

Toward A Typology of Dialogue and Deliberation

by

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Submitted to the Department of Political Science in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

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### ABSTRACT

Dialogue groups that bring together civilians with many perspectives on a conflict and hold face-to-face discussions differ. Facilitators of dialogue groups often claim that their type of dialogue is especially conducive to long-term peace and stability and results in a wider-ranging set of beneficial effects. To evaluate such claims, this paper delineates dialogue groups and their goals by type (and offers a case study to illustrate its structure): 1) dialogue that transforms human relationships in order to build interpersonal trust and reduce prejudice (E.g. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict); 2) dialogue that transforms understanding of political interest through consideration of the political interest of others in order to build a common political vision for the future (E.g. Community Dialogue based on the conflict in Northern Ireland); and 3) dialogue that transforms political decision-making from interest-oriented to public-spirited-oriented dialogue in order to find mutually agreeable solutions (E.g. Deliberative Polling Weekends based on problems within mainly developed, peaceful Western countries like America). There is no evidence that one type is superior in transformational potential; the paper concludes by suggesting that the effectiveness of different types of dialogue is contingent upon the problem being addressed.

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## Introduction

In countries torn by civil strife and hatred, dialogue groups seem like an obvious tool for promoting tolerance.<sup>1</sup> In dialogue groups, people from many perspectives on a conflict discuss their opinions face-to-face to encourage understanding in order to transform the nature of the conflict.<sup>2</sup> Dialogue groups have intuitive appeal. What could be better for dealing with a conflict than sitting down and addressing the issues by talking through the problem? If dialogue groups can truly increase tolerance and reduce violence, they deserve study to find out how to set up dialogue groups to foster peace. And if they are ineffectual or counterproductive at promoting a more peaceful environment, it would be best to divert resources spent on dialogue groups for more effective use.

Yet there is little in the way of evidence to support whether or not dialogue groups successfully lead to increased tolerance, understanding, and ultimately, non-violent solutions. Few answers exist for questions such as: do dialogue groups increase tolerance more than they increase intolerance? Do other activities such as mass protests increase tolerance more than dialogue groups? Are the various dialogue groups differentially successful? When is a dialogue group most effective?

This paper will not answer the question of whether or not dialogue groups are effective at promoting tolerance in the long-term. Instead, the paper will focus on a more

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<sup>1</sup> By tolerance, I mean willingness to resolve or accept differences in perspectives through non-violence.

<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to find clear definitions of a dialogue group. Most authors cite ground rules and give in-depth examples instead (E.g. LeBaron & Carstarphen (1997), Maoz (2000), Maoz & Bar-On (2002)). It seems intuitive that the definition should be narrower than the one suggested here, of face-to-face discussion in a group with diverse opinions to promote understanding. Yet in some ways even that definition is too broad; some dialogue groups are only conducted between members of the same side, and some are conducted online.

narrow question that will enable future researchers to attack the question of efficacy: can we identify distinct types of dialogue groups? That is, do different groups have distinct beliefs about goals that should be achieved, and do they have different strategies for achieving those goals? Or, alternatively, do different groups simply do good work for the sake of doing good work?

This distinction is similar to the one between soup kitchens for the homeless and job training programs for the homeless. Soup kitchen operators feed the homeless out of charity, and for the sake of charity. Those who run job-training programs have a goal (getting people jobs) and have a strategy for achieving that goal (providing job training). Implicitly, they also have a theory of change that links the strategy and goal with their long-term objective. Job training (the strategy) leads to landing a job (the goal), and landing a job leads to earning the money necessary to eventually pay for a home (the theory of change) and thus enables individuals to leave the street (long-term objective). With respect to dialogue groups: the long-term objective of dialogue groups is to resolve a given problem in a way that all parties involved find tolerable. In other words, it is to have peace. The goals of dialogue groups differ, but all involve transforming the individual participants in some way. Dialogue groups use the strategies meant to achieve their particular goal.

Focusing on democratic societies, this paper will clarify the different strategies and goals of dialogue groups. It will end by providing some insights about different theories of change and their implications for long-term objectives. I propose a typology of dialogue groups based on “modes of interaction.” These modes of interaction

constitute dialogue strategies: they provide ways in which people discuss, and conceptual links showing how those ways lead to achieving particular goals.

Based on this typology, I argue that there are three types of dialogue groups, as characterized by their strategy: 1) “human relationships,” 2) “political interest,” and 3) “public spiritedness.” The “human relationships” strategy transforms participants by creating positive relationships among them. The goal of “human relationships” dialogue is to reduce prejudice and create trust. The “political interest” strategy transforms participants by showing them that political interests are not mutually exclusive. The goal of this “political interest” dialogue is to create a belief that a common vision for the future is possible. The “public spiritedness” strategy transforms participants by teaching them to think about the political good of others. The goal of “public spiritedness” dialogue is to create specific solutions that benefit all parties to the greatest extent possible. After discussing the three types of dialogue groups I will illustrate the empirical relevance of this categorization using three case studies.

The case studies show that some of the regionally famous dialogue groups conform to the expectations outlined above. Each case fits neatly into one of the three types of dialogue groups. The dialogue groups discussed are the: 1) Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogues focused on the situation in Israel/Palestine<sup>3</sup>, 2) Community Dialogue’s (hereafter referred to as CD) Residentials focused on Northern Ireland, and 3) Deliberative Polling Weekends focused mainly on the United States and similar countries. The Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogues advertise and recruit in order to foster an intimate group that meets once a month for an indefinite number of months.

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<sup>3</sup> Terminology when referring to Israel/Palestine is problematic. By “Israel” or “Israel/Palestine” I refer to the state of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.



