careful consideration of the applicability of ICD as a generic approach for positively promoting intercommunity relations must be undertaken.

Definition

Another key area of concern with ICD is that it has been difficult to both meaningfully define and measure. A recurring point is the broad range of meanings attributed to it

(Ludwinek 2015). At a policy level the ICD agenda includes integration, education, youth, culture, sport, and foreign affairs (ERICarts 2008, 6). Yet different government departments interpret and promote ICD in a variety of ways, creating incoherence in policy which both feeds into, and is a consequence of, the lack of definition noted in both academic and practitioner level (Näss 2010; Agustin 2012).

The most frequently used definition of ICD in policy is that laid out in the aforementioned CoE's White Paper. It outlines five policy approaches to ICD: democratic governance of cultural diversity; democratic citizenship and participation; learning and teaching intercultural competences; spaces for intercultural dialogue; and intercultural dialogue in international relations. However, this too is both broad and vague, evidenced by the array of programmes and initiatives which quote it as both inspiration and justification (Phipps 2014).

Theoretically, ICD has also been interpreted and constructed in contrasting ways. Sarmiento (2014) conceptualises ICD as incorporating a shift away from the 'Other' and onto the self. In this view ICD is a communicative interaction in which one comes to understand the relational self. In this way, difference is present and acknowledged, but not essentialised. On the other hand, Xu outlines the work of several ICD and communication scholars who view difference as problematic for effective communication and indeed as a source of conflict (Xu 2013, 379-383). However, the most noteworthy criticism of ICD is that it could be equally applied to many existing practices used to facilitate intercommunity understanding, including those associated with multiculturalism such as cultural sharing experiences; or interfaith dialogue engaged with by members of different faith groups coming together for a shared purpose (Levey 2012; Meer and Modood 2012). This has led some scholars to argue that ICD has not in fact added anything of notable value in terms of novel theoretical breakthrough or practical application (see Hardy and Hussain 2016).

It is a direct result of such debates that the study presented within this article was undertaken. Research was conducted to explore how ICD is both understood and implemented among practitioners from across the globe in order to engage with the debates outlined above. The next section describes the methodological approach for the study before going on to discuss findings from the research.

The 'Baku Process'

The Baku Process seeks to create a solid foundation to help mobilise ICD for concrete transformative action. It does so with the foundational belief that while the superdiversity characterising contemporary communities at once represents a significant policy challenge, it also offers real benefits. Launched in 2008, the Baku Process has for more than 10 years worked to create a positive platform for an open

and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, living on different continents, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. Convened every two years, the Baku Process' seminal event is the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue. Organised by the government of Azerbaijan in partnership with UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, UNWTO, the CoE, ISESCO, and, in 2017, the UNFAO, the Forum convenes a senior and influential cross-section of academics, practitioners and policymakers to focus on how dialogue within and between diverse communities has the potential to create tension but also to build understanding. In exploring this, and related themes, the Forums have sought to strengthen and broaden the conceptual basis and operational definition of ICD in order to achieve a real sense of global application, moving from a suggested Eurocentricity or 'Western' focus to embrace wider socio-cultural contexts and genuinely universal values.

The Forums have encouraged more discussion of working within and between cultures to promote contact and exchange that reinforces the benefits of diversity and peaceful coexistence. To date, the Forums have largely validated the definition of ICD as a process focused on finding commonalities between people with different cultural backgrounds, essential for bridging the intercultural discord and social fissures of our times. Further, discussions at the Forums have sought to move beyond the conflict-based approach that has dominated work on intercultural relations and dialogue, to focus on innovation, performance, and improvisation that might help to highlight the dividends of inclusive ICD.

Therefore, the WFID provided an ideal setting to explore how practitioners understand the concept of ICD, as well as its utility.

A group of seven trained field researchers conducted interviews with fifty-two participants over four days. As the fieldwork took place during the forum itself, many were conducted in lunch and coffee breaks, as well before and after conference dinners. However, it was also fairly common for delegates to sit out of sessions and this was a good opportunity to recruit participants. As a result of the circumstances under which the interviews took place, they lasted an average of twenty-five minutes. An information sheet about the study was sent to all delegates by email prior to the conference as well as being included in the delegate welcome packs, meaning that most participants were already briefed about the study before being approached by the researchers.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to allow participants to discuss topics they felt were relevant. This was crucial given the nature of the event at which they were gathered, as it was anticipated that discussions would arise from forum content or interactions between delegates. However, the interviewers did ask some

core questions, which were designed to address issues highlighted within the literature set out above; while being non-prescriptive so that participants could interpret and discuss without being led by the interviewers' definitions. The four questions asked of all interviewees were:

- What are your reasons for attending WFID?
- What are your expectations?/Is the forum what you were expecting?
- What is your understanding of ICD?
- Do you use ICD in your own work and, if so, how?

The majority of interviews were carried out in English; however, it should be noted that this was not the first language of most delegates. Based on the availability of the researchers, interviews were also conducted in French, Russian, Urdu and Azeri. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and, where necessary, translated into English for analysis. Transcripts were read by four of the original interviewers, who then met in person to discuss and agree upon a list of nodes to be used for analysis in NVivo. The next section discusses the findings.

Discussion of Findings

This section provides an overview of the findings, which can be divided into three main themes. The first offers an insight into how participants defined and understood ICD. The second theme demonstrates clearly how the delegates sought direction for employing ICD as a toolkit or framework – a key motivation for attending the forum. The third focuses on experiences of the forum, such as sessions, topics and debates with other delegates.

Definition and purpose

Discussion on what ICD was featured in forty-two interviews. Among these, nineteen respondents described ICD in a way that broadly fit with the CoE definition, as set out in its 2008 White Paper. The quotes below are examples of these:

Intercultural dialogue is a step, the first step to building understanding and tolerance; building a more cohesive community. If we understand more about the other, we'll understand more about ourselves and in the end create a positive change. It's something we need to constantly work at. The movement of people is so big. [DR14]

[ICD is important because it] helps improve our understanding of each and every one of us. [It] is going to help promote a better quality of life for all. Improving understanding, promoting interdependence, that kind of thing.

[DR13]

It should be noted that respondents were not asked directly about the CoE definition, nor was it offered as description to be agreed or disagreed with. Many purposes for ICD were discussed within the interviews, ranging from economic growth through to developing tourism. However, ICD as a facilitator of peace and peace building, or as a tool for preventing conflict, featured within forty-seven interviews. This is an interesting trend in light of debates within literature about the utility of ICD in conflict zones (see Phipps 2014):

After the end of World War II, the kind of political arrangement to establish peace and prosperity among people with the rising of conflicts around the world does not suffice. [BA17]

[Helping us to understand] our commonalities rather than just looking at the differences. Common shared human values...and once we know that there is connectedness between ourselves, this will be the beginning of dialogue. The beginning of peace and stability across the world. [DR7]

An additional five delegates discussed ICD but stated that they did not feel they had enough understanding of the concept to be able to provide a definition. One respondent stated,

I think [there] needs to be a definition of what ICD is because I don't think there [has been] a discussion of what [it] actually is...the term has not been really defined. [BA23]

Practitioners described ICD as a response to diversity, and this is how it featured in terms of their own work. In other words, diversity was discussed as a reason for having or requiring ICD. When interviewees talked about ICD and multiculturalism, they did so without any meaningful distinction. Interfaith activities and concerns around multi-faith societies featured most frequently as context in which ICD was employed, with an emphasis on engaging with the Muslim faith in particular, when discussing a general need for ICD. Respondents referred to *interfaith* more often than *intercultural* even when asked directly about examples of how they use ICD in their work.

I think it is so important to have a sensitivity and understanding of others. I don't see an alternative other than through dialogue. I think it plays out on different levels. I was very much involved 20 years ago and served as President of the Interfaith Conference in Washington which on a local level would bring together Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Sikhs in a pretty developed interfaith network. It is still operating.

It could well be that culture is believed to encompass faith and this was seen to be

obvious by respondents. In other words, faith is part of what makes a group's 'culture' and therefore ICD is understood as an umbrella term for various forms of intergroup dialogue. This is certainly in keeping with the way culture is defined by many theorists, encompassing multiple markers that provide meaning and distinction to a group, including faith, common myths surrounding heritage, language and geography, for example (Nagel 1994; Jenkins 1997; Eriksen 2001).

Yet, how ICD as a distinct *concept* differed from other approaches for dialogue and exchange was not ever explicitly set out by respondents, hence the interviews did not help with any clear route to a conceptual shift in terms of how ICD differed from multiculturalism or interfaith dialogue. This is in keeping with a key critique highlighted within the literature (Meer and Modood 2012).

Reasons to join discussions of ICD

This leads us to our second theme of why delegates attended the forum. Most respondents discussed joining WFID as a result of working within a relevant area. In some cases, this was more abstract, such as ambassadorial staff who had been asked to attend as a result of engaging with other nationalities as part of their role; however, for others it was much more explicit, such as frontline NGO staff working within diverse communities to promote intergroup relations. Approximately half of the interviewees stated that they expected to gain better theoretical understanding of ICD, or practical ways in which ICD could be implemented, as a result of attending the forum. There was therefore a clear desire for greater guidance on how ICD can be employed in their work. This was viewed as a missed opportunity on the part of several respondents, as illustrated by the quote below:

What I expect is that we should crystallise and formalise some solid ideas. A lot of religious figures and politicians sit together; they can get the formula of how to start solving instead of just participating, travelling here and there and gathering. [BA23]

What I heard yesterday was much more high level, dreamy – 'we think we know what we're going to do but we've never actually tried it'-type statements. [CS26]

But I think here each country should be given an opportunity, maybe 5 minutes even, to deliver their ideas, their experience, and their requirements about ICD. [CS52]

The findings therefore demonstrate that ICD was discussed positively by respondents and believed to be a way to promote intercommunity relations. It was explained and understood in its most literal sense – encouraging different cultural (religious; racial)

groups to engage with each other. This was put forward as having the potential to resolve large-scale global conflicts as well as neighbourhood squabbles. Yet, how to actually go about encouraging greater dialogue between groups was left open for suggestions, and it was clear from our findings that practitioners sought guidance on how to implement ICD as a framework or toolkit for this very purpose.

ICD in formal and informal space

There were two related themes that emerged from the findings on delegate experience of the forum. The first reflects debates within the literature on power dynamics within dialogue, which was discussed in relation to forum sessions. The second related to experiences of delegates outside of sessions, within the informal space of the coffee breaks, the bus rides to and from hotels and the conference venue, and over dinner. Therefore, there were two types of ICD taking place, within the formal forum sessions and that among delegates coming from different countries, societies and organisations, during informal interaction.

Representation

While participants did not tend to address the issue of power inequality using terminology found within the literature discussed in section two; ICD and inequality was highlighted in many of our interviews through discussion of elitism between different circles of delegates. The comments of participants who mentioned elitism and the perpetuation of hegemony suggested an awareness that the lack of recognition of inequality can be a hindrance to the effectiveness of dialogue, particularly in the way that knowledge of the powerful elite is perpetuated, rather than disrupted or challenged when dialogue is not inclusive. The data provides evidence which supports Asante's view that even if the intercultural was a sort of third space, it would still be 'power-laden, not power-free' (2013, 8). The following quotes are significant in that they demonstrate a divergence in thought and practice as to the key objectives of ICD, and the pre-requisites for it taking place:

We need also to speak to the others, not only to ourselves, because all the attendants of the forum are almost experts and [there is] no intercultural dialogue from different point of views. We need to speak to all the public all over the world.

[It is] The same people. The same eight or nine people saying the same things again and again. [CS51]

More time needs to be given to the participants who have travelled from their own countries here, not only to listen but also to contribute [BA15]

We could have more than 100 countries to join this with rich and poor

countries. We, we are poor so if we are poor, we are poor at everything including communication and this is even more important for us for the poor countries to have this chance. We need to discuss poverty. How can we integrate the poor into this process? Not just my country but other countries. And even if there are people from the poor countries who are they? Are they connected back with the poor people in their countries? Is this message coming from or going back to the poor people in these countries? If it's just policy makers and law makers, but what about the poor? When you become rich everyone wants to know you. When you are poor you aren't given the same value for your dialogue.

These quotes do not demonstrate a lack of attendance or interest, but rather a lack of time and space to voice ideas. This may indicate that particular culturally situated perspectives on dialogue are not as valued or are not thought to be a part of the more mainstream conceptualisations. One participant, reflecting Asante, noted the lack of African epistemology. Commenting on a presentation at the forum, he stated,

Though he [the speaker] was from Africa, his epistemology was not from an African perspective and that to me is still a lacking issue and we need to change.

The concern over African representation was noted in a number of interviews and was particularly poignant in the following quote which highlights the perpetuation of dominant voices in knowledge production:

In all this inter-cultural divide, Africa is missing. There is a very significant absence of Africa. For some of us, we feel that at the end of the day, Africa will then become the implementation ground, yet it is not part of the process, and that to me is the downside. [CS12]

Again, this indicates some hesitation regarding the range of perspectives and voices heard at the WFID. A similar concern was voiced by a number of participants over the lack of youth representation, as represented by the following quote:

I think we need to involve more youths from different backgrounds because I believe that the future is in the hands of the young people.

The quotes remind us of one of the reasons ICD came into existence: to increase intercultural encounters and therefore understanding, in a time of 'superdiversity' and thus increased interconnectivity. However, participants' reflections raise the question of whether, even at a global forum established to provide a platform for ICD, it is possible to provide the level of interconnection needed to address the issues in the contemporary world it claims to be able to.

Networking

Linked to the concern over lack of inclusivity and range of voices is the question of dialogue itself. As discussed, the issue is not just one of presence or attendance, but of participation and inclusivity. This demonstrates that participants, as advocates for dialogue, view dialogue as the means through which different perspectives and ideas are brought into conversation. One of the most positive aspects of the conference reported by respondents was the opportunity to network with other delegates. This was hailed by many as the most valuable form of ICD that took place:

We need to talk to each other. It's an intercultural forum. Without having the sessions, it is a dialogue event of sorts. Networking and talking to people that you never get to talk to. Even that is breaking the barriers without the sessions.

It is mainly the relationships. Networking and relationships. But at the same time, I got to know other aspects of what others are doing all around the world and we need to think about it, to study it, to try to grasp it and to find better ways to conduct what we are doing.

I want to share my knowledge and my learning in the field that I'm working in and to reconnect with a lot of people that I know in the industry and also build some networks that I might be able to develop some stakeholder relationships with.

Being able to share with other practitioners was paramount for many of the respondents. Learning occurred through exchange of ideas and experiences. Furthermore, potential for building productive relationships and collaborations was viewed as an expectation that was successfully met by the forum.

Conclusion

This article discusses findings from research that was conducted at the largest gathering of practitioners of ICD. In doing so, it engaged with some of the key debates that feature within the literature on ICD. Among respondents who offered a description of ICD, less than half provided one that fit with the CoE definition. Delegates engaged with both academic and practical work used the concept of ICD fluidly, with participants rarely referring to ICD on its own, and most frequently doing so in relation to interfaith or multi-faith activities or agendas. This suggests that ICD was interpreted by practitioners as being interchangeable with other concepts such as interfaith dialogue.

Yet, the question that begs to be answered here is: should it matter? Xu (2013, 386) writes, 'Intercultural understanding through dialogue suggests that through communication people create meanings that did not exist before the interaction

and go beyond the monologue of one particular culture's discourse/ideology'. If practitioners recognise ICD as the promotion of dialogue with the aim of creating greater intergroup understanding, their conceptualisation is in line with Xu's. It could therefore be argued that whether practitioners of ICD refer to the work they engage in as 'interfaith' or promoting 'multiculturalism' is a matter of semantics. However, even if this is accepted by critics of ICD, findings from the study clearly provide evidence that concerns highlighted in the literature are valid. A particularly significant finding was that representation in and of itself was not enough. Lack of representation was noted, particularly from Africa, the Indian subcontinent and South America, as well as youth organisations and those with little prior knowledge of ICD. So, importantly, the evidence shows that if ICD is to deliver its claims, an inclusivity which goes beyond representation must be developed. The incorporation of perspectives from a variety of cultures, epistemologies and social groups in conceptualising ICD, as well as designing initiatives, is imperative if the approach is to have validity. The findings from the study therefore very much echoed the literature on the necessity for this.

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Photovoice: A Focus on Dialogue, Young People, Peace and Change

Michael Ogunnusi

Abstract: This paper explores how dialogue was introduced by the author through a model of praxis called 'Young People Peace and Change.' It was developed through community-based research, and further supported by evidence from school-based youth work, with young people in two cities in England. The paper focuses on the role of dialogue as part of Photovoice, linked to the duality of our praxis to provoke consciousness and action. It is an exciting and innovative theory-driven approach that actively seeks to help young people identify, understand and transform pressing issues and challenges of peace in their everyday lives. The work emerges from the belief that part of the solution to young people and violence is embedded in their common concerns and aspirations for peace, which can be elicited by bringing them safely into dialogue. Furthermore, the project seeks to cultivate real change by helping young people to 'speak' and self-advocate through a range of methodologies including photography, photo-elicitation and public engagement, to inform youth serving systems. 'Young People Peace and Change' has been awarded and recognised for successfully engaging a significantly vulnerable community of young people (including those at risk of violence). It has great potential for replicability and wider implications for practitioners, students, policy makers and research.

Keywords: Dialogue, Photovoice, Youth work, Young people, Circle process, Everyday peace

Introduction

Young People Peace and Change (YPPC) is shaped by dialogue, Photovoice, and a common interest in a better society. The methodology works directly with young people who are marginalised, socially excluded, and overlooked, including those at risk of becoming involved in violence, such as knife crime. Participants are asked to share, and critically reflect on, photographs they have taken, to examine issues of peace they may face in their lives. The process actively moves from individual to collective understanding, supporting young people to think, dialogue, exchange, and work together, to promote their concerns and aspirations for peace. It is commonly recognised that young people have a right, and a need, to learn about peace. Less emphasis is given to how young people actually understand and experience peace, especially in situations in which peace may seem hidden in the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life. In this context, YPPC is a form of participatory action research, drawing heavily from a Freirean dialogue-based approach to critically engage with

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questions of peace in young people's everyday life. The paper highlights what has been learnt about 'aminating' dialogue in circles, building trust, and an epistemological awareness of dialogue – both 'as' knowledge for action, and 'in' knowledge for action in the world. Key questions that frame the chapter include, 'How does dialogue provide intersecting and disruptive spaces of pedagogy, research and practice such as youth work?' And, more specifically, 'How can dialogue support a pedagogic hope and applied practice for peace with young people, especially those who are vulnerable, at risk, socially excluded, unheard, and overlooked?'

YPPC is a form of participatory action research (Kindon et al. 2007; Glassman and Erdem 2014) that combines a mixed methods approach. I am very tempted to refer to it as 'Dialogic Photovoice,' although the term is tautological. This is because there is real need to understand and emphasise the significance of dialogue in Photovoice, which has not necessarily been highlighted in prior literature. Photovoice has been widely used and reviewed (Delgado 2015; Sanon, et al. 2014; Catalani and Minkler 2010; Hergenrath et al. 2009). Photovoice is a visual research methodology that builds on Freire's pedagogy. Its origins are attributed to the feminist theory of Wang and Burris, (1994, 1997) who pioneered the method with marginalised women in rural China.

The three main goals of Photovoice are:

- To enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns.
- To promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs.
- To reach policymakers. (Wang and Burris 1997, 369).

Within YPPC, young people are asked to take photographs that represent peace in their everyday life. These images are then used to inform interviews and stimulate group dialogue with a view to systematically generating knowledge, whilst reinforcing the viewpoint of those being researched. The method is heavily influenced by Freire's problem-posing dialogue, whereby dialogue is used as a mechanism for 'raising consciousness, vision, and transformative action' (Brandmeier 2011, 357).

It is important to note that, Freire (1972, 1974) explains violence as perpetuated through structures of oppression. He expresses this ontologically as any act that denies us our natural ability to reflect and act in the world. Freire posits that this diminishes our belief in our own agency, making us increasingly susceptible to oppression. YPPC fully adopts Freirean dialogue as a genealogy of resistance, achieved by raising critical consciousness from within the affected community (Ardizzone 2003; Bajaj 2015) –

who in this instance are young people.

In his early work, Freire used schematised images, such as photographs, drawings, posters, as a 'point of reference' (Freire 1974, 143). The idea is that when contextualised images transmit complicated ideas and experiences. In YPPC the photographs taken by young people offered applicable, tangible, immediate, and accessible forms of information. Their visual meaning was not negated by language and literacy. Asking young people to present their world as 'seen through their own eyes' helped them to experience validation of their own knowledge and expertise. In turn, this supported those who might be most 'influenced by the myth of their own ignorance' (Freire 1974, 109). Furthermore, when we interact with images, we use different parts of our brain than when engaging verbally or with text (Harper 2002). In YPPC, this enabled broader and freer thinking, including that which participants may be less conscious of. As such, the young people's photographs generally led 'to a new view of their social existence' (Harper 2002, 15). This is understood as 'breaking the frame' and offers something very useful to dialogue. As previously stated, the young people selected which of their photographs they wanted to discuss in interviews and groups with other participants. In keeping with Freirean philosophy, I facilitated these meeting places (Freire 1974) as actively collaborative and power sensitive. The aim was to open up dialogue for knowledge and critical consciousness, whereby, young people are encountered as 'experts' of their own social worlds (Young 1999) and as agents of social change.

It is cardinal to understand the relations of transformative dialogue are grown and 'cannot be forced' (Boise 2008, 177). The next section will highlight four key things that I have learned as part of YPPC.

What I learned

Circle containers

YPPC purposefully utilises circles as a given space, or container, for dialogue (Senge 1994). When considering a dialogic approach to peace using Photovoice, this remains consistent with Galtung's 'self-reinforcing peace cycles' (2009, 30), and the transformative 'culture circles' of Freire (1974, 42). Circles provide a great opportunity to move communication between individual and collective thinking. The space calls for a need to work with difference and collaborate with others. It is also stretched by the dynamics of social interaction. As observed by Lewis (2002, 4), 'From the beginning it is clear. Everyone has something to offer. There is true equality of opportunity in a circle. There is no back row, no alphabetical order, no strategic placement. Responsibility is shared.' The uniqueness of circles as spaces for communication and learning is compatible with Freire's assertion that we only move

towards our true humanity and transformative potential when groups are comprised of 'loving, humble, hopeful, trusting, critical' (1974, 42) relationships. The principles listed below, for the prescriptive nature of circles as containers, are common to the praxis of Freirean pedagogy, Photovoice, and youth work:

- 'Equality' 'Democracy' 'Inclusion' and 'Choice' by which no-one is encouraged to dominate the process.
- 'Safety' through freedom to (not) speak, and an emphasis on collaboration rather than competition.
- 'Respect' as non-violent action and empathic communication, including a lack of shaming or blaming.
- 'Positivity' and opportunities for 'Agency.' (adapted from Roffey and McCarthy 2013, 39).

During YPPC, circles were limited to groups of six young people to allow each participant to have a voice and be heard. Research and projects centred around dialogue can be lengthy. This is often typified by protracted communication, trust building, and reaching consensus about shared meaning, findings and actions (Strack et al. 2004; Delgado 2015). Smaller groups can make the process less taxing, and aid engagement and retention.

YPPC progressed through four phases each time the circles were established. This involved 'Opening/Check-In, Presentation of the Issue, Sharing/Discussion of the Issue, Closing' (Lewis 2002, 6). The process was supported by a set of open questions adapted from the 'SHOWeD' schedule, frequently used in Photovoice with young people (Strack et al. 2004; Johansen and Le 2012; Royce et al. 2006; Delgado 2015). Establishing routines of practice can help to develop trust and ease in the circle, especially for young people whose everyday lives might be 'anything but predictable and orderly' (Middleton 1998, 103). During each of the sessions, the significance of the circle remained constant. Furniture was moved to set up circles in rooms. Groups were asked to retain and tend their circle. After breakout activities, and breaks from the project, we always returned back to the circle. Even when sessions were disturbed by other young people or adult staff, the young people retained their circle. This became an important indication of ownership.

Building trust, building depth

When working with young people, it becomes apparent how quickly they determine who is trustworthy, relevant and relatable. This process becomes even sharper when young people have reason not to trust adults, such as young people who feel marginalised or misrepresented by adults. As part of its design, YPPC established a

number of interactive activities to encourage co-learning by which participants become more familiar with me (as the facilitator), each other, and the space of the container. Building trust and dialogue in circles is underscored by the intersectional influences of everyday life. These can include identity, culture, roles, personal attributes, associations, shared characteristics, and perceptions about power (Hollander 2004). I found that ongoing reflexivity, and the ability to read situations in the group, was essential, including sensing the nature, feel and flow of the nuances and subtleties of non-verbal communication. We all carry the unpredictabilities of everyday life when we enter into situations of dialogue. This also shapes how we communicate inside the container, that is, who feels able to speak, when, and how; and how consensus is reached.

It is both ethical and practical to discuss the purpose and demands of work with young people at the start of the projects. This is done in YPPC, while actively generating a sense of unity and purpose (Strack et al. 2004). To support this, group activities (such as icebreakers and role plays) are introduced early on. Early sessions focus on the mechanisms of using a camera and camera care; the ethics of photographing others; 'ways of seeing photographs' as a way to send messages 'about' and 'for' peace; and the implications of the participants' photographs being used as 'educational tools' for stakeholders, policymakers, professionals, and other young people, in the local community and beyond' (Wang and Burris 1997, 379). Being engaging and interactive helps build rapport that settles into open and non-formal dialogue. Encouraging participants to recognise and hear their own voices, and those of each other, can be empowering, especially for those people who feel their voices are often unheard, silenced or muted. This requires that adults deliberately allow the container to be a young person's space, and not submit to the desire to fill silences, smooth awkwardness, or simply react to what is heard. Freire calls this listening from the heart and it is only possible when predicated by a deep trust in people's capabilities for knowledge and action. In YPPC, this means valuing and prioritising young people as valid producers of knowledge. It also means that young people 'used their own ways of speaking to articulate their shared understanding of how their world came to be like it was and how to act to change their future' (Ahmed and Rugut 2013, 25). This is the start of a commitment to horizontalised, rather than asymmetric, power dynamics by which facilitators actively strive to create a greater balance of power in the group. Evidence suggests when circles are participatory, non-judgemental, and sensitive to situated knowledge and power, they have an emergent potential to transform conflict in ways that are empathic, creative and non-violent (Bickmore 2011; Vaandering 2014). This has particular significance when we approach circle communication, both as a conduit and vehicle for peace.

Alternatively, it is clear that some groups will lack cohesion and struggle with listening

and staying focused. In YPPC, certain participants regularly spoke over each other, and others did not expect to be listened to. We explored this, including broader questions about the young people's shared commonalities of not being heard, understood or valued. It is vital to recognise the ongoing challenges presented by the visibility of communicating in circles. This can be daunting, especially for those young people who are not accustomed to speaking or being actively listened to. Not all participants will be comfortable or willing to share their true feelings and thoughts as part of the group process, especially with the additional effect of public scrutiny. Such factors make it essential for the principles of communicating in a circle to be modelled with young people, rather than assumed. Participants might have no experience of working together, and/or in ways that are characterised as dialogic or collaborative (Strack et al. 2004). Within YPPC, agreements about communicating in the circle were 'young-people-centred.' Instances of real conflicts in the groups, or experiences of being minoritised within schooling, and so on, were useful to demonstrate how conflicts escalate around incompatibilities based on our needs, feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Being open to conflict, and conflict-literate, can help strengthen mechanisms for dialogue by allowing consensus for a lived mutually respectful and safe(er) space.

Over the course of YPPC, participants were able to review and share how well they thought they had worked individually and collectively. They became visibly more relaxed with one another, and those seemingly lacking in confidence became more proactive and spoke more frequently. Further indications of trust were demonstrated by a tendency for participants in each group to disclose very personal events: for example, young people spoke openly about having Asperger's, being in care, their struggles with mental health, family breakdown, family members with drug dependency, siblings being imprisoned, experiences of sexist-racist-gendered-Islamophobic discrimination, being mugged, stabbed, targeted bullying, etc. Participants also said they felt able to 'reflect' and 'share sides of themselves' that are often misunderstood or ignored. Pastoral staff and learning mentors, who sat in for specific parts of the sessions, reported being struck by the open non-judgemental dialogue in the groups. It was recognised that nurtured trust and openness allowed young people to talk openly about their experiences, language, behaviour, and strategies for peace in their everyday life. In summary, I found that building trust not only contributes to dialogue, it is essential, especially for the type of dialogue (championed by Photovoice) that strives to move past and challenge the normalcy of how we see ourselves, others and society. This asks us to reframe the question, 'Will dialogue build trust?' and to consider instead, 'How does trust build dialogue?' It is telling that in YPPC, when I asked groups in schools, 'When did you last experience peace?', a consensus emerged by which they agreed, 'Right now, discussing our feelings and being allowed to express ourselves.'

Knowledge for action: wording peace with images

YPPC opened dialogue as ‘knowledge for action’ by asking participants to create points of reference for peace (as mentioned earlier) by wording peace as part of their everyday life. When sharing these verbally, the group could sense and hear the strength of the emotion expressed through certain ‘generative words’ (Freire 1976, 51). These were understood as expressions of what they were really concerned about and interested in. Young people’s drawings were then used as ‘codifications’ (Freire 1976, 51) to represent their situation with regard to peace. Dialogue helped them communicate and question their values, beliefs, socio-cultural positionality, and shared norms. This is understood as encouraging participants to think structurally (Chonody et al. 2013), whereby young people are asked to consider peace, and the knowledge of peace, in conjunction with power, as being systematically structured in their lives. This dialogue was later supported by photographs taken by young people to express and share how they understood generative themes of peace and its related issues. Over 572 photographs were taken by participants. They then selected which of their photographs they considered most significant for interviews and communication in circles. These photographs helped generate a sense of ‘pride and ownership’ (Strack et al. 2004, 52) and helped young people to convey their understanding of peace.

Open questions adapted from the ‘SHOWeD’ schedule (Shaffer 1983; Wang and Burris 1994) elicited knowledge about the stories and messages of the photographs, in addition to what was prioritised or might be excluded and hidden. When certain participants struggled to articulate the complexity of their experiences and ideas, their images helped them to structure, articulate, and often deepen their production of knowledge.

Fig 1. An example of participant photography and accompanying extract:



This picture reminds me of myself: hope, darkness, parts missing. There's hope in the light shining and darkness at the bottom. The darkness shows a lack of peace. It resembles sadness and anger. The light is hope, hoping for better and being happy. A peaceful feeling. (Ismail, aged 15)

This initial stage of the dialogue allowed a move from descriptive analysis to interpretive 'issues, themes, or theories' (Wang and Burris 1997, 380). Commonalities formed across the groups regarding what they learnt for peace from their families and significant others such as youth workers. Young people also started to thematically reconcile their unfamiliarity with peace language and explicit cultures of peace, with micro expressions of peace as something embedded in their lived experience. For example, findings highlight how young people understood peace negatively, as what to avoid, such as negative people, fighting, gangs; and structural violence such as discrimination, lack of freedom, and 'warmongering.' They also shared common narratives about prescriptive ways to think and act about and for positive peace. This was illustrated by a distinct and shared focus on ways to sustain social togetherness by being critically self-aware of how we understand difference, and approach our differences, in society. Finally, young people also identified a range of tactics that helped them to act for peace in their everyday life. This finding emerged strongly through dialogue, which helped young people to scrutinise their conscious relationship with particular structural barriers to peace in their daily lives; or what Galtung (2000) refers to as structural 'fault lines.' For example, the (British) politics of war, understood to be wilfully militaristic, discriminatory, hegemonic and adultist. Also, poor teacher-pupil relations are conceptualised structurally as inhumane and neglectful gateways to school exclusion and consequent gang-risk for young people.¹ Likewise, certain participants identified how their community environment perpetuated systemic cycles of gangs and gang-risk as socially destabilising. These examples of critical problem posing served to complicate and frustrate young people's concerns and aspirations for peace.

By identifying structural and cultural barriers to peace, young people gave themselves opportunities to think and act beyond certain limits which curtail their life (Freire 1974). It is indicative of a collective knowledge and critical conscious that accepts we can move away from internalised cultures of helplessness, hopeless, inertia, and inaction (Shudak and Avoseh 2015). Instead, our social worlds are known and experienced as constantly changing open systems. The realisation that our own agency, as community-based collaborative change, can bring hope for an alternative

1 In schools, it was agreed that the group dialogue about peace – and how it relates to issues of behaviour, schooling and achievement – can help to inform youth voice, pastoral care, and individual behaviour plans. Evidence from YPPC has also been used to explore and support collective strategies for behaviour with children.

reality is the key to what Freire (1974) advocates as liberating ourselves and others from oppression. This becomes apparent as knowledge in action.

Knowledge in action: peace praxis and self-representations

Wang et al. (2008) refer to the process of generating knowledge in action as 'contextualising.' They explain this as participants using their photography to 'identify the problem or the asset, critically discuss the roots of the situation, and develop strategies for changing the situation' (2008, 80). In research, this is understood as a participative methodology which can enable participants to have increased influence to explore and analyse their daily life and reach their own conclusions about community-based action (Kesby and Gwnanza-Ottmoller 2007). Public engagement is quite common in Photovoice with young people (Cahill et al. 2008; Delago 2015; Johansen and Le 2014; Royce et al. 2006; Sanon et al. 2014; Strack et al. 2004; Walker and Early 2010). During YPPC, four groups of young people provoked discussion and advocated for change, in six different settings. Their public engagements were built from praxis and self-representations, through their own words and pictures, as consciousness and action. Their decisions to act were directly motivated by their knowledge, aspirations, and concerns for peace, and how it relates to other issues in their everyday lives. Such events illustrate young people's awareness of their own agency and positionality to use their voice as a 'resistance act' (Yilmaz 2013). This includes the power of voice as potentially transformative, in addition to constituting potential counter narratives to challenge discriminatory and misrepresenting ideologies of age, power and authority (Berents and McEvoy-Levy 2015). As part of 'knowledge in action,' participants were keen to continue opening dialogue as a way of 'speaking back' with the research (Cahill et al. 2008).

Young people's engagement took place in front of cameras and directly to attendees and audiences. This included senior managers, practitioners, teachers, mentors in youth-serving systems, parents, friends, and other young people. The young people's images and words were also shown through film to students, creatives, and members of the local community. Once in public, some young people were reticent to present their work, but clearly proud of their photography (Strack et al. 2004). This provided impetus and contributed to them making themselves available to answer questions. They were keen to share their understanding of peace. All groups hoped to influence the audience 'about what it means to be peaceful, and what peace is' from a young person's perspective. Furthermore, participants wanted attendees and audiences to reflect about peace and consider what action they might take for peace themselves. In summary, young people shared and presented directly in six different settings, to audiences of up to 26 attendees in events that lasted up to three and a half hours. They facilitated peace-themed activities, shared anecdotes and findings; and explained their concerns, aspirations, and learning. The young people called for wider levels of youth

participation regarding peace, including their willingness to raise awareness citywide about peace and how peace can present possibilities for youth work. Attendees were gathered to eat together and decorate a semi-permanent peace installation in a youth centre. Young people's photography was toured as exhibitions across college campuses. Other participants were instrumental in using music as part of a summer community event to disseminate messages and raise issues as 'alternative modes of engaging in dialogue' (Pruitt, 2008, 17). In all of these examples, the action of young people is clearly 'a political statement' about their reality and social change (Wang and Burris 1997).

Conclusion

By reflecting on a model of praxis for dialogue called Young People Peace and Change, this paper has highlighted the importance of philosophical and methodological considerations as part of how we approach dialogue generally, with a specific focus on dialogue within Photovoice. I have illustrated YPPC as an applied combination of communicating circles, building trust as group process, photo-elicitation as distinct from verbal and text communication, and an epistemological awareness of dialogue both 'as' and 'in' knowledge for action. It was not assumed that the conditions needed for dialogue would emerge naturally. They were actively (re)created, including the process of reflexivity. By experiencing peace through photography and dialogue, young people discovered they had a knowledge of peace that often exceeded their own expectations. A culture of questioning opened up their curiosity, and they wanted to talk about peace. They aimed to extend dialogue. This is partly due to the power of speaking out, and giving meaning to themselves, others, and how they see their social worlds, using their own words and voices. This generated an impetus of hope that was not necessarily evident at the start of the project. In conclusion, YPPC contributes to our knowledge about how young people understand peace, and firmly positions young people as valued protagonists (for peace) 'in the here and now' (Del Felice and Wisler 2007, 18). Like previous Photovoice projects, YPPC suggests certain beneficial learning for participants, involving an array of attributes and skills (Delgado 2015; Strack et al. 2004; Johansen and Le 2014; Chonody et al. 2013). Yet, some challenging questions remain.

Empowerment does not result from 'handing out cameras' and 'there is nothing intrinsically or automatically empowering about using pictures' (Pauwels 2015, 108). Wang et al. (1998) recognise that their research enabled participants to present their perspectives to those in power. However, it did not shift power from one group to another – or move the participants into positions of local decision-making. The same can be said of YPPC. This is further complicated by the fact that it is difficult to quantify the impact of Photovoice for the researched and their wider community. The intent and philosophical premise for social change is further complicated when

we consider praxis, dialogue and conscientisation as something that ‘can be done’ as an applied science; and if so, ‘what should be done’ and furthermore ‘who should do it?’ (Rapoport 1970, 280). It should be recognised that Photovoice places the burden of change on participants. As mentioned earlier, that this need not be experienced as ‘(youth) friendly’ due to challenges presented by dialogue, lengthy engagement, and participatory expectations. Such issues are very significant when working with groups who might be marginalised.

Dialogue requires an ontological and epistemological awareness.² Whether consciously or implicitly, our philosophical premise will shape how we value the knowledge of dialogue, as well as the knowledge created through dialogue. This is never neutral and is reinforced by how we see ourselves, others, and our social worlds. With regard to Photovoice, more attention is needed to determine the primary significance of dialogue. This includes a view that (transformative) dialogue is only as robust as the relationships that shape it. Photographs offer a useful mechanism to open up dialogue. However, Photovoice requires a sensitivity to critical engagement, reflexivity and reciprocity that allows each person involved to recognise their inherent praxis. This paper has shown that the use of communication in circles can provide a useful framework to think about how to contain dialogue (in Photovoice). It complements a philosophy about everyday space and processes that are power sensitive, horizontalising, participatory, and participant-centred. This can be developed further by the theory and practice of Galtung’s structural violence and strategies to move towards ‘peace ability’ (Röhre 1994, 6) through critical anti-banking dialogues, such as those explored in critical peace pedagogy (Bajaj 2015).

In conclusion, this paper hopes to contribute towards an understanding of the ‘action’ potential of Photovoice (Sanon et al. 2014; Catalani and Minkler 2010). Photovoice calls for a congruence of (critical) theory and method for dialogue, and necessitates creativity in the container (Senge, et al. 1994) to mobilise both practitioners and young people – including vulnerable populations of young people at risk. It is an exciting and innovative approach designed to generate knowledge and enhance practice; and adds complexity to existing questions of dialogue, participatory action research, and critical peace pedagogy with young people.

2 In the case of YPPC, this is recognised as a particular theoretical framework influenced by the work of Stzompka (2008), Galtung (1969) and Freire (1974). When elaborated, this can be understood as a form of critical constructivism (Kincheloe 2008).

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Dialogue and the Cultural Other in Conflict Situations: An Augmented Understanding

Michael Atkinson

Abstract: In edition 1 volume 1 of the Dialogue Journal I outlined the case for a three-tiered framework to theoretically position intergroup dialogue. The framework was based on a) the concept of difference between groups, b) the bridging of difference through an inclusive vision, and c) transformation framed through the understanding of predominant dialogue scholars, chief amongst which was Paulo Freire. Although useful, I found the framework inadequate, particularly when applied to conflict situations. In short it fails to appreciate and interrogate difference and its role in the dialogue process. In particular, it does not take account of the competing narratives upon which difference and conflicting identities can interact. A framework of moral psychology based on the workings of behavioural psychologist Johnathon Haidt was utilised to go deeper into the manner in which people construct their sense of cultural identity. Haidt argues that we position the cultural other according to broad conceptions of moral reality to identify with either the certainty of a cultural in-group or the flexibility of broad notions of humanity. This paper explores this augmented framework of dialogue in the case of negotiations to treaty between Aboriginal Victorians and the Victorian government in Australia. Data analysis on interviews of key figures in the treaty process, as well as the analysis of an online interactive campaign involving members of both groups, revealed a hidden complexity to the dialogue process and the discourses from which cultural threat is framed. The paper argues the case that well thought out theories around identity can augment our understanding of dialogue.

Keywords: Dialogue, Cultural bias, Cultural conflict, Moral psychology, Aboriginal treaty.

Intergroup Dialogue: Appraising the Early Framework

In an early edition of the Dialogue Journal (Atkinson 2013), I outlined the case for a three-tiered framework of intergroup dialogue based on three domains: a) the concept of difference between groups, b) the bridging of difference through an inclusive vision and c) transformation. With regards to the initial domain, that of difference between groups, I used a critic-constructivist understanding of a cultural group. This not only provided a means for exploring the way in which difference is constructed between people, but also the juxtaposition between such difference and the social context. As

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an example, labels such as ‘refugee’, ‘Muslim’, ‘African’ or, for more impact, ‘African Muslim refugee’ are frequently applied and used unthinkingly as if they capture an understanding of a swathe of the population. A critic-constructivist perspective interrogates such labels and how and why they are constructed.

In the case of the second domain, the bridging of difference in the dialogue process through an inclusive vision, I found profit in the work of social learning theorist Etienne Wenger (1999). Incredibly, given the emphasis on learning within dialogue, there is little in the theoretical literature that explores the construction of meaning across cultures. Broadly, Wenger looks at how people create spaces of participation, negotiation and shared identity within and between groups. Wenger’s focus is on the ways by which social meanings intersect and act upon each other within a group of learners to create broader meanings which contribute to (or block) the sense of identity of people and their potential to experience meaning within society.

For the third domain, I was particularly interested in understanding the change process that members of cultural groups experience through their conversations with the ‘other’. For that I turned to dialogue theory. ‘Dialogue’ has been theorised by multiple scholars, coalescing primarily around the ethical co-creation of meaning through multi-vocal conversations. Foremost academic contributions include the hermeneutic philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer (1989), the reciprocity of Mikhail Bakhtin (1984), the spiritual communion of Martin Buber (1965), and to a lesser extent the rational re-constructionism of Jürgen Habermas (1984). It is a list that unfortunately mirrors the dominant hegemony of western academia.¹ In my own case I drew on Paulo Freire (1970), who has been hugely influential in the area of pedagogy and human development through his critical orientation to dialogue, David Bohm (1996), who sees in dialogue a vehicle to human consciousness, and Martin Buber, who extends dialogue into spaces of silence and solitude. These three scholars present a pathway to positive change emphasising the importance of critical understanding (Freire), communion (Buber), and suspension of thought (Bohm). Given the learning-based focus of my research I found the work of these scholars to be particularly appropriate in the context of understanding transformation through multivocal conversations. The following diagram depicts this three-part model of intergroup dialogue.

1 Dialogue Theories I and II (Sleap and Sener 2013, 2015) produced by the Dialogue Society broadens this list to non-western voices. Nevertheless, the lack of female and African voices reveals an urgency to interrogate the lack of diversity in understandings of dialogue.

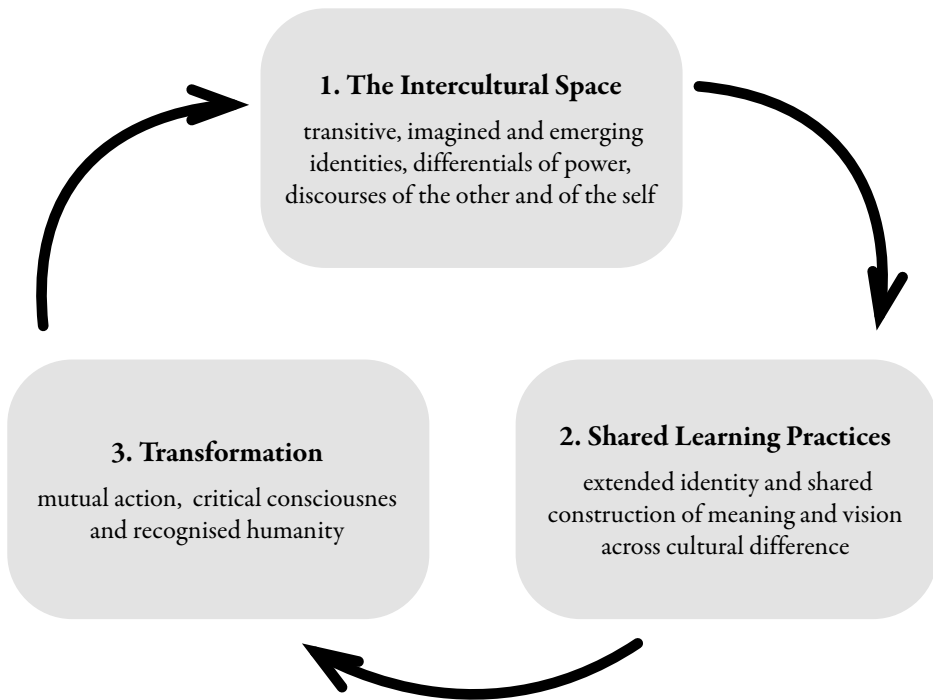


Figure 1 Framework for intergroup dialogue

With regard to the first two case studies, where the focus was on members of groups seeking to enter a broader mainstream society (refugees, long term unemployed migrants), the framework proved very useful (see Atkinson 2018a and Atkinson 2018b for a more detailed discussion). In particular it enabled me to ask important questions around people's sense of identity, what and how they learnt in their conversations with the 'other' and how such conversations led to change. For my third case study, focusing on the treaty process between Aboriginal Victorians and the Victorian government, I found the framework inadequate, however. Unlike the two previous case studies, this case study took place within the ongoing context of misrepresentation, disparagement and exclusion of the perceived 'disadvantaged' Aboriginal culture by the 'dominant' culture. The framework above, however, while inclusive of dialogue, is not inclusive of the reasons for cultural bias and how they are formed in connection with certain groups. In short, I lacked an unbiased understanding for exploring bias itself. Meeting this problem required a significant detour into the nature of cultural bias and the extremely powerful framing of moral psychology.

Augmenting the Framework: Moral Psychology and Cultural Bias

Cultural theorist Kwame Appiah (2016) makes the point that our identities are 'held together by narratives' which we inherit from previous generations that are without substantive essence. Consequently, while stories at the level of the nation or an ethnic group may shift and change, the associated labels have a continuing presence that traverse both space and time. In identifying ourselves as part of a national or ethnic group we derive an imagined, though powerful link both with the past and with place. A consequence of such identification is a bias in the way we imagine ourselves and the 'other' alongside, to paraphrase Appiah, a willed ignorance about the dark side of our cultural story (Appiah cited in Heintz, 2018). Our identity is so 'deeply internalised and embodied' (Surak 2012) that our bias is not only implicit but also unconscious (Pearson, Dovidio and Gaertner 2009).

Not surprisingly the reasons for cultural prejudice have increasingly become the object of study as researchers and academics seek to understand its persistence within society. Combined with the idea that a significant degree of our cultural bias lies outside of our conscious awareness is the further suggestion that such facility is reinforced through the learned recognition of powerful signs. Constructed meanings associated with a targeted group serve to not only stereotype the values and behaviours of others but also reinforce the cultural characteristics of one's own group (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004; Sears, Hetts, Sidanius and Bobo 2000). This framing of the other to strengthen one's own sense of identity appears ubiquitous to human constructed cultural groups. Skin colour, clothing and symbols are obvious physical identity markers of difference. Likewise, national, cultural and ethnic meanings are actively and continuously internalised and re-constructed. Religious communities do not just form identity constructs based on their own unique meanings; they situate themselves through a 'complex process of selection, emphasis and recognition in relation to proximate [cultural] rivals' (Cucarella 2019 conference paper).

Work in the area of moral psychology suggests that while we may all tend to be culturally biased, that does not necessarily translate into an active prejudice. As moral psychologist Jonathon Haidt charges, people do not react or even view the same situation the same way. Haidt's work on moral philosophy (Haidt 2012; see also Haidt, Graham and Joseph 2009) suggests that we actively construct and internalise cultural meanings both cognitively and emotionally according to our moral ideology.

Haidt argues that such moral ideology exists on a spectrum. At one end of this spectrum are people who strongly identify with moral obligations around loyalty, authority and sanctity. In contrast, other people are more inclined to identify with values of fairness and protection from harm. The former favour an in-group bias

believing that their country, their culture is clearly identifiable, unique and worth preserving. The loyalty, authority and sanctity they feel in their constructions of national identity frame not only how they see themselves but also others. Accordingly, the cultural other is potentially viewed as a direct threat, based upon their own moral bias. As a consequence, they feel an obligation to protect and defend what they see as a singular sense of cultural identity.

People who belong to the latter group, on the other hand prioritise fairness and social wellbeing over the authority of the state, loyalty to national ideals or sanctity to the group. They endorse national diversity and liberation believing that such values generate virtues and practices that allow people to live in harmony as autonomous agents with their own goals. The result is a differing set of discourses around cultural identity according to people's moral perspective and the way society, and threat, is framed. Those who prioritise authority, loyalty and sanctity take a collectivist position to one's own identity, seeking to preserve the status quo and the cultural hierarchy in order to safeguard security. By contrast, those who favour fairness and protection of harm are likely to take a cosmopolitan position towards others. Unlike the cultural collectivists, who require threat to strengthen their own position, the cosmopolitans feel validated under conditions where existential threats have been minimalised.

Within such a scenario, people on the borders of national identity play a unique role. They are alternatively cast as fellow human beings or a threat to the nation. Their identities are alternatively constructed to support the mainstream status quo or to disrupt the status quo. In the context of cultural conflict, such as in my case study, moral psychology reveals a complexity between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people beyond a simplified dichotomous relationship. The following diagram depicts this augmented understanding of intergroup dialogue. It begins with Haidt's spectrum of moral psychology resulting in different discourses of the other and a complexity to the intercultural space. This in turn results in different cultural learnings and transformative potential.

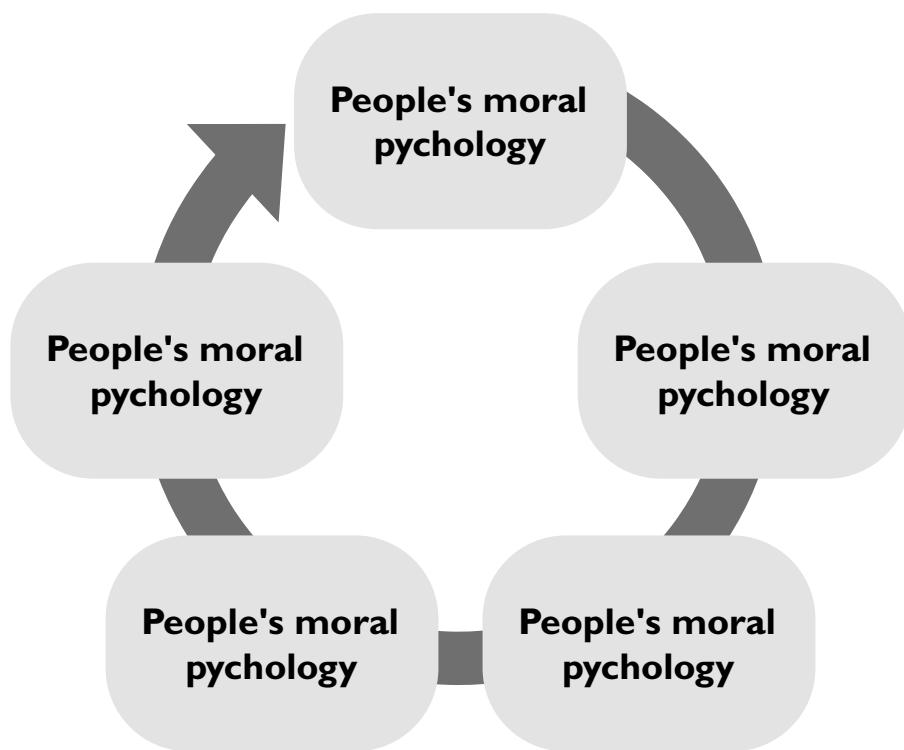


Figure 2 Framework for intergroup dialogue incorporating moral psychology

From a practical perspective, I positioned the above framework in terms of a two-part method. Step one, based on the work of Haidt, identifies significant discourses used to position the cultural other. Step two utilises the discourses identified in the previous step to inform understandings of how people relate dialogically to the other. I start, however, with a background to the Victorian Aboriginal Treaty process.