It focuses on building positive relationships between people (Interview 10) and so demonstrates “human relationships” dialogue. Community Dialogue recruits through word of mouth, bringing together groups for weekend “residential” as well as smaller, local weekly groups. It focuses on creating an understanding of individual political needs in consideration of the needs of others (Interview 1), and thus demonstrates “political interest” dialogue. As discussed earlier, Deliberative Polling Weekends bring together large, representative samples of a population to discuss problems through exchanging fact-based arguments according to merit (see Section 3). This case demonstrates “public spiritedness” dialogue.<sup>4</sup>

What are the implications of a dialogue group taxonomy? Only when different types of dialogue have been clearly established can researchers discuss how each type of dialogue group can promote peace. To successfully evaluate a dialogue group one must know what exactly the dialogue group is trying to *do*. Few academics research this topic, as they prefer to focus on those with direct influence over policy decisions (Fisher 1997). When academics research citizen dialogue groups, they tend to focus on immediate attitude changes (Maoz 2000, 136)<sup>5</sup> and not on long-term results. In the rare case where

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<sup>4</sup> Deliberative Polling is usually considered a “deliberative democracy” group and not a “dialogue group” because discussion focuses on solutions and accepts debate. The facilitators of the other two cases assume that debate does not lead to greater understanding and consciously direct participants away from debate (Interview 1; Interview 10). However, like dialogue, Deliberative Polling brings diverse citizens together in face-to-face discussion of problems to overcome apathy and transform individuals in a particular way. It is true that unlike most dialogue groups, Deliberative Polling focuses on one discrete problem at a time. Yet, the other cases cannot focus on one problem at a time because they operate in divided societies, where all discussions relate back to the deep divisions inherent in the society (Bland, Personal Interview).

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to the work of Katz & Kahanov (1990), Ben-Ari & Amir (1988), LeBaron & Carstarphen (1997), and Maoz & Bar-On (2002). My classification differs from the first three sets of authors mainly in that I consider a wider range of goals than increased positive relationships. It differs from Maoz & Bar-On (2002) in that no given power relationships are considered endemic to any particular type of dialogue, and dialogue focused on politics is not assumed to be confrontational and antithetical to interpersonal trust-building.

different types of dialogue groups are delineated, it is in order to suggest that one is more effective at promoting one particular goal than the other (E.g. Maoz 2000).

I propose that no dialogue group is necessarily better than any other; rather, particular types of groups might be better suited, or more “relevant” to addressing different problems. At the end of this paper I will present a springboard for discussion by proposing that the three distinct goals of dialogue groups (explained above) are each conducive to a different theory of change, and thus are differentially effective at promoting peace in a given “context.” By context, I refer to the salient problem a society faces. For example, the goal of “human relationships” dialogue is to build trust and reduce prejudice. For “human relationships” dialogue groups, all theories of change will involve spreading trust and reducing prejudice throughout society. Thus, it seems logical that “human relationships” dialogue is best suited to promote peace in contexts where the main problem society faces is low trust and high levels of prejudice. I propose a schema that differentiates contexts argue that each of the types of dialogue I categorized earlier is most salient to a different context.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 1 presents the rationale behind delineating groups into the three strategies mentioned above (“human relationships,” “political interest,” and “public spiritedness.”) It does so by showing that the “modes of interaction” that implement dialogue strategies naturally cluster into these three categories. Section 2 explains how the case studies rely upon these “modes of interaction.” Each case corresponds to one of the dialogue strategies and also to the goal associated with that strategy. Section 3 describes the case studies in depth to show that the structures of the three groups differ so as to promote different strategies. Section 4

presents a starting point for discussing within which “contexts” different types of dialogue groups would most effectively operate. I propose a classification of contexts as well as the dialogue group strategies best suited to address the different contexts.

## Section 1: Modes of Interaction

Different types of dialogue groups will be distinguished by the “modes of interaction” upon which they explicitly or implicitly rely. Modes of interaction<sup>6</sup> implement dialogue strategies to achieve the goal of that strategy. An example illustrates what modes of interaction are: Pretend your goal is to do well on a test. Your strategy for accomplishing your goal is to study. But just saying that you will study is extremely vague. How will you study such that you will accomplish your goal of doing well on a test? There are a number of possibilities, and the more of them you can use, the better. These possibilities could be called “modes of studying” and include reading lecture notes, summarizing readings, and reviewing important topics with classmates. All of these “modes” implement your strategy of studying, and they should help you achieve your goal of doing well on a test by increasing your comprehension of the material. The term “mode of interaction” is broader than “modes of studying” because studying is only one strategy for accomplishing the goal, while modes of interaction refers to all the ways dialogue strategies can be implemented.

The following section will analyze various modes of interaction to show that all the modes, if used, would implement one of three strategies – “human relationships,” “political interest,” or “public spiritedness.” The following table shows the relationship between modes of interaction (the bullet points), strategies, and goals. It previews all the modes of interaction that will be discussed in this section. These modes were compiled

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<sup>6</sup> Similar list of modes, upon which this list heavily relies, is found in Shapiro (2005), LeBaron & Carstarphen (1997), and Bland (2006) but the following list contains a broader set of goals and is organized to more clearly see causal links.

from psychology and political science literatures.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Modes of Interaction**

<b>Strategy</b>		<b>Goal</b>
Human Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Theory</li> <li>• Personal Stories</li> <li>• Common Ground I</li> <li>• Therapeutic Practices</li> </ul>	→	Increased trust, reduced prejudice
Political Interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Ground II</li> <li>• Authenticity</li> <li>• Linked Fates</li> <li>• Underlying Interests</li> </ul>	→	Common political vision of the future
Public Spiritedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rational Arguments</li> </ul>	→	Mutually agreeable solutions

## ***I. Transforming Human Relationships***

The following four “modes of interaction” are used to implement the “human relationships” strategy of dialogue. Each mode works on an interpersonal level and leads to seeing other person in a less threatening, less prejudiced, and more positive light, through a heavy reliance on emotion and storytelling. First the modes of interaction will be explained, and then the relationship between these modes and the “human relationships” strategy will be analyzed.

### **A. Contact Theory**

Allport’s Contact Theory is a very broad mode of interaction, stating that meeting those one is in conflict with (which I call “the other” group) will alleviate conflict through reducing prejudice and increasing positive relationships. The theory states that

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<sup>7</sup> I compiled these modes by reviewing relevant literature and interviewing academics and practitioners. Future research should focus on creating a logical schema for determining which modes to include.

the problem of inter-group conflict is individual prejudice and the remedy for that prejudice is education through exposure to “the other.” The four conditions proposed for contact with “the other” are: 1) equal status among the groups or at least individuals in the group, 2) common goals or a need for cooperation, 3) facilitators that encourage cooperation, and 4) legitimization through institutional support (Allport 1954). Empirical research has shown that Contact Theory does not hold in all cases – contact can entrench stereotyping and hatred as well as reduce it. Much empirical research has focused on generating conditions under which contact leads to reduced prejudice (Pettigrew 1998).

Exactly what “contact” is and what it accomplishes remains unclear. All modes of interaction involve contact in the most literal sense, because they all gather people into the same room to hopefully promote some positive outcome. Contact Theory will be considered distinct from the other modes of interaction because of its experiential nature and its focus on reducing prejudice. Contact Theory is also said to create positive changes in relationships, often through increased empathy. When discussing dialogue groups, increased empathy is often associated with increased interpersonal trust. All of these outcomes (reduced prejudice, increased positive relationships, empathy, and interpersonal trust) will be considered intimately connected throughout this paper<sup>8</sup> despite the lack of clear definitions. Interpersonal trust will be defined here as the belief that other individuals are humans like oneself, and do not blindly seek harm to oneself or one’s group.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The reason I constantly return to the assumption that a variety of positive changes in relationships lead to increased interpersonal trust will be explained more fully in Section 4. In short, interpersonal trust is highly valued as a result of dialogue groups because it is considered a necessary prerequisite for ameliorating conflict.

<sup>9</sup> LeBaron and Carstarphen (2002) in “Negotiating Intractable Conflict” in the second sentence of their abstract, write that “[p]articipants report increased empathy and interpersonal trust.” The words

## B. Personal Stories

“Personal stories” can create changes in relationships through indirect emotional appeals that enhance empathy by creating connections across divisions. This narrative mode of interaction provides a tool for utilizing Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory, and Inter-Group Emotion Theory more specifically. Social Identity Theory says that people categorize each other, identify with certain categories, and compare categories with a bias towards the categories with which one identifies (Miller & Smith & Mackie 2004, 222). Inter-group Emotion Theory helps explain why telling personal stories offers a successful method for creating positive relationships given that categories exist:

salient group memberships constitute an integral part of the self . . . If [a] friend is a member of a different group, this means that his or her group membership is by the same token incorporated in the self. Because the self is generally regarded positively, this process should indirectly make views of the friend’s group more favorable. (Miller & Smith & Mackie 2004, 223)

Telling personal stories promotes empathy and interpersonal connection. Inter-Group Emotion Theory explains that when one feels connected toward others, then the other person is considered part of the self. One regards oneself positively, and so one will regard the other, and the other’s group, positively. Not everyone agrees that viewing one person more positively will generalize to viewing the entire other group more positively. Although an important assumption in many dialogue groups, evidence supporting it is mixed (Kupermintz & Salomon Unknown Year, 3).

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“interpersonal trust” and “empathy” appear together throughout the paper, as hinted at by the fact that the word “interpersonal trust” appears forty five times and the word “empathy” forty two times.

The results of telling personal stories and even Inter-group Emotion Theory more generally are stated vaguely. Participants should regard others “favorably,” “positively,” with “empathy,” and should feel “connected.” Following in the tradition of assuming a connection between increased empathy and interpersonal trust, the result of telling personal stories will be considered increased interpersonal trust in this paper. Those who are uncertain that friendship generalizes propose alternative definition of trust. Bland, for example, defines trust as seeing one’s essential needs satisfied in the other’s vision of the future. In other words, even if you win the election my life will be tolerable (Bland Guest Lecture 2006).<sup>10</sup>

### **C. Hidden Common Ground I: Shared Humanity**

Finding hidden common ground humanizes the other. The assumption of “Hidden Common Ground I” is that differences between people are often imagined. Given the lack of deep and sincere differences, people may have much in common that they did not realize. Through interaction that focuses on discovering similarities, participants see that far from being the envisioned hate-filled person, others hold similar values and struggle with similar concerns (Bland 2004, 5; LeBaron & Carstarphen 1997, 347).

Identifying/empathizing with the other through finding common ground can, through Inter-group Emotion theory, lead to more positive interpersonal relationships and so to increased interpersonal trust.

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<sup>10</sup> Telling personal stories does not necessarily reinforce the status quo. As explained in the introduction, Maoz & Bar-On say that telling personal stories is a method that inherently favors the status quo due to structural political inequality. Yet Sanders argues the opposite, proposing that perhaps telling personal stories, or “testimony” is the mode of interaction that eliminates hierarchy issues: “Testimony might be a model that allows for the expression of different perspectives rather than seeking what’s common (Sanders 1997, 14).” I would argue that ensuring equal status among members of a dialogue group is a tactical goal that is not inherently related to the mode of interaction.



## **D. Therapeutic Practices**

Therapeutic approaches to discussion cover a wide range of practices said to lead to reconciliation, healing, and increased interpersonal trust. Two examples illustrate such practices. One is the psychodynamic model, which claims that one projects negative attitudes unto others. To create positive relationships and trust one must first move beyond one's personal problems (Moses 2002). Another practice suggests that for people to reconcile, they must hear the other acknowledge one's pain, accept moral responsibility for the past, and promise to avoid violence in the future (Montville 1993).