Background: The Victorian Aboriginal Treaty

Aboriginal people are neither recognised in the constitution, nor have a direct say in parliament. Neither has there been a treaty between Aboriginal people and any government, whether state or federal, in Australia. It was against this backdrop that in February 2016, the Victorian government hosted a meeting with 500 Victorian Aboriginal community leaders from across the state to seek their views on self-determination and constitutional recognition. To provide further background information, the Victorian Aboriginal population, constituting just under 1% of the Victorian population (ABS 2016), is made up of different tribal groups within which are different clans with heritage ties to the land extending over 60,000

years before white settlement. Key voices within Aboriginal communities include Aboriginal elders who have gained recognition as custodians of knowledge and lore, as well as traditional owners who are directly descended from the original Aboriginal inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land. Aboriginal people may also be members of different Registered Aboriginal Parties, which act to give advice and knowledge to the Aboriginal Minister at state level in the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria (Parliament of Victoria, 2012).

The 2016 gathering unanimously called for treaty. A state-wide forum in May 2016 identified the next steps that needed to take place in order to progress this agenda. Going through these steps is unnecessary in the context of this paper; it suffices to mention two important aspects. Firstly, the treaty process has involved multiple Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, resulting in multiple sites of intergroup engagement. Secondly, the government's commitment to self-determination and treaty included a structured engagement between Victorian Aboriginal people and the Victorian mainstream society. This came to be known as the Deadly Questions Campaign. An online public space enabled non-Aboriginal Victorians to direct questions to Aboriginal Victorians in order to acquire a deeper understanding of Aboriginal cultures, histories, and issues. My research explored both these sites.

Application of Theory to Practice

As mentioned above, the model was applied to the case of negotiations to treaty between Aboriginal Victorians and the Victorian government in Australia guided by the meta question:

What are the factors that facilitate and hinder intergroup dialogue?

Step 1 involved the identification of four predominant mainstream constructions of Aboriginality in the history of relations between Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal mainstream. The first three I labelled in terms of exclusion, deficit and shared humanity. A fourth construction is not so much a discourse as a relationship. A space of 'sanitised acceptance' where people are prepared to acknowledge the Aboriginal presence and Aboriginal knowledge, but only in a delimited extent.

These four categories provide insight for informing Step 2. An understanding of these different discourses both framed data gathering and the analysis of data. Interviews were carried out with key Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal figures in the treaty process. An online interactive campaign involving members of the non-Aboriginal mainstream cultural group provided further data. Analysis focused on the ways in which Aboriginal people were framed within the broader society and the implications for dialogue.

Step 1-Identifying discourses of Aboriginal identity in mainstream society

As mentioned above, there were four main categories of positioning Aboriginal people in the history of Australia. Historically, Aboriginal people have been excluded by both the state and in the national imaginary. The constitution is yet to recognise Aboriginal people. At the time of federation, Aboriginal people were thought to be journeying towards extinction aligned with the social Darwinian perspective that 'lesser cultures', were not only 'inferior to higher civilisations' but could not survive contact (Manne 1998). It was not until the mid-1970s that the practice of taking 'half-blood' children from Aboriginal mothers to be raised as white was abandoned. It was only in 1992 that the legal doctrine of *terra nullius*, that Australia was an unclaimed, un-owned land prior to European settlement was overturned, allowing Aboriginal people to own Aboriginal land.

A deficit discourse views Aboriginal people as lacking the skills, knowledge, or attitudes to succeed by themselves. Framed in cultural rather than racial terms, blame is directed towards a lack of training, an unstable home life, poor foundational skills in language or literacy, ensuing social problems, or even indigenous worldviews themselves. The discourse creates a sense of dichotomy between Aboriginal people and the constructed mainstream, serving to extend the status quo. Examples of the deficit discourse are common. A recent example illustrates its insidious nature. In 2007, Prime Minister John Howard carried out the Northern Territory Emergency Response Intervention. The intervention included substantial legislative changes to address allegations of child sexual abuse and neglect in the Northern Territory. Prime Minister Howard made the following media statement:

What we have got to do is confront the fact that these communities have broken down. The basic elements of a civilised society don't exist. (PM Transcripts 2007)

Howard's actions received substantial media interest that was overwhelmingly negative with regards to the portrayal of remote Aboriginal communities, while portraying Commonwealth intervention as necessary and heroic (Proudfoot and Habibis, 2013). The action left a legacy which situated Aboriginal people and communities in a situation of need for assistance because of their own 'dysfunctional' nature.

On occasions, a combination of political leadership and public sentiment has worked together to challenge the ideological position of a one-dimensional version of Australian nationhood. The result has seen the creation of a parallel discourse that is far more conciliatory and far more human-centred. A prime example is the apology speech in 2008 by former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd:

The nation is demanding of its political leadership to take us forward. Decency,

human decency, universal human decency, demands that the nation now step forward to right an historical wrong. That is what we are doing in this place today. (Rudd 2008, 3)

The result was a broader reflective stance taken on the place of Aboriginal people in Australian society, alongside debate on the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Finally, what I describe as 'sanitised' or 'accepted' occupies a middle ground between the deficit and the humanitarian discourse. It is a safe discourse, which neither confronts the cultural other, nor challenges the status quo. In minimising conflict, it also minimises spaces of cultural learning. As a consequence, it lacks a transformative ethos. Despite this, I feel that it is an essential area to understand, for it is essentially a discourse which moves from disengagement to tentative engagement as people emotionally grapple with the challenge represented by the cultural other.

Step 2: Viewing research data through a prism of moral psychology

As mentioned above, I explored both the discourses in the Deadly Questions Campaign and the experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people involved in the treaty process, informed through the above identified discourses. The Aboriginal people I interviewed were prominent leaders in the Aboriginal community. The non-Aboriginal people were involved in the treaty process as parliamentarians, government employees or facilitating organisations of treaty itself.

The Deadly Questions Campaign

An important focus of the Deadly Questions Campaign, that of asking *Aboriginal people* about *Aboriginal culture*, ensures that the questions themselves are not exclusionary. Many are, however, clearly identifiable with both deficit and humanitarian discourses: 50%, evenly divided of the 100 representative questions, fitted into these two categories.

Questions regarding the past and welfare support clearly reveal aspects of the deficit discourse:

It's 2018, why is Aboriginal culture stuck in the past? (DQ)

You say you want to be equal, but you get so many concessions that the average Australians don't, do you think this is equality? (DQ)

The allusion that members of the non-Aboriginal culture are either 'stuck' or claiming concessions situates Aboriginal people not only in deficit, but as a welfare burden to the 'fair' and 'equitable' 'mainstream' society. Such identified 'deficit' extends to

the perceived morality of Aboriginal people in casting themselves as victims of past atrocities that have long since finished. In the questions that follow, Aboriginal people are positioned as perpetrators; mainstream members are, accordingly, the victims:

Why are non-Aboriginal Australians made to feel guilty about the past? (DQ)

If we are about healing from the past, why are Aboriginal people still trying to fight for land rights if we should be equal now? (DQ)

How do people alive today genuinely claim injury for something that happened to others more than 200 years ago? (DQ)

Such statements as those above reveal both an ignorance of the impact of colonisation and the impact of ongoing racism. More to the point, however, they showcase the moralistic nature of people's bias towards the cultural 'other'. A perspective not based on evidence but on people's preconceived viewpoints as they make judgements according to their own moral authority – positioning others from a circumscribed view of social reality.

The humanitarian discourse is characterised by a shared human reality alongside critical reflection of one's own cultural viewpoints. An important aspect is that of bridging the sense of constructed difference inherent in the deficit discourse:

What can white Australians do to support Indigenous Australians in moving towards racial equality? (DQ6)

What's the most helpful thing a non-Indigenous Australian could do to support Aboriginal Australians? (DQ7)

Concerns of power, identity, and equality are broached to acknowledge present inequality and the Aboriginal desire for a changed relationship

What does a reconciled Australia look like to you? (DQ8)

What can white Australians do to support Indigenous Australians in moving towards racial equality? (DQ9)

The remaining 50% of the questions neither supported a viewpoint of Aboriginal people in deficit, nor as deserving of justice and political representation. These are the questions which I described above as belonging to the category of 'sanitised acceptance'. While many were simplified questions concerning the colours of the flag or the meaning of Aboriginal terms, the more interesting, from a dialogical perspective, were those that asked Aboriginal people about their view of white society:

What is the one thing that you wished more non-Indigenous Australians understood about Indigenous Australians? (DQ10)

How do you feel when white people champion for you? (DQ11)

It was notable that many questions were not simply about Aboriginal culture, but culture more generally.

As most of us are mixed heritage, do you also relate to those parts of your heritage that are non-Indigenous? (DQ12)

How do you feel about the increasing multiculturalism in the Victorian community? (DQ13)

While the questions in this category reveal a lack of knowledge of Aboriginal culture, they also reveal a willingness to learn from and to communicate with Aboriginal people. There is a corresponding reflection around the imposed positioning of Aboriginal people alongside the recognition past and present actions may be wrong. While the topic is delimited, the invitation to talk as equals has been tentatively accepted.

Collectively the Deadly Questions Campaign revealed different discourses directed towards Aboriginal culture. On the one hand were those people who favour fixed cultural narratives underpinned by perceived different values. On the other hand, there was an acknowledgement of shared humanity divided through wrongs in the past and inequality in the present. Between these two perspectives were people willing to converse with and to learn from Aboriginal people. In other words, there was not one 'mainstream' Victorian community with one mainstream cultural identity. The interface between Aboriginal and mainstream culture may be viewed as being far more complex. This complexity, as I show below, has deep significance in the context of the treaty process.

Aboriginal people

In contrast to facilitators, questions around Aboriginal identity drew a considered, self-confident response from participants.

It is about tapping into something bigger than who we are. (Aboriginal respondent 1)

Culture and identity is what we live and breathe. It is being strong, black and proud. (Aboriginal respondent 2)

Interestingly, the sense of surety in Aboriginal culture did not necessarily translate

to a sense of ease or effortlessness in understandings of Aboriginality. Indeed, as the following statements reveal, there is an element of struggle and emotional challenge for Aboriginal respondents when engaging with their cultural identity.

Mate that's a PhD...It's an in-depth question, its got many answers. (Aboriginal respondent 3)

I still struggle with what that means, as the whole Aboriginal community struggles with what that means and the mainstream community struggles with what that means. It raises its own dilemmas and questions constantly. (Aboriginal respondent 1)

I think this is the point. Aboriginal culture is resilient and contains possibility because of the continuous struggle to define and be true to itself under the imposed constraints of mainstream society. A continuous effort by community leaders that draws on both the struggles of the past and the aspirations of the future to create shifts in the cultural landscape in the present. It is, however, a journey that cannot be traversed alone. As two respondents said,

I identify with the struggles of my community that they have faced over the last couple of hundred years. We've survived, adapted, been resilient and we are strengthening culture and re-enlivening cultural practice...because of who we are. (Aboriginal respondent 5)

I think it is all Victorians journey. (Aboriginal respondent 4)

It is here, I believe, that we can discern a key dialogical element of Aboriginal culture. Culture itself is central to Aboriginal identity (Aboriginal respondents 1 and 2). While Aboriginal culture is difficult to define (Aboriginal respondents 3 and 4), it is also resilient. For Aboriginal people, understanding and discussing the past is a necessary part of cultural renewal (Aboriginal respondent 5), a journey that cannot be traversed alone. As shown in the Deadly Questions Campaign, however, a large extent of the non-Aboriginal population is either opposed to, or unsure of, the journey of shared cultural recognition.

The facilitators of treaty

The question of how facilitators viewed their cultural identity was met with a sense of difficulty coupled with, and possibly a direct result of, the sense of discomfort they felt regarding what may be referred to as popular national constructions and a white nationalist discourse.

I'm not comfortable with mainstream views of being Australian. (Facilitator 1)

In the 'gross unwashed middle Australian psyche' the viewpoint frankly is just get on with it or get over it. It was hundreds of years ago that wrongs took place. Why can't aboriginal people move on? (Facilitator 2)

While facilitator respondents were clearly uncomfortable with a fixed national sense of identity, there was clear identification with what may be termed humanitarian values. Variations of the following statements were common. Cultural difference with Aboriginal people was alternatively structured around privilege, positioned as a narrative, or shaped by present and past oppression:

The basis of being a good human being is to care about others and have some form of empathy. There is also a responsibility as a member of the human race to look more broadly. (Facilitator 2)

My story does not involve exclusion... Aboriginal people, because of invasion, because of exclusion, dispossession, have actually bound together in terms of identity. (Facilitator 3)

It is within the nexus of recognised privilege of their own cultural position and inclusivity of others that I feel we can define the cultural values of the facilitators. Identifying with universal humanitarian values engenders empathy and understanding of Aboriginal people beyond a narrow-minded and opinionated nationalistic cultural discourse. This raises intriguing dialogical questions from an intercultural perspective. How do these respondents understand, to use facilitator 2's words, the 'gross unwashed middle Australian psyche', and how do they engage with those who choose a limited acceptance of Aboriginal issues?

Discussion of the treaty process through an augmented view of dialogue

In conclusion, we can note that within the complexity of Victorian mainstream society an obvious finding was the diversity of opinion. There are those sympathetic to the Aboriginal perspective on history and the continual fight for recognition today. Equally, there are those opposed to any such recognition, seeing themselves as cultural victims, while peddling a racist discourse that minimises the value of Aboriginal culture and the brutality of the colonial past. Between these two groups are those who are comfortable to engage with Aboriginal culture, but only so far. Aboriginal respondents, on the other hand, sought to protect their culture against mainstream racist attitudes while promoting their own expression of cultural identity. There was a realisation that their journey to self-determination was a journey best travelled within a broader context of the cultural renewal of Australia.

This discursive summary has deeper repercussions beyond a simple description of different attitudes to treaty. For the treaty to create deep cultural change it will need

to engage with the diverse moral, emotional and cultural worlds from which people frame their social reality. I believe this leads to important questions for the state of Victoria in terms of which issues and which groups are prioritised, and which are overlooked. Is it better to challenge racist attitudes or approach such fixed viewpoints from a different perspective? How do we engage with the disengaged, those with limited interest in Aboriginal people and their journey? How do we work with those who share a humanitarian perspective?

Conclusion

The framework described here maintains many aspects of that first approach developed in the 2013 paper. Uppermost is a recourse to the work of previous dialogue scholars and transparency in terms of expressing themes of influence. In the case here that was, and remains, a focus on mutual learning and transformative change guided by the understandings of Bohm, Buber and Freire. The major difference in this version is an understanding of how cultural bias can create diverse discourses of the cultural other across a spectrum ranging from inclusivity, on the one hand, to exclusivity on the other, thus leading to different discourses directed towards the cultural other. In the case expressed here, these discourses were based on deficit, sanitised acceptance, and shared humanity. This may not always be the case. Different cultures, different cultural contexts will create different discourses of the other. Nevertheless, I make the case that an understanding of moral psychology can augment dialogical frameworks through framing the conscious and unconscious cultural biases of the other in situations of cultural conflict.

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Citizen Apologies and Forgiveness as Diplomatic Gestures of Peace

Lisa Gibson

Abstract: The paper explores the extent to which citizen apologies and forgiveness are important tools of citizen diplomacy and peace-making efforts. In recent years, there has been an increase in the frequency of apologies by state leaders and research into the reasons for these apologies. However, there has been little research into apologies by citizens in citizen diplomacy efforts. This paper seeks to fill a gap in research by exploring the role of citizen apologies and forgiveness in citizen diplomacy efforts in transnational conflicts. Conflicts are no longer just state-to-state, but instead involve a whole host of state and non-state actors alike both in perpetrating conflicts and in peace-making efforts. As such, there is a need to explore the diplomatic tools needed in building dialogue and improving relations between states that have a history of conflict. This research looks at case studies of conflicts involving Bosnia/Serbia and Libya/America. It can be concluded that citizens, as members of a collective, have the right and moral responsibility to apologise for offences of their states. These apologies do not serve as official legal acts of contrition, but as helpful diplomatic gestures of good will used to improve relations between states that have a history of conflict.

Keywords: Apologies, Forgiveness, Citizen diplomacy, Peace, Conflict

Introduction

This research explores the significance of citizen apologies in international relations. For the purposes of this paper, apologies are defined as the offering of regret or remorse for some action or past wrong and a validation of the feelings of a perceived wrong. Forgiveness involves the acceptance of the gesture of the apology and letting go of any bad feelings against the people apologising, whether they were directly culpable for the transgression or not.

It is clear that apologies have meaning, because an apology is something that people have come to expect in situations where someone has done harm or there has been a conflict. However, apologies can mean different things to different people. When citizen diplomats offer apologies on behalf of their state, they would not be legally culpable. However, in acts of war it is the citizens that are enlisted to fight so the line between state and citizen responsibility is not always clear. As a result, it is not

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uncommon for people to develop bad feelings and prejudices against certain countries and ethnic groups because of past conflicts. As such, diplomatic efforts can and should include citizen diplomats as ambassadors of reconciliation.

Overview of Citizen Diplomacy

Citizen diplomacy has become a very important mechanism for building trust and understanding between states and citizens. At the heart of citizen diplomacy is promoting good will. The increasing role of citizen diplomats can be attributed to the shift in the power possessed by non-state actors and their role in perpetrating conflicts. For example, on September 11, 2001, a non-state actor killed more people in New York than the state of Japan did at Pearl Harbour in 1941 (Nye 2011, xii). Extremist groups like Islamic State (IS) and Al Qaeda are composed of non-state actors and their primary targets are citizens. As such, citizen diplomats play a vital role in preventing and resolving conflicts. Further, citizen diplomats are uniquely positioned to bridge the divide because they are not limited by political and ideological constraints as traditional diplomats would be. Marshall believed that it is people rather than states that are the ultimate foundations of good will; therefore, every possible means must be explored to enable people to plan and participate in the expression of international good will (Marshall 1949, 9).

Traditional diplomacy alone has proven insufficient in effectively restoring relations between countries that have a history of conflict because it often neglects the relational side of conflicts. Handlemann argues that political-elite diplomacy alone is not enough to create a long-lasting change in difficult situations of destructive social conflict (Handlemann 2012, 163). The lack of public involvement in the struggle to build a new social order makes any peace-making process 'unstable, fragile and vulnerable and it does not help the people on both sides to overcome psychological barriers, such as fear, mistrust and prejudice' (Handlemann 2012, 163).

Conciliatory gestures

Apologies and forgiveness are conciliatory gestures that play a vital role in long-term resolution of conflicts. Without them it is impossible to achieve reconciliation and lasting peace (Hauss 2003). Apologies and forgiveness go hand in hand. Hauss (2003) says 'apologies and forgiveness are two sides of the same emotional coin'. Rushdy asserts that an apology can be understood as asking for forgiveness, and forgiveness as accepting the apology (Rushdy 2015, 38). Expressions of apology and forgiveness are vital because intractable conflicts cause deep feelings of pain, anger, hurt, and even hatred (Rushdy 2015, 38). Without apologies people remain stuck in the pain and cycle that caused the conflict in the first place; they are often destined to repeat the cycle if those wounds are not healed.

'Apologies abound and figure prominently in often invisible and unnoticed normative patterns that shape our moral expectations and sensibilities' (Tavuchis 1991, 2). Apologies are meant to reconstruct social meanings in the present and the future (Celermajor 2006, 176). These apologies are relational symbolic gestures taking place in a 'complex interpersonal field' (Tavuchis 1991, 14). Since apologies are largely social constructs, the importance of apologies varies greatly across cultural divides. Hickson (1986) contends that apology works differently in different cultures and that it is often tied to social hierarchies. Apologies can be used to defuse anger and promote reconciliation. However, because identity is a social construct, it can be influenced and changed through interactions with individuals (Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996).

Failure to acknowledge one's part in a conflict can have a negative impact years later (Butler 2007, 1). Traumatic pain and guilt become a time bomb in both the psyche and political history (Shriver, 1999). 'Nations, groups and individuals are haunted by the past, but the question remains how to break the past cycles of vengeance and find a doorway to peaceful coexistence?' (Shriver 1999, 9). Until leaders and citizens address the past, their future relations will likely be affected by undercurrents of hostility (Shriver 1999). Forgiveness breaks the cycle of vengeance and creates a bridge to peaceful coexistence.

The period of individual healing cannot be separated from social and political reconciliation (Charbonneau and Parent 2012, 2). Reconciliation means that victims and perpetrator groups do not see the past as defining the future (Staub 2006, 868). Galtung defines reconciliation as 'the process of healing the traumas of both victims and perpetrators after violence, providing a closure of the bad relations' (2001, 3). 'It means that they come to see the humanity of one another, accept each other, and see the possibility of a constructive relationship' (Staub 2006, 868).

Showing respect and restoring trust

Apologies can be a gesture of respect. 'Apology's role in the present is to acknowledge and pay respect to the survivors who may continue to suffer the scars of their encounters with past injustice' (Murphy 2011, 54). This is especially true where there has been loss of life. These apologies can bring no comfort to the dead but they 'may bring a measure of solace, and perhaps a sense of closure to the living who wish to see the memories of their loved ones and ancestors honored and respected' (Murphy 2011, 54).

Political apologies and forgiveness are about restoring 'seeming' trust (Rushdy 2015, 123). Trust is a very important element of diplomacy. 'Diplomacy is based on trust, so when trust is compromised, cooperation – no matter how longstanding – gives way to discord' (Skinner 2014). When there is a conflict between nations or groups,

trust is lost and must be rebuilt. 'Trust is a vital step in the de-escalation process – for any conciliatory act to be effective' (Notter 1995, 8). Trust may seem to be a short-lived quality, but it is at the heart of relations between states and is a principal goal of public diplomacy (Seib 2012). Trust is often based on familiarity and previous experience (Luhmann 1979, 18); however, trust also can be socially constructed despite unfamiliarity or even with a conflict-filled history (Hoffman 2006, 2). Trust is recognised as a necessary precondition for peace and prosperity in the world (Hoffman 2006, 1; World Economic Forum, 2012).

Building good will

Political apologies can be extended as acts of good will to signify the emergence of reconciliation between former adversaries (Rushdy 2015, 47). In this sense, the apology also could be a diplomatic formulation intended to clear the air without accepting full responsibility for a harmful act (Thomas 2014, 52). Good will is defined as 'a kindly feeling of approval and support' (Merriam-Webster, 2017). It is an emotion people feel that creates an emotional bond between people and results in trust and good relations (Pillai, 2012). Although not discussed very often in discourse on diplomacy, emotions do play a very important role in diplomatic relations. Even Aristotle recognised that 'emotions may move one to a particular judgment, may alter the severity of a judgment, or may change a judgment entirely' (Leighton 1996, 144). The offering of good-will gestures is part of diplomacy and international relations.

Intergroup apologies

Research into the area of intergroup apologies provides some helpful insights into the role of apologies in international conflicts. Research has shown that harm directed toward a group member might inflict secondhand harm on all who identify with that group, especially if the harm is clearly attributable to group membership (Brown et al. 2008, 1407). In addition, direct harm is not necessary for someone to suffer psychological effects (Wayment 2004). People who witness conflicts can be vicarious victims and can have a desire for vicarious retribution, which can prolong hostilities (Lickel et al. 2006). Brown, Wohl, and Exline suggest that 'identifying strongly with groups whose members have been wronged could promote empathy for in-group victims, indignation toward perpetrators, and anxiety about the possibility of becoming a transgression target oneself' (Brown et al. 2008, 1408). In addition, their study found that apologies can reduce people's reluctance to forgive a transgressor who has wronged a member of their in-group (Brown 2008, 1417).

By taking public responsibility for the harm that members of one's own group committed against members of another group, 'the perpetrator group extends the proverbial olive branch with the hope that the two groups can move beyond the past toward a harmonious present and future' (Wohl et al. 2011, 71). The sincerity of the

apology is more important than the person apologising. If the apology is sincere and acceptable to the recipients, it breaks the link between responsibility and the wrong (Hornsey and Wohl 2013).

Collective responsibility

Groups are not inanimate objects, but instead a collection of the emotions of their members, and it is not uncommon to hear groups referred to as expressing emotions such as sadness, sorrow, despair, and anger. Emotions are an integral part of political life including the 'inter-relations between emotions, social structures, and collective identities' (Linklater 2014, 574). Therefore, if groups can express collective emotions, they should be able to express apologies.

The rationale for apologising for a predecessor's actions is rooted in the idea of collective responsibility and is often accompanied by feelings of shame, regret, or remorse (Bhargava 2012, 375). The offering of a political apology is a moral and ethical act. Celermajor writes, 'Apologizing in this mode is not a way of compensating for wrongdoing, but is rather an expression of shame, where shame marks a recognition of ethical flaws in the identity of the collective' (Barkan and Karn 2006, 17). It is a recognition that as human beings, they have fallen short of the ideal behaviour. Shame can do ethical work that guilt cannot (Muldoon 2007, 216). The public expression and acknowledgement of a wrong is an attempt at moral repair by showing a commitment that the action will not happen again (Thompson 2008).

Humans, as social beings, bear responsibility not only individually, but collectively (Kukathas 2003, 174). Societies too have responsibilities, and we share in them as members of such communities (Kukathas 2003, 174). As a member of a society, a person is an actor or an agent of that group (Kukathas 2003, 181). 'If a good society is one in which responsibility is taken seriously, and if responsibility can only be borne by agents, then a good society must be one in which there are agents who can properly bear responsibility' (Kukathas 2003, 185).

Collective responsibility has been seen in situations where citizens are accepting responsibility for the wrongs committed by the past behaviour of their states. In these cases, there are differing views among scholars. Some argue that citizens cannot accept responsibility for their state, while others say they can. Generally, there is a belief that you cannot apologise on behalf of someone else (Tavuchis 1991, 49). When speaking of societies, it is very difficult to separate the government from the citizens, especially in conflicts between nations such as wars, where citizens are the primary actors (Tavuchis 1991, 46-47). Where there is collective memory, collective responsibility causes concerned individuals or groups to seek 'through symbolic reparation to redress past wrongs or injuries committed by other members' (Tavuchis 1991, 50).

Arendt noted that individuals can be responsible for crimes committed by nations, while not being guilty (Arendt 1945, 131). Guilt is a legal term, responsibility is a moral one (Levy and Sznajder 2006, 88).

Collective responsibility is connected to the idea of collective memory and collective identity. Individuals can experience emotions outside of the context of their own personal experience and in relation to 'collective or society experiences in which only a part of the group members have taken part' (Bar-Tal, Halperin and De Rivera 2007, 443). The ways in which people understand their present-day realities and imagine their futures are directly related to how they remember and talk about their past (Chaitin 2012, 151). Identity affects the way you see yourself individually and as a member of a group. It reflects how you see your past, present, and future. Public memory is a repository of a group's collective identity (Tsosie 2012, 194). The process of collective memory begins early in life through rituals of learning history, songs, and stories and through ceremonies (Chaitin 2012, 151). These rituals produce collective narratives (Zerubavel 1995) and 'social constructions... that are accounts of a community's historical experiences' (Bruner 1990, as quoted in Salomon 2004, 274).

Wrongs that have been committed against a group continue to be held in the collective memory and therefore must be acknowledged if healing is to begin (Salomon 2004, 195). Collective memories of conflict in a group's history concern facts and have an emotional component (Chaitin 2012, 151). Where there has been conflict, each side holds opposing narratives about the same historical events and 'these collective memories have psychosocial impacts on the victims and generations to come' (Witzum et al. 2001). The memories also can result in bitterness among individuals whose ancestors were wronged and who await apologies from the descendants of those they believe committed those wrongs (Howard-Hassman and Gibney 2008, 6). 'States and private actors now offer apologies to groups and individuals in the hope that they can thereby close the memory of an incident' (Howard-Hassman and Gibney 2008, 5). In addition, 'the more people attach their identity to a nation, the more likely they are to feel stronger emotions toward other countries when those countries' are perceived to have wronged their nation (Hermann 2017, 61).

As Kiss argues, collective responsibility 'requires that people who identify with a group be honest and accept that the moral and political future of their community depends on the actions its members take today to shape it' (Kiss 1998, 392). When it is looked at this way, Kiss argues that 'collective responsibility does not violate liberal norms of justice. It does not hold individuals causally accountable for things they did not do' (Kiss 1998, 392).

Lowenheim (2009) asserts that if citizens can inherit a legacy of bravery, they also

can inherit moral wrongs and insults, sins, and obligations. As a result, he believes future generations can be held accountable for earlier wrongs committed by their state (Lowenheim 2009, 535). The past and future are directly connected and only the group members of today can redress wrongs of the past.

Citizens carry the legacy of moral wrongs and with that comes an ethical responsibility to try to move past those wrongs. In this situation, the primary purpose of the apology is improving relationships between parties, rather than serving as some formal or legal act of contrition. Cunningham says, 'the case for apology is most convincing on the grounds that it has the potential to improve relations between groups if the apology in whatever formulation is sincere and acceptable to the recipients. This breaks the need to establish a linkage between responsibility and apology' (Cunningham 1999, 291).

Bosnia

The war between Muslims, Croats, and Serbs began in 1991 and lasted four years. Part of the root cause was unresolved past conflicts. Experts believe that failure of the former Yugoslavian government to appropriately investigate and deal with the mass killing of Serbs by Croats during World War II left deep psychological wounds that likely contributed to the violence during the 1990s (Staub 1996). In addition, before the war started, President Slobodan Milosevic unearthed the body of Prince Lazar, who was killed by Muslims in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, ceremonially reburied the body in one Serbian village after another, and used this act to stir up the seeds of the past conflict to mobilise the population against Muslims (Malek 2005). During that time, 200,000 Bosnians were killed and more than two million displaced. There was serial rape, torture, starvation, and imprisonment in concentration camps. These horrors left the people deeply traumatised and filled with fear and anger. In 1995, the Dayton Peace Agreement terminated the Bosnian war and peacebuilding efforts began. The international community did not limit its intervention in Bosnia to the mere termination of the violence but instead included a plan for rebuilding a new state (Lyon 2000, 50).

Although peace currently exists in the country, the question remains whether stable and sustainable peace is present (Kriz and Cermak 2014). Divisions still exist along ethnic lines. Deep emotional scars persist among nearly everyone living in the country (Portilla 2003). The problem, according to Kriz and Cermak (2014, 7), is that the focus is on a state-centric view of peacebuilding, rather than a multi-dimensional approach dealing with the root issues of the conflict and focusing on reconciliation in society.

Conflict experts believe reconciliation is the missing ingredient (Portilla 2003). The process of focusing on reconciliation and sustainable peace is also known as focusing

on positive peace, which can be contrasted with negative peace, which is merely concerned with cessation of hostilities. Many international organisations are trying to facilitate reconciliation. However, it has not been easy. As one survivor, Sabahudin, said, 'International foundations organise roundtables to discuss living together but it is empty talk, and the reasons are simple: we cannot forgive or forget what happened, and they either deny it happened or say they had to do it – they were obeying orders' (Vulliamy 2004).

Another survivor, Nurseta, concurs with the sentiment. She says:

There is no remorse, no one has apologised or even admitted what happened. They say they know nothing about the camps. There are 145 mass graves and hundreds of individual graves in this region, and we invite the local authorities to our commemorations, but they never come (Vulliamy 2004).

Kriz and Cermak believe that a thin form of reconciliation focused on peaceful coexistence exists rather than a deep reconciliation focused on mutual forgiveness and a shared vision of history (2014, 20). This deep form of reconciliation is the important missing element in moving toward long-term restoration of relations, and apologies and forgiveness are necessary for that to be achieved.

Libya

Libya's past involvement in state-sponsored terrorism led to years of sanctions by the UN and states like the US. Libya was responsible for the 1988 terrorist bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. A total of 270 people lost their lives in that tragedy. There was a criminal trial and a conviction of a Libyan intelligence agent, Abdel Basset El-Megrahi, for the bombing. There was also a civil lawsuit and ultimately a formal acceptance of responsibility by the Libyan government as a condition of Libya being welcomed back into the world community and the removal of sanctions.

In 2004, after the US and Libya began to normalise relations, Lisa Gibson, the sister of one of the Lockerbie victims, worked with Libyan Ambassador Ali Aujali to arrange a personal reconciliation trip to Libya. She recounts her reconciliation journey in her 2008 memoir *Life in Death: A Journey from Terrorism to Triumph*. She discusses how she wrestled through the emotion of that tragedy, found herself thinking of all Libyans as terrorists, and believed that the only way to overcome those feelings was to go to Libya and meet the people so that she could forgive and learn to see them differently (Gibson 2008). On that trip, she met with individual citizens and governmental officials and discussed the conflict between the US and Libya, including the US air raid on Tripoli in 1986 and the Lockerbie bombing in 1988. When she shared her story with the local people the initial reaction was always shock (Gibson 2008, 188). She discovered that the Libyans had always been told that Lockerbie never happened

and that it was an American conspiracy, so when they sat face-to-face with a family member who lost someone, it was somewhat bewildering. In addition, the Libyans she met had the perception that Americans hated them. So, when they met an American who had lost someone in Lockerbie attack, the responses she received from the people were truly heartfelt. One man said, 'I am so sorry for your loss. It is so good for you to come. I will do everything in my power to help you' (Gibson 2008, 188). Moved by these gestures she found herself asking questions like 'what was it like when the US bombed Tripoli in 1986?' and 'what is it like to live in Libya?' (Gibson 2008, 188). Her translator Hamid said, 'No one has ever asked me that question. It is so good of you to ask' (Gibson 2008, 188-189). As a result of sitting face-to-face with Libyans in dialogue, she became envisioned about the power of forgiveness and reconciliation and how it could be used as a citizen diplomacy strategy to help restore relations between the US and Libya as well as a mechanism to hopefully improve the lives of Libyans who were still suffering at the hands of Gaddafi (Gibson 2008).

Gibson also shared her forgiveness in a written dialogue with Abdel Basset El-Megrahi the convicted bomber. In his reply to her he maintained his innocence for the Lockerbie attack but shared his condolences and how he appreciated her gesture (Gibson 2008). In 2009, she met with Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi on his first and only trip to the United States to speak at the UN General Assembly. In that meeting, Gaddafi denounced the actions in Lockerbie and offered his condolences but never said he was responsible. The day after that meeting with Gaddafi, the story broke and was covered in media outlets around the world. In a CNN interview with Fareed Zakaria, Gaddafi said he was 'touched' by the meeting (Sterling 2009).

After visiting Libya, Gibson went on to start a non-governmental organisation (NGO) called the Peace and Prosperity Alliance that facilitated citizen exchanges and people-to-people diplomacy activities as a strategy to improve relations between Libya and the US (Gibson 2008). Citizen dialogues, capacity-building programmes, and reconciliation activities were organised by the Peace and Prosperity Alliance and the Gaddafi Development Foundation in Libya for several years. Those efforts continued during the Libyan revolution and after. She travelled to Libya to assist with providing humanitarian aid during the revolution and was given the opportunity to speak at a rally in Freedom Square in Benghazi on the day the International Criminal Court issued the arrest warrant for Gaddafi. At this rally she spoke to a crowd of over 100,000 people, continuing to share how she had chosen to forgive and had started an NGO using Gaddafi's money to help the Libyan people (Gibson 2013). Her gestures and overtures of forgiveness and reconciliation were, time and again, received with appreciation and recognition, even prompting the crowd in Benghazi to cheer 'Thank you, Lisa' in English (Gibson 2013). She notes how she was truly humbled by the reception she received in Libya and how one simple decision to forgive and focus on

reconciliation had such an impact on a global scale (Gibson 2013).

It would be impossible to measure the impact of these efforts in the overall reconciliation process between the US and Libya. However, what can be said is that her decision to forgive and reach out to the Libyan government and the Libyan people allowed her to enter Libya and do capacity-building and peacebuilding projects when other American NGOs were not allowed to. She shows that one simple gesture can have a compounding effect. In addition, it created a global platform in the media to share about the importance of apologies and forgiveness to restoring relations between individuals and societies.

In an interview with BBC News, she described forgiveness as the moral high ground: 'At the heart of terrorism is hate and fear, and the only way to effectively fight it is to walk in the opposite spirit with love and forgiveness, she told the BBC' (Campbell 2012). Apologising and communicating forgiveness both serve as important gestures of reconciliation. 'I think that holding onto vengeance just causes the cycle of hate to continue', she said.

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to explore the extent to which citizen apologies and forgiveness are important tools of citizen diplomacy. Our case studies have shown that apologies and forgiveness are important parts of the reconciliation process between different groups. Studies into intergroup apologies and the role of collective responsibility have provided key insights into the importance of apologies in restoring relations between groups and the moral justification behind apologising for historical offences. The emotional and political sides of conflict are interconnected and the memory of a conflict can be carried between generations. Since the value in citizen diplomacy activities is in the relational component that citizens provide, apologies and forgiveness serve as additional tools to building trust and good will between states.

As citizens engage in citizen diplomacy initiatives, they are not just representing themselves, but the collective to which they belong. When citizens engage in diplomacy with countries that their sending country has a history of conflict with, they should not overlook the fact that there still could be memories or feelings regarding the past that could impact their current and future relations. Just as traditional diplomats want to respect individuals in the states where they work and present their state in a positive light, so citizen diplomats should also strive to achieve these purposes. It is also important to understand that views on apologies and forgiveness are heavily influenced by culture and so the way they are received may vary from place to place. However, if the end goal is restoring relations, it is the gesture that matters most, and any effort will likely result in more good than harm.

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Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* Revisited: On the Very Idea of a Fusion of Horizons in Intense, Asymmetric and Intractable Conflicts

Oliver Ramsbotham

Abstract: This article is the second part of a two-part paper. The first part was my chapter 'Hans-Georg Gadamer' published by the Dialogue Society in *Dialogue Theories II* in 2016. In the 2016 chapter, I showed how Gadamer's 'philosophical hermeneutics' as expounded in his great book, *Truth and Method* (1960), influenced conflict resolution attempts to overcome cultural clashes and inspired the United Nations millennial 'dialogue of civilisations' forty years later.

This article begins with a brief recapitulation of the theme of my previous paper,¹ but then moves on to a constructive critique of Gadamer's approach in the spirit of Critical Dialogue Studies that suggests how it can be supplemented and made more effective in circumstances where otherwise it does not yet gain purchase.

In the second section I look at attempts to apply Gadamerian hermeneutic conflict resolution to the most difficult cases of intense, asymmetric and as yet intractable conflict. I argue that these attempts are premature because they ignore the chief linguistic feature of such conflicts – radical disagreement. As a result, the aim to transform or prevent actual or potential conflict by promoting hermeneutic dialogue and a fusion of horizons does not yet gain traction.

In the third section, I revisit Gadamer's *Truth and Method* and trace the refusal to take radical disagreement seriously to the founding assumptions of his philosophical hermeneutics. I emphasise his impressive – and less well known – struggles with the very concepts of 'the horizon' and 'the fusion of horizons' that result.

I end by suggesting how hermeneutic conflict resolution can be supplemented and revised in the light of this so that the ground can be prepared even in the most intransigent phases of conflict for its initiation or revival.

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1 Ramsbotham, O. (2016), 'Hans-Georg Gadamer' in *Dialogue Theories II*, ed. Omer Sener, Frances Sleep and Paul Weller, London: Dialogue Society.

From Philosophical Hermeneutics to Hermeneutic Dialogue

Truth and Method (*Wahrheit und Methode*) is not a book about conflict, but a book about hermeneutics – understanding texts from other times and other cultures. It is about interpretation (*Auslegung*). In Gadamer's book interpreting a text is seen as a dialogue between object and interpreter. In the application of Gadamer's ideas to human conflict and conflict resolution it works the other way – a hermeneutic dialogue is seen as a mutual interpretation of texts.

In this opening section I give a brief resume of my former article.

For Gadamer's biographer:

To the extent that individuals and cultures integrate this understanding of others and of the differences between them within their own self-understanding, to the extent, in other words, that they learn from others and take a wider, more differentiated view, they can acquire sensitivity, subtlety and a capacity for discrimination. (Warnke 1987, 174)

Contributors to the *Festschrift* presented in 2002 in honour of Gadamer's hundredth birthday say the same:

[Gadamer's] single most important insight may turn out to be a conceptual scheme that allows us to overcome cultural conflicts as well as clashes of different forms of life. (Arnsward 2002: 35)

Writing in 2011, Fabio Petito agreed that 'the Gadamerian-hermeneutical model of "fusion of horizons" can help us to understand what the process of inter-civilisational dialogue might look like' (Petito 2011, 14).

Much of the first part of *Truth and Method* is related to the origins of hermeneutics in the West such as the interpretation of sacred texts, and to its development and expansion by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) who introduced the idea of the 'hermeneutic circle' and by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) who extended hermeneutics to cover all the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and was influential in his rejection of the idea that the 'scientific method' of the natural sciences (objective, neutral, culture-free, universal) could be applied to the social sciences.

But for Gadamer the decisive shift in hermeneutics came with the eruption of the 'existential' or 'ontological' hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger. It is not possible to do justice to Heidegger's contribution here. But one key element for Gadamer was Heidegger's extension of the idea of the 'hermeneutic circle' to the insight that

the interpreter is never separate from what is interpreted. The thinker is already a product of tradition, of history, an existing being (*Dasein*) 'thrown' into the world that is at the same time to be interpreted. Heidegger demonstrated the significance of the fore-conceptions that precede and shape experience, and through which the future discloses itself through our never ending and intensely practical discursive engagement with things.²

So it is that most of the ideas that have influenced later attempts to apply hermeneutic dialogue in conflict resolution are found in the latter part of *Truth and Method* from the point where Gadamer addresses the thinking of Martin Heidegger (2003: Part II: II (254–307)). He calls his own development of the ideas of Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Heidegger 'philosophical hermeneutics'.

Truth and Method is a continuous struggle to find a route for human understanding (*Verstehen*) between two erroneous – albeit almost irresistible – dead ends. On the one hand, Gadamer continually tries to distance hermeneutics from subjectivist or relativist ideas, hence the unqualified use of the word truth (*Wahrheit*) in his title. Understanding the other is not just becoming familiar with a different subjective world but addressing an initially rival claim to truth. On the other hand, Gadamer also wants to distance hermeneutics from the objectivist idea that there is a scientific method (*Methode*) that gives insight to an interpreter independent of any reciprocal relation with what is being interpreted. For Gadamer to apply a simple subject/object dichotomy of this kind is entirely misleading. We are already part of a history that shapes us (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), and all our mutual interpretations take place in language within which – however 'forgetful' we may usually be about this – our own socially conditioned being is already constituted. Understanding is relational. We do not discover truth from outside as individual investigators. It reveals itself from within as we encounter each other in dialogue.³

So we begin with Gadamer's notion of prejudice (*Vorteilung*), the fore-understanding that we as interpreters bring to the text (or object) that we are wanting to understand. For Gadamer hermeneutics begins when we become aware of what interrupts or challenges our fore-understanding:

understanding becomes a special task only when natural life, this joint meaning of the meant where both intend a common *subject matter*, is disturbed.

2 For Gadamer's account of his own life and influences see his *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1985).

3 See Hans-Herbert Kogler for a thoughtful explication and critique of Gadamer's efforts here: 'A critique of dialogue in philosophical hermeneutics.' *Journal of Dialogue Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014), 47.

(Gadamer 2003, 180) [original italics]

This introduces the idea of the horizon (*der Horizont* – a term borrowed from Nietzsche and Husserl) as that beyond which we cannot see:

Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of 'situation' by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of '*horizon*'. The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. (2003, 302, original italics)

a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see. (2003, 306)

We only become aware of our prejudices (limits to our understanding) when we are confronted by and acknowledge what does not fit in with or challenges them:

A person who does not admit that he is dominated by prejudices will fail to see what manifests itself by their light. (2003, 360)

The encounter with a traditionary text can provide this provocation. For what leads to understanding must be something that has already asserted itself in its own separate validity. Understanding begins, as we have already said above, when something addresses us. This is the first condition of hermeneutics. (2003, 299)

What is at stake in the encounter is not merely subjective perception, therefore. What is at issue is the *object* or 'subject matter' or 'thing' (*die Sache*) that the encounter is *about*. This is not within the sole power of either to determine individually:

This is not an external matter of simply adjusting our tools; nor is it even right to say that the partners adapt themselves to one another but, rather, in a successful conversation they both come under the truth of the object and are thus bound to each other in a new community. (2003, 379)

To sum up:

Transposing ourselves consists neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in the subordination of another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other. The concept "horizon" suggests itself because it expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. (2003, 305)

Gadamer here moves from the idea of a single horizon to the idea of hermeneutic understanding as a 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*):⁴

In the process of understanding, a real fusing of horizons occurs – which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded. (2003, 307)

In the encounter between horizons each is constantly moving relative to the other. So the process of the fusion of horizons is continuous and never ending. This is nothing less than the unfolding of understanding itself. There is no final horizon.

All of this suggests to Gadamer the idea that the genuine hermeneutic encounter between interpreter and text/object is a conversation or dialogue in which each addresses the other:

What characterises a dialogue, in contrast to the rigid form of statements that demand to be set down in writing, is precisely this: that, in dialogue, spoken language – in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross-purposes and seeing each other's point – performs the communication of meaning that, with respect to the written tradition, is the task of hermeneutics. (2003, 368)

Hans-Herbert Kogler puts it like this:

The foundational character of dialogue derives from the fact that all experience is understood to be linguistically mediated, while language as a medium exists in its true and essential form as dialogue. (2014, 47)

Understanding is relational. This defines the hermeneutic stance within and towards the world – an openness to experience that is ready to recognise otherness and thereby grow in awareness and insight. It is not we who discover truth. It is truth that discloses itself. And it does so, not to solitary individuals, but through the perpetual 'dialogue that we are' (Gadamer borrows from Holderlin here) – in language.

From Gadamer's idea of hermeneutics as a genuine conversation or dialogue between interpreter and object, conflict resolution has derived the idea of conversation as a mutual interpretation of texts.

Here is a well-known account of dialogic conflict resolution based on Gadamerian hermeneutics:

4 See David Vessey, 'Gadamer and the fusion of horizons', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17, no. 4 (2009): 531–542.

The most common dictionary definition of dialogue is simply as a conversation between two or more people. In the field of dialogue practitioners, however, it is given a much deeper and more distinct meaning...Elements of this deeper understanding of the word include an emphasis on questions, inquiry, co-creation, and listening, the uncovering of one's own assumptions and those of others, a suspension of judgement and a collective search for truth. (Bojer and McKay, 2006, 10)

The authors go on to describe a varied range of dialogic conflict resolution approaches that fulfil these criteria.⁵

Here is another dialogic conflict resolution approach influenced by Gadamer, this time to do with ways of handling and overcoming competing narratives:

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict for primacy, power, and control encompasses two bitterly contested, competing narratives ... [These are] symbolic constructions of shared identity [which do not so much] reflect truth [as] portray a truth that is functional for a group's ongoing existence ... Both need to be understood, reckoned with, and analysed side by side in order to help abate violence and possibly propel both protagonists toward peace. This is an immensely tall order. But the first step is to know the narratives, the second to reconcile them to the extent that they can be reconciled or bridged, and the third to help each side to accept, and conceivably to respect, the validity of the competing narrative. (Rotberg 2006, 1)

In the book a number of examples of narrative-based hermeneutic conflict resolution approaches are described.⁶ The editor sees the narratives (horizons) as *reflexive* (they are the narratives of the conflicting parties), *functional* (they serve the underlying interests and needs of the conflicting parties) and *equivalent* (they co-exist symmetrically). The only non-Gadamerian element here is the editor's statement that the competing narratives do not 'reflect truth'.

Here, finally, is a description of the way Gadamer's Hegelian idea of a fusion of horizons which 'involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other' is translated into the conflict resolution language of 'relational empathy' (what goes beyond one person's empathy for another) and the emergence of a 'third culture':

5 For example, *Appreciative Enquiry, Change Lab, Deep Democracy, Future Search, Open Space, Scenario Planning, Sustained Dialogue, World Café, Bohemian Dialogue, Learning Journeys* etc.

6 For example, Ilan Pappé on bridging the narrative concept, Daniel Bar-Tal and Gavriel Salvendy on building legitimacy through narrative, Mordechai Bar-On on mutual critical self-examination, Dan Bar-On and Sami Adwan on parallel texts.

The third culture can only develop through interaction in which participants are willing to open themselves to new meanings, to engage in genuine dialogue, and to constantly respond to the new demands emanating from the situation. The emergence of this third culture is the essence of relational empathy and is essential for successful conflict resolution. (Broome 1993, 104)

These are some of the ways in which conflict resolution hopes to use hermeneutic dialogue to 'overcome cultural conflicts' and 'understand what the process of inter-civilisational dialogue might look like'.

Towards the end of his life Gadamer himself entertained similar hopes in the heady days after the end of the cold war. I have taken both these quotations from Fabio Petito (2011):

And if we then have to become part of a new world civilisation, if this is our task, then we shall need a philosophy which is similar to my hermeneutics; a philosophy which teaches us to see the justification for the other's point of view and which thus makes us doubt our own. (Gadamer in Misgeld and Nicholson, eds (1992) p.152)

The human solidarity that I envisage is not a global uniformity but unity in diversity... Such unity-in-diversity has to be extended to the whole world – to include Japan, China, India, and also Muslim cultures. Every culture, every people have something distinctive to offer for the solidarity and welfare of humanity. (Gadamer in Pantham, 1992, 132)

Testing Hermeneutic Conflict Resolution

What happens if hermeneutic conflict resolution, inspired by Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, is applied to the most demanding real-life examples of conflict? What happens when hermeneutic dialogue encounters radical disagreement?⁷

Let us first test hermeneutic conflict resolution by looking at an attempt by the philosopher Charles Taylor to apply Gadamerian principles to an imagined conversation between representatives from radically different cultures in which:

[the representatives] strive to come to an understanding, to overcome the obstacles to mutual comprehension, [and] to find a language in which both can agree to talk undistortively of each. (2002, 287)

7 On radical disagreement see Oliver Ramsbotham *Transforming Violent Conflict: Radical Disagreement, Dialogue and Survival* (London: Routledge, 2010) and Oliver Ramsbotham *When Conflict Resolution Fails: Engaging Radical Disagreement in Intractable Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).

Here is Taylor's account of what takes place when originally distinct horizons (the different 'way that each has of understanding the human condition in their nonidentity') meet in this way:

For instance, we become aware that there are different ways of believing things, one of which is holding them as a 'personal opinion'. This was all that we allowed for before, but now we have space for other ways and can therefore accommodate the beliefs of a quite different culture. Our horizon is extended to take in this possibility, which was beyond its limit before.

But this is better seen as a fusion rather than just an extension of horizons, because at the same time we are introducing a language to talk about their beliefs that represents an extension in relation to their language. Presumably, they had no idea of what we speak of as 'personal opinions,' at least in such areas as religion, for instance. They would have had to see these as rejection, rebellion, and heresy. So the new language used here, which places 'opinions' alongside other modes of believing as possible alternative ways of holding things true, opens a broader horizon, extending beyond both the original ones and in a sense combining them. (Taylor 2002, 287)

Let us now apply this to a concrete example of radical disagreement that was raging at exactly the time Taylor was completing his chapter – and may indeed have been in his mind as he wrote it. This was the bitter war of words that was integral to the fierce struggle in Afghanistan between the Taleban and the US-led coalition following the 11 September 2001 attack on the United States.

In this case the radical disagreement was about whether ideas of western democracy should prevail or whether *sharia* law should be imposed in Afghanistan. In this struggle the 'different ways that each has of understanding the human condition in their nonidentity' met politically and militarily as well as ideologically. In Taylor's reading the radical disagreement at the core of the conflict was a clash between 'different ways of believing things,' one of which was to hold them as 'personal opinion' and the other of which was to hold them as obedience to the will of God.