The results of therapeutic practices, such as trust and reconciliation, are ill-defined terms that intuitively seem connected. Govier & Verwoerd (2002) propose a definition of reconciliation that rests on building interpersonal trust and so the two are interconnected because one is a prerequisite for the other. Even if interpersonal trust is not considered a prerequisite for reconciliation, it seems logical that interpersonal trust could be built after reconciliation and healing. Note that others define these terms very differently, and in those cases trust, reconciliation and healing could be unrelated. For example, Bland suggests reconciliation as the ability to create productive working relationships (Bland 2004, 5). Another example is Cambodia, which is known for using reconciliation to mean not discussing the past (Hayner 2001, 200).

## **E. Overview**

These modes of interaction cluster together because they all increase trust or reduce prejudice through transforming relationships to become more positive. Contact Theory offers an experiential mode of interaction that can either function independently or be used with other modes of interaction to reduce prejudice and create positive

relations. Telling personal stories is its own narrative mode of interaction that can create positive relations and trust through empathy. Yet depending on how it is used, storytelling can also be a tool for other modes of interaction such as therapeutic practices or common ground I. Finding common ground also increases empathy and thus trust while therapeutic practices provide the groundwork necessary for people to trust each other. Clearly these modes of interaction often complement each other, although they can be used independently. Since these modes all offer ways to create more positive relationships to increase trust and reduce prejudice, they all constitute “human relationships” dialogue.

## ***II. Transforming Political Interest***

The second type of dialogue group does not stress changing *relationships* between the people in contact during a discussion. Instead dialogue facilitators assume that participants will act according to what they perceive to be in their political self-interest.<sup>11</sup> Practitioners hope to transform perceptions of self-interest. Participants are still expected to act according to self-interest, just use a different idea of what constitutes their self-interest. Again, a number of modes of interaction can be clustered under this category.

### **A. Common Ground II: Closer Political Perspectives**

Previously, “Common Ground I” was explained as seeing that people are more similar than originally believed – that in fact, all sorts of people have much in common. “Common Ground II” is about seeing that political perspectives overlap more than originally believed. People assume one’s political opinions are further apart than they

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<sup>11</sup> The terms interest and self-interest will be used interchangeably and refers to politics.

actually are because they see other groups as more unified than their own. People know that their side respects ambiguity and understands shades of grey, but believe that members of the other side are united in their extremism. In this mode of interaction, people share doubts and vulnerabilities when discussing political opinions. Seeing these doubts, especially seeing people on the same side arguing with each other over them, shows each side that the other side contains shades of grey. In these shades of grey, sides can agree more than expected or at see that the gap between perspectives is narrower than expected.<sup>12</sup> It is also possible that through discussion, the lack of common ground will be clarified. In this case, discussion is irrelevant and probably counterproductive since it will lead to a better understanding of exactly why one hates the other (Ross 2006b).

## **B. Authenticity of the Other's Narrative**

Authenticity entails understanding that others truly believe in different narratives from oneself, but are nonetheless reasonable human beings. Before contact, sometimes participants cannot even imagine why others would support another perspective, and so think that the other perspective does not really exist – it is merely rhetoric the other side's politicians use for political gain. Contact allows participants to see that others are not merely brainwashed by their politicians, but have thoughtful reasons for believing in their narrative and are also reasonable and committed to peace. Understanding the authenticity of the other's narrative forces participants to realize that reasonable human beings can

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<sup>12</sup> One problem with the goal of finding common ground is that it can stop at superficial understanding. Ronaldo Mendoza wrote his dissertation on how merely trying to “see through the other's eyes” or “walk in the other person's shoes” is unproductive. He argues that instead participants should imagine a past situation where they felt similar feelings to those described by “the other,” and also situations where participants behaved in ways that differed from their own values. The essential problem with superficially acknowledging that another's perspective is similar to one's own is that of “biased assimilation:” participants will incorporate new information into their existing mental framework, instead of changing the framework itself (Ross 2006a).

perceive the conflict differently, and will not change sides even once one's perspective is explained (see naïve realism in Bland 2004, 6). This realization is necessary for the next mode of interaction (Bland 2004, 9).

### **C. Linked Fates**

Facilitators can encourage people to see that their fate is linked with the fate of the other – that is, neither side can accomplish its objectives without help from the other side. In a situation of conflict, groups are preventing each other from achieving their objectives. For example: you want the crate of oranges and so do I. You are holding the crate and so are in my way of grabbing the crate. But I can tear up the road so you cannot take the oranges anywhere. We block each other.

To convince the other to allow one to accomplish one's objectives, one must compromise and allow the other to achieve some of its objectives. It is then in each group's interests to ensure that the other groups are sincerely satisfied by any sort of future agreement, because otherwise the agreement will break down (See "Entangled Futures" Bland 2001, 10). This realization assumes "authenticity" of the other's narrative – one cannot convince the other that his narrative is wrong. Since one cannot convince the other that her narrative is wrong, and one realizes that one's fates are linked, one needs to take the other's perspective into account if one wants peace (Ross 2006a).<sup>13</sup>

### **D. Underlying Interests**

Fisher and Ury's *Getting to Yes* famously claims that underlying every disagreement are interests that can be reconciled through reconceptualizing the problem.

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<sup>13</sup> An interesting corollary of "Linked Fates" is that one should want to *strengthen* and not *weaken* the other side, so that the other side has the power to make an agreement and abide by it.

An example he gives is that of two people who both want an orange. When asked about their underlying interests, one person said he really wanted to use the orange peel, while the other really wanted to eat the fruit itself. The orange was easily divided between the two: one got the peel, one got the fruit, and both were satisfied (Fisher & Ury 1983, page?). Moving beyond rhetoric to underlying interests helps people see the possibility of living with others. This paper will not use underlying interests to mean that all problems can be solved, but that people have individual interests that might not align with their side's rhetoric.

### **E. Overview**

These modes of interaction explain ways in which citizens realize that they can work with others to further self-interest. Either they will realize that their interests and the interests of the other are actually one and the same ("common ground II"), or they will realize it is in their self-interest to accommodate the other for the sake of long-term stability ("authenticity"/"linked fates"), or they will find ways to reconceptualize self-interest so as to be less mutually antagonistic ("underlying interests"). The realization that political interests are not mutually exclusive leads to the possibility of finding mutually acceptable political visions of the future. A mutually acceptable future does not mean a future upon which all sides agree, but only a future that both sides can (probably grudgingly) tolerate. The common vision might even simply be a method for deciding on the future, such as by elections. Because these modes of interaction lead to the belief that

common political futures are possible through changing perceptions of self-interest, these modes constitute “political interest” dialogue.<sup>14</sup>

### ***III. Beyond Interests: Public spiritedness***

Public spiritedness dialogue is based on the deliberative democracy literature and is constituted by the literature’s basic tenets. Many deliberative democracy theorists ground their ideas on those of Habermas. Despite the many distinctions between authors writing within deliberative democracy, Habermas captures the spirit and aspirations of deliberative democracy theorists and so his ideas will be presented below.

#### **A. Rational Arguments**

Habermas argues that citizens should deliberate to reach consensus about the socially optimal policy options. They should discuss policies by using rational arguments. He defines rationality as mutually understandable speech, where understandable means that one can justify one’s arguments to others (Habermas 1992).

Consensus should only be determined by the most merit-worthy argument and not by any other method. Habermas defines his “ideal speech situation” as “a situation of free and equal discussion, unlimited in its duration, constrained only by the consensus which would be arrived at by the ‘force of the better argument’ (Fishkin 1991, 34).” The

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<sup>14</sup> Note that some modes of interaction can also be outcomes. Authenticity serves as an example. In Community Dialogue (an organization explained in depth later) authenticity is a mode of interaction. Authenticity is assumed as a ground rule, and facilitators stress authenticity throughout the discussion (Interview 2; Interview 6). The outcome is that many participants realize that they should acknowledge authenticity despite disagreement. This outcome can be seen in responses to a question about how a dialogue session conducted on 12-1-05 changed attitudes. Five out of six respondents wrote comments such as: “I thought my opinion was the only one and the right one. I now listen to others a lot more and take their thoughts on board,” and “[e]veryone is entitled to their own opinion’s as long as they don’t force it down your throat.”

only constraint should be the “better argument” or merit of the argument, and nothing else. Dryzak, when explicating Habermas, explains in more depth that speech should be “free from deception, self-deception, strategic behavior, and domination through exercise of power (Dryzak 1990, 14).”

Dryzak extends Habermas’ arguments to situations of deep disagreement by introducing publicly defensible norms. Dryzak says:

The key to conflict resolution is the reconstruction of private or partial interests into publicly defensible norms through sustained debate . . . No bland uniformity of the kind that frightens liberals need to be sought, for discursively rational consensus and action can rest upon the mutual recognition of ultimately different perspectives and concerns. (Dryzak 1990, 124)

Dryzak states that the “key to conflict resolution” is the ability to create and decide on arguments based on publicly defensible norms. Through constructing mutually justifiable (rational) arguments, participants should move from considerations of personal interest to considerations that are publicly defensible. In the second half of the quote, Dryzak backtracks and admits that sometimes participants cannot agree and are left only with mutual recognition of differences.

Authors do not convincingly address situations of deep difference. Gutmann and Thompson for example, acknowledge that sometimes no higher norm or moral principle can be used to create consensus, and suggest that perhaps democracies should not strive for consensus. Instead, when a citizen holds values that others disagree with, she should “recognize that under current conditions her understand of the value is not yet sufficiently appreciated by her fellow citizens and therefore cannot yet become the basis of public policy . . .(Gutmann & Thompson 1996, 93).” Considering deeply divided societies

where people are willing to kill rather than wait for others to agree with them, this explanation is not satisfactory.

Although Habermas' ideas are recognized as ideals in many respects, strong alternatives are not suggested. In addition to deep disagreement, authors do not know how to handle self-interest (Gutmann & Thompson 1996,17; Gundersen 2000, 83) or the possibility that the consensus might not be moral.

## **B. Overview**

The “rational arguments” mode of interaction serves as a foundation for “public spiritedness.” Participants should use rational arguments that lead them to construct claims based on publicly defensible norms. Reconceptualizing arguments in a more public spirited manner leads participants to genuinely become public spirited.

## ***IV. Conclusion of Section 1***

In conclusion, the modes of interaction can be clustered together to form three distinct dialogue strategies with attendant goals. “Contact theory,” “personal stories,” “therapeutic practices,” and “common ground I” modes focus on transforming human relationships to be more positive and lead to reduced prejudice and increased interpersonal trust. These modes thus implement “human relationships” dialogue. The goal of conducting “public spiritedness” dialogue (referred to as “deliberation” in the literature) is to find the best answer for the public as a whole, which is often assumed to be the moral answer to problems. Since “rational arguments” leads to finding answers to problems through discussion that considers the public good, it is the mode that implements “public spiritedness” dialogue. Unlike the “rational arguments” mode of



interaction that strives for mutually *agreeable* solutions, “linked fates” and “authenticity” modes together show participants that they should take the political needs of others into account, and thus should strive for *acceptable* futures. “Common ground II” and “underlying interests” provide two modes through which participants can become more amenable to the interests of others as well: either through finding political interests in common, or through changing perceptions of one’s political interests. These modes of interaction all transform perceptions of political interests to be less mutually exclusive. Doing so leads to the possibility of building a common political vision based on mutually acceptable futures. These modes thus implement “political interest” dialogue strategies. The following tables summarize the previous discussion by showing how modes implement strategies.