We begin with Taylor's first paragraph.

'We' become aware that 'they' have an entirely different way of 'holding things true,' namely as the command of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic by the angel Gabriel. Our horizon is thereby said to be extended, because we can now 'accommodate the beliefs of a quite different culture.' But what does 'accommodate' mean in a context of continuing radical disagreement and war? In relation to final outcome – which is what matters to the combatants – does it mean that 'we' will now allow the imposition of *sharia* law after all? If we do, then the context will indeed

have changed. But if we do not, what will 'they' say? Will they agree that we have expanded our horizon? Or will they say the opposite? Will they say that we still want to flout the will of Allah, only now we are doing this by more devious – and therefore more insidious and dangerous – means? Is this not what they *do* say in the continuing radical disagreement?

Conversely, in the second paragraph the exchange is described as a 'fusion' rather than an 'extension' of horizons, because 'they' now come to realise that there is an alternative 'way of holding things true' than as the word of God – namely as 'personal opinion.' They, too, expand their horizon by accommodating the possibility of a belief that was hitherto outside their bounds of comprehension. But, once again, what does this mean in practical terms? Do they, as a result, abandon their determination to impose *sharia*, or soften or compromise their stance? If they do, once again things have indeed changed. But what if – as currently remains the case nearly twenty years later – this is an intractable conflict and the radical disagreement persists? What if, like Abu Musab, they say this?

Democracy means sovereignty for man. Islam means sovereignty for the *sharia*. In the American form of democracy any issue is allowed to be put to the vote of the people, and the majority decision prevails upon all. Can we Muslims put an issue that has already been decided for us by Allah up for a vote and accept the will of the majority if they vote against the will of Allah? Of course, we cannot, so we can never accept democracy as defined, practised and promoted by America. (Abu Musab 2003)⁸

In that case the radical disagreement – and the war – continue.

It is evident in Taylor's Gadamerian analysis that 'we' are seen to be on one side in this conflict. But the challenge to Gadamerian hermeneutic dialogue goes deeper than this. We find that our entire hermeneutic model is now involved in the dispute. We say,

[T]he new language used here, which places 'opinions' alongside other modes of believing as possible alternative ways of holding things true, opens a broader horizon, extending beyond both the original ones and in a sense combining them.

But in this radical disagreement it is the very idea of 'a broader horizon extending beyond both the original ones and in a sense combining them' – the fusion of horizons itself – that can be seen to be irrevocably part of what is at issue in it. Hermeneutic assumptions are found to be already involved in the radical disagreement they are

8 Abu Musab, article from *Kcom Journal*, online source (no longer available), 2003.

invoked to overcome.

Is this a special feature of Charles Taylor's 'thought-experiment'? I do not think so. I think that it applies in general in cases of intense, asymmetric and as yet intractable conflict where the conflicting parties are not yet ready to think or behave as Gadamerians want. It is not difficult to find cases of radical disagreement to test this out. The Internet is overflowing with examples of radical disagreement associated with every form and level of conflict, as well as with interventions by those trying to resolve them. This evidence did not exist earlier. It is a new and as yet hardly explored resource for studying and testing conflict resolution models and approaches.⁹ In the space available I will illustrate this with two other brief examples.

In the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, ignoring what are of course huge internal differences within the two conflicting parties, any time spent listening to Israelis and Palestinians shows why hermeneutic dialogue approaches, such as those outlined at the end of the previous section, despite many local successes, do not yet work when applied to the core of the radical disagreement as a whole.

Israelis do not refer merely to their own narrative, but to the reality of lived experience, of deep history, and of the security imperative. *Eretz Israel* (the land of Israel) is the homeland. Two millennia of exile and persecution were finally ended in 1948. Since then Israel has been subjected to attack by Palestinians from within and by neighbouring Arab states from without. Jewish Israelis are outnumbered 50-1 by Arabs, and 250-1 globally by Muslims. There is only one Jewish state. There are 22 Arab states. Withdrawing from the West Bank and handing over to a weak Palestinian government would risk a repeat of what happened in Gaza after Israel's withdrawal in 2005. Israelis do not refer to what is merely a 'subjective' horizon. Israeli arguments and claims cannot be divorced from the harsh 'objective' realities and bitter lessons of contemporary politics and past history that have generated them.¹⁰

Palestinians refer to the fused reality of fact (the *nakba*), value (its injustice), emotion (indignation) and will (determination to win back equality and freedom for their children and grandchildren). This is not just a 'Palestinian narrative'. What Palestinians say points at the lived reality of forcible dispossession. This is a collective nightmare which continues to this day. That is why conflict resolution approaches that do not engage with, and aim to rectify, the underlying inequity and injustice of

9 I think that this is a major *lacuna* at the moment in conflict and linguistic studies. I try to remedy this in the book I am currently writing, *Radical Disagreement and Philosophy*.

10 This is indicative only. Evidently there is a very wide divergence of views among Israelis. I have been engaged in collective strategic thinking work with Israeli partners from across the political, social and religious spectrum since 2006.

the situation, or the power asymmetries that underpin it, are rejected as normalisation. Normalisation tries prematurely to pacify what needs to be challenged, and, by drawing a false veil of equivalence over an unequal situation, perpetuates inequality. This is how the Palestine Strategy Report *Regaining the Initiative* (2008) puts it:

Above all it is important to combat a central idea in the peacemaking discourse that what is at issue is two equivalent 'Israeli' and 'Palestinian' 'narratives'. No doubt there are Israeli and Palestinian narratives. But what is centrally at issue is not a mere Palestinian narrative, but a series of incontrovertible facts – facts of expulsion, exclusion, dominance and occupation bitterly lived out by Palestinians day by day over the past 60 years and still being endured at the present time. This is not a narrative. It is a lived reality. Finding the best strategy for ending this lived reality is the main purpose of this Report. Transforming the discourse within which it is discussed is a major part of that effort.¹¹

In this radical disagreement, therefore, in their very different ways, neither Israelis nor Palestinians refer to what they say as merely reflexive of their own perspectives, or functional for their own interests, or equivalent to what the other says. They do not recognise the equal 'validity' of the other 'narrative'. They do not say that they are ready to 'uncover their own assumptions, suspend their own judgements, and join in a collective search for truth'. They do not say that they are 'willing to open themselves up to new meanings' or create a 'third culture' which 'offers alternative ways of holding things true and opens a broader horizon extending beyond both the original ones and in a sense combining them'. They do not say any of these things. That they do not say this is what makes it a radical disagreement. It is what so far blocks hermeneutic conflict resolution.

Hermeneutic dialogue dismisses radical disagreement as an unproductive and all too familiar dead end. It sees radical disagreement as a terminus to dialogue that needs from the beginning to be overcome, not learnt from.¹² And that is why hermeneutic conflict resolution does not yet work when the situation is not as it assumes and the conflicting parties are not yet ready to think or behave as it wants. Something else has to happen before hermeneutic dialogue gains purchase. Radical disagreement needs to be taken seriously first before a 'fusion of horizons' becomes possible.

11 Palestine Strategy Group, *Regaining the Initiative*, 2008. 16. I have been working with Palestinians from across the political, social and religious spectrum since 2006.

12 This is how Marianne Bojer and Elaine McKay describe radical disagreement (debate) as the antithesis of hermeneutic dialogue: 'In contrast [to dialogue], a debate is a discussion usually focused around two opposing sides, and held with the object of one side winning. The winner is the one with the best articulations, ideas and arguments.' Marianne Bojer and Elaine McKay, eds., 'Mapping Dialogue' (Pioneers of Change Associates, www.pioneersofchange.net, 2006), 10.

My final illustration is another class of radical disagreement in which the very idea of a fusion of horizons is itself already explicitly involved. This is the situation in which what is at stake is the attempt by the conflicting parties to expose what the other says as 'mere ideology'. Take the conflict between Marxism and Thatcherism. Here a critical theoretic analysis of Thatcherism as false ideology confronts a forthright Thatcherite dismissal of Marxism as itself false ideology. The very idea of the possibility of a fusion of horizons rests on a 'neutral' conception of ideology.¹³ But in this case neither of the main protagonists yet subscribes to this. Marxism adopts a 'critical' conception of ideology, which appeals to the material reality of the class struggle in order to expose the subterfuge of Thatcherite ideology in its attempt to conceal continuing exploitation. Thatcherism appeals to 'ordinary British people' in plain everyday language which 'calls a spade a spade' in order to expose the 'ideological, political and moral bankruptcy of Marxism'.¹⁴

In intense and asymmetric political conflicts, the radical disagreement at the heart of linguistic intractability is not a co-existence of equivalent 'horizons', but a life-and-death struggle to occupy the whole of discursive space – and act accordingly.

Truth and Method Revisited

Before following up the suggestions for extending hermeneutic conflict resolution mentioned towards the end of the previous section, let us revisit *Truth and Method* in order to discover the origin of the refusal to take radical disagreement seriously in philosophical hermeneutics.

A closer reading of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* uncovers why the phenomenon of radical disagreement is ignored in his text. This is built into its foundations. It is the categorical rejection of what Gadamer calls 'the statement' in philosophical hermeneutics that rules out the verbal disputes (radical disagreements) constructed accordingly:

The concept of the statement, dialectically accentuated to the point of contradiction,...is antithetical to the nature of hermeneutic experience and the verbal nature of human experience of the world. (2003, 468)

Why is 'the statement' ruled out in philosophical hermeneutics? Because it

13 In *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) John Thompson distinguishes between 'neutral' conceptions of ideology and 'critical' conceptions of ideology. Critical conceptions 'convey a negative, critical or pejorative sense. Unlike neutral conceptions, critical conceptions imply that the phenomena characterized as ideology or ideological are misleading, illusory or one-sided', 53-5.

14 See Nigel Fairclough, *Language and Power* (Harlow: Longman, 1989).

is identified with what Gadamer calls the 'unproductive prejudices.' Whereas productive prejudices 'enable understanding', as seen in the first section of this article, unproductive prejudices 'hinder it and lead to misunderstanding' (2003, 295). Here is the first slippage in the metamorphosis of philosophical hermeneutics into hermeneutic conflict resolution. The question of what determines the difference between productive and unproductive prejudice is a crucial issue in hermeneutic dialogue and radical disagreement, but it is not considered further in philosophical hermeneutics.

Instead of 'the statement', Gadamer's whole concern is with its opposite – what he calls 'the question' (*die Frage*):

all suspension of judgements and hence, a fortiori, of prejudices, has the logical structure of a *question*. (2003, 299)

It is through his emphasis on the question, and the suspension of judgement that it entails, that Gadamer defines his concept of genuine conversation or dialogue:

Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus, it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says. What is to be grasped is the essential rightness of his opinion, so that we can be at one with each other on the subject. (2003, 385)

Nothing could be further from the nature of radical disagreement than this. Radical disagreement – as 'contradiction' – is the antithesis of hermeneutic dialogue as defined by Gadamer. So the first hermeneutic move is to set it aside.

We now reach the critical moment in *Truth and Method* in relation to the transition from philosophical hermeneutics to the hermeneutic dialogue in conflict resolution derived from it. At the beginning of Part III, Gadamer searches for the equivalent in a conversation between two people to the 'resistance' of a text to our initial 'prejudice' as interpreters. Gadamer has already rejected the most obvious example of conversational resistance – radical disagreement. So instead he reaches for the example of translation from one language into another:

Everything we have said characterising the situation of two people coming to an understanding in conversation has a genuine application to hermeneutics, which is concerned with *understanding texts*. Let us again start by considering the extreme case of translation from a foreign language. (2003, 385)

But this is not the extreme case in human conversation. A text being translated does

not answer back like an opponent in radical disagreement. So the analogy breaks down at this point.

Gadamer (as usual) is aware of this:

the dialectic of question and answer that we demonstrated makes understanding appear to be a reciprocal relationship of the same kind as conversation. It is true that a text does not speak to us in the same way as a Thou. We who are attempting to understand must ourselves make it speak. But we found that this kind of understanding, “making a text speak”, is not an arbitrary procedure that we undertake on our own initiative but that, as a question, it is related to the answer that is expected in the text. (2003, 377)

Gadamer’s qualification, however, does not rescue his analogy. The fact that a text does not resist us like a ‘Thou’ in radical disagreement makes all the difference. It means that it is ‘we’ as interpreters who must ‘make the text speak’. Whereas in radical disagreement it is the other who answers back despite us. Interpretation/translation may not be ‘arbitrary’ insofar as we are trying to adopt the hermeneutic stance of questioning and to ‘listen’ to what the text is saying. But this is still no parallel to a conversation between opponents in a radical disagreement.

All of this bears centrally on the concept of ‘the horizon’ and of the ‘fusion of horizons’.

Once again Gadamer anticipates the problem with the description of prejudice (fore-understanding) as analogous to the ‘horizon’ of a visual field (that beyond which it is impossible to see):

the hermeneutically trained mind...will make conscious the prejudices governing our own understanding, so that the text, as another’s meaning, can be isolated and valued on its own. Foregrounding (*abheben*) a prejudice clearly requires suspending its validity for us. For as long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not consider it a judgement. How then can we foreground it? It is impossible to make ourselves aware of a prejudice while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, provoked. (2003, 219)

How can we be visually aware from within a visual field (horizon) of what is outside it? If to ‘foreground’ a prejudice and therefore see beyond it is to suspend its validity for us, what is the equivalent operation in the case of a horizon or visual field? Here is the germ of the problem with the very idea of a horizon in radical disagreement identified in the previous section. But it is not developed further in *Truth and Method* because the nature of Gadamer’s conversational analogy precludes it. He never tells us how to distinguish between ‘productive’ and ‘unproductive’ prejudice or who is to decide.

The same applies *a fortiori* to the very idea of a fusion of horizons itself. Here the problem lies with the reference to horizons in the plural in the first place (masked by the collective noun in German *Horizontverschmelzung* but exposed in Gadamer's accompanying explanation). What is the containing space within which a fusion of horizons occurs?

However, the question is whether this description really fits the hermeneutical phenomenon. Are there really two different horizons here – the horizon of the person seeking to understand lives [the interpreter] and the historical horizon within which he places himself [what he is seeking to interpret]? Are there such things as closed horizons in this sense? ... Is the horizon of one's own present time ever closed in this way, and can a historical situation be imagined that has this kind of closed horizon? (2003, 304) ... There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.* (2003, 306) [original italics]

Once again Gadamer is aware of the problem and makes another characteristic distinction to accommodate it – this time between a proper fusion of horizons and a premature or 'naïve' fusion of horizons (a 'naïve assimilation of the two') (2003, 306). Here we reach another crux in the derived idea of hermeneutic dialogue and radical disagreement in conflict resolution. As with the distinction between productive and unproductive prejudice which problematises the notion of the horizon, this distinction problematises the idea of a fusion of horizons. What distinguishes genuine from naïve fusion and who decides? In *Truth and Method* Gadamer does not pursue the question further. We are left with the suggestive, but indeterminate, notion of human understanding as a continuous and mysterious fusion of horizons 'supposedly existing by themselves'.

Supplementing Hermeneutic Conflict Resolution

It is time to pull together threads from earlier sections and suggest how hermeneutic dialogic conflict resolution, derived from Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, can be adapted and supplemented so that it gains traction even in the most intense phases of political conflict.

The clue lies in the fact that Gadamerian hermeneutics does not succeed in intense, asymmetric and as yet intractable conflicts because it ignores the chief linguistic aspect of those conflicts – radical disagreement. So, before hermeneutic dialogue becomes possible in conflict resolution, two things have to happen.

First, the radical disagreement that so far blocks conflict resolution must be taken seriously. If we want to transform radical disagreement, we must first understand it.

When this is done, it is seen that radical disagreement is not all too familiar but is perhaps the least familiar aspect of intense political conflict. And it is not a terminus to dialogue but the most characteristic form of dialogue in those circumstances, namely, what I call ‘agonistic dialogue’ or the dialogue of struggle (*agon*) (Ramsbotham 2010; 2017). In Gadamerian terms, radical disagreement is about what it is about – what Gadamer calls ‘*die Sache*’. The conflicting parties do not agree about that. And radical disagreement reaches as far as what both parties appeal to in the process of disagreeing. They appeal to the far horizon – the world itself. This is what shows why the action they advocate and fight for is justified and why what the other says is factually or ethically or logically mistaken. Radical disagreement goes as deep as the contested distinctions that constitute it – distinctions such as those between fact and value, opinion and reality, (logical) form and content, subject and object. In short, radical disagreement might be described as a *clash of horizons* in which the very idea of a horizon, and *a fortiori* a fusion of horizons, is already compromised and part of what is in dispute. Conflicting parties are much further apart than we realised.

Second, having understood this, we can then engage the material, conceptual and strategic asymmetries that block peaceful management, settlement, and transformation. Once again, we do not begin *between* conflicting parties when they are not yet ready for hermeneutic dialogue. We begin *within* them. And we start where they are, not where hermeneutic conflict resolution wants them to be. This means promoting collective strategic thinking – where are they? Where do they want to be? How do they get there?¹⁵ Why are conflicting parties ready to do this even in the most intense and intransigent phases of conflict? Because they want to overcome internal differences in order to attain collective strategic goals. Why can this nevertheless prepare the ground for a possible future initiation or revival of hermeneutic conflict resolution? Because by its very nature collective strategic thinking (CST) helps to loosen the straitjacket of radical disagreement. To see this, consider the following brief indication.

CST takes account of internal differences within the conflicting parties. This opens space for all manner of cross-cutting possibilities otherwise not available. CST analyses the *status quo* as a complex system and makes a sophisticated evaluation of existing strengths and weaknesses. This distinguishes different forms of power. CST looks to the future, not the past, and compares possible futures (scenarios) not just in terms

15 The Collective Strategic Thinking Methodology has been developed over many years by the Palestine Strategy Group, the Israeli Strategic Forum, the Palestinian Citizens of Israel Strategy Group, and latterly the Palestinian Diaspora/Refugee Strategy Group. Something similar has been developed in Yemen by the Hadhramaut Strategy Group and the Marib Strategy Group. All of this work has been done through the Oxford Research Group and respective Israeli, Palestinian and Yemeni partners. See Ramsbotham (2010) and Ramsbotham (2017).

of desirability, but also in terms of attainability and likelihood. This introduces an element of realism instead of wishful thinking. CST considers short-term, medium-term and long-term goals building in flexibility. CST determines and orchestrates various strategic options and paths for reaching strategic goals, ensuring creativity and variety. CST also requires sophisticated formulations of strategic messages in general in order to appeal to the disparate nature and interests of different audiences and enlist the support of influential third-party allies. Finally, and above all, in the light of all this, CST looks at the chessboard from the perspective of the opponent. CST does this, not in order to empathise with the other, but in order not to lose the chess game. Nevertheless, this begins to open the way for the possibility of future hermeneutic dialogue because it identifies sympathetic constituencies within the opponent who can be allies on specific issues, and, more broadly, notes what is most likely to influence the opponent's calculations of the expected cost-benefit of various strategic options. This means gaining insight into what motivates the other, and what factors weigh most heavily on the other's evaluations. All of this can be seen to anticipate the expanded 'understanding' of the other that Gadamerian hermeneutics seeks to open up and foster.

Conclusion

The upshot of this article is to reassert my admiration for and appreciation of the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamerian hermeneutic dialogue approaches achieve remarkable results in 'overcoming cultural conflicts as well as clashes of different forms of life.' They do, indeed, 'help us to understand what the process of inter-civilisational dialogue might look like.' However, no single philosopher or philosophic approach can encompass theoretically, or resolve practically, the ongoing and ever varied phenomenon of intractable human conflict and its most prominent linguistic feature – radical disagreement. This article has focused on those intense, asymmetric and intractable political conflicts where, so far, hermeneutic conflict resolution derived from Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics finds it most difficult to gain purchase. But Critical Dialogue Studies is of little practical use if it remains purely negative. So I have also tried to suggest how, by supplementing hermeneutic dialogue with a prior strategic engagement that takes radical disagreement and agonistic dialogue seriously, it is possible to prepare the ground for an application of Gadamerian understanding even in the most intransigent phases of conflict. Subject to this qualification, Gadamer's deep and subtle insights retain full validity.

The last words of the Afterword, added to *Truth and Method* by Gadamer in response to his first critics, are these:

I will stop here. The ongoing dialogue permits no final conclusion. It would be a poor hermeneuticist who thought he could have, or had to have, the last

word. (Gadamer 2003, 579)

Setting aside the no doubt ironic – and significant – fact that these *were* the last words of the book, Gadamer himself remained consistently open to new learning to the end of his life. When he was over a hundred years old, in his last months, came the shock of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that seemed at a stroke to invalidate the high hopes of the millennial Gadamerian ‘dialogue of civilisations’. In perhaps his last recorded interview he responded: ‘*es ist mir recht unheimlich geworden*’ ([the world] has become quite strange to me) – a fitting epitaph because, as seen above, coming across something ‘strange’ and recognising that it lies outside your previous range of understanding was regarded by Gadamer as the beginning of wisdom. Perhaps, had he lived even longer, he might himself, after all, have said more about the phenomenon of radical disagreement than he did say.

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‘Culture of Dialogue’ as a Decolonial Peace-Building Tool: The Case of Colombia

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Abstract: This article is based on a four-month placement with the Colombian peace-building organisation Rodeemos el Diálogo (*Embrace Dialogue*, ReD) in London, as well as three years of working with the organisation in Bogotá, Colombia. It discusses the causes of violence in Colombia, the conceptualisation of dialogue, and ReD’s notion of a ‘culture of dialogue’. First, by explaining the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being in the Colombian context, I argue that the contemporary armed conflict is a legacy of colonial logics that are still being reproduced. Then, through a literature review on the concept of dialogue, I describe its origins, its potential to be a useful method to peacebuilding and the danger of it reproducing coloniality and control. Finally, I explain how ReD understands the ‘culture of dialogue’ and why it has the potential to resolve conflict in a non-violent way and take action against colonial-inherited inequalities and oppressions. I argue that to resolve Colombia’s violence it is necessary to address the coloniality of power, knowledge and being taking place. However, to address these it is of utmost importance to be able to acknowledge the existence of violence and to recognise the multiplicity of epistemologies that coexist in today’s world. Within these processes of recognition, culture of dialogue plays an important role.

Keywords: Colombia, Dialogue, Coloniality, Peace-building, Decoloniality, Culture of dialogue

Introduction

My life has been shaped by the Colombian armed conflict, even though I am not a direct victim and I was born in a position of privilege. Like many Colombians, I grew up thinking that the war would not end any time soon, least of all through dialogue instead of military means. The peace negotiation announced in 2012, and the Peace Agreement signed in 2016 gave me a glimpse of hope regarding the possibility of transforming the country to one that resolved differences in a non-violent way. I was eager to collaborate in whichever way possible, which was why in 2015 I joined Rodeemos el Diálogo (*Embrace Dialogue*, ReD), a network of people that supported the ending of the armed conflict in Colombia through peaceful means, encouraging what the organisation calls a ‘culture of dialogue’. For the last four years, I have been thinking about, developing and working on this concept that brings dialogue to a cultural status.

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As part of my Masters in Postcolonial Culture and Global Policy at Goldsmiths, University of London, I carried out a four-month placement in the (re)emerging UK branch of ReD (there called *Embrace Dialogue*), with the objective of researching their concept of 'culture of dialogue'. The placement was divided into three phases: 1) Archival research on the organisation's documents, inquiring about the genealogy of the term and its development; 2) Semi-structured interviews with its members both in the UK and in Colombia, to comprehend how they understand and bring to life the concept; and 3) A literature review about the concept of dialogue and its relation to peace building to analyse how the concept of 'culture of dialogue' and ReD's processes and practices converge with and diverge from it.

In this article, I will reflect on my work with ReD, focusing on the placement I undertook between February and May 2019 in London, but also including experiences from the work done in Colombia where relevant.

I ground this article on the thought of the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (hereafter MCD) collective, the group of authors of Latin America that have been thinking about the decolonial option since the early 2000s. *Coloniality*, according to these authors, is the logic of domination that continued to function after colonialism was dismantled (Escobar and Mignolo 2010; Maldonado-Torres 2017; Mignolo 2011; Quijano 1989). It involves a series of mechanisms that reproduce the western way of understanding the world (modernity) as the only possible interpretation.

Throughout this article, I identify and examine the hegemonic features concerning coloniality. In this sense, one of the purposes of this paper is to contribute to the analysis of dialogue from the perspective of decoloniality. From an MCD perspective, I understand decoloniality not as a romantic vision of returning to a better past, but of recognising the multiplicity of epistemologies that coexist in today's world (Ibid). It is a twofold process that, on the one hand, reveals and challenges existing hierarchies within the supposed universality of modernity, and on the other, proposes possible 'options' that acknowledge the existence of other ways of understanding, living and knowing the world that is silenced by the epistemic violence of coloniality.

The historical and geographical background of this article will focus on the contemporary Colombian armed conflict, its history of coloniality, and the possibilities that the recent peace agreement opens for rethinking the hegemonic features of peacebuilding. My argument is that a culture of dialogue can be a way of practising decolonial peacebuilding in Colombia that acknowledges the logics of the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being that are taking place and have done historically and can actively seek to undo them. My purpose is not to prescribe a correct way of peace building or dialogue. Instead, I intend to develop a decolonial option, one of many possible options, to take advantage of the early stage of the implementation of the

Peace Agreement to deconstruct coloniality logics in Colombia. I write with this urgency in mind.

The article is divided into three sections. In the first section, I will further explain coloniality and how it operates within the Colombian context. I argue that Colombian contemporary armed conflict can be understood as a legacy of colonialism. Therefore, I will explain, in a non-linear narrative, how the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being have operated historically in Colombia to pave the way for unending violence. I stress the need to look at decolonial options to dismantle the processes of violence in Colombia and the coloniality logics that continue to take place in the country.

The second section concerns the concept of dialogue. I will first discuss the origins of the concept of dialogue in Socrates, Hegel, and Marx as a tool to seek knowledge and critical thinking. Then, I will give a brief overview of how dialogue has been used in relation to peace building. Lastly, I will describe how it has been abused and the dangers its misuse entails.

In the last section, I will explore my findings of ReD's 'culture of dialogue'. I make a distinction between violence and conflict, suggesting that conflicts are not inherently bad because they are a manifestation of dissent. I argue that to resolve Colombia's fragmentation and violence it is necessary to address the two critical points; but to do this, it is of paramount importance first to be able to engage in dialogue without resorting to violence, and to seek to undo the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being. This is where the culture of dialogue plays an important role.

Methodology

Since this research was grounded in decoloniality thought, it is important to acknowledge my positionality as a student at a university from the so-called 'global North' analysing a 'global South'¹ organisation of which I have been part for the last four years. This entailed challenges such as departing from the colonising epistemological premises of academia.² From the early stages, I reflected about the insider/outsider position of the researcher (Altorki and El-Solh 1988), thinking how my clear 'insider' position could 'bias' the findings or how it should be treated with special caution as it posed challenges that an 'outsider', a more objective researcher, would not face. During the research, however, I understood how the insider/outsider

1 I acknowledge the problematic of these terms to perpetuate symbolic and material unequal global power relations but use them here in quote marks to illustrate precisely those unequal global power relations.

2 For a deeper take on this matter see Al-Hardan, A. (2014) 'Decolonizing Research on Palestinians: Towards Critical Epistemologies and Research Practices', *Qualitative Inquiry* 20(1):61-71.

is a false binary as my position changed depending on the person I was talking with, the stage of the research, and other contextual features. Sometimes I was read as an insider, helping organise meetings and training new members, and sometimes as an outsider, a type of consultant carrying on an investigation that would end up in a product that would help the organisation. Thus, I saw this research as a conversation – or even better, a dialogue – rather than a ‘discovery’ and it was done in a respectful way that acknowledged the people in the organisation as actors (active agents) rather than ‘informants’ or ‘sources’ (passive ‘objects of study’).

The historical recounting of the history of violence in Colombia was purposely done in a non-chronological way to avoid the western imperative of history as a succession of events whose only logical outcome is ‘civilisation’. Rather, I searched for those features of Colombia’s history that illustrate how the country has been submerged into coloniality of knowledge, power, and being. Then I dived into the sea of references about dialogue and peace building. I decided to use the theory beginning from the seminal western thinkers on those fields, such as Socrates and Galtung, to set up a theoretical common ground of how these concepts are understood and build illustrations from there about the benefits and dangers. These two activities, however, were done during the last stage of the research: the literature review. Previously, I had done archival research, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation.

ReD defines itself as a ‘transnational, non-partisan foundation that supports building a comprehensive and inclusive peace through the promotion of a culture of dialogue in Colombia.’³ The objective of my placement was to deconstruct this statement, enquiring how the organisation and its members understand and practice a ‘culture of dialogue’ and whether or not this contributes to a ‘comprehensive and inclusive peace.’

At the beginning of the placement, I endeavoured to organise ReD’s documents while conducting archival research about the genealogy of the concept of a ‘culture of dialogue’ and its development within the organisation. ReD did not have one archive, but multiple private archives from its members, with possibly duplicated documents. I contacted a dozen people involved with ReD throughout the years, developing a personal archive, and received more than 2,500 files in total from seven of them. I searched for documents containing the terms ‘culture of dialogue’ or ‘cultura de diálogo’ either in their name or content, which resulted in 300 files. I codified, classified, and organised them with a filing system that respected the guidelines of archival classification (Shellenberg 1961) and set up an Excel table containing pertinent information about the concept of ‘culture of dialogue.’

3 This statement appears through many private documents found in the archival research.

Then, I carried out semi-structured interviews with ReD members to comprehend how they understand the concept. Since the organisation is almost entirely made of volunteers,⁴ the activities are led and advanced by 15 people. The sample was chosen from these key actors, trying to be representative in the sense of having at least one person representing a section of the organisation. Therefore, from March to May, I interviewed six members of ReD in London and Bogotá, and via video-call: the director in Colombia, the director in the UK, a co-founder, the head of the education team, an administrative member, the projects leader, and a member of the youth section (ReD-020). I then transcribed and systematised their answers concerning my analysis objective.

Meanwhile, I was doing participant observation of ReD's activities, looking closely at the mechanics of their processes and how they apply the concept to their activities and taking notes in a field book. From October 2018 to August 2019, including the four months of formal placement, I conducted participant observation at 22 events convened by ReD in London: 1 book launch, 2 demonstrations, 2 Embrace Dialogue Academia (EDA) closed-door discussions, 7 internal meetings, 3 open dialogues in a panel format, 2 presentations, 2 documentary screenings followed by discussions, and 2 *tertulias* (gatherings). Most of these took place on University College, London campus and at the home of the director of the organisation. Others took place in pubs or on the premises of ally organisations such as Bertha Doc House at the Curzon or Christian Aid. The most recurrent topics at these events were the Truth Commission and the role of civil society in supporting the implementation of the peace accord.

Coloniality and violence in the Colombian context

It is widely accepted that the contemporary Colombian armed conflict has its roots in the unequal distribution of land throughout the country. Although some other causes such as limited political participation, the fragmentation of the state, and the pressures of the international community are often mentioned (CNMH 2016), the conflict is not frequently linked to the legacies of colonialism. The country's colonial experience is seen as a completed process left in a far past. Nonetheless, as the authors from the MCD group argue, once colonialism was dismantled as an administrative structure, their institutions and practices were transformed according to a narrative of modernity in order to maintain that control, thus shaping a certain type of subject and producing a particular type of knowledge that maintained relationships of domination typical of colonialism. This process is understood as *coloniality*.

4 Of the more than 50 members both in Colombia and the UK, only 1 has a part-time contract. The rest offer their free time to the organisation, not constrained by a specific number of hours per week.

Coloniality operates at different levels that are intertwined with one other, ensuring that processes of *subalternation* persist: coloniality of power, knowledge, and being. 'Coloniality of power' refers to the mechanisms that reproduce colonial hierarchies (Mignolo 2011), dominating and exploiting people based on the social classification of populations. Its epistemic dimension is the 'coloniality of knowledge', the production of knowledge and practices that legitimate who is human and who is less human (Escobar and Mignolo 2010). Those that hold the economic, political and cultural power impose the global design of Eurocentric modernity as universal. As such, coloniality always implies violence: that of negating and making invisible other ways of understanding the world, and other knowledges and practices different from those hegemonic western knowledges and practices. The 'coloniality of being' refers to the lived experiences of colonisation (Maldonado-Torres 2007). It therefore includes the experiences of the subaltern subjects that exist under the coloniality of power and knowledge.

The MCD project does not define a 'new' paradigm originating from Latin America, but rather an 'other paradigm', an option among other decolonial projects (Escobar and Mignolo 2010). Decoloniality is about acknowledging the diversity of experiences and local histories that are marked by coloniality and drowned by the imposition of knowledge and power systems that oppress them. The decolonial option attempts to think according to the 'colonial epistemic difference' to unravel the hegemonic Eurocentric perspective of knowledge and uncover its violent means that, even today, silence those dissociated from modernity. From this 'other paradigm', the silenced knowledge creates a space of articulation and a space for thought that enters in dialogue with other projects that share the perspective and critique of modernity.

Therefore, to review the history of violence in Colombia, I will not follow the modern idea of chronological narration of a succession of events according to a timeline of progression. Instead, predominant features⁵ of the history of violence will be located in the three levels of coloniality previously explained (knowledge, power, and being).

Coloniality of knowledge

There are three epistemological axes of modernity on which coloniality in Colombia was (and still is) organised: the racial strategy, the imaginary of urbanity, and the discourse of development.

The racial strategy is configured in two different epistemic regimes: natural sciences and medical-based discourses and practices about the body, while social sciences such

5 Although several features of the history of violence in Colombia can be identified, I will focus on the most important ones in order to understand its contemporary armed conflict.

as history and anthropology explained 'human nature' around Darwinist ideas. These two regimes are illustrated in the official narrative of Colombian independence. Drawing from biological explanations, the Catholic religion and the argument in favour of the defence of private property, Henao and Arrubla (1911), authors of the history textbook used in all Colombian high schools throughout most of the twentieth century, stated that white *criollos*⁶ had an obvious racial and cultural superiority over black and indigenous people. It was for this reason, according to the authors, that only the *criollo*'s struggle for independence was successful. This official narrative established a clear hierarchy of the populations that inhabit Colombia, and an imaginary of *whiteness*.

Additionally, Colombia has been characterised as a centralist country organised and administered from Bogotá, where *urbanity* is a synonym of progress and development, while *rurality* is as associated with backwardness and even danger. In the context of an accelerated increase of urban centres due to the influx of international capital, medicine characterised the migrant population as poor, illiterate and unemployed peasants from Colombian rural areas (Díaz 2008). This population was labelled as the 'dangerous classes' that represented a potential danger to public health. Through this 'hygienic device', medicine could intervene in the lives of individuals (from food to clothing) and the social body (architectural distributions) to protect public health (Díaz 2008). These interventions were intended to produce clean citizens and workers, useful for the capitalist system and who would not bother those urban whites who were in the dominant position of power.

The notions of 'underdevelopment' and 'Third World' that emerged in the new global power structure after the Second World War (Escobar 2006) also impacted the colonality of knowledge in Colombia. This epistemic strategy of development allowed coloniser countries to continue extracting natural and economic resources from the colonised countries, who now had to manage their entrance to modernity by achieving 'progress' with the 'kind' help of the 'developed' modern countries and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations (Díaz 2008). Furthermore, Colombia was considered a laboratory where international aid programs were tested.⁷ The professionalisation of Colombian development experts

6 The Spanish caste system divided the population into white (European), indigenous (native), black (African slave), *criollo* (child of two white people in America), *mestizo* (child of a white and an indigenous), *mulato* (child of a white and a black), and other combinations.

7 According to Thomson (2011), 'Colombia was the first developing country to accept a World Bank mission, apply for US "Alliance for Progress" aid, receive counterinsurgency support from the US "Military Assistance Program", and implement the WB's model of "rural development on a large scale".'

can be interpreted as a way of normalising the discourse of underdevelopment as the fundamental cause of the country's problems.

Coloniality of power

Those three epistemic axes result in three clear mechanisms of coloniality of power in Colombia: the establishment of a modern nation-state of criollo elites, the hegemonic economic system through the persistence of the hacienda model and the insertion in global capitalism, and developmentalist policies.

Colombia's independence in 1810 was brought by the criollo elites to establish and control a new nation-state linked to the modern capitalist world system (Castro-Gomez and Restrepo 2008). Since then, elites have divided Colombians into what have been presented as the only two possible political options: Santanderists and Bolivarians, centralists and federalists, conservatives and liberals. Both sides have confronted one another violently since Independence, and their hegemony has exterminated and made invisible other political options that exist in Colombia. This was how elites achieved the goal of maintaining political power at the expense of impoverishing and excluding the majority of the mostly rural population. This incited violence and established a state incapable of securing presence throughout the national territory and guaranteeing access to a dignified life through the provision of health care, education, and security (Camelo 2017).

Through coloniality of power, elites also succeeded in securing economic power. As independence did not change the conventions of land tenure, the only officially recognised titles were those originally granted by the Spanish Crown (Thomson 2011). This colonial *hacienda* model dealt with territorial divisions in productive units for agricultural exploitation by an owner through the slavery of indigenous people and the black population brought from Africa. While the white settlers and their descendants continued to have a status of domination, reproducing their economic, social and cultural power, the indigenous, Afro-descendants, *mestizos* and other subaltern populations, now 'free', sold their labour for a low wage in terrible working conditions. Over the years, presidents from both parties, with the support and pressure from the United States, continued to give priority to the 'modernisation of the hacienda' in their political decisions and laws (Thomson 2011, 337). This benefited landowners, including foreign investors, while repressing the *campesinos* who worked on the lands, and their unions.

Meanwhile, the developmentalist international aid projects in Colombia inserted the 'beneficiaries' into the capitalist markets as suppliers of food products and as consumers of their agricultural inputs, technology and credit, with costs up to 575 per cent higher than the usual production investment, which was covered by banking

loans (Thomson 2011).

Coloniality of being and the peace process

In this context, those *subalterned*⁸ (campesinos, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and the urban proletariat) grew tired of being systematically dispossessed, oppressed, and excluded. Subsequently, in the 1960s, they transformed their resistance communities into revolutionary guerrillas such as the FARC-EP, ELN, EPL, MQL, and M19.⁹ Despite their ideological and methodological differences, it is possible to say that they all fought against the political and economic monopoly of the elites. They fought to decolonise the people and the land from the deep colonial structures that continued to exist in Colombia because they could 'no longer breathe', and as peasants, they had 'nothing to lose and everything to gain' (Fanon 1963, 61).

As a result of the economic gains produced by the cocaine industry and other violent means of capital accumulation such as kidnappings, the FARC-EP consolidated their presence throughout the national territory as the strongest guerrilla group. They even replaced the state in some territories by providing services to the population (Thomson 2011). In response to this, landowners, businessmen, soldiers, drug traffickers, and political elites formed paramilitary organisations and strengthened existing ones, which were later grouped into the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). The paramilitaries, under the anti-communist discourse promulgated by the United States in the context of the Cold War, were dedicated to terrorising the rural population, whom they considered to be sympathisers of the insurgency (Thomson 2011).

However, many other members of the oppressed populations did not resort to joining guerrillas or paramilitaries. On the contrary, they continued to resist the material, symbolic, and epistemic violence in their territories according to their own ways of understanding the world. *Campesinos*, indigenous people, Afro-descendants, women, the LGBT population, and all those subjectivities that do not conform to the colonial model of the neoliberal modern subject have been victimised by the conflict. They have also resisted and remained caught in the crossfire between the state apparatus, the different guerrilla groups, the paramilitary groups, the drug traffickers and common criminals.

8 Using the word 'subalterned' makes explicit the subalternity condition as a result of domination processes. It is therefore a more appropriate term than the essentialising 'subaltern'.

9 These are: the communist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC-EP), the Marxist National Liberation Army (ELN), the Maoist People's Liberation Army (EPL), the indigenous Quintin Lame Movement (MQL) and the urban April 19 Movement (M19)

After half a century of war, the Colombian government and the FARC-EP signed a Final Agreement to end their armed confrontation in December 2016. Unlike previous attempts at peace negotiations, this was successful because it enunciated, recognised and attempted to resolve colonial-inherited issues that caused the violent conflict. This included land dispossession, the imaginary of urbanity, and political exclusion, although these issues were not framed in terms of their colonality and other colonial-inherited issues were not included such as the racial hierarchies and the development discourse. It also gave space for the participation of groups that were traditionally excluded from peace talks, such as the (mostly rural) victims, women, and ethnic minorities.

The peace process built on the successes and mistakes from the previous processes in Colombia and international cases such as South Africa and Northern Ireland. It had a solid peace-building, transitional justice and human rights theoretical basis, and a five-point agenda of dialogue between the government and the FARC-EP: land, political participation, drug crop substitution, justice, and victims. The signing of the Final Agreement came after five years of challenging negotiations in Havana, Cuba. In Colombia, however, agreements between citizens were more difficult to achieve, as evidenced in the negative outcome of the Peace Referendum: 50.21% voting against the peace agreement versus 49.78% voting in favour.

Living and watching every stage of this peace process, in which two parties with very different worldviews and epistemologies sat down to talk and reached agreements (despite great difficulty) on fundamental social, economic, and political topics (which would impact the knowledge, power, and being of the people), led me to consider dialogue as an enriching conflict resolution tool in a society that has traditionally been violent. Moreover, the fact that Colombians were so passionately divided about the contents of the Peace Agreement and the very existence of the negotiation made me reflect on the potential and limitations of dialogue. That is why from the position in which I inhabit the world (and Colombia), from the knowledge that I have had the privilege to acquire, and from my experience with ReD, I want to contribute to the reflections on this concept.

Dialogue, Peace Building, and Colombia's Peace Accord

There are many ways to approach dialogue. From communication, mediation, linguistics, hermeneutics, or religion, dialogue can be described, analysed and called for as a practice, theory, or merely a condition of human life. The word is often used interchangeably with 'conversation', 'discussion', 'negotiation' or 'debate', and several authors have theorised different models about it. To understand the role of dialogue in resolving conflicts in violent countries such as Colombia, it is important to start from its origins and analyse its relationship with peace building in general and with the peace process in Colombia in particular, keeping in mind its potentials and the dangers that its misuse and abuse entail.

From Socrates to Marx: the origins of the concept of dialogue

The term 'dialogue' was coined in the fourth century in Greece, meaning 'through' (*dia*) 'speech/reason' (*logos*). Although the word might have been circulating before among sophist (Jazdzewska 2014), it first appears written by Plato in the Socratic dialogues. There, it is a type of conversation between two people consisting of questions and answers about a philosophical question, an argumentative exchange that aims to fuel critical thinking and reach wisdom.

This format of asking careful questions encourages the participants to be aware of their thought processes, monitoring the steps taken to argue something. This allows them to be in constant self-reflection about the coherence and discrepancies of their arguments, evaluating their words and correcting themselves if necessary. This results in the participants in dialogue being part of a guided process to scrutinise their thoughts, opinions, and beliefs; to acknowledge, as Socrates did, that they 'know nothing.'

From dialogue, Hegel and Marx developed the concept of dialectics. For Hegel, it was the process of finding the contradiction between ideas, resulting in a new idea. In this model, the dialogue between two or more people starts with a statement that is challenged with the goal of establishing the truth after an exchange of reasoned arguments; it is about making implicit contradictions explicit. Marx signalled that this focus on ideas ignored the contradictions present in the material world. For him, 'the subject of dialectics is change, all change, and interaction, all kinds and degrees of interaction' (Ollman 2003). Therefore, dialectic is not a formula but a method to study social processes and how to resolve them.

The *raison d'être* of the dialectic process is seeking a resolution or closure. A dialogic process, on the other hand, focuses on the exchange *per se*, highlighting the importance of listening without necessarily resolving an issue. That is also what differentiates dialogue from terms such as 'debate', 'discussion' or 'negotiation', which have the goal

to convince, gain knowledge, or reach an agreement. This unveils its potential to strengthen relationships and thus help avert violent conflicts and build peace.

Dialogue and peace building: the potentials and risks in relation to Colombia's peace process

In one of the darkest moments of violence in Colombia, philosopher Estanislao Zuleta published an essay where he affirmed that the 'eradication of conflicts and their dissolution in a warm coexistence is not an attainable or desirable goal' (Zuleta 1985) because conflicts are a constitutive space of social reality. To understand this, it is necessary to distinguish conflict from violence. Conflict is when two or more diverse positions confront each other; violence is one possible manifestation of conflict that implies aggression, either materially or symbolically.

The fields of peace building and conflict resolution seek to achieve an absence of violence (*negative peace*) and build the material, structural, and cultural conditions that eliminate the causes of violence (*positive peace*) (Galtung 2000). Doing that requires establishing *relationships* between people at the grassroots level (members of communities, refugees, local leaders), at the middle-range level (academics, NGOs, ethnic or religious leaders, media) and top leaders (political and military leaders) (Lederach 1997).

As dialogue does not have a purpose or agenda beyond 'inquiring into the movement of thought' (Bohm, et al., 1991), and its object is not 'analysing things, winning an argument, or exchanging opinions but listening to everybody's opinions and simply sharing the appreciation of the meanings' (Bohm, 1996), it is an appropriate tool for peacebuilding. It has been used in the resolution of a wide spectre of conflicts, from the peace processes of Northern Ireland and South Africa, to climate change issues, to the socio-economic crisis in Argentina (UNDP 2009).

However, a dialogue is not merely a conversation between two or more people. Examining the theories of different dialogue authors, we find that it requires at least three internal and external conditions (Incerti-Théry 2016), 1) *will*, because those engaging in dialogue should do it without any coercion or pressure; 2) a *safe space*, a 'neutral' location and trusting environment where the exchange can take place without any threat or fear; and 3) *equity*, meaning that everybody has an equal possibility and time to speak, but also that there are no power imbalances between the participants. Once those requirements are fulfilled, a dialogue takes place when its participants listen carefully to the others, are open to sharing their thoughts, and have the curiosity to ask thorough questions (Bohm 1996, Gadamer 1975, Ikeda 2005).

Although it should not be its goal, dialogue sometimes has positive effects. As a

product of dialogue, people understand others in their own way. This can facilitate the reconciliation of traumas; it can generate trust, safety, visibility, or cooperation, which can lead to building relationships between participants (a key to avoiding violence); expand the horizon of the mind, defined by Gadamer (1975) as the range of vision from a point; or bring out the best in oneself and others (Ikeda 2005). That is why dialogue has the potential to be a revolutionary method.

However beneficial dialogue looks, it is necessary to keep a critical eye on its theoretical dangers and look closely at how it takes place in practice: how it is used and abused. It is worth saying that most dialogue theorists are men from the global North, and it is often applied to the global South.

For instance, peace building, as understood and practised by international politics, is a concept inherent to modernity. It originated within the United Nations as part of its 'responsibility to protect' discourse and has since marked an agenda to respond to conflicts that were before seen as internal affairs and might even be interpreted as imperialist (Schelhaas and Seegers 2009). It is a key part of the set of theories, ideas, and practices known as 'transitional justice' promoted by the international world system, that comprises a toolkit of trials, amnesties, truth commissions, and institutional reforms (Evans 2018). This way of understanding peace building entails a coloniality of knowledge that presents the transition to democracy and capitalism as the only universal answer to overcome conflicts.

One of the major criticisms of this toolkit is that it favours neoliberalism because its main effect is normalising the markets of the previously conflictive country to become a productive part of the globalised capitalist economy (Evans 2018). That is because it is assumed that the pacification of territories attracts foreign investment and international aid for development. Indeed, peace building frequently involves the intervention of international actors in political, social, legal, and economic spheres with the goal of inclusion in the modern international system. That is a coloniality of power that imposes the adjustment of society, organised as a country, within the hegemonic world system.

As a result, there has been a professionalization of the field, with most of the people trained in peace building coming from countries such as the United States and Norway to 'build peace' in countries like Somalia or Iraq. In this context, 'dialogue' (in the form of mediation or facilitation) is taught to peace-building professionals as a form of achieving 'sustainable change' (UNDP 2009) and thus is also a common activity in its programs and projects. This interventionist logic affects immediately the requisite of *equity*, as there are clear power imbalances taking place in such dialogues: a coloniality of being.

It is also worth looking at who is involved in every dialogue. Including some people means that others are being excluded, and it is pertinent to ask who is excluded, why, and how is the exclusion enforced. Those involved in the dialogue might be speaking on behalf of the excluded, in which case it is pertinent to talk about the implications of representation, or as Spivak (1988) said, if the subaltern can speak. The control of the contents of the dialogue is also important, that is, looking to see if something is off-limits.

Beyond the practical, some have used the concept as a controlling discourse, due to its vagueness and abstractive nature. In Turkey, for example, when neoliberal strategies were imposed and the working class started revolting against losing its access to the advantages of the welfare state, some workers were invited to a 'social dialogue' table where they never had a dialogue, but were 'forced to make further concessions silently, while being kept under control' (Akpınar and Akçay 2015). In this case, 'dialogue' is used to silence dissent, called when it is needed to keep people under control, and not used as a tool to effectively resolve conflict.

In Colombia's case, the peace process unfolded a triple-meaning of dialogue. First, the dialogue in Havana, meaning the table of negotiations between the members of the government and the members of FARC-EP, with the participation of victims, women, and ethnic minority representatives. Second, the dialogue in Colombia, meaning the conversation between citizens (sometimes even previous enemies), due in part to the attention of mass media, the international community, and multilateral organisations, and in part to a general environment pushing for reconciliation. Third, the lack of dialogue of the leaders opposing the peace process up until they won the Peace Referendum. This meant that while some sectors of society were able to sit down and dialogue to resolve their conflicts in a non-violent way, something unthinkable before, new fragmentations between the civil society and between political leaders arose.

Colombians like me saw how the peace process addressed some of the coloniality issues that sparked the origins of 50 years of violence and how different voices that had been excluded were humanised through dialogue. Other Colombians, however, felt excluded and refused to listen and be listened to, humanise and be humanised. The challenge now is to achieve a decolonial convergence of peace-building and dialogue that does not silence those voices in dissent, that does not make conflicts and differences invisible, and that includes the different epistemologies and ways of understanding and living the world we inhabit so that Colombians learn to live together without resorting to violence. This is one of the endeavours of Rodeemos el Diálogo through its 'culture of dialogue' concept.

'Culture of dialogue': an approach from the Colombian experience

Shortly after Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos and his team announced and launched in Oslo a peace process with the FARC-EP in October 2012, a group of Colombians and 'friends of Colombia' living in London convened over breakfast with the idea of doing something to support the negotiation. They called themselves *Rodeemos el Diálogo*, which translates as 'Let's embrace dialogue'. This name also let them use the acronym 'ReD', the Spanish word for 'network', which described perfectly what they were: not an NGO nor grassroots movement, but a network of people interested in an issue.

They supported the peace process by understanding the causes and dynamics of the armed conflict and the development of the negotiations, keeping them in the public eye in the UK, and raising awareness of the importance and challenges of building peace in Colombia. They convened events to inform themselves about the developments of the negotiation table and to talk about their opinions, fears and doubts about them. Soon, it became apparent that the 'dialogue' in their name did not only mean the negotiations between the government and the FARC-EP, but also the debates, discussions and conversations that were being held at their events.

In 2014 some members moved to Colombia, with the idea of bringing the experiences of the UK. The group started convening weekly 'Peace Breakfasts' and *tertulias*, which followed the format of the UK events; designed a peace pedagogy strategy going to vulnerable zones in Colombia; founded ReD-020, a group of young people thinking about the role of youth; and partnered with a company to raise awareness of the role of the private sector in peace. Over the last seven years, the group has found that at the centre of their way of supporting the peace process, and broadly speaking, contributing to Colombia's peace building, is promoting what they called a 'culture of dialogue.'

In 2018, some of its members, including me, moved to London and re-launched a ReD team in the UK, recruiting new people and organising events promoting a 'culture of dialogue' and giving visibility to the Colombian situation. In this context, I began the four-month placement in which I researched the concept of 'culture of dialogue' via archival research and interviews while conducting participant observation at the organisation's meetings.

Conceptualising the 'culture of dialogue'

According to the data collected from interviews with ReD's members, the archival research, and my own observations, the culture of dialogue can be defined as a set of actions and behaviours that, by being practised regularly, become a habit, an ability,

and ultimately a way of ‘living and cohabiting the world’ (Gómez-Suárez 2019). These actions include ‘listening carefully and talking assertively’ (Méndez Ardila 2019), ‘question[ing] one’s own truths and mak[ing] our own positions more flexible’ (Vejarano 2019), and ‘respect[ing] diversity, understanding that there are no absolute truths, that there are different contexts and narratives and ways of seeing the world’ (Gómez 2019).

The actions and behaviours of a culture of dialogue are materialised and framed within six values, summarised as follows according to the interviewees: *honesty* to say what we really think, without any fear of judgement; *respect* to listen carefully to the other person and to say our ideas assertively; *solidarity* to understand where the other person comes from, because each one of us has our own path that can always be enriching; *generosity* to share our own story, even if it means being vulnerable; *self-criticism* to rethink many ideas that might not be appropriate or that are better with the other person’s inputs; finally, *co-responsibility* to understand our own important role within society. These values are promoted, taught, and practised in every activity of ReD, and for the people who participate in their spaces, ‘they make it possible to constantly question whether I put into practice the culture of dialogue or not, if I am consistent with what is promoted by ReD with my actions’ (Gómez 2019).

In fact, the emergence of the term ‘culture of dialogue’ responds to the concern of addressing the ruptures within Colombian society in the context of new peace negotiations, and the possibility of doing this outside of Colombia, in settings that could be seen as more ‘neutral’ to the Colombian armed conflict, such as a university in London. The term appeared for the first time in a 2014 article written by one of ReD’s founders, where he argues that the dialogue spaces convened by the organisation in London had the positive effects of tackling the division within the Colombian diaspora, creating a favourable environment for the support of the peace process, and addressing the legacy of the Colombian armed conflict through peace building and reconciliation (Cousins 2014).

Since then, the term has been appropriated as an objective. Throughout six years of work, in all the events, workshops, projects, activities, and presentations, both the culture of dialogue and the six values are stressed as fundamental parts of its development. People who participate in them find it enriching that they ‘enable human encounter’ (Cousins 2019), ‘build relationships’ (Soler, 2019), ‘build bridges’ (Gómez 2019) and ‘motivate us to act, they are not simply spaces for conversation and reflection, but mobilize us to commit ourselves to action’ (Vejarano 2019).

The fact that the values are being practised ensures the existence of the conditions of *will* (by being generous, in solidarity, and self-critical), a *safe space* (respectful, honest) and *equity* (co-responsible), which results in a dialogue and not various monologues.

As a result, people that participate in the dialogue are able to build *relationships* (as Lederach said) based on trust, learn to resolve their conflicts without resorting to violence (*negative peace*), and even take action to transform the causes of conflict (*positive peace*), such as rallying for land redistribution or supporting the alternative forces to change their political exclusion.¹⁰

As practised by ReD, a culture of dialogue starts at a micro-level as individual actions and behaviours (framed according to the six values) that become habits. It then moves to the macro level when the actions and behaviours become collective (which is what makes it a culture), when two or more people that practice them join, or when those actions and behaviours are shared with someone that was not aware of them and they start practising them in their daily life.

If widely spread, the culture of dialogue might be the key for people to resolve their conflicts in a non-violent way and be able to address structural and cultural causes of violence such as land dispossession, racial hierarchies, and developmentalist discourse – which are at the core of the now universalised modernity. It has the potential to be a decolonial tool because at its core it is making visible other ways of understanding and living the world (decoloniality of being), other epistemologies (decoloniality of knowledge) and practices (decoloniality of power) apart from the hegemonic western one, without dismissing the role of coloniality at the root of violent conflicts. It is foremost about epistemic reconstitution: acknowledging the multiplicity of knowledges and experiences, personal and collective, without imposing one over the others. It is a metaphorical space and practice where all the places of enunciation and thought convene.

The challenges of the 'culture of dialogue'

The culture of dialogue is, as thought and conceptualised, a conflict resolution mechanism that moves away from the western peace-building model because it does not privilege the transition to the political and economic models of modernity (liberal democracy and capitalism) as the only way to overcome conflicts. On the contrary, it advocates for an epistemic reconstitution, for the re-establishment of the ways of thinking and living in the world that the rhetoric and institutions of modernity have denied. In the way it has been practised by ReD, however, the culture of dialogue entails a series of challenges for it to be truly decolonial.

Its first challenge is to spread beyond ReD's members and participants, to a wider, more comprehensive audience. ReD's spaces of dialogue in Colombia have a

10 The members of ReD often participate in demonstrations asking the government to tackle those issues, write letters and statements addressed to those in power and the media, and make visible those issues through their activities.

diversity of participants in terms of age and gender, but they are homogeneous otherwise, composed mostly of educated, middle-class, urban people mainly from Bogotá. In ReD UK the situation is similar: most of the participants are somehow involved in academia, without including other types of migrant Colombians. The lack of resources and the fixed location in the north of Bogotá and universities in London, charging for the food, and scheduling dialogues during office hours might be excluding some people. ReD members are aware that 'more diversity is needed to avoid the dialogue becoming sterile and transforming the culture of dialogue into a culture of monologues practised in group' (Vejarano 2019) and 'it would be good to have more grassroots involvement' (Méndez Ardila 2019).

When people from other contexts participate, they are often the guests (or key speakers), which represents a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they have a platform to make visible their epistemologies and resistances. On the other, by doing that they have the burden of representing their cultures or people in front of a higher-class, whiter, urban audience. This has to be done without falling into exoticisation, with real *equity* in the power relations. When people from other backgrounds are not guests but only participants, sometimes the academic names of the events, their topics and the language used, both in the UK and Colombia, leave them 'feeling very intimidated, which led me to not being able to say I didn't understand' (Soler 2019).

The second challenge is to openly question modernity/coloniality as the hegemonic way of understanding and living the world. Even though topics such as land dispossession, political exclusion and subaltern subject construction are frequent in ReD's dialogues, they are seldom linked with the colonial structure of knowledge and specific institutions that enabled those oppressions and exclusions. The urgency of resolving pressing situations, the dynamic political landscape, and the availability, experience, and priorities of the guests might channel the dialogues to specific issues, without paying attention to a wider context, or to unveiling the violent consequences of having a universalised fiction of western modernity as the perfect stage of humanity, which is the objective of decoloniality.

The last challenge is to step out of the comfort zone of the theory and to engage in decolonial activism, especially in rural spaces and with subalterned people and communities. This must be achieved without falling into a 'salvation' rhetoric, or a discourse of development and progress. The culture of dialogue's action-focused nature could go in line with decoloniality's endeavour of 'advancing political goals in all the domains of the colonial matrix of power (knowledge, politics, economy, subjectivity, gender/sexuality, race/racism, nature/living)' (Mignolo 2017). Therefore, the organisation ought not to wait for people to come to the dialogue spaces, but instead get out and support the decolonial struggles taking place across the country.

Conclusion

The contemporary Colombian armed conflict can be understood as a legacy of colonialism. The imposition and reproduction of coloniality of knowledge (the racial device, the imaginary of urbanity, and the discourse of development), power (the nation-state project, the capitalist economic system and the developmentalist policies) and being (the lived experiences of the oppressed) have played a vital role in the persistence of material and symbolic violence in Colombia.

The concept of dialogue, since its inception in Greece to Hegel and Marx, appears as a revolutionary method that fosters critical thinking, identifies contradictions, and acknowledges that we 'know nothing'. It proves to have great potential in peace building as it can have positive effects such as establishing relationships and building both negative and positive peace. However, it is important to be aware of the dangers of promoting it as a controlling discourse and to constantly question who is being included/excluded, how representation is taking place and if the content is being controlled as it could be used to reproduce coloniality logics.

Since coloniality exists both in Colombia and in peace building, it is necessary to develop a decolonial critique. The MCD group and those who have worked with this perspective over the years agree that decoloniality is, above all, a bet to displace universalism and acknowledge the existence of other ways of understanding, living, and knowing the world that are silenced by the epistemic violence of coloniality.

ReD's concept and practice of a culture of dialogue has big potential as a decolonial peace-building tool because it seeks to break with traditional power structures and brings to the table the collectivisation of actions and behaviours that make people learn to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way and to be able to talk and take action to make material transformations of the structural causes of violence. If those inequalities and exclusion are not dealt with, and the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being keep being uncritically reproduced, a new wave of violence might occur, even with a peace agreement taking place. It is urgent to be able to sit and dialogue about what makes us different and what makes us similar – which might be that we are all still under a coloniality regime – and how to resolve it. That is where the culture of dialogue can play a key role.

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Dialogue and Environmental Education: Conflicts Between Marine Conservation and Fishing¹

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This research sought to analyse how the environmental educator process developed by a non-governmental organisation with maritime artisanal fishermen from the coast of São Paulo (Brazil) helped to foster dialogue to face the conflict of marine conservation *versus* fisheries. The data were collected through the analysis of documents and semi-structured interviews composed of a set of indicator questions divided into three categories: external aspects, internal aspects, and dialogical action and answers analysed using a synthesis of the ideas on dialogue of Martin Buber, David Bohm, William Isaacs and Paulo Freire. The results show the incipience of dialogue in the relationship between the actors. The external dialogical aspects were limited to the weekly frequency of the conversations and some formations of the participants in certain meetings. The internal aspects revealed the establishment of two types of relations: one anti-dialogical and another that we called incipient dialogical. In relation to the dialogical action, it was possible to verify the beginning of a process according to the principles of the culture circles, which did not have continuity. Regarding the pedagogical strategies adopted in the different environmental education meetings, it is possible to affirm that the one used in the participatory diagnoses was the only one that potentiates the emergence of dialogue. Finally, it was possible to find dialogical potentialities, which should be stimulated together with the creation of new ones, in order to allow the effective transition to a new model of fishing and society.

Keywords: Dialogue, Environmental education, Conflict, Marine conservation, Artisanal fishers, Non-governmental organisation

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- 1 This article is the fruit of the first author's master's thesis, under the direction of the second author, together with the Post-graduate Program in Environmental Science of the University of São Paulo.

Dialogue and Environmental Education

Dialogue comprises both an important principle and objective of environmental education (EE), as it advocates for the important international document entitled 'Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility' (Fórum Global das ONGs [NGO Global Forum] 1992) and some Brazilian public policies, such as the National Environmental Education Programme and the National Environmental Educators Training Programme (Órgão Gestor da PNEA [PNEA Managing Body] 2006; 2014).

In spite of the recognised importance of dialogue in the field of EE, there is still a long road ahead to strengthen it in the educational processes developed. This is because EE was born as a Western invention with the aim of contributing to the mitigation of the various environmental problems that Western civilisation itself helped to create, thanks to the anti-dialogical presuppositions it adopted: cultural imposition, domination of the other, individualism, belief in progress, and others (Andrade and Sorrentino 2014a; 2014b).

Thus, many of these values and beliefs have been cultivated all along the historical trajectory of environmental education, since they were created within this anti-dialogical culture. Therefore, even though full of good intentions, quite often people may be acting, unconsciously, in a colonising manner, believing that they are contributing to the transformation of reality, when in fact they are reinforcing the status quo (Andrade and Sorrentino 2014a; 2014b).

Consequently, an important challenge to be faced by those who work with the EE process is the elaboration and implementation of dialogical pedagogy (Andrade and Sorrentino 2014a), which stimulates the deconstruction of dominating colonising values, as much in the educators as in the pupils.

For this reason, this research aims to contribute to a deepening of theoretical and methodological knowledge of dialogue in environmental education processes,

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starting with the following question: do research and EE activities developed by an NGO with artisanal fishers on the São Paulo state coast promote dialogue in search of the transition to responsible fishing and the improvement of the fishers' existing conditions?

Dialogue Theory

The theoretical framework used in this research² is based on the ideas of Martin Buber, David Bohm, William Isaacs, and Paulo Freire. We begin with the ideas of Buber (2014) on the two forms of existence: the monologic, characterised by being closed in oneself, seeing the other as an object, and the dialogic, characterised by reciprocity and communion among those involved, giving form to the word pair I-THOU (Buber 1979).

As a result of this comprehension, Bohm, Isaacs, and Freire formulate methodological paths to stimulate the dialogical existence. Bohm (1980; 2005) and Isaacs (1993; 1999) believe that such an existence materialises with the overcoming of fragmented thought, recognising the implicated order and suggesting, for this, the formation of groups of dialogue that adopt the suspension of presuppositions such as methodological procedure.

Freire (1981; 1983), in turn, believes that the dialogical existence becomes present when there is no oppression of individual liberty, suggesting the formation of culture circles, which have codification and decodification as a methodological procedure. Both ways aim to promote the individual and collective uncovering of the historical-cultural aspects, allowing those involved to understand the other and the contradictions in which they reside.

The aim here is to achieve a synthesis of the ideas present in Bohm's (2005) and Isaacs' (1999) groups of dialogue and Freire's (1981) culture circles because of the belief that such an accomplishment could potentialise the experience of dialogical existences. To do this, three categories of analysis, which possess indicator questions, were elaborated based on the elements of the suggested ways of the aforementioned authors.

The first category, entitled *External Aspects*, refers to the structure of the meeting: the number of people, their arrangement, the frequency of the meetings and the acoustics of the location. The second, *Internal Aspects*, is connected to the people's attitudes: the deliberation through dialogue, the listening, the facing of conflicts, the suspension of presuppositions, the fondness, the faith, the trust, the humility,

2 The text presented in this item, with small adaptations, is part of an article submitted to the periodical *Revista Pesquisa em Educação Ambiental* on June 2, 2018, still in the analysis phase up to the finalization of the present article.

the hope, the revealing of historical-cultural aspects, and critical thinking. The final category, *Dialogical Action*, refers to the culture circle aspects, such as openness so that all those interested can accomplish the process of thematic investigation, the solidification of the thematic investigation circles and the culture circles. The three categories with their respective indicator questions are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Categories and indicator questions (part I)

CATEGORIES	INDICATOR QUESTIONS
External Aspects	What was the frequency of the meetings?
	What was the number of people involved in the meetings?
	What was the arrangement of the people in the meeting (in circle, in rows, etc.)?
	Did the locations of the meetings have good acoustics and make it so that the actors were focused on the meeting?
Internal Aspects	Was there deliberation through dialogue?
	Could all the participants express themselves, respecting and listening, in turn, to the others?
	Was the emergence of the polarisation permitted by means of the conflicts?
	Was there exposure of presuppositions on the part of the both sets of actors, looking at them in suspended form? If not, did each set of actors at least recognise the presuppositions of the other group?
	Are there any indications that the experienced process permitted the unveiling of cultural aspects?
	Are there any indicators of the presence of love, humility, faith, trust, hope and critical thought in the experienced process?

Figure 1 – Categories and indicator questions (part II)

Dialogical Action	Was the project presented to the community with the proposal of inviting interested parties to perform the thematic investigation?
	Are there indications that there was a thematic investigation through the codification and decodification together with the fishers?
	Were seminars administered to re-admire the ad-mirations?
	Were thematic investigation circles made with the fishers? If yes, did they unfold within the circles of culture?
	If the complete process did not occur, was the reduced perspective proposed by Freire at least realised?
	What was the joint decision-making among the actors who engaged in organised, collaborative work and who welcomed differences, beginning with the unveiling of the reality through generating themes?

Source: Categories and indicator questions as exposed in the first author’s thesis, defended in 2018. The construction of the figure came from the ideas of Bohm (2005), Isaacs (1993; 1999), Freire (1981; 1983) and Andrade (2013).

Methodology

To attend to the proposed objectives for this research, a qualitative approach was adopted since this permits comprehension of the complexity of the determined study question (Creswell 2014) seeking to explain the social relations starting from the different values and beliefs that permeate everyday life (Minayo 2002).

The vision of Becker (1994) on the importance and necessity of improvisation in qualitative research complements this conception. It allows the researchers to adapt the chosen methodological ways without strapping them into ‘straitjackets.’ This idea is defended by the author with the justification that the methods are created in determined historical contexts and because of this should have a flexible openness to new contexts that appear without, however, letting go of the scientific rigour necessary to describe the chosen methodological steps.

Thus, we adopted as epistemological inspiration the case study, that is, we adopted its methodological principles without binding ourselves to them like a ‘straitjacket.’ In such an approach, the researchers seek to describe a case in depth, considering several sources of data (Creswell 2014). We next describe the case analysed in this research:

the process of EE developed by an NGO with artisanal fishers to face the conflict between marine conservation and fishing (Instituto Biopesca [Biopesca Institute] 2012; 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d; 2014e; 2014f; 2014g; 2014h; 2014i; 2014j; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; 2015d; 2015e; 2015f; 2015g).

The process of EE developed by the NGO with the artisanal fishers

The Biopesca Institute is an NGO based in the municipality of Praia Grande, São Paulo (Brazil), acting, since 1998, in the marine conservation of endangered animal species, with focus on the Franciscana dolphin (*Pontoporiablainvillei*) and sea turtles (Instituto Biopesca 2012).

In August 2013, the Institute was able to expand its activities territorially with the approval of Projeto Pescador Amigo (Project Friendly Fisherman) in a sponsorship announcement from the company Petrobras. Its actions began to reach the entire central coast of São Paulo, encompassing the municipalities of Peruíbe, Itanhaém, Mongaguá, Praia Grande, São Vicente, Santos, Guarujá, and Bertioga, as well as the south of São Sebastião (northern coast of the state). This project lasted two years and ended, therefore, in August 2015 (Instituto Biopesca 2012). The general aim of the project consisted of:

Monitoring and amplifying knowledge of the impact of dolphins and sea turtles bycatch on the central coast of the state of São Paulo, as well as sensitising and capacitating fishers, coastal communities and tourists with environmental education actions, with focus on responsible fishing practices, conscientious fish consumption and the importance of the preservation of the marine environment. (Instituto Biopesca 2012, 8)

With the above objective in mind, the NGO elaborated a series of activities, with those developed directly with the artisanal fishers being highlighted here: research and EE activities, which were performed by different teams. The research activities consisted of the monitoring of fishing activity by a team from the NGO in order to verify the occurrence of bycatch, pick up the dolphins and turtles that did not survive, and take them to the laboratory for the collection of biological samples. To perform this work, it was necessary to have trust between the fishers and the members of the NGO, since the animals in question are protected by Brazilian environmental legislation (Brasil 1998) and cannot be captured and transported. Nevertheless, the NGO was supported by a Normative Instruction that permitted the transport of the animals for the use of scientific research (Instituto Biopesca 2012).

The EE activities were theoretically based on the critical conception principles of EE, which are characterised by the search for emancipation of the subject by means of dialogue. This permits the ones involved to jointly build knowledge about the reality

in which they live by means of generating themes (Carvalho 2004; Freire 1981). Such activities had the aim of sensitising and capacitating the artisanal fishers from the different municipalities within the project's range about responsible fishing practices, based on the principles of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries developed by the United Nations for the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1995. A total of 574 fishers was reached over the length of the project (Instituto Biopescas 2012; 2014f; 2014g; 2015a).

The first stage in such activities was characterised by the performance of interviews so that the NGO team could better understand the different fishing communities and identify their interest in participating in future meetings (Instituto Biopescas 2014f). Next, participative diagnoses were performed in the different municipalities in the project's range, by means of a participative methodology called *Biomapa* (Instituto Ecoar para a Cidadania 2008), with the purpose of identifying the fishing situation (Instituto Biopescas 2014f; 2014g).

With the diagnoses completed, the course on sustainable entrepreneurship was given in the same locations. The course was four hours long and divided into two parts. The first was done by the NGO, which presented the fishing situation on different scales (in the world, in Brazil, and in the state of São Paulo), the problem of bycatch and the principles of the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The second part of the course was done by a consultant from the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae) and consisted of a lecture on sustainable entrepreneurship. All of the course's participating fishers received a kit with promotional products from the NGO, such as a cap, a T-shirt, as well as a certificate of participation (Instituto Biopescas 2014g).

After the course on sustainable entrepreneurship, the course on responsible fishing practices was also given. It had the purpose of presenting and discussing a few practices of responsible fishing, performing a joint evaluation about the project (Projeto Pescador Amigo), identifying the positive and negative points and publicising the final EE activity: The Responsible Fishing Practices and Techniques Contest. This course was given by members of the NGO, having a length that varied from thirty minutes to one hour, depending on the specific municipality (Instituto Biopescas 2014g; 2015a).

Finally, the contest of responsible fishing practices happened with the purpose of stimulating the fishers to share their ideas or think up new ones to reduce the problem of dolphins and turtles as bycatch. The three best ideas were rewarded in a grand event and sent to two ministries of the Brazilian government: the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Ministry of the Environment (Instituto Biopescas 2015b; 2015c; 2015d).

Collection stages and data analysis

Four stages of collection and data analysis were performed for the construction of this research. The first consisted of the *bibliographic review* (Marconi and Lakatos 2003) on dialogue in the conception of Martin Buber, David Bohm, William Isaacs and Paulo Freire; on the history of the non-governmental organisations and artisanal fishers to examine the presence or absence of dialogue in their historical trajectories; and on the relationship between environmental education and dialogue. The second stage was the performance of *semi-structured interviews* with fishers and participants of the NGO responsible for the project, utilising a pre-test to examine the pertinence of the questionnaire (Ludke and André 1986; Boni and Quaresma 2005). The choice of the interviewees came from the contacted actors' interest in participation in the research, recognising here the limitation of access to all of those involved in 'Projeto Pescador Amigo.' Contacts for the NGO members and some of the fishers were available since the first author of this article had joined the organisation team during the developed work. Other contacts were obtained with the help of the fishers contacted and some were found during the visit to the municipality, making it possible to converse with diverse opinions about the relationship between the NGO and the fishers.

In total, thirteen field trips and twenty-three interviews took place with the help of the *Audio Recorder* app for cell phones. Six were with members of the NGO and seventeen with fishers from the five municipalities from the project's area – three from Peruíbe, three from Itanhaém, five from Mongaguá, two from Praia Grande and four from São Sebastião. The municipality of Santos was not considered since, in that one, the fishers who participated in the project are from the industrial fisheries and therefore outside the scope defined for this research that focused on artisanal fisheries. São Vicente did not receive the EE activities of the project for motives of team security and in the municipalities of Guarujá and Bertioga, fishers who were inclined to participate in the research were not found.

It is worth highlighting that photos of the different moments of interaction between fishers and NGO members were used at the beginning of the interviews to assist the memory of the interviewees about Projeto Pescador Amigo since it had been terminated over one year earlier.

The interviews were done until the moment in which it was possible to verify the repetition of the collected data (Fontanella et al. 2008), which permitted analyses with a basis in the proposed objectives. The identity of the actors interviewed was preserved by adopting a generic denomination followed by a number (for example Member 4 of the NGO and Fisher 8).

The interviews were transcribed with the help of the software *Express Scribe*

Transcription and a field notebook, which was filled in after each interview with the aspects that drew attention. The transcription was divided into two parts. The first consisted of the transcription of recorded speech, striving to highlight intonations and non-verbal signs (Ludke and André 1986) and making the first notations around the evidence of dialogue or of non-dialogue in the speech. The second consisted of a new listening to the recordings to review the transcriptions and organise the data.

The third stage in data collection was the *documentary research* (Ludke and André 1986; Marconi and Lakatos 2003), which considered the nineteen documents elaborated by the NGO and sent to the sponsor of Projeto Pescador Amigo. The analysis of those documents was first done with a floating reading (Bardin 1979) to identify the NGO's presuppositions, the adopted theoretical and methodological principles of EE, and the aims and goals of the developed activities, as well as the indications of dialogue. The written part of the documents, the tables, and charts, in addition to the photos and respective captions were considered. To finalise the analyses, a deeper reading was performed, seeking to identify indications that had perhaps not been considered during the first reading.

Finally, the last stage, named *data analysis*, which was begun in the preceding stages, had the purpose of identifying indications of dialogue in the relationship between NGO members and fishers. To do this, the three categories of analysis composed of indicator questions (see Figure 1) developed from the ideas of Bohm (2005), Isaacs (1999) and Freire (1981; 1983) were used. The data collected through the two aforementioned techniques were initially analysed separately and then compared to find similarities and contradictions.

Results and Discussion

External aspects

The number of participants, their positioning, the frequency and the location of the meetings between NGO members and the artisanal fishers were analysed in this category to identify and discuss indications of dialogue.

With regard to the number of participants in diverse moments, it was possible to verify that, during the conversations on monitoring bycatch led by the research team, the number of those involved varied from two to six people (Instituto Biopesca 2014f; 2014h; 2015f), which differs from what was suggested by Bohm (2005) for the emergence of dialogue. According to the author, the group ideally has twenty to forty people in order to permit the emergence of a cultural microcosm. In a group of up to six people, there is a tendency to avoid the emergence of conflicts, which hinders dialogue. It was not possible to precisely know the number involved in the diagnostic

activities and courses, since the NGO's registry of documents presents only the quantity of fishers present, leaving out the number of members of the organisation.

Regarding the formation, when analysing the conversations on monitoring, it was possible to notice arrangements in the form of a line, made up of three people, and of a triangle, made up of four people, which obstruct the emergence of dialogue. On the other hand, semicircular and circular shapes made up of five and six people were found (Instituto Biopesca 2014f; 2014h; 2015f), respectively, which potentialise the dialogue (Bohm 2005; Isaacs 1999). At the EE about the participative diagnosis and in the courses on responsible fishing practices, it was possible to verify the predominance of semicircles and circles (Instituto Biopesca 2014f; 2014g; 2015a), although, in the sustainable entrepreneurship courses, the line format predominated (Instituto Biopesca 2014g; 2014j). This characterises a strong obstacle to dialogue in that it creates a hierarchical environment among the participants by concentrating the power on the one who is in front of all the others with the possibility of speech (Freire 1981; 1983).

Concerning the frequency of the meetings among the participants, there are two forms of analysis (Instituto Biopesca 2014f; 2014g; 2014i; 2014j; 2015a; 2015f). The first considers the existence of a weekly consistency of the conversations on monitoring, being placed between the EE meetings, which meets the suggestion of Bohm (2005) about the importance of weekly or fortnightly regularity of meetings for the emergence of dialogue. The second form of analysis considers the moments of the EE meetings separately. In such a scene, the conversations on monitoring maintain the weekly periodicity suggested by Bohm (2005). However, the EE meetings start to present a sporadic character, since each municipality received only three meetings over the two years of the Project, having an interval of four months between participative diagnosis meetings and the sustainable entrepreneurship courses, depending on the municipality considered, and from six to seven months between the sustainable entrepreneurship courses and the responsible fishing practices courses, also depending on the municipality analysed.

As for the locations, it was possible to verify the obstruction of dialogue, since the meetings occurred on the beaches and piers (Instituto Biopesca 2014f; 2014g; 2014h; 2014j; 2015a; 2015f), the workplaces of the fishers, which are open and windy areas, therefore not meeting the requirements of Isaacs (1999) about the importance of an environment with good acoustics and little distraction. Another obstruction to dialogue we found was the fact that some of the fishers were working while they talked to the NGO's members, which indicates a lack of attention and focus on the interaction (Isaacs 1999).

One other analysis point was the pedagogical strategies adopted in the different

EE meetings, where it was possible to identify some as potentiators of dialogue and others as obstacles. The participative diagnoses (Instituto Biopesca 2014g), by having stimulated the fishers' participation to identify and recognise the contradictions experienced by them, came quite close to a dialogical pedagogy (Andrade and Sorrentino 2014a; 2014b) that aims for historical-cultural unveiling.

Meanwhile, the course on responsible fishing practices (Instituto Biopesca 2015a), despite having adopted the circular arrangement of the participants, adopted discussion principles, different from dialogical principles, and appeared to be ruled by the NGO's presuppositions about the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995), with no indications of an openness to the fishers' vision, which makes the emergence of dialogue difficult (Bohm 2005; Isaacs 1999; Freire 1981).

The sustainable entrepreneurship course (Instituto Biopesca 2014g) was administered with a conservative pedagogical base (Andrade and Sorrentino 2014a), seeking to transmit the NGO's technical knowledge to the artisanal fishers, assuming a hierarchical posture and therefore, anti-dialogical (Freire 1983).

It is worth highlighting that the responsible fishing practices and techniques contest (Instituto Biopesca 2015c; 2015d; 2015e), in spite of bringing with it an interesting potential for the integration of traditional and scientific knowledge, was ruled by competitive and individualistic logic. Aside from this, it was based on the NGO's presuppositions on marine conservation, considering that they would be responsible for judging the best ideas to be rewarded. In this manner, this pedagogical strategy presented potentially obstructive characteristics to the emergence of dialogue (Bohm 2005; Freire 1981).

Another important point to consider in relation to the EE process developed was its discontinued and disjointed character (Brasil 1999). There are no indications of articulation between the participative diagnoses, the sustainable entrepreneurship courses and the responsible fishing practices courses. This indicates a fragmented comprehension of the process and constitutes an important challenge to be overcome by the NGO in the fragmentation of thought (Bohm 2005). This is confirmed by the statement of the NGO's coordination in affirming its unfamiliarity with the theories and methodologies of environmental education:

We've never been able to do specific work on environmental education or environmental communication with the fishers [...] with methodology [...] it was very improvised because my research area isn't the environmental education area, I don't work with education, I work with ecology. [...] this conversation between education and the biologist, we know we need it, but it's not us who do it because we don't have the theoretical conceptualisation to do it and we try to do it somehow

many times, straying from what would be best. (NGO Member 2 – coordination).

Such lack of knowledge in EE and its historical trajectory results in unfamiliarity with dialogue as a basic principle of educating praxis (Fórum Global das ONGs [NGO Global Forum] 1992; Freire 1981), bringing about the development of traditional and conservative processes of EE, marked by anti-dialogicity (Sauvé 2005; Andrade and Sorrentino 2014a; 2014b).

Internal aspects

In order to analyse the internal aspects, the basic presuppositions of the individuals involved were identified in the documents and interviews. The NGO entered the relationship guided by presuppositions on marine conservation of endangered species and the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995).

The fishers, in turn, entered the relationship with distrust and fear, in light of previous relations with other organisations. For them, such organisations use them to their own benefit, without considering their claims. Besides this, they distrust the scientific research performed, believing that they provide data for the researchers and that the results discovered, not shared with the fishers, serve to impair their fishing activity and, therefore, their lives. Finally, they are afraid of sanctions fixed by Brazilian law on the capture of endangered animals.

In light of these presuppositions and the work proposed by the NGO, through the project Projeto Pescador Amigo, right from the first contacts between the actors, a significant conflict arose which lasted throughout the two years of work. This conflict initiated two types of relationships between the NGO and the fishers, one that we call anti-dialogical and the other incipient dialogical.

Anti-dialogical relationship

This relationship was marked by the polarisation between the NGO and some fishers, since the actors adhered to their respective presuppositions, impeding empathy, listening, faith, humility, and trust as suggested by the authors of the dialogue (Bohm 2005; Isaacs 1993; 1999; 2012; Freire 1981).

Fisher 11 affirmed that 'they [the NGO] only wanted to know about dolphins, whales, penguins and turtles. [...] And if [...] there is any problem [they blame] the fisher', indicating that the members of the organisation did not seek to understand their point of view. Fisher 17 reinforces the idea when he affirms that 'they [the NGO] didn't give us any opportunity to participate [...] they [...] came here "ah, the turtle is dead?" "yeah," [...] "we're going to take it to study" [...] Cars came all week then [...] the time came when you know what happens? "ah, these guys are bothering us."'

In response to this resistant posture of the fishers, the members of the NGO adopted a persuasive posture in the attempt to get closer, as stated by Member 5 of the NGO, '[...] many times we tried to persuade the fisher [laughs], basically most of the time and there were cases where it didn't help at all, but generally we tried, even if they deny it.' Such an attitude can be understood as an attempt at domination of the other and cultural invasion, characteristic of the anti-dialogical attitude as defended by Freire (1981; 1983).

The persuasion brought as a consequence more anti-dialogicity to the relationship, setting off moments of verbal violence among the participants. Member 6 of the NGO affirmed that '[...] we got kicked in the field and had to keep quiet [...]' there have been situations where we were sent away from the place [...]. As a result, the NGO members removed themselves alleging, '[...] that didn't work out, so let's monitor another [fisher], this isn't our project focus, this fisher isn't going to change his attitude from what we're going to say' (Member 6 of the NGO). This attitude of withdrawal can be understood as conflict avoidance, passing over the initial stages of a potentially dialogical process which are characterised by fear and anger, as suggested by Bohm (2005) and Isaacs (1999).

In this manner, it is possible to perceive that there was no emergence of a relational dialogical field among these participants over the two years of the project. On the other hand, dialogical potentialities were identified, such as the fact that the fishers recognised the presuppositions of the NGO's marine conservation and it recognised their distrust and fear. This recognition is an important first step in the emergence of dialogue (Bohm 2005).

Moreover, it was possible to note an important self-criticism on the part of the NGO's coordination, attesting to their lack of knowledge about EE processes, as already mentioned in an earlier citation, and the recognition of a team with little experience in working with people.

This may indicate a latent possibility for the emergence of a dialogical relationship among the actors, in the case that they decide to suspend their presuppositions and open themselves to the other (Bohm 2005; Isaacs 1999), seeking to uncover together the historical-cultural aspects and build collaborative work (Freire 1981).

Incipient dialogical relation

This relationship initiated between the NGO members and other fishers, different from those cited in the previous relation, presented dialogical indications. Here the fishers affirmed that respect, openness to the other and humility were present in the relations among the actors. Fisher 9 affirmed that 'we could speak equal to equal [...]

they didn't come with a concrete idea for us and we had to, let's put it this way, accept it.' Another fisher affirmed that 'I never felt any oppression, any judgement, anything [...] no fear of any pressure, of any guilt' (Fisher 4). Fisher 14 said that 'they [the NGO] listened a lot, even listened to that which had nothing to do with their job. Stuff we were having trouble with, this business of environmental documentation, we talked with them, they [...] looked into what they could do.'

As the relationship unfolded, the fishers could suspend their presuppositions of fear and distrust concerning the NGO. One interesting case that confirms this affirmation is that of Fisher 14. A short time before meeting the members of the NGO, he had his net seized by the inspectorate because he had unintentionally captured a sea turtle. Faced with this situation, at the first contact with the members of the NGO, he refused to contribute for fear of new punishments. Recognising the fear and insecurity of the fisher, the NGO member invited him to go to the inspectorate and show him that there was no problem in bringing in unintentionally captured animals. The fisher accepted the invitation, the two actors talked to the inspectors and from then on, began to work together in such a way that the fisher began to bring in the unintentionally captured animals.

This situation demonstrates a dialogical moment experienced by the actors from facing an emergent conflict at the first contact, as suggested by Bohm (2005) and Isaacs (1999), requiring a humble attitude and faith in the relationship as proposed by Freire (1981). On the one hand, the NGO member was able to recognise the presuppositions of fear and distrust of the fisher and propose facing the conflict through a visit to the inspectorate. On the other, the fisher was open to suspending his presuppositions for the relationship, accepting the invitation and transforming his way of thinking and acting with the NGO and his fishing practice.

It also appears that, with the development of this relationship, a feeling of hope arose (Freire 1981) on the part of the fishers in the work developed by the NGO, believing that it could demystify the negative image of fishers as the villains of the sea. This perspective is opposite to that of the fishers who established a relationship of polarisation with the NGO. Furthermore, the joint work of the participants seems to have sparked a feeling of union, as suggested by Freire (1981), to deal with the problem of bycatch, as Fisher 13 suggests '[...] we were trying to unite so that this [bycatch] cut down as much as possible.'

However, it is worth highlighting that this collaborative work seems to have been based on the NGO's presuppositions of marine conservation, which were adopted by the fishers open to the relationship and who suspended their own presuppositions about such organisations. This is sustained as no indications that the NGO had suspended its presuppositions were found over the two years of the Project. On the

other hand, indications of such exercise were found after the work was finished.

Some members of the NGO recognised the existence of goals and agreed upon benefit packages with the sponsor, as well as the conservationist presupposition with obstacles to the relationship, thus achieving the practice of suspension of Bohm (2005). NGO Member 1 affirmed that it is '[...] difficult to create a relationship [...] of trust and more proximity when, in a certain way, [...] the benefit puts itself between two people, you know? With the "have to" do something or what needs to be done, some rules to be followed.' ONG member 4 added,

We had great reports on capture, but in compensation the part of how to do the social work was lacking, we sinned on this part [...] I believe that it wasn't one of the pillars of the project [...] we were there, in their daily life with them, we could have thought a little more about this part [...] it was really sort of a lack of experience.

Thus, it can be inferred that the emergence of the incipient dialogical relationship happened much more because of the fishers' attitudes, who were open to suspending their presuppositions, listening and respecting the other, as suggested by Bohm (2005) and Isaacs (1999), than because of the NGO's attitude, keeping in mind that it approached all of the fishers in the same manner, establishing with some a relationship marked by anti-dialogicity. Nevertheless, it was not possible to find indications that permit the understanding of the motivations that took the fishers from the incipient dialogical relationship to adopt such principles.

Dialogical action

There were indications found that the process of the culture circles of Freire (1981) was started. The participative diagnoses were moments in the relationship between NGO members and fishers in which there was sharing and listening to the challenges faced by the latter, such as the difficulty of getting licensed, conflicts with industrial fisheries, and difficulties in dealing with representative bodies (Instituto Biopesca 2014f).

However, such moments did not unfold into new collaborations between the actors, as Freire (1981) suggests, seeking to recognise the contradictions experienced, understanding them as historical-cultural constructions and proposing interventions to change reality. Fisher 10 stated that 'there was nothing like this [joint actions], I don't remember anything like this "let's do it together," nothing like that, there were ideas put forward, but in practice, few.' NGO Member 4 agreed with that idea, saying, 'I believe these [joint actions] were something that went down on paper [...] I don't remember that we worked on that, on something they needed, some claim.'

Only the location of Boissucanga, in the municipality of São Sebastião, went a step further by asking the NGO to hold a meeting on community-based tourism. On the day of the meeting, however, the participation of the fishers was small, with only nine participants, in relation to the first meeting that had twenty-five (Instituto Biopesca 2014g). There were no indications of the reasons for such a scenario. After this meeting, there was no continuation of the process, indicating the non-prioritisation of a continued character for the processes performed.

In this way, it is possible to perceive that in spite of the existence of dialogical indications, such as respect, faith, humility, trust, hope and suspension of the presuppositions among the actors who experienced the incipient dialogical relationship, there was no emergence of a dialogical action as proposed by Freire (1981; 1983), characterised by a joint effort in the search for the transformation of reality. It is possible to affirm that the participative diagnoses consisted of a suppressed dialogical emergence.

Other obstacles and potentialities

In addition to the obstacles and potentialities previously identified within the three categories of analysis, others were found that deserve attention. One obstacle identified was the fact that there was no indication that the actors recognised the importance and deliberated through dialogue during the relationship, reinforcing the anti-dialogical cultural habits prevailing in the interpersonal relations (Buber 1979; Bohm 2005; Isaacs 1999; Freire 1981).

Another obstacle identified was the failure of the cultural synthesis proposed by Freire (1981) during the EE meetings. The emerging conflicts between NGO members and fishers who established an anti-dialogical relationship with each other were quieted. According to Fisher 7 '[...] when the conversation was getting a bit agitated the folks [from the NGO] would already start joking around to relax a little, understand? [...] they [the NGO staff] would already get into it like this to take the focus off of that conversation there and come to an agreement.'

This attempt at placating conflict indicates a pretension to create a civil environment, one of accommodation, not permitting the development of the dialogical process (Bohm 2005; Isaacs 1999). On the other hand, such a situation presents a dialogical potentiality, since the search for agreement, as suggested by the fisher, can be understood as a moment of negotiation, which is considered a preliminary stage for the dialogical process (Bohm 2005).

One potentiality found was the choice of the meetings' locations among the actors. If on the one hand they were not in agreement with the recommendations for acoustics and focus suggested by Isaacs (1999), as previously presented, on the other they did

demonstrate care on the part of the NGO to meet the fishers in their localities and life contexts, which can constitute a dialogic indication. Fisher 13 affirmed that '[...] you [from the NGO] come from so far to our community here. This shows importance to us [...].'

Another potentiality found was that the NGO was responsible for the exchange of knowledge among the fishing communities about the different fishing practices on the central coast of São Paulo. Fisher 12 affirmed that 'every time you come here, you bring some experience from another region to us [...] So it's daily learning with you, that you always brought to us.' Thus, the NGO consists of a polliniser of ideas and promotor of articulation among the fishers, which characterises important indications for dialogical action (Freire 1981).

Consequences of dialogical incipience for the processes of environmental education

In light of all the results discussed above, it is possible to affirm that the relationship of the actors was marked by the inception of dialogue. This scene conforms, on one side, to the historical trajectory of the artisanal fishers, marked by anti-dialogicity, since they suffer cultural domination and imposition by the capitalist system (Diegues 1983; 1995; 2001; Freire 1981; 1983; Marrul-Filho 2001). On the other, the NGO considered in this research seems to have distanced itself from the values and principal characteristics of the centres of popular education (Oliveira and Haddad 2001; Steil and Carvalho 2007) and citizenship NGOs (Gohn 2010; 2013; Machado 2012), organisations that gave origin to the current NGOs and that possess dialogue as a basic principle, considering that it did not promote historical-cultural unveiling and maintained adherence to the marine conservation presuppositions.

A process of EE based on these presuppositions seeks to promote the conservation of natural resources without considering the sociocultural aspects. This perspective represents a limited vision of EE coupled with the conception of sustainable development (Sauvé 2005), which adopts the principles of capitalist progress defended by developed countries (Diegues 1992). It is lacking in critical vision of the values and beliefs behind the processes of production and consumption (Diegues 2008; Carvalho 2004; Sorrentino 1995), promoters of anti-dialogicity (Buber 1979; 2014; Bohm 2005; Freire 1983).

This EE does not promote a transition to a new model of fishing as the NGO involved intended. It adopts and reinforces the markers of anti-dialogicity by considering the other in an objectifying manner and therefore reinforcing the historical anti-dialogical aspects experienced by the actors. It contributes to the maintenance of the predominance of I-IT relationships, as suggested by Buber (1979; 2014).

On the other hand, this finding does not entail blaming, since we live immersed in a neoliberal capitalist culture which reinforces an anti-dialogical existence marked by individualism, competition, objectification of the other, and the incessant search for profit (Diegues 2008; Gohn 2010; Steil and Carvalho 2007), many times without any awareness of the force that these presuppositions have in our lives.

Thus, seeking to overcome these anti-dialogical characteristics presents itself as an important challenge to EE which intends to promote real changes in the search for sustainable societies. It is necessary to practice self-reflection (Oca 2016), a type of internal dialogue that permits the identification of the cultivated presuppositions and the posterior emergence of conflict between the anti-dialogical values and the new, dialogical ones. This individual practice should be stimulated in relations with others, seeking together to uncover the cultural presuppositions that guide their lives, deconstructing them and constructing anew in direction of collective utopias (Bohm 2005; Isaacs 1999; Freire 1981; 1983; 2013).

Final Considerations

With the development of this research, it was possible to verify that the relationship between the NGO and the artisanal fishers, initiated by means of an environmental education process to face the conflict between marine conservation and fishing in search of a transition to a new model of fishing, was characterised by the predominance of obstacles to dialogue with a few marked moments of dialogical indications.

The external dialogical aspects among the actors were restricted to the frequency of the conversations and certain formations of the participants in the moments of conversation, diagnosis, and courses about responsible fishing practices. In relation to the internal aspects, two types of relationship were formed, one anti-dialogical and the other incipient dialogical. The dialogical action was begun with the participative diagnoses, but for lack of continuity consisted of a suppressed dialogical emergence.

Regarding the pedagogical strategies used in the environmental education meetings, only that with participative diagnoses potentialised dialogue. The strategies of lecture, discussion, and competition adopted in the entrepreneurship courses, the courses on responsible fishing practices, and the contest respectively, in turn, obstructed the emergence of dialogue.

It is relevant to recognise that the transition to a new model of fishing should happen in conjunction with a transition to new forms of interpersonal relations, surpassing the predominant anti-dialogical values, heading toward new values that permit, in an increasingly intense form, the experience of a dialogical existence.

This research aimed to contribute with the construction of possible indicators to be used in educational contexts, and possibly others, so that people may, individually and collectively, perform the exercise of recognising their presuppositions and suspending them. The aim is to increase comprehension and empathy, as well as make possible the establishment of collaborative actions that aspire to transform the different aspects of reality in the direction of the shared utopias.

Some recommendations to be considered in work that aspires to the much-desired transition to a new model of fishing are: in the first place, recognise the importance of and adopt dialogical principles in your practices; exercise the suspension of presuppositions on marine conservation, opening up to the comprehension of the other and the possibility of new insights, appropriate environmental education theories and methodologies, and understanding of the nuances of this field of knowledge; strive for the best external aspects of the meetings, seeking to guarantee the circular arrangement of the participants, a location with good acoustics and focus on the meeting; see conflicts as opportunities for dialogical emergence, facing them and not suppressing them; and, finally, reinforce the dialogical characteristics already present in your practices and those that were identified by this research.

It is also worth articulating recommendations to the initiatives' sponsors like the one investigated here. The search to surpass quantitative logic is important, valuing the quality of the processes funded, particularly those related to education. For such processes to be successful, it is necessary to stimulate their continuity, medium- to long-term, seeking to overcome short-term sporadic actions. It is necessary to stimulate articulation between different initiatives so that together they amplify the strength of their results. It is necessary to stimulate the adoption of dialogue as a basic principle for these processes.

Finally, the importance and necessity of more research that investigates the EE processes are underscored, since the results obtained here do not seem to be exclusive to the case investigated and the negative presuppositions of the fishers concerning the NGOs indicate a history of relationships potentially marked by anti-dialogical characteristics. Moreover, it is hoped that reflection is stimulated regarding daily EE practices and the relationships initiated among those who shared the educating experience.

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Children in the Fog of War: Responses to Parental Alienation

Owen Logan

Abstract: The term 'parental alienation' describes a child's irrational rejection of a parent and is the source of conflict in families, in psychological, legal and therapeutic practices which dispute its theoretical basis and causes. The increasingly reported issue is associated with children involved in high-conflict divorces or separations who exhibit psychological deficits reminiscent of child soldiers. In these cases, dialogues and mediation processes are highly regulated, often court-ordered, but both traditional and newer therapeutic approaches are controversial in terms of scientific and moral efficacy where it is believed a favoured parent is manipulating their children. The article takes the methodological approach of sociological poetics. This discourse analysis locates practical issues associated with parental alienation in the historical desire of eighteenth-century enlightened despots to win the inner consent of their subjects. The contemporary focus is at three scales; first, the World Health Organisation's online debate about the recent inclusion of parental alienation in ICD11, the International Classification of Diseases; secondly, at the micro level in France where the concept of parental alienation is officially banned; and, finally, in debates about specialist treatments in North America. These empirical contexts suggest a vertical power axis transmitting and perpetuating despotism at the family level. The issues of manipulation, social pathologies, subjective truth, and 'white-collar crime' are examined theoretically and philosophically. It is argued that problematic professional responses to parental alienation (PA) which subordinate truthfulness to the goal of reconciliation call for vertical and horizontal reforms to ethically strengthen the role of dialogical truth.

Keywords: Parental alienation, Despotism, Manipulation, Social pathology, Dialogue management

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Introduction

The term ‘parental alienation’ describes a child’s irrational and pathological rejection of a normally esteemed and involved parent. This painful experience, and the use of the term itself, is the source of great conflict in families and among professionals in law and mental health. Although not exclusively linked to high-conflict separations and divorces, the increasingly reported issue is closely associated with a fundamental lack of family consensus. Psychiatrists and psychologists specialising in the area of parental alienation see the children affected exhibiting emotional deficits reminiscent of child soldiers set against a ‘targeted’ parent and demonstrating a total loyalty to the other ‘favoured’ parent, who is typically content with the breakdown of communication. In these cases, dialogue and mediation need to be highly regulated, often court-ordered, but are controversial in terms of efficacy, timeliness, scientific and moral standards. At the heart of parental alienation is the critical issue of *manipulation*, and the reasons why some children are susceptible to it. Thorny questions dogging the term ‘parental alienation’ are: the existence or extent of ‘brainwashing’, professional competence in distinguishing different forms of abuse, the long term risks for children’s mental health, the fashion for labelling individuals with personality disorders, and, perhaps most controversial of all, how to treat the pathology, if indeed it is one.

This article is in five parts. Following this brief introduction, part two outlines a *longue durée* discourse analysis of parental alienation based on sociological poetics. This method suggests that an understanding of despotism helps to re-articulate and re-connect issues of history, self, and society that appear to be fractured by responses to parental alienation. Part three offers an empirical basis for taking it seriously as a social pathology, albeit loaded with the ethical and ideological pitfalls that the latter term entails, and which are sustained, if not generated, by justice systems and mental-health professionals. The issues appear to be fogged by *cultures* of litigation that have little to do with truth seeking or justice – in line with any definition of a ‘culture’, litigation lends some forms of communication more value than others. In court-ordered programmes parent-child mediation can take the place of full investigation and, in keeping with the history of despotism, this may obscure or splinter a collective viewpoint. In this case, dialogue management centralises decision-making powers and supplants more revealing group conversations.

I analyse the above problems discursively and ethnographically at three scales; first, via the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) online consultation about the recent inclusion of parental alienation in the index of its classification of diseases; secondly, at the micro level in France, where the concept of parental alienation is officially banned and, thirdly, via scholarly debates concerning specialist treatments in North America. For the sake of conciseness, I compare and contrast these different scales within psychological discussions concerning *Indoctrination and Brainwashing*;

Attachment and Disattachment; Refusal and Intrusion. Part four offers some theoretical and philosophical reflections. One of the key factors making parental alienation so contentious and difficult to resolve is the legal notion of subjective truth which tends to be reduced to the controversy surrounding 'child-centred' approaches critiqued by forensic psychologists such as Lowenstein (2007, 56). I suggest that the controversy about the management of highly subjective and distorting testimonies from children is only a fraction of larger problems which need to be considered, high among them being the argument in moral philosophy that modern societies are founded on manipulative social relations. In conclusion, part five considers the conceptual challenges of a social pathology and how it might be practically addressed in egalitarian and dialogical terms.

The Sociological Poetics of Family-Level Despotism

Sociological poetics is a form of analysis applied to arts and literature, but it is rooted in Aristotle's *Poetics* written at a time when the art forms were virtually synonymous with questions of statecraft. Likewise, the innovation of Aristotle's *The Politics* was to analyse state formation as an associative poetic interplay of society's various parts. In ancient Athens, this justified a patriarchal pecking order from slaves, children and wives to fathers, the latter being regarded as natural citizens, leaders and the guardians of virtuous social relations (Aristotle 1981, 91-216). The modern sociological poetics developed by literary philosophers such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) and cultural sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) shows how discursive closures, and the evasion of socio-economic issues, centralise knowledge and fog the nature of competition and conflict over power and resources. Consistent with this methodological tradition, in what follows I discuss parental alienation (PA hereafter) in a broader historical context than is usual.

Dialogue is not such a warm and fuzzy term as it may sound to some ears. From the rebellion against debt enslavement that underpinned the creation of a direct democracy in ancient Athens, conflict and dialogue are two sides of the same coin (Meiksins Wood 1989). Through sustained industrial actions in the twentieth century the public in mass mediated societies saw that dialogue is not the opposite of conflict but is a carefully integrated and strategic part of it. The development of narratives in popular and romantic films in the last century also reveals how dialogues appear and are shaped, or how they are refused or avoided in accordance with society's views of power and authority. In cases of PA, mediation and investigative dialogues are usually accepted by children and their custodial parent only when officially ordered under the threat of penalties for non-compliance. With the exception of duties to report criminal abuse, the carrot many clinicians offer in dealing with these cases is that the process of reconciliation 'is not a truth-seeking exercise' (Fidler and Ward 2017, 26), it is more about constructing a shared narrative for the sake of children. Although

laudable, it seems naive to expect a possibly fictitious consensus to yield long-term reconciliation. Without a serious interest in dishonesty and its causes, shared narratives are likely to be charades in the face of authority. A major obstacle to more durable family narratives is the sort of professional intervention which represents divergent viewpoints via discrete dialogues with the main parties. Ever since Bakhtin's literary analysis, the skilful incorporation of certain divergent viewpoints is a hallmark of democratic quality in the arts, (Swingewood 1986, 148). However, reports using the clinical analysis of the unconscious to avoid realities exposed by more complex group dynamics are a no less fictive means of acquiring authority in civil society.