**Table 2: How Modes Implement “Human Relationships” Dialogue**

<b>Mode of Interaction</b>	<b>Implements “Human Relationship” Strategy</b>	<b>Accomplishes Goals</b>
Contact Theory	Meet other	Reduce stereotypes
Personal Stories	Share personal background to induce empathy	Increase interpersonal trust
Common Ground I	See similarities in other	Increase interpersonal trust
Therapeutic Practices	Various healing techniques to move people beyond the past	Become ready to increase interpersonal trust

**Table 3: How Modes Implement “Political Interest” Dialogue**

<b>Mode of Interaction</b>	<b>Implements “Political Interest” Strategy</b>	<b>Accomplishes Goals</b>
Common Ground II	See similarities between perspectives	Increased willingness to take the other’s perspective into account
Authenticity	See other believes his or her perspective	Acknowledge the right of others to hold alternate perspectives

Linked Fates	Realize one needs to satisfy the other's political needs to satisfy one's own	Increased willingness to take the other's perspective into account
Underlying Interests	Reconceptualize interests	Increased willingness to take the other's perspective into account

**Table 4: How Modes Implement “Public Spiritedness” Dialogue**

<b>Mode of Interaction</b>	<b>Implements “Public Spiritedness” Strategy</b>	<b>Accomplishes Goals</b>
Rational Arguments	Ability to justify one's arguments according to publicly defensible norms – means being public spirited	Reach consensus on arguments based on merit

The three major dialogue strategies will from now on be referred to as “human relationships,” “political interest,” and “public spiritedness.” These strategies and goals can be represented as follows:

- 1) Contact → transform understanding of the other → increased interpersonal trust, reduced prejudice
- 2) Contact → transform understanding of political interests → common political vision
- 3) Contact → transform understanding of the problem → include other perspectives in search of best solution

## Section 2: Case Study Utilization of Modes of Interaction

In the previous section dialogue types were delineated according to “modes of interaction.” This section extends that work by providing one example each of these types of dialogue. To show that a case utilizes a particular type of dialogue, I will analyze modes of interaction used by the case. If the case predominantly focuses on the cluster of modes that implements a particular dialogue strategy, then the case will be considered to exemplify the appropriate type of dialogue.

This section shows the following: the Traubmans’ Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue utilizes modes of interaction that lead to transforming human relationships and so is a “human relationships” dialogue group. Community Dialogue focuses on the modes of interaction that lead to the goal of transforming interests given the interests of others, but also use the modes of interaction that lead to the goal of transformed human relationships. They are thus mainly a “political interest” dialogue group that also does “human relationships” dialogue work. Fishkin’s Deliberative Polling groups focus on the mode of interaction that lead to finding public-spirited solutions to problems and so are “public spiritedness” dialogue groups. His groups also use many “political interest” and “human relationships” modes but do not stress or encourage them.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Questions about modes of interaction that are used, but not focused on, are beyond the scope of this paper.

## ***I. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue***

The Traubmans explain that contact will lead to finding common ground and eventually to harmony through spiritual mechanisms. Len Traubman explains: “I know everyone has a soul that remembers cooperation, the garden, echad [oneness in Hebrew] and I know this is going to work out if we meet face-to-face (Interview 10).” Face-to-face contact leads to the soul remembering cooperation. Through meeting, participants will discover that they are one with the others in the room; there is “hidden common ground.” On their website, the Traubmans explain this convergence of self: “With new, diverse ideas in the midst, and with a spirit of goodwill, divergent views can converge . . . for the good of all (Traubman 2006, FAQ).”

Personal stories are the mechanisms by which the Traubmans believe that new social intelligence and oneness will be created. They explain that “[a]n enemy is a person whose story you have not heard (Interview 10).” On their website they are more explicit: “Through listening to personal stories, relationships are changed in a way that brings people closer together (Interview 10).” Extensive use of personal stories is meant to create more positive relationships.

However, telling stories does not necessarily help the participants to create conditions favorable to a common political vision. Even though some of the events the Traubmans have been involved with, such as sponsoring a dinner called “Building a Common Future” (Traubman 2006, An Evening for Jewish-Palestinian Relationship), sound related to building common visions for the future, these events tend to remain

focused on relationship building. It has not yet been shown that individual empathy and understanding leads to a greater likelihood of being able to find common ground in a political sense, (there might not be “common ground II”) or that increased positive relationships lead to the ability to solve problems in mutually agreeable ways. (There might not be “rational arguments.”)

The Traubmans also focus on reconciliation and therapeutic practices. I observed a situation at a dialogue group meeting on April 10<sup>th</sup> that serves as an example. One participant claimed that another group was inherently violent. The Traubmans refused to let the discussion speed up into a back-and-forth debate, but instead refocused attention on that participant’s personal story and also on healing, saying, “it seems that you are very hurt and angry. Do you have something in your past you’d like to share with us that made you feel this way?” When the participant continued to voice an opinion considered extreme, the Traubmans reiterated that this participant may have never had anyone listen to the participant, and encouraged story telling as means to forgiveness.

## **Overview**

The modes of interaction that drive the Traubmans are: “contact theory,” “personal stories,” “therapeutic practices,” and “common ground I.” Their Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogues are the archetype of the group that tries to change relationships and build interpersonal trust through increased empathy and understanding. They do not focus on building political understanding or finding political solutions, instead leaving those aspects of dialogue for a future in which people have transformed their interpersonal relationships.

## ***II. Community Dialogue***

Community Dialogue's stated goals assume authenticity and linked fates:

We enable diverse individuals and groups to engage in dialogue about our future, encouraging people to take ownership of the process of agreeing our future and to develop greater understanding of our varied and often opposed positions because without such understanding an agreed future is impossible. (Holloway 2004, 8)

People should try to understand other's positions, which assumes the positions are authentic. Even if one disagrees with the other's opinions, one should understand them – to make an “agreed future” possible. In other words, fates are linked. Community Dialogue does not use “rational arguments” even though the quote mentions an “agreed future.” Mutually acceptable ideas for solutions are not discussed in the dialogue itself.