According to Hobbesian Statecraft 'authority rather than truth makes the law' (Wolin 2004, 43). However, the eighteenth century marks the sophistication of this God-given rationale. The burdens of the Seven Years War (1756-63) provided a strong impetus for a certain consensus between aristocratic rulers and their intellectual houseguests concerning the limits of torture and violence. New arts of governance and control were required, among other things to build the popular morale to fight wars (Hirst 2001, 20 ff.). The need for soft power is made clear in Frederick the Great's 'Essay on the forms of government and duties of sovereigns' written in 1777: 'One can compel by force some poor wretch to utter a certain form of words, yet he will deny to it his inner consent; thus the persecutor has gained nothing' (in Blanning 1990, 278). The 'inner consent' searched for by so-called enlightened despots, such as Frederick, and developed by the Bonaparte dynasty in France, was a necessity for a transition from the conditions of serfdom and slavery to a greater embrace of commerce and imperial markets. The obligations of the feudal order were to be superseded by a Kantian loyalty to private contracts which helped veil the continued treatment of people as property and objects whose liberties would paradoxically depend on their loyalties and ultimate submission to authority.

Today it is argued by PA activists that justice systems have effectively normalised a pathological loyalty to one parent and obstruct the investigation of inner consent. In terms of the *longue durée* one of the obvious flaws in attempts to get to the bottom of these situations is service contracts. In most cases they make dialogical investigation very difficult. Dramatically life-changing reports are prepared on the basis of brief meetings with the individual children and adults directly involved. Extensive group discussions involving all concerned parties very rarely take place. The professionals charged with the poisoned chalice of building supposedly objective knowledge from discrete dialogues have the tendency to avoid sustained strike action, and services may be organised in such a way as to make industrial action unthinkable. In keeping with a specifically Kantian sense of contract loyalty, complaints about inadequate time and

resources are heard most of all when tragedies require public explanation.¹

The external rupturing of child-parent attachment is an age-old experience with a legal history of egalitarian contestation by women such as the English writer Caroline Norton (1808-1877). However, the issue is the subject of an ever-increasing number of articles, broadcasts, books, and websites. What might be new is the rise of parenting policies in various countries over the last thirty years which also saw rising divorce rates. The policies have been backed up by a variety of new institutions which, rather ambiguously, attempt to support and police the family. Socio-economic efficiencies provide the political motivation for technocratic style parenting policies that do not interfere with the status quo in education or public services and are thought to save states from the future health and welfare costs of 'incompetent' parenting (Martin 2016, 10; Martin 2003). It is argued that parenting policies make the family into a social problem, and a target which is used to shift the blame for state and market failures from governments to the family. In thinly veiled terms, unless they breed the sort of individualistic reflexivity demanded by the economic system, parenting discourse invites us all to blame our families for our misfortunes. This public discourse appears to form the contemporary ideological backdrop for PA, specifically for the sort of accusations of negligence or insensitivity voiced somewhat robotically (from a diagnostic point of view) by alienated children and adolescents. It is not difficult to see how the general political discourse of the incompetent parent supposedly responsible for future socio-economic failure might influence court proceedings. If a favoured parent appears to represent a functioning child-adult alliance, patently unreasonable attitudes or conduct towards the other parent might be normalised.

Family litigation is the context in which a pathological form of alienation suffered by children has been increasingly defined using psychological theories and methods (e.g. Warshak 2003; Baker 2007; Lowenstien 2007; Baker and Sauber 2013; Childress 2015; Broca and Odeidnetz 2016). The still controversial theorisation identifies parents with narcissistic personalities who turn their children into 'child soldiers', but diagnosis centres on a counter-intuitive approach subject to heated methodological debates, and PA cases are plagued by litigation. However, it is claimed that competently trained professionals can identify a pathology, and effectively treat it as a form of psychological abuse. PA 'fingerprints' are seen in certain traits such as an exaggerated sense of entitlement, not seen in the victims of sexual or physical abuse. It is argued

1 This questionable tardiness is evident in the explanation given by a psychologist involved in the 2006 'judicial disaster' in Outreau, France. Several adults were wrongly convicted of child sexual abuse, and witnesses later admitted to lying. Pressed to explain the psychological validation of false accusations, Jean-Luc Viaux stated that he was paid only fifteen Euros per hour, and when you pay the same amount you pay for the expertise of a cleaning woman you will only get the expertise of a cleaning woman. See 'Procès d' Outreau', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kYkadGuOhM> (Accessed August 2019).

that effective treatments often depend on the temporary separation of children from favoured parents responsible for their child's attitudes and isolation. Typically, these children have been isolated from their wider families, including siblings and grandparents and indeed anyone who might question the wisdom of exclusive side-taking.

PA theory focuses on campaigns of subtle denigration carried out by the favoured parents. As noted above in the ancient Athenian context, families are seen to provide the basis of a socio-political order and statecraft itself, yet it would be difficult to separate this long-standing policing tendency from family and kinship bonds that also provide primary traditions of solidarity (i.e. a risk shared). Perhaps PA could be avoided by some people if their 'until death us do part' commitments were more like workers' solidarity, in so far as mutual respect is expected to survive, or even deepen, after a possible defeat – in this case in the known afterlife of separation and divorce. Granted, a bit of poetic tinkering to take account of a growing statistical failure and encourage sustainable kindness and mutual support would be a very weak reform. Yet today's discourses of PA appear equally unlikely to improve matters in the absence of egalitarian reasoning about double standards in public services.

When justice systems, via secure institutions, effectively take on the parental role for child offenders, accusations of abuse seem to be treated lightly by comparison with the inflationary responses to conflict at the family level. At the time of writing, in Britain children are held in officially 'unsafe' institutions run by private sector partners.² More generally it is argued that middle-class concerns skew child welfare priorities (Costin, Karger, and Stoesz 1996). While trade union movements have enjoyed success in some countries in defending services against cutbacks and privatisation, none have yet come up with an effective model of international solidarity to challenge the fiscal elusiveness of globalisation (McCallum 2013). Even when confronted with major environmental issues, calls for progressive taxation and public spending are immediately countered with discussions of disinvestment. The fear of 'capital flight' is used to rationalise reductions in spending on almost everything except warfare. From Rousseau (1712-1778) onwards, despotism has been defined as governance based on fear rather than law (cf. Rousseau 2003, 60); and as PA specialists point out, children have much to fear in parental conflicts. Siding with one parent might be experienced as preferable, in the short term, to witnessing the crossfire between both. Notwithstanding long-term psychological risks, the coming generations face an equally uncertain future because of state and market failures at the environmental level. In this general conjuncture a shift towards various micro-level despotic traits is a disturbing possibility and comprehensible as populations are encouraged to exchange liberty and reason for sheer loyalty.

2 'Youth Justice?' *File on Four*, BBC Radio 4, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00017th> (Accessed August 2019).

Observations

Here I examine published and online arguments about PA. I also draw on participant observation, particularly my partner's first-hand experience. She is a schoolteacher, and one of the many divorcees in France and elsewhere affected by the phenomenon. Officially reported in her case as '*diabolisation*' (demonisation), such rejections of a parent were often presented as mainly affecting men under the banner of 'father's rights'. However, statistics and social dynamics are anything but clear and certainly not reducible to a gender issue. Forthcoming research exploring the gender distribution of PA cases suggests custody is a major influence making parents vulnerable to alienation (See Koch *n.d.*). However, even a woman with custody who leaves a family home with her children may be vulnerable to manipulation if the ex-partner continues to occupy the children's known *habitas* and represents stability rather than rupture to children who have difficulties adapting to a new life and uncertain surroundings (Bourdieu 2010, 166 ff; Lizardo 2004). Factors which might aggravate a 'cleft *habitas*' and contribute to the complex alienation from parents of either sex may be class sensibilities, religious beliefs, schooling, sexual orientation, etc. (Bourdieu 2007, 100-103). In general, alienated parents may well feel that their lives and rights are used against them.

In my partner's case her elder daughters, aged 11 and 13, were encouraged to hold a secret Catholic communion ceremony for the eldest, and the two girls went on to disavow their relationship with our daughter, their formerly adored half-sibling aged 3, on the grounds that my partner and I were not married. An illegal abduction was used to evade family therapy. Judges overlook such evidence of manipulation, and violations of the rule of law also occur whereby serious accusations are concealed, denying parents the fundamental right to a proper defence. Such Kafkaesque 'trials by ambush' are no longer permitted in European civil cases (Bingham 2010, 98-109). However, profound irregularities can take months to reach appeal, by which time children may be subject to guilty feelings and be enmeshed by manipulation and anxieties which make resolutions all the more complex.

Some of the most prominent researchers on PA are women such as Amy Baker (2007), who examines the accounts of adults who, as children, were manipulated to reject their mothers.³ Yet egalitarian issues tend to be obscured by highly gendered disputes about PA that would appear to have less to do with feminism than with a regression to a pre-feminist war of the sexes. In 2019, PA was indexed by the WHO in the ICD-11 (11th Revision of the *International Classification of Diseases*) under

3 For other adult testimonies, see Murphy and Murphy (2018), and Amanda Sillars interview by Dorcy Pruter, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBQ017-GeiU> (Accessed August 2019).

the general category of 'Caregiver-child relationship problem' (WHO 2019). The modest proposal met with considerable resistance as objections were posted on the WHO website for advance consultation. The vast majority of objections against the inclusion of PA argued the diagnosis is misused as a distraction from rational reasons for estrangement, such as sexual or physical abuse. Among them was a petition claiming that PA is 'junk science' with 157 international signatures, almost exclusively from women. However, objections made on the basis of misuse ignore the distinction between alienation and estrangement pointed out by William Bernet (President of the Parental Alienation Study Group) and others. As discussed above, PA specifically describes a child's rejection of a normal-range parent with whom they formerly enjoyed warm relations and who wishes contact and communication, and it was pointed out by Nick Child, a retired child psychiatrist, that misdiagnosis does not invalidate the concept of PA itself. Yet many objections appeared to ignore its basic precepts and detracted from a possible discussion of a *social pathology* with the medical and ethical issues that term entails.

Within the Frankfurt School tradition of critical theory, Honeth (2014) argues that the juridical structuring of the family conflict – portrayed in the 1979 film *Kramer vs. Kramer* – is a social pathology. However, the implication that society is an organism subject to social infections has an ugly genocidal history, experienced directly by the Jewish founders of critical theory in Germany. Among their long-standing concerns is the threat of fascism arising within democracy (Habermas 1989, vii). One of the most significant questions arising from this historically reflexive tradition attentive to the conceptual pitfalls of social pathologies is 'what legitimates one to be a doctor of society?' (Freyenhagen 2018, 3). Through such legitimising processes, vertical market and state failures are turned into diseases that demand technocratic intervention rather than egalitarian socio-economic reforms. Typically, the technocratic treatment involves splitting up groups and 'dispersing the concentrations' (CDP 1977, 54) (cf. Rousseau 2003, 16).

The WHO member-states retain the important decision-making powers about interpretation and implementation of ICD 11, and the system of advance public consultation is part of the WHO's own internal reform programme. Logged objections to the indexing of PA merely on the grounds of cynical misuse or professional misapplication were void since they apply to virtually any diagnosis in the WHO's classification of diseases. Cancer cells are visible, and the failure to diagnose cancer early on, the concealment of evidence about its causes (e.g. smoking or pollution), and ineffective treatments driven by commercial speculation have all had devastating consequences. (Delvecchio Good 2007, 362-380). Likewise, the behaviour patterns associated with PA are visible and audible in refusals to see a parent for dubiously stated and often patently frivolous reasons. Although the causes, the need for timely

therapeutic action and the long-term effects are disputed, it would be extremely implausible to deny that children can be manipulated against their family rights and mental-health interests. Therefore, it was scientifically appropriate to index PA in a more general diagnostic category as it presently appears in ICD.11.

Nevertheless, this leaves another type of more coherent objection against PA, namely that irrational rejections of a parent are psychologically complex, involve multiple causal factors, and are in fact compatible with normal child development. Jean Mercer articulates this position in an article entitled 'Are intensive parental alienation treatments effective and safe for children and adolescents?' (Mercer 2019). Mercer has a reputation as a forceful critic of non-conventional therapies; she is also signatory to another petition to the WHO containing 173 signatures from professionals opposing any reference to PA.⁴ Mercer's (2019) objections to PA treatments stand out for a certain rigour but cannot avoid controversy about children's rights – increasingly high among them the right not to be turned into child soldiers.⁵ Although not involved in real war zones, when children or adolescents become partisans in parental conflict, and exhibit extreme beliefs or conduct suggestive of pathologies, these youngsters have a right to competent investigation and treatment. Since society does not expect general practitioners to deal with cancer, generally trained psychologists or psychiatrists cannot be expected to solve conflicts embedded in complex family relations only partly visible to them.

Professionals trying to make advances in this area use PA and related terms to articulate scientific curiosity. Nevertheless, as Mercer argues, the psycho-education treatments for PA supported by psychologists such as Childress and Warshak cited above need to demonstrate medium and longer-term restorations of tolerant relationships and therefore be transparent about their efficacy and their failure rates. Childress, who is highly critical of poorly theorised approaches to PA as a form of psychological abuse, expresses a faith in a reputation market weeding out inferior expertise.⁶ Mercer (2019) does not engage in Childress's (2015) theoretical work on 'pathogenic parenting' based, as Childress insists, only on standard psychological theory.⁷ Mercer instead marshals her arguments by pointing out lack of random control tests in the

4 'Collective Memo of Concern to: World Health Organization, RE: Inclusion of 'Parental Alienation' as a Caregiver-child relationship problem' [April 22, 2019].

5 See *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict* (2000), <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/optional-protocol/> (Accessed May 2019).

6 See 'Protecting Your Allies in Mental Health - Dr. Childress', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGLIF7ltM98> (Accessed August 2019).

7 Childress's PA model abandons controversial concepts used in the original theorisation of PA by Richard A. Gardener (1931-2003). See Childress (2015): 1-7.

still experimental North American treatments programmes favoured by Childress, Warshak and others. She also critiques these treatments as questionable business models with high financial costs unjustly distributed to custodial parents.

Yet the issue of efficacy has little to do with whether or not the term PA is used. In France where *aliénation parentale* has been the object of governmental gender politics, the term became a legal taboo, yet low scientific standards and a lack of accountability in traditional reunification therapies appear far worse.⁸ It is not uncommon in France to be refused any information about failure rates, nor is longitudinal data for long-standing programmes available in other European countries. PA activists suggest that extremely high failure rates are in fact the norm in conventional reunification approaches. Whatever the true state of affairs actually is, Mercer's critique is focused on North American PA treatments that are more transparent and accessible. For some this may signal market efficiencies viewed somewhat optimistically by Childress.

However, the lack of scientific clarity about therapy programmes reflects a complicated mixture of state and market failures. One of the reasons for the unaccountability of court-ordered programmes is that the possible negative psychological effects of parental warfare have become banal as a result of scientific vagueness about evidence in mental-health treatments generally (Priebe and Slade 2002). The benefits of the pleasant surroundings and activities that costly PA treatments bring alienated children and parents to in North America are easier to understand than some of the more sophisticated scientific claims about reconciliation based on a possibly superficial *modus vivendi* which buries rather than analyses dishonesty (cf. Priebe and Slade 2002, 232-233). Nick Child recalls that during his career as a child psychiatrist 'family therapy turned very much to post-modern and relative ways of thinking and working' while at the same time 'being interested in keeping its uncomfortable membership of the medical camp'.⁹ Anthony Easthope's (1999) historical appraisal of the influence of psychoanalysis on the general scientific category of *the Unconscious*, concludes that 'there is no question that psychoanalysis licenses some kind of post-modern flight into a free-floating world without the necessity for responsibility and choice' (Easthope 1999, 169).

One of the PA treatments discussed by Mercer is the Overcoming Barriers Camp (OBC) programme running summer camps in California. This is a unique initiative: rather than centring on the relationship between a rejected parent and alienated child, this (non-profit) project is based on a multi-family approach that assembles

8 See 'Justice 2018, Proscription du «Syndrome d'Aliénation Parentale» c'est officiel', Marie-Christine Gryson, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/marie-christine-gryson/blog/050918/justice-2018-proscription-du-syndrome-dalienation-parentale-cest-officiel> (Accessed May 2019).

9 Correspondence with Child.

several families suffering internal conflicts into a group including grand-parents and stepparents, etc. As with other PA treatments, custodial parents usually agree to the programme only under threat of judicial penalties. According to Dr Mathew Sullivan, current President of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, and a founder of the OBC programme, the camps successfully utilise inter-family dynamics to loosen up alliances and discuss ‘distortions’ of reality.¹⁰ Although Sullivan agrees that meaningful reconciliation depends on truthfulness, he prefers not to refer to ‘lies’ in the therapeutic context; however, cases can involve vicious false allegations and, as he admits, there are some which progress in the therapeutic context of the camp but go back to square one a few months later. An independent evaluation of OBC supports this mixed account of success and failure (Saini 2019). For Sullivan, the treatment of PA is somewhat bogged down in a polarised scholarly argument between PA advocates such as Bernet (responsible for proposing the term to the ICD-11, thus almost guaranteeing negative reactions from their adversaries such as Mercer). PA may be understood as the institutionalised rationing, or even the complete absence of dialogues. However, this reality is at least partly shaped by professional meta-discussions.

Mercer (2019) argues that evaluations for Overcoming Barriers, and other programmes she regards as only ‘promising’ are not sufficiently rigorous, and implies her approach and terminology concerning family conflicts are more scientifically objective. Yet Mercer appears quite unconcerned with the problem of getting to the truth in situations of emotional manipulation where children’s feelings of shame and fear can generate misplaced or false solidarities. Although published by the *Journal of Child Custody*, Mercer’s article glosses over the related legal issues, merely noting low standards of evidence often found in family courts (Mercer 2019, 23). In the following subsections I discuss three of Mercer’s (2019) critical standpoints. They are indicative of the discursive fogging of PA as a social pathology transmitted through a vertical institutional axis at the core of dialogue management in PA type cases.

Indoctrination and brainwashing

For Mercer brainwashing is a scientifically implausible and unfalsifiable ideological concept originated in the United States during the Cold War, specifically in 1950s scare stories about Chinese communism. However, this discussion of brainwashing is rather misleading. Mercer avoids a consideration of the borders between education, persuasion and indoctrination, and she uses the term ‘ideology’ in a pejorative sense that would be meaningless in political science. To say that ideology is an unfalsifiable concept would be to miss the point, namely the valid scientific interest in understanding matters of spirit and conduct. The pre-history of the profoundly

10 Interview with Sullivan.

ideological concept of brainwashing actually appears at least a century earlier. In Britain its discursive origins coincide with the existence of the popular non-commercial press connected to the Chartist movement. In 1852, fighting off the commercial appropriation and subversion of the workers' cause, the *People's Paper* wrote: 'Heaven preserve us from the kind masters. Brutal tyranny can enslave the body, but brutal kindness does worse it enslaves the mind...' (Harrison 1974, 136). This political history has an analogous relationship with critically reflexive research concerning the boundaries between education, persuasion and indoctrination, oddly passed over by Mercer. Widely reported judicial scandals in the US revealed manipulative forms of evidence gathering from children and the unquestioning acceptance by courts of wildly improbable evidence of sexual abuse (Costin, Karger, Stoesz 1996, 14 ff.). Psychological experiments in schools showed the ease with which striking 'false memories' may be instilled in young children through a gradually inflationary series of suggestions and prompts.¹¹

A less verifiable but equally troubling issue articulated in moral philosophy is acutely relevant to Mercer's attempt to diminish the potential consequences of manipulation and indoctrination. In his influential book *After Virtue*, the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre argues that a utilitarian collapse of means and ends that ranges across management, aesthetics and therapeutics encourages emotionally manipulative social relations to be adopted at different institutional scales, so everyone becomes someone else's end (MacIntyre 1981, 30 ff.). However, lacking any real means to form a democratic consensus about morality, modern capitalist societies are unable to rationally distinguish common goods from things that gratify us personally. Virtues such as courage and honesty are simulated rather than actually searched for as points on a moral compass (MacIntyre 1991). From this perspective the important question is not whether brainwashing exists; like ideology, it is an ideal type or a working hypothesis. The relevant analytical question is the possible connection of PA to ideology. Since it may reasonably be argued that societies that normalise manipulation as a power technique pave the way for authoritarianism, the issue must be considered more seriously in drawing any conclusions about PA.

Attachment and disattachment

The matters of ideology and moral spirit discussed above do need to be carried over to Mercer's arguments about child and adolescent development. Mercer offers a normative theory of disattachment arguing that proponents of the concept of PA do not sufficiently distinguish between the dynamics of infant and child attachments and the normative process of adolescent *disattachment*. In favour of Mercer's

11 See also '1980s False Memory and Child Abuse Hysteria' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPZu9E7C-_0 (Accessed August 2019).

argument, one might add that older children and adolescents who have experienced very unpleasant or abusive boarding school education have emerged with complaints, but without necessarily showing bad effects on their longer-term mental health. Childhood resilience should not be underestimated, nor, however, should it be generalised. Although the combined issue of disattachment and resilience seems to be Mercer's basic point, she does not mention such an obvious example of educationally institutionalised disattachment, and one cannot help but wonder if this is because Mercer wants to inflate the stress of PA treatments that temporarily remove children for a few days or weeks from contact with their favoured parent. Although 'coaching' does occur at a distance through calls and text messages and has even been a factor in leading children to matricide,¹² Mercer objects to the confiscation of mobile phones and other strategies she regards as too invasive. However, deploying the precautionary principle in cases where there is evidence of manipulation seems justified and practically necessary. Even during short monthly mediation sessions with an alienated parent, children disappear to the toilet to speak to the favoured parent on a mobile phone.

Mercer seems to take negative childhood anecdotes on PA treatments at face value, not as possible signs of manipulation, but merely as signals of ineffective treatments, whereas PA specialists point to positive anecdotes and user surveys. Notwithstanding the lack of control trials, which remains an issue in therapeutic services generally, a key research issue is surely what can PA treatments tell us about a social pathology? Although PA is described as a pathology the word social is rarely put before it, so many structural issues are evaded. Yet PA seems to be implicitly loaded with questions about the socio-economic power to understand, define, prevent or treat a social ill. Essentially Mercer's position implies that people trying to treat PA have invented a profitable pathology in a way that appeals to unhappy parents going through a particularly traumatic manifestation of the normal disattachment process.

Mercer's account of disattachment plots a normative line of increasing childhood autonomy that implies a high level of respect for irrational adolescent conduct; however, she overlooks breach and repair sequences which other psychologists see as vital to the normative social development that takes place through the ups and downs of the parent-child relationship (Childress 2015, 331; Judge and Deutsch 2017, 80). This seems to be the key issue in PA, namely the concerted attempts on the part of some parents to create breaches in a child's relationship with their other parent in tandem with attempts to obstruct repairs. On its own, parental involvement in the creation of breaches (e.g. raising controversial issues) or interference in repairs (e.g. a concern for truthfulness in mediation processes) may signal perfectly valid parental concerns.

12 See CBS *48 Hours* on Neurauter murder case, <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/karries-choice/> (Accessed August 2019).

However, the combined and concerted interference with breach and repair sequences (i.e. provoking conflicts and obstructing investigations, normal communication or mediation) deserve to be taken seriously as a general issue of children's rights and mental health, with equally important consequences for parents. As a general social experience, the issue of normal emotional growth through the breaches and repairs of a child's relationship with a parent needs no history. What does have a history is the aristocratic acquisition and disposal of wet-nurses, tutors and other intimate childhood servants with no real moral or educational autonomy. PA cases effectively demote parents to that servant status – left with financial responsibilities and emotional distress they face a vicious pincer movement.

Refusal and intrusion

As if to replace discussion of interference in normal breach and repair processes, Mercer uses the concept of 'intrusive parenting' to shift the critical focus onto the adult victim. Facing the sort of manipulative conduct described by psychologists under the category of PA, Mercer represents defensive responses on the part of *targeted parents* (a term she rejects) with an overly needy and intrusive attitude. In Mercer's words, 'parents' demands for more affection are likely to create more resistance' (Mercer 2019, 39). Mercer's extremely simplistic description of contact issues here lumps together what she admits are 'attempts to gain psychological control' through 'manipulative tactics' with the responses of targeted parents that are in fact firmly in the realm of the meaningful and legal exercise of parental authority. In keeping with the mores of persecutory therapists critiqued by Meares and Hobson (1977), psychologists tend to act as professional gatekeepers calling into question parents' legitimate attempts to protect the value of reason and truthfulness, leaping instead to highly questionable conclusions about a parent's unwillingness to 'let go'. This is certainly Mercer's failing in her remarkably one-sided account of irrational adolescent rejections where she refers anecdotally to the potential trauma of PA treatments which temporarily remove children or adolescents from a parent suspected of manipulation. Mercer overlooks the longer-term trauma otherwise experienced by many parents and wider families who are typically cut off for years and await the return of guilt-ridden strangers brought up in a spirit of dishonesty and self-deception.

The long-standing relationship between statecraft and parenting discourses and policies means that there is no state of nature allowing a psychologist to view family gatekeeping separately from its vertical scholarly and institutional structuring by writers such as Mercer. Its worst excesses are portrayed in Ken Loach's award winning 1994 film *Ladybird Ladybird* about a working-class woman whose children are forcibly taken into care at birth by a shallow justice system and autocratic social services policing the family. The fictional adaptation of this real case is also an interesting example of a truth-seeking exercise that rejects some of the vertical power structures

in film making (Bennett 1994). While Mercer registers the fact that children go to great lengths to avoid school, she fails to recognise the double standard that refusals of schooling are taken seriously and timely resolutions are sought out as a matter of urgency. In overlooking this double standard, Mercer effectively normalises parental refusals on the pretext that 'some but not all adolescents can think about thinking' (Mercer 2019, 32). By evading Childress's theorisation of PA within well-established psychological theories, and by also evading a serious discussion of the controversial idea of 'brainwashing', Mercer is able to rationalise submissive and robotic character traits. Submitted to a different journal, Mercer's naturalising assumption about a significant reflexivity deficit might raise sociological questions about general educational norms and socio-economic powerlessness. However, with one rhetorical gesture, Mercer's article published in the *Journal of Child Custody* actually relieves a vertical power axis (politicians, justice systems, educational and social services) of responsibility and implies that rejected parents concerned for their children's future are in fact psychologically flawed. Psychology is a relatively young and inexact science still in its steam age; a less imperious tone, and more historically and scientifically curious approaches are needed.

Theoretical and Philosophical Reflections

The objections discussed above to the terminology and treatments for parental alienation are put in secular and scientific language. However, the lack of curiosity about dishonesty appears to be an unconscious hangover from the widely discredited doctrine of original sin, which tells us to expect the worst from children and society. If we take ideology more seriously than Mercer does, then despotism takes us to the issue of licensing social discrimination within the family (ably explored by Philip Roth (1933-2018) in his tragic intertextual novel *The Human Stain*). In mixed marriages and untraditional partnerships, types of discrimination may influence childhood rejections. The historical annals of courtship suggest that the development of Western individualism is related to a belief in the power of love to conquer all ethnic and social distinctions, but once conquered the same differences can be recast in more intimate and tortuous relationships, still governed by fear and the dynamics of domination and submission (cf. Passerini 1999, 3 ff.). On the basis of Mercer's arguments examined above, even if child or adolescent rejections are tainted with unreasonable prejudices, the judicial and public/clinical responses may still be tailored to discrimination.

Notwithstanding structural critiques of political truth and reconciliation processes, there are some instructive examples of real reconciliation at the micro-level following some of the worst political conflicts. Some of these cases in South Africa are explored ethnographically by Scheper-Hughes (2007), who suggests that four levels of truth, identified by Justice Albie Sachs, help to explain the inter-personal reconciliations that sometimes occurred between killers and the families of their victims. In Sachs' view the

four levels of truth are (1) legal, (2) logical, (3) experiential and (4) dialogical truth. Scheper-Hughes supports Sachs's view that South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission 'was most able to produce the fourth, dialogical, truth' negotiated out of a 'cacophony' of voices with their own experiential, or subjective, truths. This somewhat post-modern compromise resembled the dissembling tactics of the old apartheid regime as its adherents saw a window of opportunity for a new manipulative approach to public relations. This 'good enough' post-modern truth disappointed many, including Justice Sachs and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who observed that supporters of apartheid 'lied as if it was going out fashion, brazenly, and with considerable conviction' (in Scheper-Hughes 2007, 202-203). In the cases of needless violence and suffering, for every story of contextual understanding and reconciliation among the warring parties, more suggest a lack of remorse, entrenchment and self-justification. These failings are connected to certain fraudulent political desires for a shared narrative that would subordinate important matters of truth. However, they also stem from the temporary and truncated nature of the reconciliation commission and its retrospective character. In the case of PA there are surely other, more timely and prolonged ways to morally strengthen dialogical truth and make it less of a hostage to fortune.

By contrast with technocratic division and dispersal tactics, the Overcoming Barriers Camps mentioned above are suggestive of the potential for timelier, and longer-term, dialogical responses to PA that should bring all concerned parties together *before* alienation becomes institutionalised and discursively ritualised by a painfully slow and costly justice systems (Cf. Childress 2015, 20). The principle that justice delayed is justice denied has great bearing on PA cases since the consequences of delayed intervention are very hard to rectify. In this regard Nick Child (2019), points out that the fabrication of allegations is a punishable crime, but family courts turn a blind eye and allow allegations of sexual or physical abuse to fog their proceedings. One signal of PA is the mixture of frivolous complaints with more serious ones, and this can have the effect of infantilising proceedings. The presence of serious accusations can dignify what would otherwise be regarded as trivial child-like disputes. To clear the air, Child argues that serious allegations should be immediately referred to the police and social services for proper investigation. The vital principle here is that serious matters ought to be taken seriously; nevertheless, even when complaints are made formally, weeks and months can pass by before they are investigated and dropped, by which time even illegal abductions become a *force majeure*. So it is surely at the earliest signs of crisis that a dialogical approach should be instigated to assist truth seeking and the repairs of breaches created through manipulative or dishonest methods. Perverse emotional bonds created with children are not always sustainable in their adult life, and there are lessons to be drawn here from the history of therapeutic communities. The shortcomings of these attempts to dissolve hierarchy call for transparency about

different types of risk for professionals and users (Fischer and Ferlie 2013).

The maxim that successful enquiry terminates in truth applies to PA, but very little progress seems possible without reforming the way the law views family cases involving webs of deceit and a high level of subjective truth. There is no doubt that subjective truth provides the protective emotional shield for the children involved; their painful experience of conflict can be simplified by withdrawing to one parental trench where whatever complaints or jealousies a child might express receive support, even amplification and grotesque exaggeration. Far from putting children first, this inflationary tendency seems to be a great burden to the children and trivialises court proceedings. Regimes of legal truth seem more competent and historically thoughtful in other areas. In the 2017 case of *Ivey vs. Genting Casinos*, the UK Supreme Court was not in favour of the subjective truth of a gambler who believed his card sorting techniques did not amount to cheating in a game of chance (Supreme Court 2017). The judges had to carefully consider the historical meanings and nuances of 'cheating', 'dishonesty', 'conspiracy' and 'fraud'. Reading through their decision, the idea of turning a blind eye to an institutionalised web of false allegations which has the effect of depriving parents and children of normal relations ought to be regarded as a matter of fraud and as a subversion of justice itself. In scholarly research about failures to address 'white-collar crime', the notion of 'respectability' has been critically examined in making the argument that the real issue is the way 'offenders exploit the structural vulnerabilities of trust relationships through deception, self-interest, or outright incompetence' (Reurink 2016, 397).

Good news perhaps are the charges brought in 2019 against a German lawyer whose cynical sounding advice about creating conflicts to prevent shared custody was posted online to drum up business.¹³ However, the lawyer's foolishness is also an example of the post-virtue world described by MacIntyre (1984; 1994; 2002), so it is worth recalling the arguments about the built-in flaws of utilitarian philosophy and practices which turn everyone into someone else's instrument. For MacIntyre, the utilitarian idea of the greatest public happiness helps underpin self-serving social practices unable to properly identify the common good. On the basis of happy ends justifying the means, any amoral enormity from Auschwitz to Hiroshima may be justified. The only check on this tendency in the foundations of utilitarian thought are justice systems, which, of course, begs the question what happens when they fail? With no obvious sense of nostalgia for the pre-Enlightenment world MacIntyre argues that virtues such as courage and honesty, which were once socially determined as obligations, are now treated as vices. The conduct of opportunistic professionals in

13 Details of charges against Agnes Wendelmuth: <https://www.facebook.com/491987348002616/posts/567407077127309?s=10002259523402andsfns=mo> (Accessed August 2019).

self-referential reputation markets and the trivialisation of dishonesty in family courts would suggest that families are hostages to a particularly utilitarian misfortune.

At another influential level press reports imply, in rather exaggerated terms, that politicians mad on parenting policies have lost touch with reality. In an economic system which increasingly looks like socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor, politicians certainly have little good news to offer the mass of voters. So the metamorphosis of the political class into the guardians of the child against the background of rising divorce rates in a larger economic context riddled with political double standards is an obvious ideological expediency. Yet it is still vital to consider an educational approach to co-parenting in schools. The dangers of manipulation could be openly discussed from the early years as a variety of bullying, which is already addressed with some success. Arguably schools should respond to the social reality of family separations and protect children from negative consequences. However, MacIntyre's critiques give a clue to the political obstruction to such practical proposals for building social intelligence, namely that liberalism's morally incompatible panoply of practices is the ideological disguise of economic oligarchy. Each of us is invited to falsely believe that our goals are contributions to the greater good. So, without a critically reflexive understanding of the socio-economics of social pathologies, PA activists may be unwittingly swimming with an ideological tide whose tokenistic measures sweep up and dispose of moral issues for society.

At the moment, given the precarious future of our species and climate, the licensing of despotic characteristics in children (what the psychologists call an exaggerated sense of entitlement) is tragically mistimed. Although the trait is encouraged by manipulative parents hiding their own insecurities, they are unlikely to be the only source. *Habitas*, particularly the stick and carrot ethics of social competition and consumerism surely matters. From apartheid to the structured educational inequalities tolerated in most countries or the popularity of gated communities, etc., the social development of an individual *habitas* of isolation, distinction, and segregation is visible. It appears to be largely unquestioned by people on different sides of PA debates who, therefore, lend unconscious validation to a vertical power axis.

Conclusion: Social Pathology vs. Social Intelligence

The contestation of PA cannot be directly compared with the history of clinical vagueness about smoking, or to advertising campaigns where doctors helped play down the effects of the tobacco industry (Gardner and Brandt 2006). Nevertheless, to naturalise family conflicts discussed above does smack of a remarkable lack of curiosity on the part of some psychologists. On the other hand, while the concept of a social

pathology is alluded to by their professional adversaries, it seems largely un-examined. I suggested that it is precisely because of the troubled history of the term, particularly its technocratic use in dispersing the blame for socio-economic failures from states and governments to the people themselves, that a politically reflexive concept of a social pathology is applicable. The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory anticipates a non-technocratic social intelligence capable of speaking truth to power.

Social intelligence needs to emerge dialogically and would require the development of a more quotidian habitas, not costly summer camps that come too late for many. The methodological approach I have taken represents a hybrid theorisation of PA which suggests that professionals would do well to speak of a social pathology requiring vertical and horizontal social solutions. The former involves reforms to legal and technocratic power structures that appear unconcerned by despotism and fraud at the family level. Crucial judicial reforms are already being called for. Yet vertical reforms would be weak without horizontal action to strengthen the character of dialogical truth. Its problematic status was exemplified above by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Alongside authentic reconciliations, TRC supporters saw the failings of an expedient attempt to construct a shared narrative. In terms of assisting despotic power, these investigative failings are analogous to the truncated interviews which feed court reports and put various social workers into a position where they centralise and validate superficial knowledge. In this way, discretionary powers may be exercised in a manner that plays into the hands of despotism at different levels of society and isolates social pathologies in the long tradition of blaming the victims. The fog of parental alienation appears like a shroud cast over the most basic form of solidarity adhered to by healthy adults, namely a consensus which says that malicious dishonesty and an inflated sense of entitlement are undesirable character traits to be discouraged from the earliest years. If not, children's capacities will be eroded, and the social imagination will become more like *Lord of the Flies* than *Peter Pan*.

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The 'Prevent Duty' (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) and its Impact on English Secondary Schools: A View from Leadership.

Adam Peter Lang

Abstract: My paper considers 'dialogue' and seeks to begin to consider what has been succeeded and what has not yet been succeeded with the 'Prevent duty' in English secondary schools.

In July 2015, a legal duty came into force requiring that 'specified authorities' in England, which included schools, show 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This is popularly referred to as the 'Prevent duty'. Prevent, developed by the Home Office in 2003 out of full public scrutiny, and only fully operationalised following the 7 July 2005 London bombings, has consistently been the most contentious element of the UK Government Counter-Terrorist Strategy (CONTEST).

Four years on, my research aim is to find out how the 'Prevent duty' has been enacted by school and college leaders in secondary schools and colleges in England and additionally, to discover to what extent, if any, the 'Prevent duty' has 'securitised' education and what effect, if any, it has had on free speech in schools.

I have rich data from school leaders and schools in various geographical locations. My key findings use the work of Stephen. J. Ball on policy enactment, explore different policy actor positions and consider how Prevent is impacting on schools, on the professionalism of school leaders and on concepts such as 'free speech' and 'securitisation'.

Using Michel Foucault to think differently, I place my work in the global context of 'An Age of Anger'. Can Foucault's method be helpful in analysing education policy and practice or does such a lens blur our understanding? Is it possible to evaluate the 'Prevent duty' in terms of success and failure? How important is dialogue in this field?

Keywords: Prevent duty, School leadership, Policy enactment, Securitisation, Extremisms, Citizenship education

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Introduction and Context of my Research

In 2015, a parent came to ask my advice about a relative at a school outside London who had been referred to the Channel programme, a multi-agency programme which, according to the Home Office (HM Government Channel Duty guidance 2015, 2), existed to 'provide support for people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism'. The child had been referred for allegedly speaking up for a Palestinian state in a discussion with fellow pupils. The woman, a successful, educated, Muslim businesswoman and British citizen spoke of the 'humiliation, shock and anger' that she and her extended family felt – they no longer believed that they were equal citizens in their country. This case confirmed the reservations that I had regarding the new 'Prevent duty' and made me reflect as a head teacher and teacher and question this policy. My concerns and questions motivated me to not only research the 'Prevent duty' in its practical and operational effects but to consider the need for this very significant and new 'Prevent duty' to be researched and studied in a rigorous, academic, theoretical and systematic way.

In July 2015, a legal duty came into force requiring that 'specified authorities' in England, which included schools as well as colleges, show 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This is popularly referred to as the 'Prevent duty' (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015).

These duties, which had not existed in previous periods such as the Troubles¹ in Ireland and the UK, created new challenges and demands for school and college leaders in carrying out their work (Riley in Earley, P. and Greany, T. 2017). As yet no systematic study on the way the 'Prevent duty' is viewed and has impacted on leadership in English secondary schools has been published. Busher et al (2017) produced a limited study on teachers and schools, two years on from the arrival of the legal duty. Their report did not refer to leadership specifically and recognised that more research is needed on the 'Prevent duty' and more evidence needs to be gathered of how it has played out at ground level. It is significant that a new review called for by the Home Office and led by Lord Carlile has in August 2019 just begun its work looking at the government's counter-radicalisation and 'Prevent' strategy. This review is already mired in controversy (Independent 2019) with questions being raised regarding its independence and its credibility as well as the confidence it can instil.

My own context is that I was for over thirty years a London secondary teacher and for twenty of those a secondary school leader working in a range of diverse West London schools. As a school leader I was used to implementing and managing policy and I

1 The Troubles – the period of conflict and violence known internationally as the Northern Ireland conflict in The UK and Ireland, 1968–1998.

served as Chair of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Public and Parliamentary Committee. In this role I examined, engaged in and influenced and shaped a range of educational policies. I was very interested in the 'Prevent duty' and as a result I was asked to be involved in the consultation led by the Home Office in advance of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill of 2015. I had concerns about the statutory 'Prevent duty' at that time and its potential impact both intended and unintended. Having now left leadership in schools, aside from some consultancy work, I decided, after a period of reflection, to return to academic study encouraged by family, former colleagues and fellow academics.

I believe that a study of the 'Prevent duty' and school leadership makes a fascinating study and is a rich area to explore particularly in relation to the ways policy is enacted and to the success of dialogue as a tool in this sensitive and controversial field.

The 'Prevent Duty'

The 'Prevent duty' was the latest outcome of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy – called CONTEST – that goes back to 2003. CONTEST has four elements or work streams that are known within the counter-terrorism community as the four Ps: Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare. The aim of the UK counter-terrorism strategy is 'to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.'

The purpose of Pursue is to stop terrorist attacks by detecting, prosecuting and otherwise disrupting those who plot to carry out attacks against the UK or its overseas interests. The purpose of Protect is to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack in the UK or against its interests overseas and so reduce their vulnerability. The focus is on border security, the transport system, national infrastructure and public places. The purpose of Prepare is to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack where that attack cannot be stopped. This includes work to bring a terrorist attack to an end and to increase the UK's resilience so the country can recover from its aftermath.

The overall aim of the Prevent strategy, the fourth P, is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

The overall Prevent strategy has, according to the UK government, three specific strategic objectives:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it.
- Prevent people from being drawn into and supporting terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice.

- Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address.

Prevent, first developed by the Home Office in 2003 out of full public scrutiny, and only fully operationalised (Omand 2010) following the 7 July 2005 London bombings (7/7), has consistently been the most controversial and contentious element of CONTEST (Griffith-Dickson et al. 2014) and will be the focus of my thesis. A revised version of Prevent was first made publicly available in 2006; after 7/7 further revisions were published on 24 March 2009; and again, in April 2014.

In 2011 the then-Coalition government created an explicitly changed Prevent strategy to deal with all forms of terrorism and to target not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism ‘which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists exploit’ (HMG 2011 Prevent strategy). Prevent still remained a central part of the overall CONTEST policy and was designed ‘to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ (HMG 2011, 6).

The ‘Prevent duty’ of 2015 broadened and significantly changed the Prevent element of the overall counter-terrorism strategy as for the first time it placed a specific legal responsibility on schools and colleges to play a key role in the prevention of extremism and terrorism. The Government defined extremism in this new duty as ‘vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’ (HM Government Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, s.26).

Research Aims, Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

Four years on from the introduction of the ‘Prevent duty’ my key research aim is to find out how the ‘Prevent duty’ has been enacted by school and college leaders in secondary schools and colleges in England; and additionally to discover to what extent, if any, the ‘Prevent duty’ has ‘securitised’ education and what effect, if any, it has had on free speech in schools and colleges.

My key research question is:

How has the ‘Prevent duty’ been interpreted and enacted in selected secondary schools and colleges in England by school and college leaders?

Subsidiary questions are:

1. How do school and college leaders think that the ‘Prevent duty’ has impacted on schools and colleges, on interactions with students and

- parents, on teaching and learning, on the curriculum and on student relations?
2. How do school and college leaders regard the 'Prevent duty'? What positive views and criticisms, if at all, do they have on the duty?
 3. How and to what extent, if any, has the 'Prevent duty' 'securitised' education and what effect, if any, has it had on the practices of free speech in schools and colleges?
 4.
 - a) How has the role of and professionalism of school leaders changed, if at all, as a result of the 'Prevent duty' and how, if at all, has the 'Prevent duty' and its effects changed over a school leader's time working in education and schools?
 - b) How have school and college leaders managed and enacted the 'Prevent duty' and what new systems, structures and training have been introduced, if any, by school and college leaders to manage the 'Prevent duty'?

My work considers the way in which leaders, using the ASCL eligibility for membership (head teachers, principals and senior management leadership teams), engage with the policy and how the 'Prevent duty' is enacted.

I have carried out my interview research in three different geographical locations in London, Manchester and Kent. I have identified these areas in order to interview school and college leaders in a range of schools with different student populations and serving different communities. Comparisons can be made between responses from London, with culturally diverse schools with a sizeable (over 30%) Muslim population, and the North of England some with a sizeable Muslim population others with a predominantly white population and responses in Kent, where the schools identified have different school populations, some with high levels (70%) of white British children. I have chosen Manchester because of the 2017 bombing. The schools identified include Local Education Authority (LEA) schools, academies, schools with post-16 provision, at least one faith school and one single-sex school.

Can a theory help or hinder our understanding?

In order to answer the question as to whether a theory or method can illuminate my key and subsidiary questions and those set out at the outset of this paper, I want to turn to Foucault. Using Foucault as a lens, I aim to 'show that things are not as obvious as people believe' (Foucault 2002, 456). My research questions the 'Prevent duty', and in the process of critiquing, probing and analysing it, recognises that 'Foucault offers not solutions but practices' (Ball 2017, 36). Developing from Foucault, I will draw on

the work of Stephen J. Ball on policy enactment. These building blocks provide me with a useful but changing conceptual framework.

The first responsibility of government is traditionally that of protector (Hobbes 1651), and hence in the UK, as in any other state, the desire is for national security. The Prevent duty is situated within this context where real and perceived threats of terrorism have brought this responsibility to the fore. The context is complicated by the fact that we are also witnessing a period of time, when liberalism and neoliberal economics are being strongly challenged: a period of economic and cultural insecurity when some argue that the liberal progressive consensus is breaking down and economics and politics are moving in a post-liberal direction (Pabst 2017; Brender and Pisani 2010; Mason 2015). In essence there is a need to debate theories of neoliberalism which have become a normative and political construct. My work, in the spirit of critique and scholarship, wishes to think through the utility of the concept of neoliberalism around issues of education and education policy.

Thus, a theoretical approach, even a complex one such as Foucault's, can help in our understanding of the 'Prevent duty'. We can use Foucault to think differently and in particular about how schools do policy.

Foucault

I am using Foucault as a theoretical lens to explore how to think differently about how we problematise, research and make sense of education, in this case the 'Prevent duty' and its perceived impact on selected English secondary schools. What would Foucault, as a disruptive scholar, write about 'the Prevent duty' in this 'Age of Anger' (Mishra 2017)? How can we use Foucault to think differently, how can we apply Foucault's method to education and to education policy, and to the 'Prevent duty', and should we ask how and not why and examine practices not solutions?

Using Foucault, it is now possible to describe a new populist *dispositif*, one in which economic populism is rejecting globalisation. Within this emerging populist *dispositif*, Foucault, in his lecture course in Paris (1981-84) and in Berkeley (1980-1983) provides modern scholars with a further very interesting tool, the ancient concept of parrhesia, truth telling or 'free-spoken-ness', and within it the possibility to identify both good and bad parrhesia. Can we detect bad forms of parrhesia that appeal to base, xenophobic instincts in the prevailing global economic/cultural populist discourse, and specifically in the UK?

My research is examining if and how the 'Prevent duty' has been shaped by this emerging parrhesia and for this paper raises the role of dialogue in addressing these challenges.

My work draws on Stephen J. Ball and analyses policy enactment in this case of a contemporary statutory education policy and seeks to understand how it has been interpreted and enacted by school leaders.

Foucault as educator

It is illuminating to use Foucault's ideas and in particular his concept of *dispositif* – ideas, laws, activities, policies, speeches, actions (Ball 2013). *Dispositif* is a word not easily translated, often the English word 'apparatus' is used, but for Foucault *dispositif* refers to the systems that support a discursive formation which can be administrative, institutional and material. In the case, for example, of the discourse of educational leadership a range of different objects and practices make up the *dispositif* which can include structures, qualifications, training, professional development, courses and events (Gillies 2013, 11).

When asked about his work he wrote, 'my objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects' (Foucault 1982, 777). Prevent therefore needs to be viewed in the dynamics of social policy/educational policy and within its relation to the state and located within policy discourse. How are policies represented and disseminated, how do key speeches articulate the policy, and how does the policy work at all levels? How indeed, as Foucault notes, are 'human beings made subjects' (Foucault 1982)?

In this 'Age of Anger' (Mishra 2017) that we are living through, an anger has been created by the practice of neoliberalism as a reaction to its failings and shortcomings. Using Foucault, it is possible to identify a recent period of ruptures that has occurred including the economic crisis of 2007/2008, which has seen a 'crisis of capitalism' and linked to it a 'crisis of liberalism'. From these dynamics, the different responses and reactions have supported a global rise of populism and anti-democratic, non-liberal forms of government. Neoliberalism, whilst still dominant, has been and continues to be challenged as there has been a shift away from neoliberalism, both economically and culturally, with the rise of the concept of economic populism. This political discourse can be seen across the world including in China, India, Brazil, Russia, USA, Italy, Hungary, and the UK (Mason 2015, 2018; Pabst 2017).

Foucault enables scholars to consider and describe a new populist *dispositif*, one in which economic populism is rejecting globalisation. This discourse is articulated by, amongst others, Steve Bannon and Donald Trump with his 63 million twitter followers. Within this emerging populist *dispositive*, Foucault in his lecture courses in Paris (1981-84) and in Berkeley (1980-1983) provides modern scholars with a further very interesting tool, the ancient concept of *parrhesia*, truth telling or 'free-spoken-ness', and within it the possibility to identify both good and bad *parrhesia*.

I have argued that there is an emerging economic populist apparatus ('dispositif') challenging and overlapping with the neoliberal apparatus and in my research evidence that we can detect forms of bad parrhesia that appeal to base, xenophobic instincts in the prevailing global economic/cultural populist discourse, and specifically in the UK.

Additionally it is possible to identify a primary discourse relating to the 'Prevent duty' specifically around the implementation of a statutory duty and the need for safety and security but beneath that to identify a secondary discourse of how schools deal with this duty, what it is like to be a school leader and how the spaces created are filled.

My work finds that there is a compliance culture because of the high stakes of implementing this statutory duty or not: failure to fully implement the duty can lead to a poor OFSTED report or indeed dismissal. On the other hand, I also find that there is disaffected consent, contestation and other responses. Analysing how schools have organised or re-arranged themselves, their systems and structures to deal with the duty is an illuminating strand of my research.

Thus, in outlining my theoretical context I return to Stephen J. Ball and his influential 'think piece' 'What is policy? Texts, Trajectories and Toolboxes' (1993), in which he writes of 'the complexity and scope of policy analysis' (Ball 1993, 10) and in asking what policy is, he finds that 'policies are also processes and outcomes' (Ball 1993, 11).

The messiness of policy enactment

Policy enactment is never straightforward or simple; it is inevitably contradictory and messy. In order to analyse leadership, 'policy work' and 'the paradox of enactment', I utilise the policy actors or positions identified by Ball et al. (2011) as a heuristic device and as a thinking tool. Actors in schools take up different positions in relation to policy, including positions of indifference or avoidance or irrelevance. The positions are:

1. Narrators
2. Entrepreneurs
3. Outsiders
4. Transactors
5. Enthusiasts
6. Translators
7. Critics
8. Receivers (Ball et al. 2011, 626).

I interviewed a long-serving secondary school leader (JJ) who led a mixed, large (1,700 students), local authority secondary school with a sizeable Muslim population (30%). In the analysis of the interview I applied the different policy actor positions described by Ball et al. (2011) to school leadership. Below is an extract:

JJ: 'At Thorpeside we had overall very good relations with all of our communities. Prevent and the duty got in the way ... well, initially it did. The training I was on was pretty poor and so obviously biased against Muslims – you know, lots of pictures of dark-skinned, would-be terrorists but with one at the end white to make it not looked biased.'

'I had been at the school a long time so knew the families and communities, and they knew and trusted me..... We didn't really ever use the term Preventit was interesting that at the beginning some more Muslim parents came to school events you know parents' evenings; maybe they were checking out what we were up to. I do remember one difficult meeting with a parent...but things did calm down and the hot issue turned to knife crime'.

It is possible to use the policy actor framework to place JJ as 1) a narrator; 2) an entrepreneur; 6) a translator; 7) a critic, and possibly from the full interview, 8) a receiver.

I am also placing the 'Prevent duty' within the messy context of school policy and theory of enactment. I place the school at the centre in a complex web of discourses and institutions, and consider the 'delivery chain', focusing on head teachers and senior leadership teams, who are passing on the pressures to perform.

Shadow boxing

Below are extracts from three of the semi-structured interviews I have undertaken:

Geoff

From the 90s onwards, with the introduction of OFSTED inspections, we went ... we had been through a period which maybe we are now starting to come out of, but through most of my headship we went through a period where I think there was more ... there was a greater centralisation and more expectation of compliance by school leaders, and I think that Prevent perhaps fits into that, but it was by no means the only ... there seemed to be more and more things that we were told that we had to do, whether or not they were necessarily going to be in the best interests of our own schools and our own school communities. ... And I think it, you know, it varies from school leaders to school leaders depending perhaps on your own background and your own experience. But I think that ... personally I do think that the best most effective

school leaders feel able to use a degree of judgement and autonomy and are resistant perhaps to those instructions from government agencies that they feel genuinely will not be in the interests of their school community.

Maria

Staff, some staff haven't liked, they think it will criminalise, but we've *shadow boxed* that, we know ... as a school I think with most things we kind of ... they're controversial, we shadow box – what will be the key concerns – so I've already gone through that. 'Cos they haven't a monopoly on liberalism – we are liberals, we know what it is – but we also know about safety. So, when staff say 'Oh but if we do that, we criminalise it' – because I have to have faith in the Prevent strategy, I have to have faith that it's not going to criminalise. I don't have faith in it, to be honest – I wouldn't say that out there, because I have a duty, a legal duty, and also a duty to make them feel that I'm calm. Because they know me, I think they have faith that I'm not going to criminalise the children.

Helen

I think there could be more in leadership training. I mean there's a deficit model in leadership training currently I think, compared to what it used to be, and I think that may come back to bite the system ultimately. Also, not enough leaders, good leaders at the right stage to move up – some moving up too quickly. I think those in large multi-academy trust chains, it's all kind of very regimented and corporate, and therefore you know the feeling it, the understanding of, you know, walking around a building, being able to feel things, you know, not having to do things according to how the whole group does it but how you feel as an individual, and as a professional how to manage – so I do worry about all of that. Because it is about experience and it is about being able to hear those who have had the experiences and learn from them through really good quality training. So, I think there is a deficit model in that regard.

How to begin to evaluate? Emerging themes

Themes that have emerged from the analysis so far of my data include a key, overarching finding that school leaders see the 'Prevent duty' as very much fitting in with their and their institution's safeguarding responsibilities and rarely question or critique its place therein. Yet the responses of leaders to the 'duty' varies across a continuum from compliance to resistance and can depend on local circumstances, the prevailing school culture, and the age and experience of the school leader. Many school leaders cite that critical debate, engagement, and discussion are all crucial and that dialogue creates the conditions to consider the Prevent duty beyond policy acceptance or reluctant policy accommodation.

Emerging themes include;

Master/Policy/School discourse – linked to the rise of populism;

- Parrhesia – linked to the above, the emergence of a non-liberal, at times xenophobic, policy discourse;
- Secondary discourse – how schools talk and deal with policy;
- Policy acceptance and/or policy contestation;
- Safeguarding: schools view the Prevent duty within a continuation of existing safeguarding responsibilities;
- 'Responsibilisation': school leaders as individual professionals are now responsible for policy, a process characteristic of neo-liberal systems of governance (Thomas 2017);
- 'Securitisation': since the London bombings of 7/7, society has become more securitised, which in turn has placed a greater onus on schools, school curriculums, and school leaders (Osler 2009);
- Professionalism – the ever-changing nature of school leaders in an increasingly diverse system and their remit and varied training within;
- The importance of local circumstances and local communities: can local school leaders rightfully claim to know their communities?
- Free speech: has the 'Prevent duty' restricted or damped down free speech or have some institutions/school leaders used the space created to open up debate?

Analysing these themes can offer ways in which to evaluate whether the policy has been successful in the experience of school leaders.

Much of the literature about 'Prevent' in education thus far has focused on the criticisms and negative implications of the policy but my research is showing that the response and actions of school leaders are much more complex and nuanced. Indeed, for some school leaders the space that has been created in some institutions has stimulated debate amongst students and staff and within the space has created positive opportunities. So here dialogue is being used as a positive tool to promote debate amongst young people, although my interviews have shown great frustration and indeed anger amongst school leaders that professional judgement has been taken away from teachers in the desire to conform and freedom of speech has been curtailed. For some, the reaction has been to comply but, for others, there has been

the opportunity to challenge, contest, and even resist or, as Maria says, 'shadow box'. A paradox of the policy is an unintended consequence that in some schools it has succeeded in promoting debate.

The almost full acceptance of the 'Prevent duty' as a safeguarding issue by school leaders can be seen on the one hand as a success; on the other, it raises a separate issue of whether our assumptions about safeguarding as a concept and practice need to be critiqued. How far can school leaders act as individuals exercising their professional judgement and to what extent does a leader's length of experience and experience of working with an inspiring and influential school leader affect a leaders' actions and approaches to this and other policies? Professionalism is learnt on the job and rooted in an institution's strong values within its community as much as it is learnt in training. My research shows that school leaders in general are much more accepting of the 'flawed' 'Prevent duty' than they are of the 'un-British' Fundamental British Values. There is a nuanced mix of responses to policy and its enactment and these responses reflect and are shaped by engaged dialogue amongst school leaders themselves and within school communities including parents, governors, young people and staff.

My interviews show two specific areas where the 'Prevent duty' has not been successful. The first regarding the training offered particularly at the outset of the 'duty' in 2015 but also since. My data raises questions about the need for both good quality local and national training. Leaders raise questions about how prepared they are for the professional role of leadership given the complex nature of these societal 'problems' and the high status stakes attached to dealing with issues such as 'terrorism' and 'knife crime' which interestingly is being considered by the Home Office in much the same way as 'Prevent'. Secondly, many school leaders point out that the existence of far-right extremism has been missed or under-played throughout and in a number of schools, leaders spoke of their Channel referrals being for far-right extremism, not Muslim extremism.

So, what does the 'duty' mean for the professionalism of school leaders today and how much are they compliant, 'responsibilised' participants or are acting or can they operate using a professional degree of judgement and autonomy? Where and what is the balance between accountability and autonomy? My research demonstrates that there is a mixed response, particularly when one looks below the 'master narrative' or primary discourse of how schools deal with this duty to the more reflective secondary discourse. Whilst there is a compliance culture partially formed because of the high stakes of implementing or not a statutory duty and all schools have placed 'Prevent' within their Safeguarding duties and policies, nevertheless, professional opinions and actions have varied along the continuum of acceptance to resistance. School leaders take up, often depending on their experience, different policy actor positions, including being 'enthusiasts' and 'critics'.

Conclusion

Omand (BBC July 2017), the creator of the original Prevent strategy, now expresses some doubts that 'Prevent', by joining together the need for counter-terrorism and the need for some form of community cohesion and agreed set of values, can succeed in its present form. He cites the lack of trust and perceived hostility and concludes that 'if it is not accepted, then it is not going to work.' These new priorities require nuanced responses both within our communities and within our schools and colleges. The 'Prevent' programme permeates the entire UK education system, yet there is little evidence that the securitisation of education is contributing to the creation of more peaceful conditions within or outside the classroom (Novelli 2017).

The almost full acceptance of the 'Prevent duty' as a safeguarding issue by school leaders can be seen on the one hand as a success, while on the other it raises a separate issue of whether our assumptions about safeguarding, as a concept and practice, need to be critiqued. Leaders in general are much more accepting of the 'flawed' 'Prevent duty' than they are of the 'un-British' Fundamental British Values.

Leaders raise questions about how prepared they are for the professional role of leadership given the complex nature of these societal 'problems' and the high-status stakes attached to dealing with controversial issues such as 'terrorism' and 'knife crime'. Secondly many school leaders point out that the existence of far-right extremism has been missed or under-played throughout. In a number of schools' leaders spoke of their Channel referrals being for far-right extremism not Muslim extremism and post the Brexit referendum vote 2016 that this dynamic has become more visible and concerning.

Finally, it is instructive to return to Foucault, as theory can illuminate, to consider dialogue as a tool within this sensitive and controversial policy and four years into the operation of the 'Prevent duty' to consider what has succeeded and what has not yet been successful or failed. Foucault enables us to consider 'the how of power', to reflect upon the concepts of *dispositif* and parrhesia, to understand 'how we are made subject' but, most importantly, he enables us to think differently about education and learning in order that we continue to be disruptive, critical and questioning scholars in this 'Age of Anger'.

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Aspects of Effective Dialogic Interventions

D. Beth Macy

Abstract: Based upon on a broad reading of quantum physicist David Bohm's work and upon my organisational experience, I propose that effective interventions into problem situations require three aspects: dialogue, whole-system involvement, and identification of systemic issues. Without partnership of these three aspects, the real problem often hides in the crevices, leading interveners to focus on the wrong problem and to further solidify the original conflict. Concepts that underlie Bohm's science and philosophy serve as metaphors for his process of dialogue as well as for this paper. In Bohm's view the relationship of wholes and parts underlies scientific as well as all other processes. A problem arises from *fragmentation*, a breakage within the essential relationship of the parts that manifests in our societal, organisational and personal conflicts. His process of dialogue proposes to mend and reweave those fragments back into their participation in the whole. In dialogue, by placing a societal or organisational issue within its context and by viewing fragmentation from various perspectives, we begin the process of mending and rebuilding a broken issue back into wholeness. The image of the spiral suggested by Bohm describes the pattern underlying his dialogue, as well as the intervention model I propose. Brief narratives from organisational and societal-cultural interventions based upon these three aspects demonstrate their application in diverse situations and types of conflict.

Keywords: Dialogue, Whole system, Systemic issues, Intervention, David Bohm, Conflict

Introduction

After many years of intervening in a variety of disagreements and problems within a large diversity of organisations and situations, I have come to a few conclusions. One is that *dialogue is the most indispensable tool* in my tool chest for helping groups move beyond difference. In addition, I have concluded that while every problem has its uniqueness, successful interventions into various types of problems seemingly

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share at least two other common aspects: the intervention must be a *whole-system* process, and the intervention must be based on an assessment of the *systemic issue(s)*. In this paper I will describe how dialogue, along with those two common aspects, lays the groundwork for successful intervention, illustrating these aspects in the societal-cultural milieu as well as in work organisations. As well, I wish to propose a pattern, inspired by the work of quantum physicist David Bohm, which underlies this set of three aspects.

My own dialogue journey began in the early 1990s when I was the administrator of a large healthcare system. During my doctoral studies I had become very interested in systems theory and in translating into management practice the concepts of early systems theorists. It was during early excursions into systems thinking that I happened upon David Bohm's writing and his then-nascent process of dialogue. After having participated in training by Bill Isaacs, at that time a lecturer at MIT's Sloan School of Management and president of the consulting firm DIAlogos, I felt that dialogue provided a methodology for translating the concepts of systems theory into practical application. I was not disappointed. Dialogue has proven itself invaluable in supporting groups to evolve beyond difference.

Yet, something was missing, something I could not articulate. Experiences within the dialogue circles at times were unexpected and perplexing. On occasion dialogue participants described memories that had burst into awareness of troublesome, long-forgotten incidents, long tabooed from awareness. Sometimes long-held animosities between individuals in the dialogue suddenly and inexplicably dissolved. Not infrequently, an entirely new and unanticipated possibility burst forth that held potential to resolve a previous dispute. Many times, I read and reread the essential methodological description that had guided me, *Dialogue, A Proposal* (Bohm, D. et al 1991, 1-8). That missing, unarticulated *something* continued to prod my curiosity.

Early in my organizational career I experimented with various ways of structuring interventions and from those experiences came to articulate the aspects to be described in these pages: the important partnership of dialogue, whole-system approach, and identification of systemic issues. And at the same time, that nagging 'something's missing' feeling continued and led me into a deep study of David Bohm's life experience, his science, and his philosophy. What I propose now – even as that deep study continues – is that the three aspects hold together because of a pattern which I suggest underlies and flows through Bohm's many faceted life and work.

A caveat is warranted before pursuing further my assertions regarding aspects of effective intervention lest they appear to advocate an overly idealistic picture. Certainly, intervening in conflict situations is complex, and those who do so (hopefully) have a large repertoire of skills and processes that operationalise the

overall change plan. In my own case, even before an intervention is planned, I carry out various diagnostic processes such as conducting deep interviews with key players, engaging with those who carry authority within the system to assure their willingness to confront difficult underlying issues, and meeting with participants to form sufficient rapport so that my facilitation is trusted to be neutral. Those are just a few examples, and other consultants or leaders could well add to the list of processes needed to fully populate complex interventions. And beyond that, even with the best and most skillful planning and intervening, the success of such an effort may not be the result. History's many societal and organisational upheavals display the evidence that even the best plans and highest skills can fail to deliver the desired result. Yet, in situations where we do perceive the potential for change, the three aspects advocated in following pages address at the broad structural level those which in my experience establish the necessary framework for effective intervention.

A Common Pattern in David Bohm's Life and Work

Common ideas underlie Bohm's science and philosophy and serve as metaphors for his process of dialogue as well as for this paper. An interview conducted by a Buddhist mystic, Nish Dubashia, a year before Bohm's death, well summarises these common ideas. Bohm's starting point in all his work pivots on the *whole*, its *parts*, and their *interrelationship*. Said Bohm, 'Every part affects the whole, and the whole affects every part' (Dubashia 2018, 26), and further, the parts arise from the whole: 'You can see that the particular originates in the universal – the universal particularises itself' (Dubashia 2018, 30).

In Bohm's view the two together – parts and wholes – underlie cosmic as well as all other process, but a problem arises from what he might have called a part-gone-wrong, in his terminology, *fragmentation*. We could think of parts of a mechanism, perhaps a watch or a machine, in which all of the parts fit together precisely and all work toward some intended purpose (Nichol 1996, xvi-xvii). But in many cases, our societally based attitudes have taught us incorrectly to treat parts as separate when they are not, that is, as fragments by breaking apart their natural relationships to each other and to wholeness. He gives the example, '...like the fragmentation between countries. People come to believe that the boundaries between countries really exist and say "This is my country." But these countries all depend on each other.' (Dubashia 2018, 19). Sadly, in today's world such fragmentary attitudes are common, and as a result we engage in incoherent ways of thinking and acting toward ourselves and others. The broken relationships are the origin of our societal, organisational and personal troubles. His process of dialogue intends to mend and reweave those fragments back into their participation in the whole.

Bohm liked the image of a *spiral* to describe the pattern of the whole breaking into

parts and/or fragments in a downward movement, and then the relationships among fragments and parts mending in order for movement to flow upward again into the whole. He called this the process of unfolding and enfolding (Bohm 1980, 228). In dialogue, by placing a societal or organisational issue within its context and by viewing fragmentation from various perspectives, we begin the process of mending and rebuilding a broken issue back into wholeness.

This image of the spiral serves as an initial simplistic description of the pattern to be articulated here, again in my attempt, as from early days of learning systems theory, to translate concept into practice as well as using the image as a partial response to my early ‘something’s missing’ questions.

Some Starting Descriptions

In previous paragraphs the term *intervention* was used, by which is meant planned actions intended to achieve a particular change. In addition to dialogue, I propose two aspects of an effective intervention: involving the whole system and identifying systemic issues:

Whole-System Interventions: Bohm was very intent in his emphasis on the *whole*, and an effective intervention strategy begins with the whole system. As we work with organisational or societal issues, the *context* of the issue contains the whole system. An effective intervention has been structured so that *representatives* of every segment of the affected groups, or entities – the involved families, cultural groups, organisations, professions, shifts, levels, functions, etc. – are included. All are simultaneously engaged in articulating and becoming aware of the dynamics of the issue as it plays out across the whole entity. Participants, regardless of their position or location in the problem structure, jointly hear the same stories about the meaning of the conflict situation.

Systemic Issues: Bohm utilised the term fragmentation to refer to damaged relationships among parts of a system. In an organisational or societal sense, the fragmentation impacts the whole system, manifesting in problems that are very difficult to attribute to just one person or segment. The fragmentation may be so embedded as to have become unobvious, wasting significant human and financial capital. Discovering, articulating, and resolving these issues requires engagement of the whole system.

As Bohm said, the whole is all-encompassing. Dialogue, whole-system engagement, and pinpointing the systemic issues interweave into one pattern. They rely on each other. Without the partnership of these three aspects, the real problem often hides in crevices and shadows, evading detection and resolution.

Involving the Whole System

Coming to clarity about what constitutes the whole system requires effort. Metaphorically I think of this as the big upper arc of Bohm's spiral.

The whole system will be unique in each intervention situation. The system may not conform to obvious and logical boundaries, but rather could be tied to a particular dilemma that affects a subgroup by crossing boundaries within a larger context, for example, individuals within a professional discipline spread across several organisations, or individuals from multiple countries interested in the practice of dialogue. In other cases, system boundaries may be easily apparent, such as those that involve specific societal groups, cultural upheavals or a specific organisational entity.

Several examples will illustrate the idea of *whole system* as portrayed through actual intervention experiences. Because my own work has been primarily in the realm of large organisations, two of my colleagues have graciously shared from their own work in cultural and societal issues to provide a broad representation of examples. Here is a description of an intervention from my own experience to illustrate the risk that accrues when the whole system has *not* been included.

Along with George, an unusually employee-centred leader, I had sketched out a far-reaching transition plan after several previously independent segments of a large multi-national corporation were being brought together into George's new business unit. Prior to reorganisation the cultures and countries which these individuals represented differed significantly so that blending into one whole effective new culture would be difficult. Our plan brought small groups together with the new leadership team to hear and engage around the transition plan for the new business unit. Every employee had a chance to hear and be heard. Various other engagement processes were planned over a period of the next many months to keep employee concerns and experiences front and center during the transition. That process, though immensely time consuming, calmed people's worries and encouraged them in quickly adopting the new work processes.

But an unanticipated outcome arose. People at the boundaries of this new business unit had frequent contact with colleagues in other business units and shared their surprise and pleasure at the seriousness with which George sought to engage employees. These across-the-boundary colleagues were not having the same experience in their own new business units where they too were under serious reorganisation. They complained to their new bosses, 'Why aren't we getting that same kind of treatment?' Sadly, those leaders did not share the importance of employee engagement, and at their own level they began complaining to the company vice president: 'Why is George wasting so much time on an over-the-top reorg plan that is causing us trouble now in our own

groups?' Although we were able to proceed with our transition plan, George took a beating from his peers and boss.

We had failed to assess accurately the whole system which would be affected by our intervention. That lesson came with a heavy price tag of wasted human capital and time as well as damage to George's relationships to peers. That led both George and me to reassess what is meant by that concept, *whole system*. While it is easy to draw boundaries around a particular organisational unit, a community, a cultural group or another entity for which we may have been called to assist, I am suggesting that we need to look deeply for a clear identification of those who, though outside of legal, geographic or cultural boundaries, yet function as an essential part of the contextual system and whose participation makes a difference in the primary group's capacity to achieve its purpose or intentions.

Two other examples demonstrate the whole-system concept in diverse contexts, this time with positive results. First, a long-term healthcare facility in the US was experiencing a variety of quality and administrative issues and requested my assistance. Part of my initial assessment had to do with the overarching culture of the facility. Rivalries were rife among professions, among shifts, and among levels of employees so that the possibility of any intervention working was doubtful unless the culture itself improved first. That was the initial step in the intervention plan. All 180 employees were trained in dialogue, and then approximately half of them participated in a year-long series of dialogues focusing on the causes of the difficult culture. It was an intense year of dialoguing in which many points of conflict arose as we engaged in the experience of listening and considering together the negative effects those conflicts had manifested. Because all staff had been trained, those participating in the year-long effort were able to continuously share with their own teams the experiences in the facility-wide effort and to initiate their own team-based dialogues. The full staff involvement lessened resistance to the overall intervention. The size of this healthcare organisation was small enough that the whole system could be involved.

At the other end of the size continuum is the Truth and Reconciliation process following the South African Apartheid. Aimed at unification and reconciliation of a deeply divided population, the Commission's constituency included the whole country, about fifty-eight million people. As it held public hearings in various locations across South Africa, the Commission carried out its charge 'to bear witness to, record, and in some cases grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations, as well as offering reparation and rehabilitation to the victims' (Wikipedia (n.d.)) in the hopes of bringing out and historically documenting the truth and beginning the healing of decades of societal fragmentation. Many of the public hearings as well as weekly summary presentations were broadcast live on television and radio for the purpose of making the process accessible to individuals all

over the country. Although it is clearly still a very long-term work in progress, which unfortunately has suffered significant setbacks since Mandela and Tutu's initial work, the example reinforces the challenges involved in truly large systems change, as well as the potential that lies within this approach.

Getting Practical About Intervention Size

These two examples run the gamut of system size. Both are unusual in real life because each did include the whole. Suggesting such a broad definition of a whole system as I have raises questions of practicality. My colleague, David Vogel (Vogel 2019), a consultant with over 30 years health systems reform experience and a social-economic activist in Albuquerque, New Mexico, poked me a bit on what it means to involve the whole system. Said David, 'Yes, and then you include this group because it's part of the context, and then you see that this other group needs to be included, and pretty soon you've got the universe involved!' While agreeing with me that the ideal is for the whole system to be involved, the fact is, David contends, we have to get real about what is possible. What is more, we are almost always wrong about critical representatives of the full system who *must* be included unless we do some digging. So, defining the system is a matter of both practicality and investigation.

David is a founder of and mentor to the Common Ground Project which was initiated as an early stage effort to bring together young community leaders in New Mexico's Middle Rio Grande Region. The purpose is to engage these young leaders in collaborative exploratory conversations that hold the prospect of yielding greater cross-cultural understanding while building the long-term foundational relationships and human capacity required to lift up the entire region. A core group of intentionally diverse, young adult leaders who seemed likely candidates to be engaged in future conversations was identified. Once the initial group was convened, the group asked itself the question, 'Who else is really critical to be engaged in this conversation?' Numerous excellent suggestions were made by group members regarding additional participants in the conversation. The resulting group wasn't a product of the various community groups' organisational charts, but rather the informal inner network of young adults who know and live within the experience of the community issues that are ripe for resolution. Their day-to-day lives are immersed in feeling and struggling within these issues.

Another colleague, Randall Butler (Butler 2019), is an attorney who has specialised in conflict mediation and who founded the Institute for Sustainable Peace. In 2002 Randall had been recruited to support a leadership development and peace gathering among young adults from the different ethnic groups whose home communities had been torn apart by the ethnic conflicts and wars accompanying the break-up of Yugoslavia. The project had grown out of what Randall describes as an 'indigenous'

effort during the crisis in a mountainous region of Croatia where different ethnic groups had continued in relative peace. People of the diverse sides of the conflict had been working together for years taking care of refugees. Randall describes that as the turmoil ended and refugees began to go home, those who had formed deep bonds while working with the refugees wondered, 'Now what? Do we want to stay together and keep working?' And there was a young lady from the region who said, 'I have this idea....'

In populating this programme with potential young leaders, the programme leadership's dilemma was much like David's, how to select participants who knew the realities, the traumas, and the wounds that had torn their peoples apart. The solution was more formal than David's and yet relied on that same principle of selecting those with knowledge of the realities who could form future leadership networks. As word of the project spread throughout the region, nominations were requested, and once nominated, individuals needed at least two written references on their behalf indicating that they possessed real leadership potential and connection to take on the challenge once back home of building the fabric of an inclusive and tolerant society. In selecting participants, the organisers worked hard to put together a group of equal numbers of participants from all the different ethnic groups and different states in the region.

A final example took place in a work organisation to which I served as consultant. The organisation had been poorly managed for years, and the new leader, Raul, could see that underlying attitudes could negate any real efforts at reconstituting a healthy work environment. One indicator we found was a secretive introduction of new employees into the informal authority of the 'old-timers' network.' Said one new employee, he had been given a list of 'ten commandments' expected of all employees by one of the powerful old-timers, the first of which was 'never tell management exactly what you're doing.'

Even though younger people disliked the old-timer's informal authority, they feared not conforming to it. Turning around such buried attitudes would be a challenge. We enlisted the involvement of a group of twelve new employees, folks who were still new enough to the organisation that they were seen by others to be politically safe and low enough on the totem pole that they posed no risk. We trained the young folks in soft interview skills and gave them a set of broad questions about how employees felt about the workplace and what it would take to turn the culture around. Every month each of these young professionals was given a list of ten employees randomly chosen whom they would interview confidentially. Given the perceived lack of political risk these young people posed, even the old-timers were willing to talk. Then with their results summarised the interviewers met with Raul and his transition team each month to discuss their findings. Their summary reports were shared across the whole

organisation so that all employees became aware of how their peers had responded and the issues going forward to leadership. This was a very different approach as only a small number of people were involved in the transition process, but yet over a period of months every employee had a safe chance to say their piece and to be heard.

Identifying the Systemic Issues

Returning to Bohm's imagery, an intervention structures a practical but effective method of involving the whole system by which all parts are concurrently involved, directing our attention downward on the narrowing arc of the spiral.

The last examples hint at the second aspect of effective interventions, that is, the necessity of engagement of the whole in sleuthing out those systemic issues lying hidden in the shadows. Even if known, these issues might be too touchy for anyone to speak about openly. Or, participants may have become so accustomed to the issues that they no longer noticed while being blindly acted out. These are the issues that fester and feed fragmentation and division. Examples will illustrate the identification of such issues.

At the beginning of this paper, the case of a healthcare facility was described. A major problem faced by the facility was an unusually high rate of absenteeism, particularly among nursing staff. In fact, nursing was overstaffed by nearly fifty per cent in order to keep units covered twenty-four hours a day, resulting in a very high budget impact. Every conceivable human resource process had been tried over the past few years – focus groups, questionnaires, punishments for excessive absenteeism, rewards for showing up at work, etc. – and all to no avail. The intensive dialogues led to a different, deeply engaging process that offered up an unexpected revelation.

One of the dialogue groups – a diagonal slice of staff representing every department, discipline, and level of the facility – gathered for an all-day dialogue. Joe, a maintenance man who had worked at the facility his whole adult life and a usually quiet and stoic man, looked grey and distressed as he sat down in the circle of chairs. His demeanour was very out of character, and he was near tears. As the group settled and noticed his distress, I asked if he was okay. 'Oh,' he started, 'Mr. Smith died last night, and I just heard about it right before I walked in.' Mr. Smith had long been a patient at the facility. Joe continued haltingly, 'He was like a father to me, and I visited him most every day for the past ten years. And... he has died... .' The group fell silent, holding the pain this man was trying so hard to choke up within himself, but could not. Finally, one of the nurses spoke. 'I know, Joe, just what you're feeling. Some days when I leave, I think to myself, I don't know if one of my patients will last through the night. And I can't stop thinking about it all evening, worrying... .' And then another nurse added, 'Yes, me too. Some mornings when I pull into the parking lot, I sit there

with the car in park, and I wonder who has died since my last shift. It's all I can do to keep from putting my car back in drive and going home to call in sick.' And so it went with one after another of the staff sharing their deep distress when patients to whom they had provided such intimate care passed away.

All of the various methods of attempting to force people to show up for their shifts had failed. The essential issue had been missed. Human hearts were suffering as patients they cared for and loved died. Of course, it was a long-term care facility, so death was to be expected. What was not expected – even to the staff themselves – was the toll that human grief was taking and the strength of that grief to evade all the mechanical, feelingless procedures that had failed. It was the sharing in the circle of people from diverse parts of the facility that allowed the common and unrecognised grief to emerge into awareness. The facility began offering grief therapy for staff.

It was a learning about the power of the human spirit that touched that facility deeply. Other issues, even though they have different contours and colours, equally strike to the depth of human life and culture.

One of David Vogel's projects, the New Mexico Commons, began in 2011 by convening grass roots citizens, who live in neighbourhoods surrounding a blighted 234-acre State Fairgrounds, around the re-envisioning of that site as a public common. That project gradually evolved and expanded to include various sites throughout the region, as well as multi-lateral collaboration with similar initiatives already underway in the community, thereby defining a network of 'nested' systems.

The New Mexico Commons Project stimulated the companion 'Living System Project,' a two-year investigation that involved conducting one hundred one-on-one in-depth interviews with formal and informal community leaders in New Mexico's Middle Rio Grande Region, the population and economic hub of a majority-minority state and home to half the state's population of two million people. Each leader was asked, 'Why has New Mexico, and specifically Albuquerque and the Middle Rio Grande Region, been at the bottom of almost every economic and social indicator for most of the period since the area was colonised in the 1500s?'

Of course, over the years many studies had been conducted in the traditional ways of accountants and consultants, but the issues remain. David queried, 'Why is that? Don't tell me the symptoms. I understand the symptoms: education, crime, poverty, etc. What I'm really interested in knowing is what you believe to be the base cause of these symptoms?' Through the interviews and the dialoguing among Living System Project participants, the real underlying issues emerged. In David's words,

It's cultural. Culture was overwhelmingly identified as the heart of the

economic and social malaise of this entire “system.” It has to do with European colonialism and the disparity of haves and have-nots, landowners and land slaves, originating 500 years ago. The disempowerment that originated in colonialism prevails. It’s alive and well in New Mexico today. And it is a primary cause of the economic and associated social woes of a culture and people who feel they don’t have the capacity to move beyond where they’ve been in the past and to lift themselves up toward a different future. I now have had enough of those conversations, many of them with fellow citizens whose families have lived in New Mexico for eighteen generations and more to begin to see and understand more clearly. When you have conversations with long-term residents and others about this delicate topic, moving through and beyond hurt, anger, denials, and symptoms versus causes in a dialogic way where you’re in a deep listening and inquiry mode, rather than an advocating mode, you begin to encounter moments of truth.

An additional key finding of the Living System Project research was the almost unanimous consensus that in order to understand and effectively address this large-system, culturally based challenge, it is essential to frame subsequent work with the understanding that it will take at least a generation, if not longer, to resolve several hundred years of cultural disempowerment.

In the process, it became obvious that the youth of the region had to be at the core of this effort, partly because they were going to be the beneficiaries of whatever cultural change is ultimately manifested, partly because many, if not most, Millennials, Next and X-Genners are already hungry for change and opportunity to influence their own lives and communities, and partly because their seniors are too entrenched in historical, dysfunctional, cultural beliefs. These young adults are ready and eager to redefine the ‘system’ in which they feel disadvantaged and encumbered. That insight led to David facilitating the Common Ground Project cited previously.

Likewise, Randall Butler’s work with young leaders following the wars in the former Yugoslavia penetrated deep below the surface. These potential leaders represented all of the ethnic and national groups of the region. The young people were to gather after their fathers and grandfathers had fought each other and many had lost family members to their adversaries. The end goal was for these young people to return home with skills and relationships to bridge across the factions so that sustainable peace could be built. But, to be able to enter into serious dialogues and to see beyond the wartime wounds would require first finding enough commonalities.

Randall and the other leaders oriented the first few days to building personal relationships and to breaking down rigid assumptions each group held against the others. A common pervasive belief was that each participant’s own ethnic group had been the victim of the war, not the victimiser. About half-way through the project,

they created small groups of participants representing all the different ethnic groups the assignment to tell a story in the first person of someone whom their own ethnic group had victimized. That had been an *unspeakable*, the idea that one's own ethnic group had victimized others. But they took on the assignment, speaking in the first person, 'My name is _____' and then telling a real story they had heard or realistically telling a story made up by combining elements from true stories of experiences of the group members. For the story tellers and for the listeners, the experience was powerful beyond words. Clearly, no ethnic group had clean hands. All ethnic groups had committed victimising deeds against others. It was hard for many to take, yet the proof was in the room. And they were stunned. No more good guys and bad guys. They all were both. That was a major system issue!

The idea of *responsibility* arose graphically during their dialogues, bringing this experience to a climax. They had begun talking about the role of *corporate repentance*, the acknowledgement and restitution by a body of people for its role in having hurt others. One participant took issue with the idea. He asked, does a society come to the point of having met the guilt head on so that the shame could become complete? How long must the societal shame go on? Would it never end? Impassioned, he said, 'I'm not responsible for what my parents or grandparents did!' One young lady let that soak, then stood and shared her response: 'True, none of us are responsible for the terrible things that our grandparents did, for the problems they created. But we *are* responsible for the solutions.' What better incorporation of a *systemic issue* could have happened than for young people in dialogue with former ethnic enemies to go home to their communities as leaders knowingly *responsible for the solutions*?

It seems that the systemic issues are there hiding in plain sight. But it takes the co-presence of – if not the whole system, then at least meaningful representation of – the whole system to bring those issues into full focus. Each of us carries our own protections to maintain our self or group image and identity, and left on our own we defend that identity, shuttering out of full view the real systemic issue. We hold tight to our fixed positions. With the full system represented, those defences cease to go unnoticed. We are called to take off those shutters. Then we are enabled to see the reflection of our own defences in the eyes of others and to see the effects of our collective ways of participating in common problems. By creating a safe place for participants representing the whole to safely dig under the surface together, the real issues that belong to all are given potential to emerge.

Underneath the Systemic Issues

It seems to me that effective interventions follow the arc of Bohm's dialogue downward until a certain point is reached, a certain sense seems to emerge across a segment of the dialogue circle and then to spread. I particularly watch for it when participants have

shared, often with emotion, their differing perspectives and their fellow participants have attentively listened and seemingly understood, though not necessarily agreed with, the perspectives shared. At those times there seems to be equity between the sharing and the receiving.

The examples that have been presented, though from very different contexts, all pivot around an underlying realisation by participants. In each of their contexts the real issues may differ in how their contours and colours manifest, but underlying all is coming to the realisation of *shared common ground*. Again, some examples.

In the long-term care facility introduced in earlier pages, one of the dialogue groups stumbled into a conversation about the impact status had on working relationships. A nursing aide had joined her early morning dialogue group in a dark mood, angry at a nurse in her unit and accusing that nurse of treating her 'like dirt.' Her emotional outburst evoked an equally strong outburst by a nurse from another unit who had an equally evocative example of how poorly she felt she was being treated by higher management. As the day of dialoguing progressed, the head of pharmacy angrily stated that he felt dissed by uncooperative nursing staff, and frontline staff were being restricted from participating in care staff meetings because they were too low on the totem pole. In the daylong cacophony of these deeply troubling and pervasive victimisation stories, the medical director – the person highest on the totem pole – became emotional: 'Do you have any idea how you all treat me? I walk into the break room and all conversation stops. Do you ever ask how I am? Do you ever invite me to your birthday celebrations? You treat me as if I carry the plague.' That was the showstopper. Even the head physician felt emotional abuse. The group sat in silence, and finally one of the nurses said what was so for them all. 'As I listen to all our comments, I'm thinking, gee, we *all* sure treat each other bad here.' Status was not really the issue. The common need for regard and respect regardless of position had been laid bare for this diagonal slice of the facility to see together and to act upon as they left.

David Vogel relates his experience of coming to common ground within the societal realm. Says David, the word *common* is intentionally included in the names of his various projects and forms a starting place in their working. In the Common Ground Project that brings together Next and X-Genners, the first order of business has been to support participants in finding *common ground*. The group of forty or so young leaders represents a wide diversity – every race, creed, sexual preference imaginable. In their first meeting David observed that, 'You all live in Albuquerque or the surrounding area, you all experience what this environment is like. You all know the challenges and issues here. How would you describe them?' And then one at a time they went around the room. Each had a heart-wrenching story. Sharing those stories in the dialogue circle began to bond the group, allowing each person to be open and

to reveal situations that others knew or suspected. It confirmed the commonality of hopes and worries that confronted all even though they came from different pockets of society.

From a different context, Randall Butler offers another effort within which common ground came to flourish. For several years Randall facilitated a dialogue group of Muslim and Jewish men in Houston, Texas, who wanted to reach beyond their religious and cultural divides. Randall conducted a retreat in their early days together to deepen their process and to create a strong base. Randall's contention is that the more opportunities in which folks experience real empathy, the deeper the change that can happen. So, during their retreat this group of Jewish and Muslim men took an 'empathy walk.' Their instructions were to walk with a man of the opposite faith and to tell life stories. Perhaps the stories would be of high times or low times, family origins, heroes, one's faith or a profound experience of the transcendent. Randall recalled that watching the pairs walk and talk was astonishing. Partners' engagement in each other's stories was almost palpable, and even following the walk's completion, those pairs hung out together, furthering their budding relationships. Months later participants still echoed the closeness they felt to each other.

But then came a real challenge. The Israelis had made an incursion into Gaza. What might be the impact of such a real world happening to the deeply felt relationships among this small group of Jews and Muslims? Even as the incursion was being broadcast on the morning news, the group met for its usual breakfast meeting, this time at the home of one of the Jewish members. With cordial smiles they greeted each other, but the tension was so strong it could have been cut with a knife.

Randall asked them to begin their conversation by going around the group and each person sharing what they most appreciated about each of the others. The tension lifted slightly with each participant's sharing. And then, Randall said, 'And now we're going to talk about Gaza. But first, how can we have that conversation in such a way that it strengthens the fabric of the fellowship that's so in evidence in this room?' The group took up his challenge, each of them then telling their own stories and perceptions of Israel and Palestine. Then, one of the Jewish members took the process further, recalling Randall's frequent advice of 'walking in the other's shoes.' He told a story about Gaza from the perspective of a Palestinian. That story shook the group with its realness. Said one of the Muslim men, 'I wouldn't change a thing in your story. You really get it from our perspective.'

That series of steps of Randall's guidance allowed them both to air their own perspectives and to take on the other's perspective, opening these men's learning and understanding far beyond their own cultures' divides. One gentleman summed up for the group, 'There's nothing you can say to me today that will make me quit being your

friend.' Common ground had been reached.

The Turning Point

As the awareness of common ground settles into a group, be it articulate or fuzzy, the downward-most point of Bohm's spiral has been reached, the point between unfoldment and re-enfoldment. The process begins shifting from downward to upward. Reaching the point at which meaning congeals across the group, it seems that a shift in the kind of sharing occurs and signals that mending of the initial fragmentation is beginning. With that, movement begins to flow back up the spiral.

As my conversations with both David and Randall progressed, we began reflecting. How do we know the turning point is near? What might be the indicators? David, Randall and I posited our ideas.

First, that sense does not just *happen*. One of David's favourite words is *patience*. We can set the context that encourages commonality to become apparent, but we cannot force it to come forth. It may be a 50-year project, not a five-year project. Breaking through long-standing resistance and emotional strains takes time and will not happen until enough *trust* has been established. But, then, when it does happen, the basis is laid for building or rebuilding relationship by *connecting people through their hearts*, by their sharing both what makes their hearts break and what makes their hearts sing. In David's words, this heart language is an 'organic identifier,' and bridge builder. When that point is reached, people's language reflects a softened, sensitive, empathic attitude toward their peers.

Randall concurs with the idea of taking a long-range view. 'I don't know in my lifetime if the turning point will be fully reached. This is a generational thing and we're working with a younger generation, knowing that they are the ones who will have to pick up where we have left off,' he says. Yet already, participants in the former-Yugoslavia programme of which Randall spoke have taken on key leadership roles in their communities. That programme planted seeds of tolerance and understanding in these young people, and the full fruition may require years to mature. But in those seeds are the remembrances of having had a riveting *experience of the other's humanness*. That was the initiation of the turning point for those young Balkans, the point when they experienced empathically their mutual humanness which will be with them throughout their lives.

From my own experience, I think when that kind of melting point happens, that the people, not intellectually but *experientially*, *feel each other's sameness*. There comes a moment at which we experience the essential, rock-bottom likeness of ourselves and others. It is when that *sense of deep humanity* arises unmistakably and is acknowledged,

recognised and held. It is when individuals experience being deeply heard and seen for the real human beings that they are. The connection of one human self to an 'other' signals the turning point from which the troubling conditions shift. Energy begins flowing back up the spiral.

A very poignant example of humanness and connection sums up this idea of the *turning point*. It comes from David's story of working on a health system redesign project for the Mandela administration in South Africa after the ending of Apartheid. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission had brought together people of different ethnic groups for what might have been for some their first ever face-to-face conversations. As David recalls,

There was a white person sitting there together with a black person, and neither really had talked to the other side before, at least never within the context of equals. It was Tutu's background that had brought them into a conversation with care and understanding rather than positioning, negotiating or advocating. And then there came a moment in those people's conversation as the recognition set in. *Oh my God, that's also a human being. That person and I have something that we share together.*

Spiralling Up

In these pages and examples, I have laid out my assertion that effective interventions, regardless of the type of problem situation, involve three aspects: dialoguing, involving the whole system and identifying systemic issues. After my own training in the practice of dialogue, I felt that some essential knowledge about that process was missing, and so began a quest to find what that was. To a large degree, the missing links became apparent through an awareness of a pattern that Bohm considered essential and that crossed over his life experience, his science, his philosophy and his dialogue. The words and the examples in these pages have sought to describe that pattern through the metaphor of Bohm's image of the spiral, linking the three aspects posited as underlying an effective intervention.

Were we able to query David Bohm on his own thinking, we might hear something like this:

Things start out whole, but that wholeness often becomes fragmented as the energy winds down to the level of our manifest human experience. The process isn't a straight line, rather, it goes like a spiral. Our job is to bring those fragmented parts back together, to weave them back into a whole. As the lower point of the spiral is reached – assuming our process is effective – insight happens, and commonality is perceived. Fragmentation begins to mend. Movement winds its way upward coming back to wholeness, but at a higher level than our starting point. Through the downward then upward flow, *new meaning* has emerged (Dubashia 2018, 34).

At the lower curvature of the dialogue spiral, the fixed positions that each initially held – the fragments – soften as they are seen within the larger context, and with continued dialoguing around the systemic issues, a turning point is reached. A new possibility emerges, not a compromise, but something unanticipated that evolves the wholeness. Bohm called it new meaning, an order *beyond* (Peat 2014).

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Dialogue and Peacebuilding in Colombia: A Dialogic and a Transformative Relationship

Angela Marcela Olarte Delgado

Abstract: This article analyses different initiatives that have emerged from the top-down and everyday bottom-up peace approach after the peace agreement in Colombia and have led to establishing dialogues among different actors to contribute to the peacebuilding process. Three years ago, Colombia signed a peace agreement with the largest guerrilla group in Latin America. After this signature, the big challenge has been the implementation of the deal in the most conflict-affected territories, characterised by poverty, high rates of violence, unemployment, etc. Despite the pitfalls in building positive peace, many communities have started generating spaces by themselves and have created initiatives of peacebuilding through nonviolent actions, the acceptance of differences, active participation and empowerment and the acknowledgement that dialogue is the only way to achieve cooperation and to rebuild another story rather than conflict. This paper seeks to examine the different characteristics that have shaped dialogue-based practices when they are produced with a top-down and a bottom-up approach of peacebuilding. To do this, it is necessary to identify the parties participating in these encounters, their motivations, conditions that have allowed parties to establish a dialogue, and the results. This paper notes that in a post-conflict society, dialogues coming from the top-down will take longer in accomplishing positive peace, rather than the dialogues that have emerged from the bottom up which may be the engine to social mobilisations and the way to capitalise on social skills in achieving justice, truth, and reconciliation.

Keywords: Dialogue, Top-down approach, Bottom approach, Local peacebuilding, Community, Empowerment, Understanding

Introduction

Colombia has faced a protracted armed conflict; after fifty years of a continuum of violence, in 2016, the government signed the General Agreement for Ending Conflict and Building a Stable and Long-Lasting Peace with the world's largest guerrilla force, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC). This agreement was praised by the Kroc Institute as a very well-drawn accord. It recognised the failures of peace agreements signed before and aimed to tackle the structural causes of the war. In other words, this agreement wanted to pursue not only negative peace but also positive peace. However, the same institute advised that the effectiveness of the peace agreement needed to be measured by the firmness and the quality of the implementation (Kroc Institute, 2017, 8), even though the implementation is a complex process that does not reconcile with citizens' and

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parties' expectations.

According to the Unit for the Victims Assistance and Reparation, there are about 8,794,542 victims of the armed conflict in Colombia, which represents almost 20% of the population. This fraction is significant considering that one of the main axes of the agreement is to guarantee and ensure the rights of the victims of armed conflict in the search for truth, justice, reparation, the guarantees of no repetition and reconciliation (Unit for the Victims Assistance and Reparation, 2019).

Nevertheless, what is true is that two years after signing the agreement, to date only 23% of the commitments have been completely fulfilled and 31% of the implementation has not been initiated (Kroc Institute 2019, 2). The reasons for this breach are partly attributed to the lack of will of the new government, which took over in October of 2018 and is opposed to the peace agreement. This has led to the new institutions created by the peace agreement delaying the implementation of the programmes, which are not prioritised in the public policy agenda.

Therefore, because the peace agreement was signed in a specific context, under certain circumstances, by specific parties, what follows is the shift to a transformative platform where people can participate, creating new dynamics of peace and replacing ongoing episodes of violence by initiatives of constructive change (Lederach 2005, 42). These dynamics will be tested by proximity and accessibility (Lederach 2005, 58). In protracted conflict settings, there is a need to build the paths towards reconciliation, restoration, and social healing. Lederach and Lederach (2010, 7) suggest that social healing:

requires a focus on the local community that takes seriously their lived experience, with their inevitable need to survive and locate both the individual and the collective voice. Voice suggests a notion of movement that is both internal, within an individual, and external, taking the form of social echo and resonance that emerges from collective spaces that build meaningful conversation, resiliency in the face of violence and purposeful action.

In this sense, it is important to analyse different dialogue-based initiatives that have emerged from the top-down and the bottom-up in Colombia and which are oriented to guarantee and protect the rights of victims and to restore social relationships. Furthermore, it is important to question how dialogue has played a key role in these processes and has contributed to generate constructive change on the different levels.

The first part of the paper will briefly review the theoretical framework in which the top-down and the everyday peace approach emerged in the field of peacebuilding. Then, through the concept of generative dialogues and resilience, this paper will

critically study three dialogue-based practices. From the top-down approach, there are truth-seeking initiatives that have been displayed by the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non Repetition in order to construct a consensual understanding of violent events and human rights violation, and a second initiative led by the same institution that we will consider a middle approach and which is oriented towards the recognition of the suffering of victims of sexual violence. From the bottom-up approach, this paper will study one initiative from civil society in conflict-beset territories in which dialogue has meant a citizen-mobilisation towards peace. This part will outline the different platforms where dialogue was present, the parties and actors involved, and the motivations and triggers that allowed parties to converge into discussion and question whether dialogue is a pivot of constructive change.

Top-down Approach to Peacebuilding

The top-down approach to peace entails the values of the liberal peace that was built after World War II, mostly by developed states. Because of the explosion of 'new wars' worldwide, foundations of peace needed to rely on values such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, and be market-guided, among others (Richmond 2006, 4).

As Richmond stated:

liberal peace represents the biases of a specific set of actors, a knowledge system and epistemic community, allied to a narrow set of interests, norms, institutions, and techniques, developed from these. Yet, its subjects have resisted, exposed local ownership as external regulation, and have fragmented the hegemony of the liberal peace. (Richmond 2011, 3)

Liberal peace has become a hegemonic narrative and universalist within post-conflict societies (Richmond 2011). The top-down approach of peacebuilding is characterised by its technocratic appearance, in which peace is designed by experts and is the result of best practices. According to Mac Ginty and Firchow, 'The dominance of technocracy concerning peacebuilding and state-building narratives is significant in that it influences how information is collected and how contexts are described' (2016, 312). Moreover, top-down practices are commonly bureaucratised through a settled agenda where security is prioritised. Besides, the methodological practices are standardised, institutionalised, what makes them rigid and formal, are time-limited, and participation is selective and guided, dialogue commonly lacks meaningful participation and inclusion to legitimate peace at the local level. In this sense, in a transitional scenario where the state displays several mechanisms for justice, truth and reconciliation, the dialogue is essential to bring closer victims, perpetrators, and communities. However, as McEvoy (2008, 28) notes:

State-centric schemes may fail to take sufficient account of local customs and practical knowledge and to engage properly with the community and civil society structures. Such failures, often justified in the name of efficiency, professional expertise [...] may in turn [...] encourage grassroots resistance to such state-led initiatives.

In sum, as many practices are effectiveness-oriented, the role of dialogue in the different mechanisms could minimise the ownership and accountability of all the parties and reflect the distance from achieving truth, justice, and reconciliation.

Everyday Peace Approach

The notion of everyday peace is an answer to the critical research agenda of the liberal peace and conflict studies. MacGinty (2014, 549) argues:

That everyday peace refers to the routinized practices used by individuals and collectives as they navigate their way through life in a deeply divided society that may suffer from ethnic or religious cleavages and be prone to episodic direct violence in addition to chronic or structural violence.

The everyday approach relies on three principles: it recognises the ‘heterogeneity of the groups, the fluidity of the social world and the environmental factors that influence the space in which communities display everyday peace’ (MacGinty 2014, 549). Theoretically, the everyday peace approach recognises the agency of the ‘margins’ and the structural conditions that are faced by people in violent contexts. It gives voice to those who have been historically excluded and silenced because of conflict, it embraces trauma individually and collectively. Everyday peace allows people to re-appropriate spaces, adapt, develop ownership, develop political strategies and negotiate structures of power as a coping mechanism amid ongoing violence (Berents 2013, 66).

Everyday peace practices are usually informal; they promote spontaneous participation and have led the population to be innovative, creative and led them to shift from passive victims to active agents of peace.

However, bottom-up processes could fail in that they ‘replicate broader social inequalities’ (Mc Evoy 2008, 9). Many community-based initiatives may limit the participation of the marginalised people and reflect the patriarchy and power dynamics embedded in social relationships (2008), in which dialogue and participation may end up monopolised by few and selected voices and the most vulnerable could remain silenced.

Meaning of Dialogue and Generative Dialogue Approach

Before exploring the different initiatives, it is necessary to frame the theory of dialogue.

Dialogue, according to Freire,

characterizes an epistemological relationship. Thus, in this sense, the dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic... I engage in dialogue because I recognise the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing. (Freire 2005, 17)

Freire suggests that dialogue is, in fact, a dialectical interaction. Thus, parties need to act upon a specific context to reflect critically upon the reality, transform it or create it and hope, love, humility and critical thinking are crucial (Freire 2005). Therefore, talking about dialogue means also talking about dynamic and horizontal relationships, which are prone to setbacks. However, this contributes to generated action, reflection and could mobilise people to cooperation and new forms of identities and relationships.

This definition of dialogue will be examined in the light of a generative perspective. According to Fried and Schnitman (2000, 34), the potential of generative dialogue lies in the hidden possibilities that can arise in the midst of conflict enabling convergences and a new future that can be guided by the participants. This approach entails the reconfiguration of spaces, interests, and prejudices creating new capacities and skills, in addition to breaking ground to transformed relationships and actions built collectively. Fried (2008, 6-8.), states that generative approaches promote the development of freedoms and capacities such as proactive participation and the creation of new possibilities, in building a future from the present, rebuilding, recovering and building innovative relationships allowing the emergence of new identities and relationships. Moreover, recognizing diversity in local and daily life leads to shared values as common engines, by manifesting, expressing and listening together. At the same time, it entails more collaborative and associative relationships.

Having framed the theoretical approaches, we will examine the extent to which top, middle, bottom-up initiatives are generating new knowledge, improving relationships, transforming realities, and increasing resilience among conflict-affected communities in Colombia.

Dialogue-based initiative from the top down

The Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition has led the first initiative. This commission has the mandate to construct a historical and consensual truth about the causes and consequences of the violent conflict in Colombia. Secondly, as an extrajudicial institution, this commission was not to ascribe any individual responsibility but a collective one, and was to promote the inclusion

and recognition of victims. Thirdly, it was to urge peaceful coexistence within the conflict-affected territories. In doing so, it is necessary to cultivate social justice, cooperation, and justice through spaces in which dialogue and trust are crucial.