In the above statements, the modes of interaction are implicit; to see more explicitly how dialogue should work, we can turn to CD's discussions on dialogue: “[Dialogue] comes in because it is a tool, which we can use to mould conflict into a creative, positive and productive process . . . It does this by shifting the focus from the stated positions that we so often argue over to the needs (often shared), which underlie them (Holloway 2004, 14).” Underlying interests are explicitly discussed in the quote through “shifting the focus” to the needs which “underlie” “stated positions.”

Participants are expected to go beneath their normal rhetoric and discuss exactly what they need from the future through a structured approach created by Bland.

Participants should think about their answers to the following questions (Bland 2004, 2):

- What do you want?
- What do you really need and why do you need it?
- What could you live with, given that the needs and hopes of others may differ from yours?

Participants, in discussing the answers to these three questions, will differentiate between needs and desires. “Needs” are the “underlying interests” that go beneath normal statements of positions.

Facilitators explain that CD empowers participants to identify their needs for themselves. CD tries to create conditions under which people can talk and articulate what they think they want. It also asks participants what they can do to help themselves (Interview 1; Interview 2; Interview 4). Although at first participants are scared of being challenged and so are frightened to attend CD, they eventually become comfortable justifying their thoughts (Interview 4).

Facilitators use “personal stories” both as its own mode and also as a tool for finding “common ground I” (Interview 2; Interview 6). However, they are torn about using personal stories as a tool for “therapeutic practices.” According to one publication, telling personal stories is considered a way of healing, and creating common ground I (*italics added*):

To share about who you are, how you feel and what you have experienced can be a *healing* and satisfying experience. This ‘telling of stories’ to each other is a critical part of the dialogue process, not just in developing understanding of oneself and others but also often in generating a powerful new sense of shared humanity, common identification and understanding . . . For this to happen it is necessary to move away from the ‘party line’ and explore the individual behind it. (Holloway 2004, 19)

However, a facilitator disagreed with the use of therapeutic practices in CD, saying that CD is “not about psychological/emotional needs . . . [for those, one can go] see a shrink (Interview 2).”

Community Dialogue utilizes “contact theory” in its focus on reducing prejudice. CD holds large weekend “residentials,” and also smaller dialogue group sessions that

meet regularly (see Section 3). The residentials reduce stereotypes according to facilitators (Interview 2; Interview 6) and participants (Interview 8). Yet it is the small groups that more heavily work to reduce prejudice. For example, one facilitator of small groups makes expectation lists with Protestants and Catholics separately before they meet each other. Often, the lists end up being identical: Protestants say Catholics will bleach their hair blond and hate them for their religion and vice versa (Interview 5).

## **Overview**

Community Dialogue organizers use “human relationships” modes but focus on “political interest” modes. They try to reduce prejudice through “contact theory,” but mainly in the small groups. They allow for telling “personal stories,” but are torn about the value of “therapeutic practices.” CD mentions “common ground” but in the same controversial quote that mentions healing. “Linked fates,” “underlying interests,” and “authenticity,” are all considered important and these are “political interest” modes of interaction. Given the focus on “political interest” modes of interaction, the lack of “common ground II” at first seems puzzling. However, CD does utilize “underlying interests” which is substitutable. Thus, instead of participants learning that their political interests are more similar than expected, they learn to reconceptualize their interests so that their political interests are more similar. CD helps participants reconceptualize interests by encouraging them to think about needs instead. The focus on needs enables participants to believe that they have more political vision in common than they thought they did before the dialogue.



### ***III. Deliberative Polling Weekends***

The style of discussion in Fishkin's Deliberative Polling Weekends shows the "rational arguments" mode of interaction:

"We take deliberation to be a weighing of competing considerations through discussion that is: Informed (and thus informative). The factual claims in arguments should be reasonably accurate. Balanced. Arguments for given propositions by their proponents should be answered by arguments by others with other points of view. Conscientious. The participants should be willing to talk and listen, with civility and respect. Substantive. Arguments should be considered sincerely on their merits, not how they are made or who is making them. Comprehensive. All points of view held by significant portions of the population should receive attention. (Fishkin & Luskin 2004, 2-3)

Fishkin stresses factual arguments conducted civilly and accepted on merit. To ensure that "competing considerations" are weighed, discussion should also be balanced and comprehensive. All of these factors promote "rational arguments."

Fishkin also promotes "rational arguments" in his stress on the importance of mutually justifiable speech. In the following quote Fishkin explains what he terms "sociotropism," which is a concept similar to that of "publicly defensible norms."

"It won't do in public discussion to offer arguments that a given policy alternative will benefit oneself or one's family. That, in itself, will arouse some mix of laughter and disdain, no support. The only chance of persuading anyone is to argue that the alternative will benefit the public as a whole, or at least a large majority. Even if this is initially mere tactics, there is much evidence in psychology to suggest that people induced to rehearse given arguments come to believe them (Luskin & Fishkin Unknown Year, 4)."

He explains that presenting arguments that will "benefit the public as a whole" eventually creates "public spiritedness" because people "come to believe" in their own arguments.

"Publicly defensible norms" obviates the need for the mode of interaction "linked fates." "Linked fates" claims that one should consider others out of a self-interested desire for peace and stability. Yet if one uses publicly defensible norms in a genuine

manner one considers others out of the sake of good citizenship. More practically, Fishkin has only run Deliberative Polls in situations where linked fates were assumed.