The first of these spaces is the 'Dialogues for Non-Repetition,' which is a formal space conceived for social discussion and participation that examines the reasons for violence and the manners in which society and the official institutions have to tackle the problem. In these conversations, multiple actors participate, such as policymakers, international NGOs, senators, businessmen, academics, social media, religious authorities, social leaders and the local ombudsman. Witnesses from civil society also attend the dialogue and have limited participation. Two facilitators who are Truth Commissioners lead the dialogues.

The first dialogue, named 'Long life to human rights advocates and leaders' was held in the capital, Bogotá, and its 12 participants representatives of official and civilian institutions aimed to study the murders of social leaders and the violations of human rights. Through this conversation the commission was to identify the responsibility of the state, the mechanisms that are being implemented to tackle the problem and the mechanisms used by society to avoid murders. This dialogue is characterised by the diversity of participants such as indigenous, afro Colombian, population, associations of farmworkers' women, elders, etc.

The methodology of the dialogue consisted of raising three questions asked by the facilitators, who advised the participants that it was necessary to answer the difficult questions in order to identify the causes and to provide a solution; each participant had to respond, generate dialogue and reflection on the problem. No particular order was imposed answering the questions, participants were free to respond as they wished. Before this encounter, the Truth Commission carried out several meetings with the organisations that are monitoring the killings of human rights activists.

Some conclusions of the systematic killing of social leaders were that historically in Colombia there has been an ongoing interest over land, and most of the social leaders killed fought against land grabbing in defence of their territory. Moreover, some of the participants argued that a high level of stigmatisation and prejudice makes social leaders appear like a threat. Furthermore, they said that the state always arrives late, when damage is already done, and the legitimacy of law is very long-winded in the territories where policymakers are not familiar with the local realities.

Dialogue as a process of knowing and acting involves power and the convergence of mutuality, understanding, and accessibility (Lederach 2005). When dialogue is activated it is because it will lead into something new. Hence, this new creation will be the product of shared thoughts and feelings where there is a capacity for direct

participation and not only as observers or passive agents.

In this case, even when participation was diverse and different representatives of both government and civil society took part, interventions were characterised by the giving of their point of view. According to Bohm (1996, 3) 'only if people are able freely to listen to each other, without prejudice, and without trying to influence each other' something new can arise.

More than a dialogue, it seemed to be a discussion where officials of governmental institutions defended their acts but were not open to questioning structural assumptions and to accepting responsibility for the murders of social leaders in Colombia. Thus, answers were evasive, characterised by caution and fear of being judged. It seemed to be before an audience that there were claims of accountability, rather than a productive space where new ideas and solutions came up. Although this was a physical space in which thoughts, assumptions, and feelings converged from the different participants, this did not reduce the distance from official institutions and local representatives, what Lederach called the 'social distance of direct conversation' (2005, 57).

The conversation was sterile because institutions were not able to deconstruct assumptions of a distant and neglectful state that is not aware of the violations against human rights advocates, and they were not prepared to engage and make real commitments. While governmental institutions insisted security measures were taken to protect social leaders, civil participants alleged that these measures were adopted from a centralised view of security ignoring the real situation in the territories; this reinforces the status quo of institutional weakness and the lack of political will. If the state were not sympathetic to the assassinations of social leaders, its answers, provided from a purely rational and legal perspective, would be insufficient for preventing further human rights violations.

Building peace among violence is a very complex task in conflict-affected settings, and recovering trust, empathy, and confidence is a long-term hope. However, the state, institutions, and citizens might appeal to all the resources that contribute to a constructive change. In this sense, this paper does not have the intention of dismissing the task that is leading the Truth Commission through the 'Dialogues of non-repetition'. However, what is shown is that these dialogues built from the top reflect the resistance from the official representatives to creating social knowledge around a subject that calls for immediate but agreed actions among the communities who claim comprehension of the dynamics in the territories rather than standardised security measures. Therefore, in order to create dialogic relationships based on dialogue and not a simple transference of communication, dialogue needs to be developed alongside other strategies that help to create engagement and commitment from the

participants. For instance, leaders argued that these dialogues might have parallel actions oriented to motivate communities and build a collective memory and identity. Otherwise, they are seen as disjointed actions in which participation is formal but there is no intention of reaching a mutual understanding or a new knowledge derived from dialogues.

Dialogue-based initiative from the middle

The second dialogue-based practice, which was also led by the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, was the First Encounter for Truth called *My body says the truth*. It was a victim-based initiative, which focused on the recognition of women, the LGBT population and victims of sexual violence in the armed conflict. This encounter was justified as a political and ethical duty in mobilising society and rejecting invisible and silent crimes. Around 600 people attended the encounter, which was held in a region where there are a greater number of registered victims of sexual violence. Among the audience were some of the perpetrators of the crimes. More than 30 testimonies were recorded via video, others were given personally by the victims, and others were letters sent by the victims and read by different participants.

This encounter is part of a holistic process in which the commission is working hand-in-hand with victims of sexual violence. Previous to this encounter, 35 workshops were carried out with different organisations in 10 regions in which victims had the opportunity to talk about the causes, the facts and the consequences of this crime. Along with these encounters, the Truth Commission is having private meetings with the groups responsible for these crimes such as guerrillas, paramilitaries, and army officials, to initiate a process of recognition and acceptance of crime.

This encounter was accompanied by chants, theatre, and poetry that express their loss, anxiety, frustrations, and grievances and facilitate the expression of feelings and emotions such as crying, claims, and sadness, feelings that were easily raised among the audience. Through their testimonies, victims made visible the stigmatisation that they have faced, their needs, their suffering, the extent to which their dignity was hurt, and how their bodies were used as an object of war. This was very important in the process of dialogue because it allowed attendees to connect thoughts with their feelings and with their body and verbal language, and this generated connection and awareness about sexual violence within the armed conflict.

As said before, a constructive change is usually generated in spaces of proximity, understanding, and accessibility. In this case, trust was built beforehand to facilitate the participation of victims and allow them to feel safe and confident. Therefore, the physical space contributed to articulating the voices that were heard and allowed

victims to build a common meaning and cohesion. This concrete space was not about imposing arguments, analysing things or negotiating truth. Rather, as Bohm states, this encounter achieved a participatory consciousness:

to suspend opinions and to look at the opinions – to listen to everybody's opinions, to suspend them, and to see what all that means. If we can see what all of our opinions mean, then we are sharing a common content, even if we don't agree. It may turn out that the opinions are not very important – they are all assumptions. And if we can see them all, we may then move more creatively in a different direction. We can just simply share the appreciation of the meanings; and out of this whole thing, truth emerges unannounced – not that we have chosen it. If each of us in this room is suspending, then we are all doing the same thing. (1996, 30)

Testimonies implied that victims were heard; in turn, voice implies the development of an internal and external movement that in the words of Lederach and Lederach 'takes the form of social echo and resonance that emerges from collective spaces that build meaningful conversation, resiliency in the face of violence and purposeful action' (Lederach and Lederach 2010, 7). So, victims felt in a safe space where they shared a collective story that was told by their bodies; its tensions, and its pain found that refuge within.

In this sense, voices led to unveiling that which was previously silenced and had not been spoken because of fear, shame, and uncertainty. In spite of being a confronting space, it was an environment of resistance and courage. The atmosphere created a space of empathy, care, and solidarity for the victims.

This encounter resonated in all the participants that were touched by the voices and made them feel connected to each other. It took a great effort for victims to prepare and find the precise words to describe their pain, their suffering, but they recalled their experiences, which led them to reflect on their strengths, such as awareness, empowerment, recognition of themselves and recognition of the others (Bush and Folger 1994). This space gave victims back the power that was unfairly taken away from them and turned it into a way of achieving truth, a truth built collectively and inclusively. Furthermore, it allowed women and LGBT ex-combatants to give their testimonies of abuses within armed groups.

This dialogue-based initiative was framed under the middle approach. Even though this encounter was a symbolic act and organised from the top, it was the result of previous meetings in which victims participated not as passive agents but as agents that have been developing actions of prevention and actions of empowerment and human rights advocacy among the community to avoid re-victimisation. The encounter was developed with a territory approach, so inclusion was not selective and allowed the

public recognition of the victim's experiences and sorrow, helping them recover their dignity.

This encounter was relevant as it was a space where sensitive issues were spoken openly and victims were recognised and acknowledged as survivors. Nonetheless, this encounter could also fail, in becoming a mere symbolic act if such testimonies remain as narratives and the structural causes of sexual violence are not addressed. Moreover, if justice and reparation are not achieved, the whole process could end up in re-victimisation and frustration.

Dialogue-based initiative from the everyday bottom-up

Finally, the bottom-up initiative that is placed at grassroots is called 'the schools of generative conversations' and led by La Paz Querida (LPQ), an NGO formed by Colombian citizens that aims to contribute to a social transformation and promote a culture of peace, strengthening democracy.

The background of the schools of generative conversations, created in 2019, was the intergenerational dialogues which began in 2017. These dialogues arose at the challenges that the implementation of the peace agreement posed in the territories. Thus, it was important to bring the agreement closer to the people who have suffered most from the conflict and have historically been marginalised and disempowered because of the negligence of the state.

In this sense, LPQ wanted to ask citizens what their expectations about the implementation of the peace process were and their inputs to achieve a positive peace in their territories. Therefore, through an open and public call made by the local journals, the community radio, and social networks, they gathered local authorities such as civil authorities, police, social leaders, youth, parents, and educators that were interested in having this conversation.

One of the facilitators of the intergenerational dialogues in the territory talked about the challenges and difficulties faced to ensure engagement and commitment of participants, considering the latent fear and distrust among the population because of the problems of violence that are still present in the territories. Then, meetings were usually celebrated along with cultural events that ranged from festivals to celebrations that were planned by the town hall or by other civic organisations and were open to the public instead of remaining closed spaces.

Through time, they observed and recognised the common ideas and initiatives shared to contribute to embracing a common and a better future for children and youth. These spaces provided security and care among participants. One of the representatives

of the LPQ suggested that ‘conversation was crucial: it requires care in the context in which dialogue is performed, care in how questions are asked and care in the process of listening’ (Lemoine 2018). Then, for the dialogues to be constructive, they need to set clear purposes. As Bohm states (1996), dialogue is a movement and a movement is energy. Therefore, the key is to channel this energy to the extent that smart answers are formulated for complex problems.

For some young people that participated in this initiative, how questions were formulated was the key that allowed dialogues to be dynamic. The starting point of some dialogues in territories was the question ‘What would people thank the past generations for?’ This question served its purpose, which was to create exchange, knowledge, and reflection among participants. Some of the conclusions of these dialogues were the importance of the legacy left by the past generations in learning and transforming realities and the need to empower the young and children as active agents in this process of peacebuilding.

These dialogues had a great impact: they allowed participants to construct collective thinking and made them aware of the importance of active listening, listening to the dreams of the people, the families, and the towns. This also led them to organise and along with parents and educators, they started a project of peace education and culture of peace within schools (testimony of one of the dialogues). The dialogues granted participants with conflict-resolution resources and conversation skills and strengthened their political capacities of participation.

Consequently, the schools of generative conversation emerged as a result of the understanding, consensus and coordinated action among the participants, specifically with the leadership of young people and teachers in each territory. Although the schools are a work in progress, they are present in seven territories and are integrated mostly by students, teachers, parents and human rights advocates. According to the needs identified in the dialogues, each school sets an agenda that is aligned with the principles of LPQ.

This empowerment from all the participants made LPQ think about how to catalyse undiscovered social capital into something visible, sustainable and accessible for every citizen interested in contributing to building local peace. It was a demand from the participants to turn words into action and commitment after going through a process of ‘conscientisation’ in which participants were invited to reflect on their history, their heritage and the capacities they developed even during armed conflict (Lederach 1995, 25).

Galtung suggests that empathy, creativity, and non-violence are essential values to peacebuilding and conflict transformation. He stated that in a structurally violent

context, communities are required to make use of their creative potential, so processes cannot be professionalised and fall into legal and technical rigidities (Graf and Krammer 2006) because it explores the knowledge rooted in the local practices and local understandings. In intergenerational dialogues, this was important from the beginning of the process because they ensure engagement through creativity, and creativity was the main catalyst that allowed the schools of generative conversations to arise.

The experience of schools of generative conversation integrates a generative dialogue approach that understands dialogue as an emerging process (Fried 2008) in which exchange among participants turns into a learning community so that knowledge is being built socially. This initiative drives self and collective organisation processes (Fried 2008) and also unveils social capital and allows a process of reflection that arises from the individual and collective experiences, and from specific episodes that have marked the history of communities. Amid the complexities and contradictions that have emerged in a conflict, the confrontations, and disputes, this is a space that contributes to the circulation and interweaving of new possibilities and perspectives for participants that could help them to visualise a new future and build towards it (Fried and Schnitnam 2000).

What the middle and bottom-up dialogue initiatives have in common is the capacity to generate and strengthen the resilience built by the communities affected. Understanding resilience entails that society and ecology are complex adaptive systems that are interconnected and in constant variation.

As noted below, bottom-up initiatives could also fail in romanticised local communities and could lead to reproducing systems of power and dominance embedded in social networks. Moreover, as Lefranc (2011) argues, bottom-up practices of peacebuilding could dismiss political and social issues relevant to tackling structural causes of conflict, leaving individuals the responsibility of peacebuilding, and modifying their ways of interacting and thinking. In this sense, the experiences described in this paper from the middle and bottom-up initiatives would not pretend to idealise communities. For instance, the schools of generative conversation have faced drawbacks as well: some families have rejected the participation of their children in the schools to avoid any stigmatisation caused by the fear that is still alive in some territories.

Nevertheless, as MacGinty (2014, 552) states, everyday peacebuilding is fluid; it entails many expressions such as change, avoidance, cooptation, and resistance. Furthermore, everyday peacebuilding can be episodic, sometimes it can be strong and at others weak, and this is very important to understand resilience in a context in which violence is still latent and communities are trying to negotiate and build better life conditions amid adversity. These variations are the result of a non-linear process

into systems that involve several interactions that happen at the same time and cannot be controlled in an equal and homogeneous way.

Walker et al (2006) propose the following attributes as necessary for a society to be resilient:

- Diversity – a variety of social (ethnics), political parties, economic models, cultural inclusion.
- Connectivity or modularity – the degree of elements in a system is linked.
- Reserves – a system is necessary to acknowledge slow variables to control predictable variables or feedback associated with thresholds.
- Tight feedbacks – the ability to respond properly and on time to feedback.
- Governance – the redundancy in governance structures need to be addressed.
- Social capital – the building of trust and balance networks.
- Innovation – the capacity to encourage change and novelty into a system.
- Fairness and equity – foster equality in the system.

These attributes are relevant to understanding the potential vulnerabilities that the system can endure and how intervention must be addressed to transform and recover from shocks.

Relationships and everyday practices increase resilience in the local context. Despite violent conflicts, individuals are capable of transforming their daily lives and building a pacific coexistence.

This scenario saw the emergence of the term ‘transformability/ as ‘the capacity to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social (including political) conditions make the existing system untenable. Transformability means defining and creating new stability landscapes by introducing new components and ways of making a living, thereby changing the state of variables, and often the scale, that defines the system’ (Walker, Holling, Carpenter, and Kinzig 2004).

Furthermore, these two initiatives reflect the extent to which dialogue can lead to an awakened or strengthened agency. According to Giddens (1984), agency is the capacity of individuals to make choices within a specific context. For him, this

capability involves the power of resisting or embracing the structures (1984, 9-17). The victims of the second encounter effectively manifested that this encounter was part of the path of resistance that they had been paving. Likewise, in the last initiative, the dialogue was also the main resource that awoke agency in youth, teachers, and parents to generate a social mobilisation towards peace when faced with adversity and fear.

Conclusion

This paper examined three dialogue-based initiatives through the top-down, middle and bottom-up approach. These experiences show the extent to which dialogue can contribute to creating change in conflict-affected societies. Change is not linear: it is wrapped in a complex web of relationships in which interest, prejudices, thoughts, and assumptions coexist. However, dialogue plays a crucial role in bridging people, communities, and societies. As Freire argues, dialogue is a process of learning and understanding. Hence, it is based on a horizontal relationship in which power is neutralised. When dialogue achieves this, people feel that they are being heard and they can raise their voice, so something new is built and a common understanding is shared. In post-conflict societies like Colombia, it is through dialogue, that the perception of distrust as social value needs to be deconstructed.

Dialogues cannot be instrumentalised and be forced by the Institution or by specific interest conversely, promoting dialogues in which shared needs are expressed, trust among the population should emerge organically. Furthermore, this could lead to empowerment, consensus and coordinated action towards a new meaning of peace within the different approaches.

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Prophecies of Self-Determination and the Authority of the Word: The Era of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

David Goldberg

Abstract: In 2019, accusations of antisemitism in British national politics coincided with calls in Israel/Palestine for a state with equal political rights. These issues coalesce in contesting the meaning 'self-determination' in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. I consider the term 'self-determination' by examining the relations between the mythic and the political, the inclusions and exclusions of people from the political community. The paper begins with an example of the interconnections between the mythic and the political. The paper examines the term 'self-determination' within the IHRA definition. The definition is understood in two contexts: the Stockholm Declaration, the founding document of the IHRA; and, Israel by its constitutional laws. The last part examines the IHRA definition as moral and civil law. I end by suggesting that the UK government define the term, 'self-determination' in the IHRA definition as this may enable accusations in British politics to turn to dialogue.

The privileged texts examined in this paper are:

- the IHRA Stockholm Declaration¹;
- the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and²;
- the Basic Law: Israel - the Nation State of the Jewish People³

Keywords: IHRA, Israel/Palestine, Self-determination, Political theology, Moral law

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I would like to thank Professor Bento for his comments at Garrick's Temple (Bento, 2017) and others for their comments on earlier drafts. The views expressed here, as well as the mistakes, are mine.

1 Available at: www.holocaustremembrance.com/index.php/stockholm-declaration

2 Available at: www.holocaustremembrance.com/node/196

3 Available at: knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/BasicLawNationState.pdf

Introduction

Public debate has become increasingly conflictual; xenophobia and racism appear to be increasing in virulence. The UK government response was adoption of a definition of antisemitism which gives as an example the denial of the Jewish people their right to self-determination. This presents me with a dilemma. If Jewish 'self-determination' refers to all the Jewish collective throughout the world having rights in the land of Israel, the rights for 'self-determination' of all the inhabitants of Israel/Palestine may be constrained. Born in the shadow of the Second World War, I exist within two sequelae of the Holocaust: international law based on concepts of human rights, and Jewish nationalism based on ideas of self-determination. My response is to try to enter into dialogue within the UK context about this right of self-determination.

This paper examines the term 'self-determination' in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. The aim is to find a space for dialogue without fear of denunciation (Harpin 2019b). I start from a position that we are all polarised within a complex cultural dynamic. Few, if any, can be an outsider; most have grown up within the mythic structures related to the Christian inheritance of the western world, the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, and political upheavals in the Middle East. Even the academic theories we use to understand this situation are interconnected with the cultural history of these ideas. In these circumstances, how can denunciation turn to dialogue?

Methodology

The IHRA working definition of antisemitism gives as one of the examples of possible antisemitism as '[d]enying the Jewish people their right to self-determination'. In 2019, I attempted to understand the meaning of 'self-determination' by examining the full definition in the context of texts to which it refers. The IHRA definition begins by referring to the 'spirit of the Stockholm Declarations', the statement which founded the IHRA. The definition also names the state of Israel. In textual terms, this is represented by its constitutional laws, the relevant Basic Law being 'Israel - The Nation State of the Jewish people' (Knesset 2018). I hope the readers will take the opportunity to read these three privileged documents prior to proceeding with this article; it may enable them to come to a different view from mine and thus open up a dialogue.

On my first reading, I was confused; did I as a British Jew have a right to self-determination in the land of Israel and did that right supersede that of Palestinians then demonstrating for their rights (Wikipedia, October 2019)? I therefore moved from a reader-response position to one of textual analysis. I had hoped that Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action would help me structure a response

(1986), but found that I could not use this model to explain the relationship between history and myth emerging from the IHRA definition. I therefore found myself embracing Martin Buber's use of mythical hermeneutics. History and myth are not exclusive categories; myths are woven into our understanding of history, becoming part of our identity and future as we enact our understanding of the implications of history as we see it (Ohana, 2019). While I am sympathetic to Buber's desire for dialogue to access transcendence in 'I and thou', I worried about his usage of messianism (Ohana, 2011). Buber's model did not provide me with the answer as to who has the temporal authority to define 'self-determination'. I therefore moved from Buber's political theology to that of Carl Schmidt and his critic, Ernst Kantorowicz. In my changing approach I had criss-crossed thinkers who had responded to history they lived through, particularly the Jewish Holocaust. Those now debating 'self-determination' of the Jewish people are a generation away from the Holocaust.

The paper is divided into sections. The first section describes a prophecy, calls for a democratic Israel/Palestine. The degree of hope or dread gives messianic intensity, the presence of death provides immediacy. The second section provides an example of the political debate in the United Kingdom during the time of this study. The aim is not to further polarise the discussion, which it may indeed do, but to illustrate the issues involved. Only by studying our disagreements may we find the space for relevant dialogue. The third and longest section examines the term 'self-determination' in privileged texts. The fourth section develops an emergent concept of moral law, in contrast to civil law. The paper ends with a suggestion that the UK government clarifies the term 'self-determination' in guidance it has adopted, or at least, provides the legal context. This may enable denunciations to dialogue by promoting stability of terminology.

Part One

Prophecy

I read a report that a man with flowing white hair declaimed from a podium: 'The Palestinian people want democracy. . . If there is no democracy, there is no point in anything. We must concentrate on building democracy, to stand against those who don't want democracy, who control everything.' This declamation was made during a videoconference between people from Gaza and the West Bank, entitled 'The Palestine Authority: Between Survival and Collapse,' organised by Masarat, a Palestinian policy unit (Hass, 6 July 2019).

Two months earlier, the Reut Group, an Israeli policy unit, published a warning on their website: Israel will be faced with a crisis if, and when, the Palestinian Authority collapses, 'accompanied by an official Palestinian declaration that they no longer

demand an independent state, but rather demand that Israel give full civil rights to Palestinians' (Reut Group, 5 May 2019). Both policy units voice the same prophecy, that of full equal rights for Jews and non-Jews in Israel/Palestine: one as a hope for existential survival and the other as threatening extinction. The Reut Group prioritises the 'right of the Jewish people to self-determination in the State of Israel' in a democratic state (Reutgroup 2019) while the Masarat speaker prioritises democracy as equality for all in Israel/Palestine. The desire for democracy, with equality for all in Israel/Palestine is a threat to the counter-prophecy of unique national self-determination of the Jewish people in the State of Israel.

I understand these calls for democracy as prophecies; they are a prediction for the future, a commitment to act to materialise these hopes, a determination to follow through even with the threat of exterminating violence and a messianic hope that democracy will bring peace.

Part Two

Illustration

To guide the discussion, I have written this illustration to examine how I understand the relation between the mythic and the political within the current debate about antisemitism.

On 19 May 2019, a senior past-president addressed a meeting of the Board of Deputies of British Jews; the ambassador of the state of Israel was in attendance. The past-president thanked the current president in extravagant terms for her 'excellent letter' to the leader of the UK parliamentary opposition, Corbyn. 'Perhaps,' he then continued, 'there was one thing you omitted to say and that is this. The word 'corbyn' is very suitable for him, as the word 'corbyn' in Hebrew is korban, which is a sacrifice. I think we should sacrifice him for all the trouble he has caused' (my transcript from the Canary website, 28 May 2019).

The analogy, 'Corbyn as ritual sacrifice' alludes to two sets of related myths. For the audience listening, 'korban' was probably the ritual slaughter, including when small parts of an animal were burnt on the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem. Corbyn becomes 'kosher' in ritual slaughter, Judaised in death. For the followers of popular media, where Corbyn was pictured as a Christ figure, (Harpin, 2019c; Horton, 2105; Middleton, 2016; Moore, 2018), Corbyn becomes the lamb of God, who is offered as a sacrifice by the Board. The trope becomes an inverse 'blood libel'. The use of the trope 'sacrifice' refers to sacred violence, while denying actual physical violence. These myths were not articulated: it is I who perceived them. These ill-defined myths gain meaning in their overall context, in this case, the 'excellent' letter.

The letter, which the past-president praised, was, I believe, the Board's letter on behalf of the Jewish community demanding that Mr Corbyn answer allegations of 'pure and unequivocal racism' (Board of Deputies of British Jews, 3 May 2019). This letter appeared to demand that Mr Corbyn admit to being an anti-Semite, the consequences of which would be the loss of his post as leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, and a decrease in the likelihood of British recognition of a Palestinian state. In support of the main accusations of antisemitism, Mr Corbyn had 'unsuccessfully attempted to dilute the international definition of antisemitism that was adopted by the Labour Party.' The term 'dilution' is a metaphor which implies an analogy of completeness and perfection. The modification that Mr Corbyn had suggested, to the National Executive Council of the British Labour Party, would curtail an essential component of the definition and/or has shown disrespect. On 3 September 2018, Mr Corbyn had recommended an addition to the Labour Party's use of the IHRA definition attempting to modify one of the illustrative examples of the definition of antisemitism: 'Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour' (Sabbagh, 4 September, 2018).

My assumption is that the past-president would have understood the term 'self-determination of the Jewish people' as referring to national self-determination in the land of Israel as defined by the state of Israel, while Mr Corbyn saw the term as meaning local self-determination in the internationally recognised state of Israel within 1967 borders. The past-president saw self-determination in terms of Israeli constitutional law, while Mr Corbyn was seeing self-determination in terms of British foreign policy within international law. This distinction is important as a single democratic nation state of Israel/Palestine with equality of civil rights of Israelis and Palestinians, were it to exist, would replace the right of national self-determination of the Jewish people in the land of Israel with the right of self-determination of all inhabitants of Israel/Palestine.

'Tropes'

The analogy, 'Corbyn as ritual sacrifice', acts as a 'trope'. Though 'trope' is a technical linguistic term referring to the figuration of language, such as metaphor, this term is being used, or misused, in common usage (Marsh, 29 September 2011). More recently it is used to describe the words or phrases which impute sinister stereotypes with power to dehumanise and demonise others (Silow-Carrol, 20 February 2019). Currently 'trope' is used to describe words which imply myths that are not explicitly stated but understood by the listener. For instance, the phrase 'Cultural Marxism' is said to be a trope for antisemitism, presumably based on the myth that evil international communism was spread by Jews (Sugarman, 26 March 2019). The word, 'trope', used in this way, is similar to dog-whistle politics in the United States. Here political messages use coded language, possibly innocuous to the general population,

but recognisable by people holding similar prejudicial views. The analogy is that of a dog whistle, whose ultrasonic tone is heard by dogs but inaudible to humans (Lopez 2015).

I use the term ‘trope’ to name the process by which words gain mythic resonance with prophetic implications. These myths may allocate inherent moral qualities or capacities to the designated group which predict their relations with other groups. These myths are based either on putative history which I call ‘historical myths’ (such as Holocaust denial) or on socially legitimated myths which I call mythic history (such as the Bible acting as a legal charter to the land of Israel). The word ‘trope’, deriving from the verb to ‘turn towards’, moves meaning from a limited literal meaning towards a wider context. Each trope gains social power by relying on people not explicitly stating the associated myth but presuming that others recognise the myth and support the prophecy implied. The same word can have differing mythic resonances depending on the culture and experience of the speaker and hearer. Tropes lose their social power when they cannot enrol others in agreement with the mythic prophecy. Explanation of the mythic resonances defuses the power of the trope, while denial of their mythic resonances increases the sense of power to determine history.

Part Three

Adoption of the IHRA definition

The UK Government formally ‘adopted’ the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism on 12 December 2016. In a speech made on the same day, Prime Minister Theresa May said the adoption meant: ‘There will be one definition of anti-Semitism – in essence, language or behaviour that displays hatred towards Jews because they are Jews – and anyone guilty of that will be called out on it’ (Torrance, 4 October 2018). The government is said to have adopted all the illustrative examples which include reference to the self-determination of the Jewish people. The definition, to my limited knowledge, is unusual within the UK anti-discrimination legislation in that it refers to two states, Britain and Israel, with no reference to an international legal framework outside the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Britain is a member of the IHRA. This is an inter-governmental organisation with envoys from 31 countries, all European or in North America with the exception of Argentina and Israel. All IHRA countries, except Israel, accept the oversight of the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2016).

The Holocaust (Shoah)

The word ‘Holocaust’ orients my reading of the definition. The Stockholm Declaration, states that ‘The Holocaust (Shoah) fundamentally challenged the

foundations of civilisation. The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning' (Article 1, IHRA 2000). Though the 'universal meaning' is not revealed, the Declaration's prophecy is clear: the Holocaust can and perhaps will happen again. Forgetting, minimising and denial make it more likely. The 'Holocaust (Shoah)' is the suffering of the Jewish people, its magnitude and horror are transmitted in the text by using such words as 'seared', suggesting fire, and 'engulfed' suggesting being overwhelmed or consumed. The overarching metaphor pictures past and future holocausts as darkness; education and knowledge of the Holocaust (Shoah) as light. I envision an engulfing firestorm over the body of Europe, leaving burnt bodies and barren vegetation. The metaphors come in sequence: the memory of the fire gives light to the present: from overwhelming personal suffering through visions of fire to light among the shadows, and on to justice grounded in the earth, a 'commitment to plant the seeds of a better future amidst the soil of a bitter past' (Article 8, IHRA 2000).

I probably started using the words 'the Holocaust' in the 1970s; but it was present before. When I was a child, there was the time before 'the war' and a time after. This mood was apparent in darkened sitting rooms with elderly people. It was looking at old photographs and arguing in many languages who was who. It later gained words such as 'Dachau' and 'Theresienstadt'. I knew I was being protected from something which had transformed the world. Later it became a muddle of story fragments attached to people, stories which did not fit together well, deadening silences and grey-brown photographic images. It gained a name for me in the early 1960s, the Destruction of the European Jews, and became a consistent story when sited away from me in a glass cage in Jerusalem as my parents discussed Eichmann's trial (1961).

As a young adult, the Holocaust, which had already shifted from being an enormous void to an emotion evoked on meeting people, moved on to become a moral history with the clarity of good and evil. By the time of Lanzmann's film, *Shoah* (1985) the Holocaust moved into a single history, an ethnic history with 'universal meaning'. In this way the words 'the Holocaust' moved from evoking nameless pervasive mood, to personal stories, usually fragmented, to a universal history with a clear moral: the Holocaust gained a capital H. Later the word Shoah made it more personal and gave it a mythic resonance, of survival marked by each year's Passover survival.

Dictionaries give three meanings to the word 'holocaust':

1. the systematic mass murder of Jews and other groups by the German Nazi regime;
2. destruction and slaughter on a mass scale, especially caused by fire or nuclear war. A nuclear holocaust brings to my mind Dr Strangelove (1964) and the Cold War of the Cuban missile crisis (1962) as well as

the Sampson option: the threat of nuclear catastrophe when the state of Israel's physical existence is threatened (Hersh 1991);

3. historical reference to a Jewish sacrificial offering burnt completely on an altar (Douglas, 2001). Activists, ambitious to build the third Temple, recently made sacrificial offerings on the Temple Mount (Hasson, 2018). Maybe it was this sacrifice to which the past-president referred. Meanings of the word 'holocaust' link building the Third Temple and the Nazi destruction of European Jews. In Christian Zionist eschatology of the End Time, the Great Tribulation and the Rapture all three meanings of the Holocaust come together especially in imagery (Sizer, 2014). If I am correct, when the Jews return to Israel, Christ will appear in a cataclysmic event consuming the world. The word 'Holocaust' has both mythic power and historical reality at the same time.

The Spirit of the IHRA Stockholm Declaration

The IHRA definition of antisemitism is written 'in the spirit' of the Stockholm Declaration, the founding document of the IHRA. The phrase, 'in the spirit of', has wide associations: first, a metaphysical or sovereign authority acting as a guide; the manifestation of a benevolent God, the holy spirit of Christianity; or, a providential law providing universal meaning. The Stockholm Declaration is written in the tradition of European political philosophy, a secular tradition growing out of Christian political theology (Royce, 2017). Hegel's 'Phenomenology of the Spirit' (1809) comes to my mind, whereby European and other peoples gain self-actualisation through history (Ferro, 2019). There is also a legal-sounding reading of 'in the spirit of': the intention of the British legislators as recorded in discussions in Hansard.

The spirit is a compact, a covenant between secular legal philosophy and religious 'tropes'. For me the spirit of the Stockholm Declaration is Holocaust Remembrance. As the last witnesses die, Remembrance consists of social actions to remember the dead, such as the rites of remembrance days, and visits to sites of massacres and museums. Remembrance, rather than remembering, is a communal action intimately linked to peoples' sense of belonging to a group or a nation. Individuals remember and reflect during communal remembrance. The Stockholm Declaration is a statement of social remembrance by envoys of states and is addressed to individuals and institutions the world over. The spirit of the Stockholm Declaration is universal solidarity and enlightenment, using the metaphor of light and redemption, to eliminate racial genocides.

The Reut Group's mission statement 'aspires for the State of Israel to serve as a leading light among nations' and similarly merges the light of moral enlightenment,

radiating to the whole world, from the actualisation of the state to the physical lights of the menorah. This is in stark contrast to the European conflagration, the ovens of Auschwitz and the world-consuming fires of the Great Tribulation and nuclear Armageddon. The Stockholm Declaration is a prophecy intended to prevent the next holocaust by enacting secularised ideals from Christian Europe to further Jewish destiny. This movement from mass murder and ethnocide to moral redemption and the establishment of a state is performed by moving from the tropes of 'light' to that of 'land'.

The IHRA definition of antisemitism

The definition begins by quoting the Stockholm Declaration's exhortation to share a solemn responsibility to fight the evil of ... antisemitism and xenophobia. (Three dots replace the words, 'genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism'). The core of the IHRA's non-legally-binding working definition of antisemitism is framed in a prominent black box. The style of writing changes from the declamatory to technical guidance:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

The core statement contains a modal, the word 'may', when referring to a 'certain' perception. What constitutes a 'a certain perception' is not defined. The modal, 'may', introduces fluidity and uncertainty (Tomlinson 2017). The definition focuses on two aspects of the word 'perception': first the ability to see, hear, or become aware through the senses of something outside oneself; the second aspect is an understanding, intuition or insight into the way something is regarded, known or interpreted. Thus, there may be a difference between the person alleged to have made an antisemitic reference and a second person perceiving that that person has made an antisemitic statement. The question becomes 'Who decides whose perception takes precedence?' The Macpherson Report (para 45.16 and 45.17, 1999) identified the victim's perception as being a ground for investigation. Over a few days in July 2018, the existence and meaning of the 'Macpherson principle' was debated: was antisemitism judged by the perceiving victim or the relevant authority? (Elgot, 16 July 2018; Institute of Race Relations; 16 July 2018; Sedley, 18 July 2018; Sugarman, 20 July 2018).

'Self-determination' in the IHRA definition

The framed definition of antisemitism is elaborated by a series of illustrative examples which may guide the IHRA in naming antisemitism. One focuses on the right of self-determination: 'Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, foe

example, by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.' Self-determination has two poles of meaning. First, self-determination is the free choice of one's own acts without external compulsion, as developed in philosophy and individual psychology. The second meaning of self-determination is the choice by a people of their own future political status, a meaning developed from international law. The term links our metaphysical sense of personal identity, the free choice to control one's own acts, to political self-determination of the government of a territory or 'land'. The concept 'self-determination of a people' has two applications: national self-determination within a discrete territory, and second, local, even individual, self-government within the state. The definition does not clarify over what territory the Jewish collectivity has self-determination – over the territory recognised by the international community, the territory claimed by the State of Israel, or the Land of Israel from Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).

There appear to be at least two definitions of self-determination within the IHRA working definition as adopted by the UK government: first, self-determination as defined in the State of Israel's constitutional laws; and, second, self-determination as understood by the UK government in continuity with the Balfour Declaration (1917). The first specific reference to the term 'self-determination' in Israeli constitutional law appears to be the Basic Law: Israel - the Nation State of the Jewish People (Knesset, 19 July 2018). This is said to have superseded the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (Israel 1948) which acknowledges the patronage of the Balfour Declaration (1917). The Balfour Declaration stated that the UK government at the time supported 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' in which 'nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.' The Balfour Declaration suggests equality of civil rights in Israel/Palestine. The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel ensures 'equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex'. However, there appears no reference to 'equality' within current Israeli constitutional law; specifically, no guarantee within Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty (Knesset, 1992). Currently the principle of equality is said to be reversible by ordinary legislation; furthermore, it will not override statutory or judge-made laws (Dinstein, 1996).

Other terms in the IHRA working definition of anti-semitism also have two poles of meaning. 'The Jewish people' has two poles of meaning: one being the imagined or metaphysical collective of all the Jewish people in the world without practical means of direct representation or enumeration. The other pole is the actual collective of all those people who have, or qualify for, Jewish nationality within the State of Israel registration procedure. Thus, the Jewish collective is both a civil or political collectivity and a metaphysical or moral one.

The term ‘nation’ also has meanings that differ between Britain and Israel. Most, probably all, member countries of the IHRA understand the ‘state’ as encompassing the ‘nation’. However, the Supreme Court of the State of Israel declares that ‘the Jewish nation’ exists in Israeli law and ‘the Israeli nation’ does not. Apparently, there is no evidence that an Israeli nation exists in Israeli law – see the Tamarin ruling of 1972, last upheld in 2013 (Tamarin v State of Israel, 1972; Ornan v. Ministry of Interior, 2013; Nakba Files 2019). (Mr Tamarin was a Turkish Jew who had converted to Catholicism and wanted to be classed as an Israeli national rather than as a Jewish national.) The Basic Law: Israel – the Nation State of the Jewish People supports this reading in its first paragraph:

The State of Israel

- a. Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people in which the state of Israel was established.
- b. The state of Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people, in which it actualizes its natural, religious, and historical right for self-determination.
- c. The actualisation of the right of national self-determination in the state of Israel is unique to the Jewish people. (Translation from the Jewish Virtual Library 2019).

‘Nation State’ becomes an amalgamation: the ‘Nation’ standing for the Jewish nation, and ‘State’ standing for the Israeli state (Yadgar 2017; Tekiner 2000). This unites the two meanings of Israel, as the world Jewish community or children of Israel, and Israel as a recognised state within the international community. The metaphysical aspects of the Jewish people merge with the physical aspects of the institutions of the State of Israel. As the terms, ‘self-determination’, ‘nation’, ‘the Jewish people’ and ‘land’, have shifting meanings during dialogue, it may be difficult to define when double standards are being applied in comparison to other nation states (Walsh, 12 October 2017).

The IHRA working definition of antisemitism appears to be phrased in terms of the human rights agenda of international law. As certain words have multiple meanings they act as tropes, moving meaning to poles of their definition. Thus, the tropes move the meaning of self-determination between that of all inhabitants in a territory and that of selected groups of people within a state, between all ‘Jewish people’ and Jewish citizens of the State of Israel. The large number of conditionals in the IHRA definitions allows for compatibility of any contradictions (Alderman 12 July 2019). The definition, while not acting as a well-drafted legal or normative definition, can act as a flexible moral one containing any emergent contradictions. It can be used as moral guidance.

The IHRA adopted its own definition of antisemitism in 2016. The Knesset passed ‘The Basic Law, Israel – the Nation State of the Jewish People’ two years later. Within this law, self-determination is both ‘national’ and ‘unique’ (Chowers 2019). The term ‘unique’ suggests exclusion of the non-Jewish population from full political rights, there being no mention of democracy or equality except for preserving the status of the Arabic language. The term ‘national’ is enlarged beyond international borders to include the view that the development of Jewish settlements in territory occupied illegally under international law is of ‘national value’. Thus, ‘national’ also has two poles of meaning: one of the land within the 1967 borders and the one including military-occupied land considered to be of ‘national value’ beyond the 1967 borders.

Civil religion

The constitutions of Israel can be seen as an evolving civil religion. The Declaration of Establishment (Israel 1948) is written in a grand religiously inspired rhetoric with a great sense of urgency of the then current political situation. The state is referred to as Israel, a state in the eyes of the United Nations and its ‘freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel’. This is a secular state driven by its ethnic history gaining wisdom from the ancient prophets. In contrast, the language of this Basic Law is more administrative with religiously derived symbols, the Star of David and the Menorah. One clause suggests religious reenactment: ‘The state will labor to ensure the safety of sons of the Jewish people and its citizens who are in trouble and captivity due to their Jewishness’ – ‘captives’ being a trope related to exile in Babylon. The state of Israel (1948) has become the Nation State of Israel (2018) with the wisdom of the prophets, equality and international law absented from the text.

Thus, civil religion has been changing and developing over the years as different myths have been seen as more fundamental to state development (Liedman and Don-Yehiya 1983; Don-Yehiya 2018). Like all states, Israel justifies itself with myths, a mix of historical myths and mythic histories (Cassirer 1946; Sahlin 1981). The most famous myth is Masada, enacted in the swearing of oaths for Israeli soldiers (Ben-Yehuda 1996, Gilad 17 June 2019). I understand this Basic Law as the current civil religion of the state of Israel as political theology, linking myth with politics.

Political myths

Myths become political when their strategic use changes the power relations between groups within and between states (Salter 2012: 206–263). While civil law is justified by jurisprudence or legal philosophy and their myths debated, moral guidance is justified by implied myth. ‘Myth’ refers to sets of interconnected stories from a cultural tradition describing the putative past, which give meaning to the present and morality to future actions. Myths have a validity and instructive normative force whose rhetorical power does not rest on demonstrations of factual accuracy or

inaccuracy. They are rarely defined, as they are mutable as contexts change. They are not held by individuals but sometimes by groups and corporate bodies. Sometimes individual or corporate bodies, institutions and states, claim privileged access to 'their' myth which justifies the person's political identity or institution's constitution. Myths mutate and change over time and space, inverting their components between competing societies (Levi-Strauss 1986). Myths are seen in retrospect to be enacted, changing their prophetic implications with historical events as states develop (Ohana 2012).

I live with four sets of incompatible myths: a 'Jewish nationalist' myth; a 'Jewish internationalist' or Diaspora myth; a myth of Universal Human Rights; and, a myth of 'equality within international law'. Each myth uses the tropic qualities of 'self-determination' differently. The 'Jewish nationalist' myth links it to the actualisation of the Jewish people in a democratic state in the land of Israel. This is based on a series of historical myths and mythic histories. The Diaspora myth holds that the Jewish people have been diasporic since the fall of the Second Temple and that the state of Israel is not the fulfilment of messianic prophecy. The myths of equality and human rights believe that, since 1798, it has been possible to construct a utopian world of equal human rights. The myth of international law is that a safer world may occur when the international community of states act in unison to negotiate the rights of groups of individuals. There is a fifth myth, which I fear, is that of a Christian Zionism which prophesies that all Jews need to 'return' to Jerusalem for the elected Christians to attain transcendence (Sizer 2014).

Part Four

Political theology of the IHRA definition

Each of the privileged texts discussed, has its own political theology dependent on which political unit claims supreme authority over the text. The political theology of the IHRA definition gains meaning when understood in the context of related texts from the movements of meaning between the different poles of terms such as 'nation', 'Jewish people' and 'self-determination'. These words act as tropes exchanging, merging and separating meaning. The meanings may change dependent on the context. External events are seen as the myths enacted. (The Israel Project's 2009 Global Language Dictionary provides good examples.) As these meanings change, the 'Jewish people' are taken as homogenous, with shared views (Finlay 2015).

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance gains its authority from the Stockholm Declaration and the authority of the countries in the Alliance. This Declaration acts as prophecy, based on mythic history, history of such enormity that it provides a universal meaning. In the absence of the British government stating

the definition of the term, 'self-determination', the constitution of the state of Israel defines 'self-determination' within civil religion, its own political theology. This political theology is based on the historical myths of both Jews and Christians to be confirmed by archaeology (Pfeiffer 25 July 2019).

The IHRA's definition acts as moral guidance within the UK; it is neither legally binding nor drafted with legal clarity (Sedley 2017). Moral guidance gives priority to the accuser to define the offensive tropes of antisemitism; in civil law, it is the assessor. As Theresa May, Prime Minister, stated, those suspected of breaching the IHRA definition will be guilty and 'called out' (Torrance 2018). Such moral guidance focuses on public shaming and apology (Hansard, 17 July 2019). Respect is shown by supporting the unattended definition. Moral guidance holds to fixed norms, albeit with flexible definitions (Bickenbach 1989). It has no need of temporal authority as this is gained from the power of metaphysical beliefs. It depends on the use of tropes implying, and disguising, underlying myths; rhetoric is its science (Kantorowicz 1954/1999; Salter 2012). Moral guidance does not need legal scrutiny: the IHRA definition was 'adopted' without parliamentary scrutinising of the wording in respect to the Jewish community (Hansard 2017). In contrast, civil legality depends on a positivist view of norms, where words directly represent the world. Civil law gains its authority from the scrutiny of legislation by representative bodies which draw their authority from different myths of democracy in the face of the law (Cotterell 2005, 54–63; Kantorowicz 1957).

Moral law

In this conceptualisation, moral guidance becomes moral law, when those accused of infringement are threatened with denial of political rights. Moral law ends if, and when, civil courts scrutinise the moral law, rather than give moral guidance due 'regard' (Equality and Human Rights Commission 28 May, 2019b; para 8). Whereas all are said to be equal in the face of the civil law, in moral law those making allegations may not be held to the same standards as those accused. It is the responsibility of the accused to show that their 'criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic' (IHRA 2016). When moral guidance is applied coercively, it acts a moral law enforceable by social pressure rather than by statute. Thus, the moral law operates in an arena of exception – a pre-criminal space, a space that the state can both create and dissolve but can claim not to own (c.f. Heath-Kelly 2017).

Moral law operates by public sanction. The perception of the accuser and not that of the adjudicator dominates. The moral court is formed by public opinion and media outlets. The more allegations are repeated the more guilt is assumed. Moral law is judged more by respect shown to the definition itself than breach of its specific clauses;

the moral character of those who associate with the accused is more important than what the person said. The allegations can remain in public media, even when shown to be false. Allegations demand apologies; apologies justify the original allegations. No explanation provides exculpation, only a commitment to political exclusion (Frot, 30 May 2019).

Moral laws gain their power by making two ideas compatible; in this case, the apparently contradictory prophecies of unique national self-determination of the Jewish people and the human rights of all the inhabitants of Israel/Palestine. For instance, if the self-determination of the Jewish people is to determine the fate of the State of Israel, any criticism of Israel may be antisemitic, as the person will be involved in 'targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity' (IHRA, 2016). To operate this moral law effectively, the definition needs to maintain conditionality. Within moral law, privileged groups, self-assigned by mythic history, are seen as the authority in interpreting the meaning of the definition. (This is similar to the 'moral rights' given to copyright holders in UK (Intellectual Property Office, 2019).) Challenge to the supremacy of these groups results in accusations and exclusion from the community (Harpin, 20 June 2019a). If a tribunal provides the morally wrong decision, the tribunal process itself can be doubted. As soon as the moral law is incorporated into civil law, the terminology would become clarified by precedent, and the moral law less flexible.

Civil law

The IHRA working definition of antisemitism was adopted by the UK government as advisory; public authorities and political parties are encouraged to incorporate it into their regulations. This non-legal binding definition becomes binding by contract when political parties, Local Authorities or public and other bodies incorporate the definition into their contracts or constitutions. Political party members and local authority employees can be held to the definition once it has become part of a contract (Gould 2018). Thus, advocacy for a single egalitarian state might technically be a 'sackable offence' for some but not others, depending on how these tribunals read the document. The definition's validity cannot be questioned, although its implementation can (Equalities and Human Rights Commission 28 May 2019a). It is unclear how the IHRA definition relates to Equality legislation in which 'attachment to the state of Israel' is not a protected characteristic (Fraser v. UCU. 2013; Grove 2013).

The IHRA definition is not legally binding except when it binds employees and political party members through the law of contract. No proof of antisemitic intent is needed: the UK government having rejected the Home Office Select Committee's suggestion of 'clarifications' (Torrance 2019). As soon as moral law becomes civil,

the adjudicator's perception of antisemitism takes precedence over that of the person making the accusation or denunciation. Thus, at different times, the IHRA definition is above, beside and under the law. It is above the law in the sense that it cannot be readily tested in court; it is beside the law when there is no acknowledgement of international law; and under criminal law when a criminal offence is committed. Currently, it appears that there is no clear sovereign authority over the definition; there appears to be no state office or legal process in place to define the key terms of the definition prior to a tribunal. When there is no human arbiter, rhetoric, public accusations, and humiliations take over from due legal process. As no intent of antisemitism is needed for it to be alleged, advocacy for a single egalitarian state of Israel/Palestine may, or may not, be antisemitic. Adoption by a public body or political party is committing the employees and members to a vow. In the absence of sovereign authority, the spirit of the Stockholm Declaration becomes the arbiter; that is, when ignoring the words 'genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism' absented from the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

There is, I believe, a route to ensure sovereign authority. The UK representative to the IHRA is Lord Eric Pickles, a former government minister. The envoy works in coordination with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and a government agency, the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, which is attached to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. I would not have chosen Mr Pickles to represent me, given his support for Poland's Law and Order Party (Freedland 2009), his reported views on the Latvian Waffen SS (Zuroff, 2009) and his role in supporting the evictions of Roma which were turned into art at the time of writing (McVeigh 2010, Guardian 2015, Tate Modern, June 2019).

The authority of the word

I believe that the conflicts in British politics regarding criticism of Israel may be able to move from denunciations to dialogue, from public shaming to public conversations only after the UK government gives a ruling as to the limits of the term 'self-determination' in the IHRA document. At the moment, I see a struggle between the nationalist and diasporist myths, between the actualisation of a people through a state and the actualisation of humanity through internationalism. While the IHRA definition remains privileged and inviolate, its wording takes on increased salience and furthers political conflict.

The IHRA definition is written in the terminology of human rights. When placed in the overall context of Israel/Palestine, the definition can be read as excluding the human rights of those not present in the text. Dousinas (2000) has pointed out that the concept of individual human rights has triumphed globally, hijacked by governments' use of treaties and conventions to create a world of utopian hope despite

mass violations of human rights. In certain circumstances, the human rights of specific groups challenge the authority of states, in the name of respecting human rights. I am arguing that, in this instance, the state can maintain the fiction of its own power, even when it defines the words it uses; no state can fully justify its monopoly of violence without defining its power, which will inevitably evoke the mythic (Schmitt 1996, Agamben 1998, 15–28).

At the moment, the IHRA working definition gives authority to itself and is yet to be tested in civil courts. Without definition by the state, ‘self-determination’ becomes oxymoronic: the self is determined by the self, ‘I am I’ (Althusser, 1971). The UK may threaten its own authority if, and when, it defines the term, self-determination, as it may clarify the tensions in UK foreign policy between Israel being a national home for the Jewish people and provision of equal political rights for all inhabitants of Israel/Palestine (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2019). It may imply that the balance of violence maintains states rather than mythic justification. Without the full authority of law, conflicts of morality will only be resolved by sacred violence. This is violence, symbolic or real, in proportion with the myth of the moral law, and out of proportion with civil law. Moral law becomes a form of ‘lawfare’, a compact of *law* and *warfare*, aiming to damage and delegitimise an enemy and win a public relations victory (Kittrie 2016).

Holocaust remembrance

I have used ideas from political theology to find a way to talk about the mythic and the politics in discussion about Israel/Palestine and antisemitism in the UK in the era of the IHRA. Political theology grew out of the failure of the Weimar Republic, the Nazi takeover of power and the international response which followed the revulsion from the Holocaust (Shoah) (Schmitt 1996, 2005). Carl Schmitt, the Nazi crown jurist, documented the disintegration of the Weimar republic, seeing a failure of supreme authority when there is no democratic consensus (Stirk 2005). Schmitt used his theories in an attempt to justify the constitutional law used by Hitler in his first years in power before his completed takeover of the state. He understood supreme authority as being justified by secularised political theology, developed over the centuries of Christian predominance (Schmitt, 1985) While no single myth could fully legitimate a state holding the monopoly of power, supreme authority was necessary for a stable legal system. Buber responded to Carl Schmitt by arguing that divine sovereignty is absolute and inimitable; no human ruler can claim the legitimate power reserved to God (Lesch, 2018). Buber, who had left Weimar Germany in 1926 for Palestine, watched the legal developments of Nazi Germany with concern, understanding them in terms of actualisation of unmodified myth. Later, he used the same theory to criticise the development of Israel as he did not believe that the redemption of the Jews could be achieved through political victories. Ernst Kantorowicz, a legal

historian who left Germany in 1937 for the United States, argued against Schmitt's view. Sovereign authority was a necessary fiction, in which people gave power to the state and then saw that power as somehow beyond themselves (Herrero, 2015). He showed in 'The King's two bodies: a study in mediaeval political theology' (1957), how concepts of the separation between a person's role and their person had its genesis in mediaeval political theology. Thus, institutions give authority temporarily to people who make up the institution. Oaths, such as adoption of the IHRA non-legal definition of antisemitism, can be seen as constraining commitment for future expressed beliefs. Kantorowicz's approach grew from his experience of persecution in Nazi Germany and his subsequent refusal to take an oath to the Regents of the University of California (Kantorowicz 1955/1990).

My Opinion

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance created a guide for the elimination of antisemitism which has highlighted the argument over the meaning of 'self-determination'. The IHRA definition is well drafted for moral guidance because of the implicit appeal to the mythic, but inadequately drafted for civil law because of the flexibility of meaning of certain words. The UK government adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism without definition of its key terms or obvious linkage to statute. No one person or agency appears to have the supreme authority to define 'self-determination'. At the moment moral and statutory authority appears distant, without effective linkage between the two. My hope is that if, and when, the UK government defines the term 'self-determination' that the meaning may be stabilised. Does the word, 'self-determination' primarily related to international law or Israeli law; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination or the Basic Law: Israel – the Nation State of the Jewish People?

While the moral and the statutory, the mythic and the political, are detached, concepts of political theology may enable understanding of the current pattern of denunciations. Without authoritative definition, 'self-determination' divides friend from enemies; there is little room for ambivalence and subtlety. Carl Schmitt's concept of political theology will prevail (Schmitt 1996). Defining the term may legitimate ambivalence and ambiguity without fear of political disenfranchisement. Room will be created for Martin Buber's political theology or theopolitics where myth emerges from history and myth is enacted as remembered history (1997).

Denunciation may turn to dialogue when patterns of rhetoric are understood as

myth and prophecy, rather than past and current oppression. Such dialogue may be enabled when current authorities clarify the words they use for social regulation of such exchanges. As long as the authority of the word remains uncertain, perhaps transcendental, friend and enemy will be divided; as long as this prophecy is messianic, existential threat will lead to sacred murder. My hope is for dialogue when the word, 'self-determination' is authorised by the UK state within international law.

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How Might Lamentations Be Read in the Light of Applying Winnicott's Notion of a 'Holding Environment' to Reconcile the Internal Conflict of the Absent Comforter?

Preston Evangelou

Abstract: This paper attempts to investigate how Lamentations, chapters 1 and 2, conveys the notion of the absent comforter in proximity to Zion, asserting that the Temple of Jerusalem served Zion as her transitional object by emitting the presence of YHWH, thereby hypothesising that Zion's tragedy during the Babylonian occupation of Jerusalem in the sixth century BCE was due to the destruction of the Temple. This event prevented Zion from accessing her transitional object and it consequently prohibited interplay, which according to Donald Winnicott provides the essential activity for liberating and creating a sense of self. Thus, this paper proposes that the author of Lamentations expresses grief in the form of emotional catharsis in order to resolve the internal conflict of losing the presence of YHWH. By examining the text of Lamentations in the light of Winnicottian discourse, one might discover a methodology to resolve the internal conflict of the absent comforter. This can be achieved by applying a dynamic that resembles a holding environment to circumvent anxiety, as the function of a holding environment provides a setting that perpetuates the presence of a primary caregiver. Dialogue is demonstrated between Hebrew Scripture and Winnicottian analysis, as both of these worlds of discourse demonstrate a value of attempting to access the presence of a caregiver by expressing emotional catharsis.

Keywords: Holding environment, Transitional object, Grief, Zion

Introduction

The application of psychology to the interpretation of biblical scripture¹ has met with resistance over the years, as there has not been a great deal of attention to examining biblical texts in the light of a psychological framework. For example, in *Theology and Psychology* Fraser Watts states, 'Regrettably, there seems to have been

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1 Bible citations are from the New International Version, published by Crossway. Reference is also made to the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament: Hebrew and English (Masoretic text), published by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

virtually no cross-fertilization between the two separate literatures, on how theology should relate to psychology specifically and to science generally' (Watts 2018, 7). This highlights the lack of dialogue between both disciplines. While Watts is positive about the attempt to develop a conversation across this interface, he conveys that for many people psychology and the Bible tend not to mix (Watts 2007, 17).

Although there has been some resistance to bringing these two worlds of discourse together, psychology is relevant when examining human emotion. Therefore, it might be suggested that the investigation of biblical scripture to discover meaning – in other words, each and every time one reads the Bible for personal relevance and understanding – involves the employment of psychology. To put it simply, 'Biblical psychology is the description and explanation which the scriptural writers give of the mental and spiritual constitution of man' (Rollins and Kille 2007, 13). In this light, this paper addresses how biblical literature might be examined through the lens of a methodology that leans towards a Winnicottian framework.

The idea that the Bible provides a glimpse into past traditions and cultures requires an understanding of the influences that might have been present at the time when the scriptures were written. Therefore, certain measures might be taken to examine the text through the lens of psychological inquiry in order to gain some insight into its message. The preferred methodology to investigate the highlighted material is to examine the selected discourses in order to draw out comparable features. Discourse includes 'all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity, seen in connection with social, cultural and historical patterns and developments of use' (Blommaert 2005, 3). This mode of investigation provides a close study of language use as evidence of aspects of society and social life (Taylor 2013, 4).

In *YHWH and Israel in the Book of Judges* (2019), Deryn Guest provides an understanding of how Object Relations theory might be applied to interpret biblical discourse when examining the relationship between YHWH and Israel. Guest opts for a psychologically informed critical assessment of the literature, which highlights how 'YHWH is projected as an ideal, loving-but-correcting, enduring loyal parent [...]' (Guest 2019, 13). Guest's methodology includes an overview of Winnicottian Object Relations theory then moves on to convey how the biblical scriptures might be interpreted in the light of a psychological reading.

This paper explores how the book of Lamentations is suggestive of a construct analogous to Winnicott's theory of a caregiver and how the Temple of Jerusalem resembles a holding environment. Winnicottian discourse was chosen as a method of inquiry for this paper because it provides a model that shines a light on affect regulation. This model emphasises the importance of a care-based dynamic when considering the underlying principles of infant development.

Winnicott's theory of infant development explains how transitional phenomena assist in the process of maturation: 'Here is the basis for what gradually becomes, for the infant, the self-experiencing being' (Winnicott 2002, 14). According to this theory, a true sense of self is discovered by spontaneous authentic acts of experience, which lead to 'a heightened sense of being alive' (Akhtar 2009, 128). Winnicott uses the term 'transitional' to imply a 'temporary state belonging to early infancy in which the infant is allowed to claim magical control over external reality, a control which we know is made real by the mother's adapting' (Winnicott 1988, 106).

Winnicott identified a dynamic in which there is intersubjective meaning according to the senses. An example of this can be seen in how an infant makes every effort to gain proximity to the caregiver's presence, which is where the value of maturational development exists. This dynamic is a holding environment, which is a term used to describe an environment of stability that circumvents the feelings associated with anxiety. Winnicott first introduced a dynamic to connote this term in 'The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship' (Winnicott 1965). According to this dynamic the caregiver's presence provides a source of security for the infant to live out his or her experience of the world in a safe and secure environment. The simplest way to demonstrate this concept is to explain it in terms of the infant's sense of connection to his or her mother while being held. According to this model the infant develops an unconscious affinity to the mother, and by doing so the infant acquires a sense of being. This sense of being creates opportunity to discover. The basic understanding of this notion is what Winnicott described as the 'self-experiencing being' (Winnicott 2002, 14). This is where infant development is directed by an intrinsic drive to be creative in order to discover a true sense of self. The caregiver is a significant component of this construct, because, for the infant, the caregiver and the infant's sense of self are indistinguishable. The infant's ability to create a sense of self depends on the accessibility of the caregiver's presence.

The general principle of the Winnicottian theory of infant development is that a union exists between the infant and the caregiver. This notion is to the fore in Winnicott's *Human Nature*, which emphasises the necessity of constituting a care-based dynamic according to the nurturing needs of the infant (Winnicott 1988, 99–115). Studies of socio-affective functioning have contributed to the understanding that affect regulation is paramount during the developmental years of infancy. Affect regulation connotes emotional regulation of the senses, a significant factor when considering the individual's true sense of being. Alice Miller demonstrates the significance of affect regulation in that the true value of childhood expression is located in the realm of the unconscious (Miller 1997, 113). Therefore, emotional discourse can inform attempts to interpret a model that signifies personal development. Such an approach can complement a rigorous historical-critical approach, which remains of value.

Setting the Scene

According to scholarly research it is thought that the book of Lamentations was written during the exilic period (Thomas 2013), somewhere between 587 and 538 BCE, as a response to the catastrophic events that befell Jerusalem during the Babylonian reign of Judah (Parry 2010). The book makes very few references to specific dates, persons, and events. However, this provides evidence to suggest that it is a narrative to a plea for salvation as it is used for rituals of public lament (Parry 2010). Chapters 1 and 2 primarily focus on the author's expression of pain and grief, with direct laments of loss and abandonment, as the text presents a desperate attempt to try and recover the concept of a comforter, often referred to as 'the one who comforts' (Lam. 1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21; 2:13).

Although the comforter has seemingly abandoned Zion, there are areas of the two chapters that evidently suggest that YHWH has instructed the fall of Jerusalem due to her transgressions (Lam. 1:14) and uncleanness (Lam. 1:17), which places YHWH as a judge.

The scene is set according to an expression which some might refer to as poetic (Parry 2010), as it reflects what can only be assumed as the inner feelings of a pleading mediator who narrates from a position of grief. Although chapters 1 and 2 have been criticised for not flowing in accordance with a monophonic tone (Parry 2010), they do present cathartic instability that may function to solve the challenge of identifying Jerusalem's solace, which is perceived as the Temple. It is due to this very premise that the book conveys a cathartic form of expression, in response to pain exhibited as anxiety due to sin (Thomas 2009). The discernible tension that is created within the text is essential to its message and what its content means in relation to its audience as it presents a voice of confession.

Robin Parry demonstrates that the book employs polyphonic expression, which is suggestive of interrelationships rather than an isolative voice (Parry 2010). The author expresses emotional contortion by an interchanging perspective, as Lamentations 1:14 portrays that it is the Lord that delivers Jerusalem to the enemy, yet, according to 2:5, the Lord has become the enemy.

Upon closer examination, chapters 1 and 2 are an attempt to orient the true self, as conviction functions to focus confession according to faith in YHWH. In this way, Coggins and Houlden propose, 'The book thus becomes a source of consolation to the reader' (Coggins and Houlden 1996, 382). The text provides interpretive value as it induces a state of emotional catharsis, expressing empathy of loss and pain through the classical notion of tragedy. In line with this notion, Christian Dunker provides an insight to this paradigm of tragedy that is fundamental in complying with cathartic

expression. The genre of the setting must bestow polyphonic expression subject to action within separate scenes, however, all within the same locality and sequential in time. 'From this point of view of the plot, a tragedy must break up the myth, isolate its essential fragments, and thus, in a certain sense, extract its structure' (Dunker 2011, 33).

It may reasonably be claimed that Lamentations is structured in a way that deals with the emotional need to re-localise the concept of YHWH as it is deeply rooted within the developmental stages of attachment, which leads on to an internal construct with relational value.

According to Sigmund Freud, 'the theory of repression is the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests' (Freud 1914, 16). From this perspective one should locate the source that identifies the grieving process, which is imbedded in an interpersonal loss of attachment to the relational object. This form of analysis presents an intimate portrayal of attunement between the ideological concepts of Zion and YHWH. This demonstrates that the concept of the comforter is being grieved and this is expressed in the text as a form of emotional discharge.

A methodology for interpreting the text

The methodology of a psychoanalytic attempt to interpret the Hebrew Scriptures is primarily concerned with the neurotic impulse discovered in the emotional discourse of the author's expressive attitude, which is conveyed through the text. The principal factor for such a technique is to bring out unconscious meaning identified in key texts that convey the actions and the products of the imagination (Aichele 1995). Emotional significance is fundamental during analysis, which, in this case, is the cause for anxiety and guilt, which contribute to the emotional structure that causes grief.

According to the psychoanalytic power and structure of interpretation, content or material of any nature that is emotionally driven can potentially be interpreted by empathetic attunement. This defines what Aloysio Augusto D'Abreu conveys as 'experience apprehended in the interpretive act' (D'Abreu 2005, 953). Of this method '[i]nterpretation transcends mere intellectual communication. It is also an experience in which analysts' emotions work as an important instrument in understanding their patients' (D'Abreu 2005, 953). Likewise, the reader's emotional attunement to the text is fundamental in order to discover relative subjective meaning. After all, Heath Thomas places the significance of the book's meaning according to Umberto Eco's aesthetic theory by asserting it is an 'open text'. Essentially this method interprets the text according to an integrated approach, as the book contains 'certain structural devices that encourage and elicit interpretative choices' on part of the model reader' (Thomas 2013, 67). Similarly, aesthetic emotional discourse provides an affective

mediating factor of how the text affects the reader. This is achieved by the individual attuning to the message of the text according to a bodily based means of interpretation, an affective way of understanding. For example, if a colour is removed from a painting its original effect will be distorted (Thomas 2009). How a painting or poem relates to an individual is interpreted through the style in which the artist, or in this case, the author, conveys meaning: '[Lamentations'] phonology of mourning paves the way for both expressing pain and sometimes enacting penitence' (Thomas 2013, 20). This supports the idea that *Lamentations* is expressed as emotional art, by facilitating the grievance of a nation (Coggins and Houlden 1996). This type of poetry presents a bodily impulse of unconscious intention, which expressively emits emotional cathartic energy. Desire and unconscious drive both play a fundamental part in deriving value from meaning.

In order to identify the root cause of the author's lament, one has to examine a model that links emotional discourse to infant development. Winnicottian analysis offers a framework that encompasses transitional phenomena as a feature necessary for investigating emotional discourse during analysis of interpretation by focusing on the process of interplay. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on Winnicott's dynamic of a transitional object, which is an item that constitutes the commencement of the capacity for symbolisation. This object develops into the capacity for play, which is essential for the infant's development of creativity and establishes a method to create a sense of self. The main function of this object is to circumvent anxiety. According to Winnicott in 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena' the power of this item is based on the attachment process to the object in question (Winnicott 1971, 2–3). Imagine a two-year-old child who does not let go of a particular teddy bear; however dirty and smelly the teddy gets, the child will simply not let go. The child is obviously attached to the item. The object is perceived by the infant to perpetuate the presence of the caregiver and therefore the infant develops an internal construct which is relatable to the object. For the child, the teddy is not just a representation of the caregiver but presents qualities of the caregiver too. Letting go of the object is simply not an option. If the child were to let go, even if the item were in the same vicinity, the child would experience great stress and overwhelming anxiety.

The formation of the transitional object is an unconscious process, determined by the representation of the caregiver's presence and subject to the emotional value bestowed upon it. The infant does not necessarily choose what will act as the transitional object, but rather discovers it by the arousal of certain innate responses according to awareness of the caregiver's presence. It might reasonably be claimed that for the child, the object is not an extension of the caregiver but is an emotional representation of the caregiver. In this case, the child has created an environment where the concept of the caregiver still exists. The power and the structure of the transitional object is rooted

in what Winnicott claimed to 'stand for the "external" breast, but indirectly, through standing for an "internal" breast' (Winnicott 1971, 13).

According to Dias, what is clearly made evident by Winnicott is a stage of development called 'transitionality' (Dias 2016, 27–68), whereby the child achieves the ability to identify with objects. This complete reliance on external reality provides the basis of dependency on an item that the child can internally relate to, as the practice of play provides a means of interpreting the surrounding world. The transitional object is part of this dynamic, whereby the child can adjust, with ease, from being dependent on the caregiver to transferring emotional dependency to something other than the child's concept of self. Therefore, this object is paramount for the developmental process of the child's emotional well-being. Likewise, Jerusalem's love invested within an object, such as the Temple, that permeates the original loved object (YHWH's metaphorical bosom, [Isa. 40:11]), will determine its transitional value according to an attachment operative. The transitional object is perceived to emit a form of comfort, operating as a defence mechanism against anxiety by permeating the presence of the caregiver (Winnicott 1971). This procedure manifests as a bodily impulse that supports the internal orientation for emotional development. Accordingly, this dynamic provides opportunity to necessitate a sense of the true self through the practice of interplay. This development occurs during infancy and operates as an essential care constituent throughout the individual's life, as it is originally regulated through the mother's care, and in later life, by the concept of the caregiver's presence (in this case the concept of the comforter).

Jan Abram terms this process 'primary psychic creativity', which emphasises how the biological needs of the individual are attended to by the caregiver and/or environment (Abram 2007). Primary psychic creativity therefore ascertains the notion that the caregiver regulates a system representative of maternal care. In keeping with this concept, Todd Linafelt links Isaiah 49:14–26 to Lamentations (Linafelt 1994) on the premise that it associates the maternal value of the two texts (Lam. 2:12, 20). It is in this respect that the author's psychological state is concurrent to what the destruction of the Temple represents, which is the absence of maternal care. Subsequently, this restricts Zion's liberty to exercise interplay, as this is expressed at the end of the opening first verse of chapter 1, '[the city of Jerusalem] [h]as become a slave!' (Lam. 1:1).

Identifying the Temple of Jerusalem as Zion's transitional object

Lamentations is typical of Zion theology, which originates from 'royal Judahite ideology', and presents Jerusalem as YHWH's sovereign state by commitment to the Davidic royal line (Heath 2013), as demonstrated in: 'the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob' (Ps. 87:2). In this sense, one may infer that an affinity exists between the concept of Zion and YHWH, drawing attention to the

symbolic involvement of an interactive deity. Within this conjecture one can interpret the role of the comforter as YHWH.

If one assumes that the comforter provides the preliminary to a state of transition, the focus is then placed on Zion's ability to 'do' through creative interplay, as this serves to necessitate orientation. According to this theory, the author's perception of Zion's anxiety must have been ignited by the absence of her transitional object, the destruction of the Temple, consequently compromising transitional space to access the conceived presence of the comforter.

It seems that all is lost for Zion when referring to an absent comforter, as her purpose is located within the concept of YHWH. The symbolic attribute of the comforter comes to light in Lamentations 1:16: 'For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my spirit.'

The comforter serves to circumvent anxiety just as the transitional object comforts the child. By the comforter's absence, interplay is deprived which leads on to grief. Hence, the direction and tone of the author is typical of an emotional imbalance regulated psychically by the influence of internal stressors.

Winnicott's notion of the caregiver signifies that the transitional object is rooted in an attachment that exemplifies comfort within a state of interplay, representing a therapeutic dynamic according to the structure of a holding environment. To sum this up metaphorically, holding provides ontological value by forming an omnipotent concept of the caregiver for purposes of healing and development.

In a similar manner, awareness of the caregiver's presence is sufficient to encourage dependency upon the transitional object. The Temple of Jerusalem serves Israel in this way by permeating the concept of YHWH, influencing the presence of the caregiver to reside both within the object (the Temple) and within the individual's primary psychic state of a true sense of self.

Winnicott asserts that the individual's need to locate a true sense of self is linked to the location of culture (Temple practices) and the individual's feeling of being merged with the caregiver (the comforter). Therefore, the significance of the Temple, as the transitional object, encompasses a state of identity, security and sense of freedom.

Barker provides evidence to suggest that the Temple was a symbolic expression of YHWH's existence that places the essential value of worship according to its location and function and most notably that 'His name should dwell there' (Deut. 12:11) (Barker 2008, 29). However, more specifically the Temple encouraged practices that would regulate an affinity between the people and the concept of YHWH. This

conceived a holding environment, which stimulated interplay to facilitate personal psychic growth and identity. For example, 'the bread of the Presence' signified YHWH's existence within the Temple during the Sabbath service, consisting of placing twelve loaves in two rows of six on the golden table (Barker 2008). The significance of this custom provided a *bona fide* representation of an ideological interpersonal caregiver located in proximity to its loyal subjects, where the Temple itself became space for a transitional state of interplay. Its destruction, therefore, mitigated YHWH's presence as 'Israel's entire symbol system had been torn away and the people had experienced a complete loss of meaning' (Joyce 1993, 310). Therefore, tradition and custom were compromised, obscuring the holding environment: 'The Lord has caused the appointed feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion' (Lam. 2:6).

This struggle consequently results in Zion's participation in a detrimental affair with a foreign authority. The author seemingly demonstrates anger and is emotionally torn, presenting internal conflict and frustration (Lam. 2:11). By restricting access to the Temple of Jerusalem (the transitional object), Zion is unable to access a holding environment, therefore compromising the affective principle of comfort: 'Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her' (Lam. 1:17). The author's sentiment of abandonment includes Zion's concept of the comforter unable to attend to her needs, consequently hindering emotional development, cathartically expressed as grief.

Grief: dealing with the destruction of Zion's transitional object

By the loss of the transitional object emotional stability is compromised, producing an emotional imbalance. Therefore, grief is experienced due to the discomfort of loss and abandonment. The first two chapters of Lamentations demonstrates Zion's loss as a representation of her original love object:

Infants and babies faint in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers,
'where is bread and wine?' as they faint like a wounded man, in the streets of
the city, as their life is poured out on their mothers' bosom. (Lam. 2:11–12)

These verses assert a fundamental premise that locates a struggle between the mother and her child, as life is being 'poured out' from the love object, the mothers' bosom. The author distinguishes that it is the mother that has wronged her child, that the supposed caregiver, here being Zion, is inadequate. Further still, the text follows on to demonstrate that Zion gives herself over to a foreign authority. Although the comforter is absent, Zion is responsible for this loss as she lends herself to a deceptive misleading:

Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not
exposed your iniquity, to restore your fortunes. But have seen for you oracles

that are false and misleading. (Lam. 2:14)

The author's exposition of Zion's displacement uncovers the logic of YHWH's abandonment. Correspondingly, Parry sheds light on how '[t]he Narrator's own attitude to Lady Zion softens from chapter 1 to chapter 2 as her grief penetrates his emotions' (Parry 2010, 185). This process defines the typical essence of free associative expression by emitting emotional discharge as the author conveys the tragic event as Zion's inability to care for her own children. Anton O. Kris describes this principle as 'freedom of the association' (Kris 1997) by representing a cathartic dynamic, where the analysand is free to infer the situation's consequence.

Although the text is an expressive interpretation of a traumatic event caused by rebellion, restrictive creativity provides the preliminary of conviction that evidently primes the admission of guilt, as Joze Krasovec suggests that the author demonstrates compassion for Zion (Krasovec 1992). It may reasonably be claimed that chapters 1 and 2 are a confession, a statement of a present condition owing to Zion's historic detriment of rebellion and sin. Krasovec's exposition enlightens the possibility of Zion's reconciliation to God (YHWH). The key feature that may suggest hope within this interpretation is the recognition of guilt (Krasovec 1992). According to Krasovec, 'awareness of personal guilt also signifies that quiet waiting is a sign of readiness to atone for personal aberrations, which are, in turn, the obstacle preventing the appearance of salvation' (Krasovec 1992, 232). Hence, the author's complaint is the reason to atone, seeking salvation from a state of guilt due to sin. In order to re-establish the presence of the comforter, one has to confess YHWH as truth. This is the natural position that Zion finds herself in proximity to the comforter. By means of conveying grief through confession the author is able to vent emotional discharge to a technique similar to 'free association', permeating the awareness of the comforter through poetic expression.

Winnicott's basis for healing is transitionally focused; setting the scene for a holding environment that corresponds with a sense of the omnipotent power of YHWH. 'Transposed to the therapeutic relationship, it is the setting in analysis that provides the necessary holding environment for the patient' (Abram 2007, 190). Accordingly, the holding environment is a pre-requisite to a practice that provides an opportunity to develop self-orientation and emotional stability. The attachment process to the transitional object internally stabilises the individual. However, by its loss, grief serves the author by re-locating the comforter's position through transitional interplay of emotional expression. The holding environment is demonstrative of truth and by the loss of this internal dynamic the author seemingly attempts to re-establish a connection to his perception of YHWH through cathartic expression.

The Hebrew word for truth is אֱמֶת (Strong 2011), which may be interpreted to

connote a personal reference to the idea of trust and sincerity. The affiliated spirit that Zion has developed as a consequence of alleged disobedience and covert sin (Lam. 1:8) has come to light within the text, suggesting an attempt of redemption (Lam. 1:11). A desperate call to YHWH is demonstrative of a plea to obtain mercy. The author employs terminology to express grief to an idealised emotional transcendent concept termed the 'comforter'.

The word 'comfort' derives from a term implicative of reconciliation as the Septuagint renders the word *παρακαλῶν* (Brenton 2001), which means to console, and further connotes the terms 'regret' and 'repent'. The Masoretic text translates the word 'comfort' as נָחַם, 'by implication, to be sorry, i.e. (in a favourable sense) to pity, [or] console' (Strong 2011). The theme of the absent comforter presents a significant factor that the book's opening chapters attempt to convey, a struggle for Zion to function without this 'presence'.

From this position, grief functions to re-locate the caregiver's presence through the transitional space of the text. However, this dynamic can only be achieved by identifying the position of the true self within proximity to the true God. This is achieved through confession by the process of free associational thought, typically exercised as emotional discharge.

The procedure follows that desire conditions unconscious orientation by attuning the individual according to a bodily based method of interpretation. This fundamentally derives meaning that is understood within the practice of creative interplay. Hence, emotional discharge orients desire, the true nature of intention. The text yields a struggle of cathartic release, almost a desperate attempt for a cry of mercy: 'My eyes are sent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out to the ground' (Lam. 2:11). However, it follows on to convey acceptance of the situation in the form of closure that apprehends the author's rendition of the situation by bridging the concept of YHWH with the purpose of the destruction of the Temple:

The Lord has done what he purposed; he has cried out his word, which he commanded long ago; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes. (Lam. 2:17)

In this sense, truth is discovered according to the preceding premise bestowed upon it by the authority invested within the ideology of Zion in order to deal with the process of grief being exercised. Through this graduation, from tradition and custom to emotional expression, the transition to restoration may occur by awareness of the concept of YHWH present within the text, owing to the ability to recognise the fulfilment of 'what He [Lord] purposed' (Lam. 2:17). The author conveys the proximity of the comforter within the true sense of self by expressing grief as the

practice of this interplay, concluding with an awareness of truth, however traumatic. Accordingly, the bodily impulse of desire inaugurates awareness of the caregiver, establishing a new holding environment for the purpose of cathartic change.

Sally Weintrobe points out that the dynamic of grief is only experienced as negative due to its affective inter-subjective discourse; however, its main aim serves not to destroy but to highlight change (Weintrobe 2004). Weintrobe identifies grieving as transitory and asserts a value that addresses the process to the idealisation of the other: 'To idealize the other you must have some awareness of the other and awareness of depending on it' (Weintrobe 2004, 84). In this way, the author quotes: 'Jerusalem sinned grievously, therefore she became filthy' (Lam. 1:8). This suggests that Jerusalem's change is not permanent, as anything that becomes unclean can be cleaned. Hence, the author's expression of guilt and abandonment regulates awareness of truth, signifying that the process of grief serves to console the loss of the transitional object.

Conclusion

Due to the destruction of the Temple (the transitional object) the daughter of Zion (the infant) is unable to function in service of YHWH (the caregiver). The destruction of the Temple prohibits interplay according to the ideological concept of Zion's involvement with her comforter.

Chapters 1 and 2 of Lamentations are demonstrative of this tragedy by conveying a structure that localises grief unto Jerusalem's destruction. The author employs emotional cathartic expression to resolve the internal conflict of the absent comforter. The text reads as an insight to the author's anxiety, which resembles the anguish one might experience as a result of loss and abandonment.

The interpretive process identifies that the Temple of Jerusalem functioned to permeate the presence of YHWH, a dynamic analogous to a holding environment. In this way, the Temple dynamic adheres to an equivalent attachment principle that places transitional value on an object by reverberating the presence of a primary caregiver.

The Temple provides Zion with a sense of stability. The adverse effect of losing the Temple results in exclusion from the holding environment, ensuing a state of disorientation. It may reasonably be claimed that the author portrays Zion as displaced, unable to identify the true caregiver, resulting in the abandonment of her comforter. This is reflected as Zion unable to adequately care for her own children, demonstrating that a holding environment is essential for wellbeing and functionality, as the foreign authorities provide no transitional value to restoration.

Therefore, the text encompasses a process of grief, by which it deals with the loss of the Temple of Jerusalem. This suggests that grief serves as a process that resembles free association, a dynamic that vents emotional catharsis. This conjecture assumes that this lament presents an attempt to orient the true self. Hence, grief serves the purpose of restoration by the act of consoling Zion to her comforter.

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Understanding the psychological mechanisms that constrain the transfer of dialogue effects

Katherine O'Lone

Abstract: An intrinsic component of evaluating the success of a dialogue programme is the concept of *transfer*. This refers to the means by which the effects of dialogue extend beyond the immediate participants to their wider social groups and go on to influence broader societal and policy change. In this paper I am interested in exploring, from a psychological perspective, why positive dialogue effects at an individual level (i.e., the *micro* level) sometimes fail to motivate future positive behaviour in the local social milieu (i.e., the *meso* level). This failure of dialogue effects to permeate beyond the immediate group can mean that transfer is limited, thus raising questions about the effectiveness of dialogue interventions. Drawing on psychological research that looks at mechanisms of indirect contact (whereby positive effects of contact with an out-group member spread beyond the immediate setting) I propose that a factor which might hinder the process of transfer is a cognitive bias called *vicarious moral licensing*. I propose that by understanding the psychological mechanisms that stymie the transfer of individual attitudinal change in to group behavioural outcomes, one can better address the crucial question of how to maximise the degree of transfer following from dialogue.

Keywords: Transfer, Intergroup dialogue, Indirect contact effects, Vicarious moral licensing, Dialogue, Psychological bias

Introduction

Transfer includes the processes by which a project's effect on participants is spread or transmitted beyond that group to influence other groups, practices or policies, and make broader changes in society (United States Institute for Peace 2016, 11).

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A wealth of research in social psychology has found that direct contact between members of different outgroups, under certain conditions, is an effective predictor of improved intergroup attitudes (Allport 1954; Brown and Hewstone 2005; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Wright 2009). More recently researchers have found that attitudes about out-group members can be improved through mechanisms of *indirect* contact (see Dovidio et al. 2011; MacInnis and Hodson 2019; Mazziotta, et al. 2011). For example, learning that a close in-group member is friends with an out-group member (Wright et al. 1997); imagining positive interaction with an out-group member (Crisp and Turner 2009) and even observing an in-group member interact with an out-group member (Mazziotta et al. 2011) have all been shown to enhance positive intergroup attitudes.

It is plausible to assume that these mechanisms of indirect contact play a crucial role in transferring the positive effects of dialogue out into the broader community, thus leading to improved intergroup relations at the group level. Yet there is evidence from social psychology and from dialogue practitioners themselves to suggest that all too often the positive effects of dialogue on intergroup attitudes do not permeate beyond the immediate setting (Abu-Nimer 1999), nor do they lead to subsequent behavioural change and policy support in the wider group (Dovidio and Gaertner 2000, 2004; Quillan et al. 2017).

So there is a contradiction. On the one hand there is a large amount of reliable evidence to suggest that *both* direct and indirect contact with an out-group leads to positive attitudinal changes and improvements in intergroup relations. Yet on the other hand, there is compelling evidence to suggest that contact effects (both direct and indirect) may not have any meaningful impact on people's actual *behaviour*. Moreover, in certain circumstances they may actually lead to the avoidance of the out-group (Shelton and Richeson, 2005) and a reluctance to engage in collective action. Researchers have recently started to address this discrepancy (MacInnis and Hodson 2018) and in this paper I aim to contribute to this area of investigation by proposing that a psychological bias called *vicarious moral licensing* (see Kouchaki 2011) might also play a role in the failure to translate positive attitudes gained via contact effects, into subsequent behavioural outcomes at the wider group level (e.g., collective action and policy support).

Direct intergroup contact effects

Research in social psychology suggests that intergroup dialogue is a promising method for ameliorating problematic intergroup relations (Dessel 2010; Dessel and Rogge 2008; Dessel et al. 2006; Nagda et al. 2009; Spencer et al. 2008). For example, reported positive outcomes of participation in intergroup dialogue at the individual level range from increased perspective taking and empathy; appreciation

of group differences and structural inequalities; an enhanced sense of similarity with out-group members and a motivation to build bridges and alliances (Nagda 2006; Nagda et al. 2009; Werkmeister-Rozas 2007). At the community level too, the positive outcomes of intergroup dialogue are numerous. They include: decreased stereotyping, increased trust and reduction of threat, the facilitation of relationships, improved communication, establishing common ground, increased perspective taking, generation of grassroots collaboration, and increased commitment to social justice action (DeTurk 2006; Dessel 2010; United Nations Development Program 2004; LeBaron and Carstarphen 1997; Southwest Educational Development Lab 2000; Rodenburg and Huynh 2006; Spencer et al. 2008).

The theoretical rationale for much of the work on intergroup dialogue is based on Allport's landmark 'contact hypothesis' (Allport 1954). The basic premise is that contact between members of different groups is an effective way to reduce prejudice, partly through the reduction in intergroup anxiety (Brown and Hewstone 2005; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008), although for contact to be successful at reducing intergroup conflict Allport stipulated some prerequisite features¹ (Dovidio et al. 2015; Pettigrew 2016). In the decades since it was first published, extensive empirical evidence in support of contact theory has emerged. In 2006 for example the results of meta-analytic studies revealed a small but positive effect of intergroup contact on out-group attitudes (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), a finding that has since been replicated (e.g., Beelman and Heinemann 2014; Lemmer and Wagner 2015). A larger effect size has been reported for intergroup friendship on improved intergroup attitudes (Davies et al. 2011).

Indirect intergroup contact effects

Recent research suggests that these positive effects of intergroup contact are not bound to the immediate dialogue situation (i.e., they are not restricted to direct, face to face interaction with out-group members) and can be transmitted through indirect modes of contact. For example, studies suggest that *extended* contact, that is, merely knowing that an in-group member has a close positive relationship with an out-group member can lead to reduced negative out-group attitudes and intergroup bias (Wright et al. 1997). These findings converge with a body of research that demonstrates people infer their own attributes by observing the behaviour of other group members, *as if* they had observed themselves performing the action (Galinsky et al. 2008; Goldstein and Cialdini 2007). Even perceiving the actions and emotions of similar others activates the same neural mechanisms we employ when we produce those actions and emotions ourselves (Conson et al. 2017; Decety and Grezes 2006). For example, studies that

1 (1) Equal status within the contact (i.e., dialogue) situation. (2) Contact that allows people to get to know outgroup members as individuals. (3) Cooperation in the pursuit of common goals. (4) The support of authority figures (see Pettigrew 2016).

expose participants to shared multi-sensory experiences have been found to alter their mental representations of their identity and to increase the perception of similarity with others (Paladino et al. 2010; Tajadura-Jiménez et al. 2012).

Similar positive effects have been noted through the use of *vicarious* contact, that is, observing the positive interactions of an in-group member with an out-group member influences ideas about how to behave and perceived norms for intergroup behaviour (Gomez et al. 2011; Schiappa et al. 2005; Turner et al. 2008).² Even experimentally inducing a sense of merged identity with an out-group member has been shown to lead participants to perceive themselves as possessing the attributes of the target which they then incorporate into their own self-concept (Goldstein and Cialdini 2007). Under certain conditions simply mentally simulating an instance of positive contact with an out-group member, or *imagined contact*, can significantly reduce intergroup bias (Crisp and Turner 2009), as indeed can instances of virtual contact (White et al. 2014), albeit to a lesser degree (Lemmer and Wagner 2015).

The above research provides strong rationale for assuming that any positive effects of dialogue would extend beyond the original setting. It also suggests that dialogue initiatives need not be limited to direct engagement with out-group members, similar positive effects may be found from online participation or in a virtual environment, for example (see Schwab et al. 2017). It also suggests that by virtue of individual members of an in-group engaging in dialogue with an out-group member, any positive effects will transfer to the wider community via mechanisms of indirect contact (i.e., vicarious or extended contact).

Intergroup contact and a lack of transfer

Despite the findings outlined above, there is research in social psychology which suggests that, in some circumstances, the positive attitudinal effects of intergroup contact do not permeate beyond the immediate circle of participants. Nor do these effects generalise to other members of the out-group. Liked members of an out-group are perceived as exceptions to a negative rule, rather than stereotypical of the out-group at large (Amir 1976; Cook 1978), for example. In fact, more recent psychological research suggests that increased contact with minority groups can, particularly in situations where there is a degree of competition for resources, *increase* prejudice and inter-group hostility (Nagel 1995; Saguy 2018). Indeed studies have shown that as minority groups grow, so too does local opposition to race-targeted policies and programmes (e.g., Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998).

2 And of course, the opposite is true; that viewing negative behaviour and interactions with outgroup members can influence behaviour and reinforce old stereotypes. A reason why continued negative portrayals and narratives about out-groups in the press can heavily influence prejudice (Shaver et al. 2018; Weisbuch et al. 2009).

Dialogue practitioners provide anecdotal evidence to suggest that positive effects of dialogue often disappear after participants return to their normal lives and social groups (Abu-Nimer 1999) often due to fear or resistance from within the community. Abu-Nimer (1999) noted that across six Arab-Jewish dialogue initiatives in Israel, the programmes did manage to alter participants' perceptions about and interactions with each other but rarely did they affect behaviour outside of the dialogue contexts. He argued that for transfer to occur the attitudinal changes in participants must be translated into behavioural changes that in turn influence others. Only in this way will any successful effects of dialogue filter out and make larger societal impacts. Without this shift from attitudinal to behavioural change, dialogue efforts are but a 'drop in the ocean' and any observed effects can easily be reversed once back within the in-group context (Abu-Nimer 1999).

Divergent effects: intergroup contact effects on attitudes vs. behaviour

Despite a large amount of evidence to suggest that contact (both direct and indirect) is a reliable predictor of positive intergroup attitudes, there is not a similar degree of evidence examining the role of contact on positive intergroup *behaviour* (McInnis and Hodson 2019). Of the research that has been conducted, it has been shown that often improved intergroup attitudes do not translate into behavioural outcomes. For example, studies have found that despite attitudes towards out-group members becoming more positive over a period of time, this has little impact on in-group members' actual behaviour (e.g., Dovidio and Gaertner 2000, 2004; Koen and Durrheim 2010; Quillan et al. 2017). Improvements in attitudes do not necessarily correlate with improvements in accompanying behaviours. Nor does the evidence suggest that intergroup contact predicts other relevant behavioural outcomes, such as support for policy (Dixon et al. 2012) or collective action. As MacInnis and Hobson state, 'It appears that relative to negative intergroup attitudes, negative intergroup behaviours (e.g., avoidance; discrimination) are more persistent' (MacInnis and Hodson 2018, 13).

Despite people's willingness to express improved intergroup attitudes (Fasbender and Wang 2017), their subsequent behaviours have not been sufficiently measured. The few studies that have examined behavioural outcomes tentatively suggest some degree of association between increased contact and positive behavioural outcomes. For example, it was found that among youths in Northern Ireland (McKeown et al. 2012) and among children in racially diverse schools (McKeown et al. 2017) intergroup contact was associated with positive behavioural outcomes (i.e., less segregated seating arrangements). Yet, despite the findings that intergroup contact did initially predict more willingness to sit next to out-group members, this effect decayed after time and did not last.

Given these findings, it is critical that we better understand the factors that hinder positive attitudinal change being translated in to relevant behavioural outcomes. A clearer understanding of the variables that constrain transfer will allow us to make headway in (a) ensuring that transfer does take place, and (b) that it is successful and sustainable. In the next section I discuss some explanations for the divergent effects of intergroup contact (i.e., why intergroup contact predicts positive attitude change but not necessarily relevant behavioural outcomes).

Explaining the divergent effects of intergroup effects

MacInnis and Hodson (2018) propose that issues of external validity and measurement limitations may go some way to explaining the divergent effects of intergroup contact. As they point out, the findings of the controlled laboratory studies that make up the bulk of the psychological literature may simply not be reflective of intergroup contact as it happens in the “real world” (see also Dixon et al. 2007). Similarly, the measures that researchers used to assess contact effects may simply be too crude to capture subtle changes as they occur in real world settings:

It may not be possible for intergroup contact measures to fully capture the complexities of human relationships. Perhaps it is only the contact experiences tapped by common contact measures or contact that takes place under well-controlled laboratory conditions that reliably predicts reduced prejudice. (MacInnis and Hodson 2018, 15)

This over-application of laboratory findings to real world settings has characterised many previous attempts to assess intergroup initiatives. For example, in the field of prejudice reduction, research conducted in the laboratory has far out-paced research conducted in the field (Paluck and Green 2009). This may mean that those seeking to conduct programmes aimed at societal or policy change are relying on evidence that is not applicable to real world settings (Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research 2015). Arguably until this gap is closed, the conclusions that one can draw from the academic literature are, perhaps, limited (Paluck and Green 2009).

This explanation is very plausible, and certainly, as a culture of dialogue evaluation emerges one must face uncomfortable questions about the extent to which one can extrapolate findings from a laboratory to the real world. As compelling as this explanation is, however, there is a long tradition in psychology that has examined the attitude-behaviour gap, that is, that attitudes do not reliably and consistently predict behaviours (Bhattacharjee and Sanford 2006; Venkatesh et al. 2003). This implies that the divergent effects of intergroup contact may have a cognitive explanation. In the next section I propose such an explanation and suggest a mechanism that might underpin these divergent effects; a cognitive bias called *vicarious moral licensing*.

Moral licensing

Research has found that recalling past moral behaviours renders us more likely to engage in immoral activities without worrying about feeling or appearing immoral (Khan and Dhar 2006; Kouchaki and Jami 2018; Merritt et al. 2010). This phenomenon, *moral licensing*, has been documented in a wide range of contexts including recruitment decision-making (Cascio and Plant 2015; Monin and Miller 2001; Effron et al. 2009); racial attitudes (Effron et al. 2009; Effron et al. 2012; Mann and Kawakami 2012); consumer choice (Khan and Dhar 2006; Mazar and Zhong 2010); environmental judgements and behaviours (Meijers et al. 2015; Nilsson et al. 2016; Noblet and McCoy 2017; Tiefenbeck et al. 2013); food consumption (Eskine 2013; Garvey and Bolton 2017) and pro-social behaviour (Conway and Peetz 2012; Jordan et al. 2011).

For example, male participants who had the opportunity to establish non-sexist credentials by disagreeing with overtly sexist statements were subsequently more likely to indicate that a particular job was better suited for a man than a woman (Monin and Miller 2001). In the racial domain, non-black participants who had been given feedback stating they were progressing on egalitarian goals were subsequently more likely to choose to sit further away from black individuals and closer to whites as well as indicate greater implicit racial prejudice (Mann and Kawakami 2012). Similarly, participants who had the opportunity to display non-racist credentials by endorsing Barack Obama's presidential candidacy (Effron et al. 2009) or by selecting a black candidate for a category-neutral job (Monin and Miller 2001) were more likely to exhibit preferential judgements of white candidates in a later job hiring scenario. In fact, simply indicating they would do a future good deed reduced charitable donations (Khan and Dhar 2006).

Vicarious moral licensing

Research has shown that people not only use the past moral behaviour of similar others to inform their own self-concept but they use these credentials to license subsequent immoral behaviour, a type of *vicarious* moral licensing (Kouchaki 2011; Meijers et al. 2018; Newman and Brucks 2018). For example, Kouchaki (2011) asked white participants to indicate whether they thought an available job position was better suited for a particular race. Those who were told of the moral superiority of their group in a prior task were more likely to indicate that a job position was better suited for a white candidate than an African-American candidate (Kouchaki 2011, Study 1). This suggests the past moral behaviour of the in-group enhances one's moral self-concept, which then licenses discriminatory attitudes on a subsequent task. Similarly, when given information about a group member's previous non-discriminatory behaviour (i.e., having chosen a Hispanic applicant in a prior task), participants went on to make

discriminatory ratings against the Hispanic for a job position that was stereotypically associated with whites (Kouchaki 2011).

It might be that the knowledge an in-group member has had a positive interaction with an out-group member bolsters an individual's moral identity. The individual then feels licensed to express prejudiced intergroup attitudes without compromising their self of moral self-worth. The positive attitudinal effects garnered from intergroup contact never translates into broader behavioural outcomes because, via a process of vicarious moral licensing, the initial positive effects are used to justify and license entrenched negative intergroup attitudes.

The moderating role of group identification

The degree to which a person is influenced by the behaviour of other group members depends on the strength of their identification with the group (Goldstein and Cialdini 2007; Tajfel 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Therefore, past in-group behaviour can trigger vicarious moral licensing *only if* identification with the group is strong enough (Kouchaki 2011; Newman and Brucks 2018). For example, Kouchaki found that participants who were told of their group's past non-discriminatory decisions expressed more prejudiced attitudes towards a Hispanic applicant on a subsequent job hiring task when they identified *more* with the in-group (Kouchaki 2011, Study 3).

Similarly, participants who strongly identified with a corporate brand (i.e., *Nike*) used information about that brand's socially responsible behaviour to vicariously license subsequent selfish behaviour in the context of an economic game. Participants indicating lower levels of 'self-brand overlap' however, did not exhibit licensing behaviours (Newman and Brucks 2017, Study 1). Meijers et al. (2018) conducted a series of studies to assess the vicarious moral licensing effect in dyadic relationships. They found that participants who both read about and imagined a close other (e.g., friend or partner) performing an environmentally friendly action subsequently went on to behave in a less environmentally friendly way (compared to participants who read about or imagined their close other performing a neutral action) (Meijers et al., 2018). In line with both Kouchaki (2011) and Newman and Brucks (2018), Meijers et al. (2018) found that the degree of identification with the target moderated any vicarious licensing effects. Less environmentally friendly behaviours were only performed after participants read or thought about a close other's ethical behaviour, rather than a non-close other. Meijers et al. (2018) also performed a meta-analysis on two of their studies, which revealed a significant vicarious moral licensing effect and yielded a small to moderate mean effect size.

Vicarious moral licensing and intergroup contact

Unlike research on contact theory, research on moral licensing and vicarious moral licensing is relatively new and therefore lacks multiple attempts to objectively measure effect sizes. To address this, there has been a recent focus on conducting meta-analyses to provide an objective measure of the strength of the moral licensing effect³ (Blanken et al. 2015) and the *vicarious* moral licensing effect (Meijers et al. 2018). These preliminary meta-analyses provide compelling evidence for the robustness of these effects and therefore a degree of confidence in this area of research. Given these promising findings, this fledgling research agenda could provide useful insights to help reduce the lack of transfer of dialogue effects that are not explained by contact theory alone.

For example, the degree of group identification is a factor that warrants more investigation in the context of the transfer of dialogue effects. Multiple studies have shown that the strength of one's identification with the group moderates vicarious moral licensing effects (Kouchaki 2011; Newman and Brucks 2018). That is, the more someone identifies with the group, the more they will use the past moral behaviours of in-group members to license prejudiced attitudes and judgements. This finding has immediate implications for the transfer of positive effects of dialogue. The prediction being that an individual who observes an in-group member having a positive interaction with an out-group member will be more likely to use this information to license subsequent problematic attitudes *the more they identify with the group*.

What this means for transfer is that regardless of promising intergroup attitudinal changes within the dialogue setting, these will not permeate into the wider community if group identification is too strong. Research in social psychology has long recognised the role of group identification in fostering problematic intergroup relations (Branscombe et al. 2002; Doosje et al. 1998; Tajfel 1982; Roccas et al. 2006). For example, a study with Israeli participants looking at the effect of collective guilt on the propensity to engage in collaborative behaviour (i.e., with Palestinians) found that the more participants felt collective guilt, the greater their readiness to cooperate. However, the stronger their *identification with the target in-group* the less their readiness to collaborate with the out-group (Solomatina and Austers 2014). As Kelly points out,

individuals who identify strongly with a social group (and whose self-esteem is therefore highly dependent on it) will be more likely than weak identifiers

3 Blanken et al. (2015) for example conducted a meta-analysis of 91 studies ($N = 7,397$) comparing a moral licensing condition with a control condition. The results yielded an average effect size of $d = .31$, 95% CI $[0.23, 0.38]$; a small to medium effect on Cohen's (1988) classification.

to differentiate between fellow in-group members and members of alternative social groups. By this means, the social world becomes clearly divided into “us” and “them” and the more favourable perceptions of the in-group promote a positive social identity and self-esteem. (Kelly 1993, 60)

For my purpose it means that, theoretically at least, transfer will not happen if the degree of group identification in the wider social milieu passes a certain threshold. The implication following from this is that research at the wider group level needs to be done to address the ways that people construct their group identities and the types and degrees of group identification this fosters (see Sassenberg and Wieber 2005). It might be that group-level initiatives aimed at addressing degree of group identification would go some way to countering vicarious moral licensing effects, thus meaning that positive intergroup effects from indirect contact stand a better chance of transfer.

Conclusion

I have taken a theoretical stance in this paper, and in some places the ideas I have laid out have been speculative. However, what I have hoped to convey is the importance of future research into vicarious moral licensing effects and how they operate at a group level, particularly the moderating role of group identification. I am calling for the construction of a theoretical hybrid as a framework for understanding the issues of the transfer of dialogue effects; one that combines insights from the well-established contact theory and the more fledgling research on moral licensing. However, in the early conceptual stages, this theoretical hybrid is not intended as a framework for understanding the processes of transfer at multiple levels. I am suggesting this will be useful for gaining insights into the mechanisms of transfer from the *micro* (individual level) to the *meso* (local group) level. In order to understand meso to macro level transfer it is likely that a different theoretical hybrid will need to be constructed; the social and psychological and social mechanisms involved in transfer at this superordinate level are no doubt different and beyond the scope of this paper.

In short, just as important as understanding the positive effects of dialogue on individuals, is understanding the biases in the minds of the communities to which they return. In doing so, one can perhaps go some way to maximising the effectiveness of dialogue by ensuring a higher degree of transfer. Ultimately this would mean that the hard-earned individual positive effects garnered from dialogue would go on to influence the broader community, thus greatly increasing the possibility of social cohesion and peaceful relations between previous hostile communities.

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In this special issue, The Journal of Dialogue Studies addresses dialogue as a means of conflict resolution under the title of “**Critical Dialogues: Dialogue and Conflict Resolution**”.

As a tool of conflict resolution, dialogue can take on many different shapes and can be moulded to respond to each conflict. Contributors to the special issue were invited to consider questions such as the following: in applying the theory in question how can success and failure be evaluated? What has succeeded and what has not yet succeeded in a selected case or cases? Why was this? Can the theory or method be adapted or supplemented accordingly to deal with these difficult cases? Or may it be necessary to combine the theory with other theories and construct tailored ‘hybrid’ frames for these conflicts at various levels?

In this special issue of the Journal of Dialogue Studies, the authors have aimed to critically engage with the existing theories and methods utilised to peacefully end conflicts at various levels. Some of these theories were compiled in two volumes by the Dialogue Society and published as *Dialogue Theories I* and *Dialogue Theories II*. This special issue is a follow-up to those publications.

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