Fishkin strays from Habermas' ideals in that he expects a lack of consensus, which is partially due to his accommodation of self-interest. Participants do not need to achieve consensus because they vote individually and anonymously (Fishkin & Luskin 2004, 3-5).<sup>16</sup> Consensus would likely be extremely difficult to achieve in large groups that deal with complex issues in a limited time. In part this difficulty may be due to conflicting moral values. Fishkin is less concerned with this possibility and instead considers citizens who choose to vote according to interests. His opinion on self-interest vacillates, but eventually he settles for hoping that citizens will make decisions based on "public spiritedness" to a greater degree than self-interest:

"Deliberation may make citizens more public spirited. They may come, in the process of discussing the issues with others and, partly as a result, learning and thinking more about others and their interests, to take greater account of the interests of others—of either the population as a whole or at least wider sections of it. In the first sense, the best case is when everyone understands his or her own interests and what given policy or electoral choices imply for them and votes or opines accordingly; in this second sense, it is when everyone understands the public interest and what given policy or electoral choices imply for it and votes or opines accordingly . . . And, in practice, many people must jointly maximize their own and the public interest—with weights that are unclear and probably vary but may lean toward the former. At least arguably, in fact, that is what they should be doing—with weights leaning more toward the latter. (Luskin & Fishkin Unknown Year, 1-2)

Deliberative Polling, through acknowledging interests, also uses the "authenticity" mode of interaction. Fishkin calls this authenticity "Political Empathy" which is "an appreciation of the interests of others situated very differently from oneself." He explains that "[s]eeing and hearing people from very different walks of life conveys a

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<sup>16</sup> In Mendelberg & Karpowitz's (2006) study, where groups were modeled on jury trials presents an example of participants required to achieve consensus.

sense of needs and aspirations, as well as the constraints they labor under—and of the legitimacy of the former and reality of the latter (Luskin & Fishkin Unknown Year, 3).” Different needs are legitimate.

The modes of interaction relating to “political interest” and “public spiritedness” dialogue have been discussed, but Fishkin also relies on some “human relationships” modes of interaction. These more emotive modes of interaction are not mentioned in the theoretical explanations of Fishkin’s work but rather come through in Fishkin’s anecdotes. For example, he often tells of the time that one man told an African-American single mother that she and her child did not constitute a “real family.” By the end of the deliberative weekend, after getting to know this woman better, the man approached her and apologized (Fishkin & Ackerman 2002, 17; Fishkin 1995, 191). In this example, “contact theory” through “personal stories” lead to reduced prejudice. Although deliberative democracy theory is less interested in the “human relations” modes of interaction, they are implicitly part of the process.

Common Ground I and II are modes of interaction that are not often mentioned by deliberative democracy theorists, which occurs because Common Ground I and II are almost irrelevant to deliberative democracy theory. Deliberative democracy is a tool for finding rational solutions, and sharing a belief in common humanity or political interests is not necessary for solving problems based on logical arguments.<sup>17</sup>

## Overview

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<sup>17</sup> As befits deliberative democracy theory, when a desire for common ground is expressed, it is for the purpose of figuring out a moral high ground, a “common good” that participants can use to make decisions. Barber states: “I will put myself in his place, I will try to understand, I will strain to hear what makes us alike, I will listen for a common rhetoric evocative of a common purpose or a common good (Sanders 1997, 9).” Note that is more likely that participants be willing to think that a common purpose or good can exist when discussing problems that are not deeply divisive.

Almost all of the modes of interaction are utilized in Deliberative Polling, but the “rational arguments” mode that implements “public spiritedness” dialogue predominates. Deliberative Polling does not particularly utilize “therapeutic practices,” “linked fates,” or “common ground I & II.”<sup>18</sup> It touches upon the other modes of interaction: “contact theory,” “personal stories,” “authenticity,” and “underlying interests.”

Deliberative Polling resembles Community Dialogue in the acknowledgment that interests influence decisions and yet it is hoped that decisions will predominantly be based on “public spiritedness.” The lack of stress on these modes of interaction (now “linked fates” or “common ground II”) reflects the concern of deliberative democrats to avoid decision-making based on interest if possible. Thus, Fishkin’s Deliberative Polling can be considered a case of “public spiritedness” dialogue despite its differences from Habermas’ ideals.

#### ***IV. Conclusion of Section 2***

Each of the cases focuses on different clusters of modes, leading to different overall types of dialogue groups. That these cases illustrate each type of dialogue provides some support for the existence of three distinct types of dialogue. The Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogues are the archetype of a “human relationships” group; they use the modes of interaction that change relationships. Community Dialogue includes many “human relationships” modes but focuses on “political interest” modes. Fishkin’s Deliberative Polling groups focus on “rational arguments” while including (but discouraging) other modes of interaction. The following chart summarizes these results.

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<sup>18</sup> More research could be done to see why deliberative democracy tends to ignore these modes of interaction in particular. Community Dialogue also does not focus on them, but does discuss and acknowledge them nonetheless.

**Table 5: The Case Studies' Uses of Modes of Interaction**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Living Room Dialogue</b>	<b>CD</b>	<b>Deliberative Polls</b>
Contact Theory	Yes	Yes	Yes
Personal Stories	Yes	Yes	Yes
Common Ground I	Yes	Yes	No
Therapeutic Practices	Yes	Yes, discouraged	No
Common Ground II	No	No- underlying interests instead	No – discussion of interests discouraged
Authenticity	No	Yes	Yes – Political Empathy
Linked Fates	No	Yes	Yes – Sociotropism assumes linked fates
Underlying Interests	No	Yes	Yes but discouraged
Rational Arguments	No	No	Yes (not consensus)

## **Section 3: Structure to Maximize Dialogue Strategy**

The previous section used modes of interaction to show that each case utilizes different dialogue strategies. This section provides details as to how each case is structured to promote those strategies. The structure of the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room dialogues helps to change relationships, the structure of Community Dialogue helps participants to reconceptualize interests, and the structure of Deliberative Polling Weekends helps participants to focus on the public good.<sup>19</sup>

To show that the cases are structured differently, I will first present an overview of the cases, and then analyze the following factors to see how they impact dialogue strategy: 1) How is the dialogue group structured in terms of how often it meets and how many people attend? 2) How is the discussion structured in terms of its pace and what participants focus of discussion? 3) What is the location of the dialogue group? 4) How are participants recruited? 5) What type of facilitators are used – are they paid? Are they personally invested in the conflict?

### ***I. History of the Cases***

#### **A. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue**

Len and Libby, a retired American-Jewish couple who live in San Mateo, have always been involved with social justice causes and organizations. Toward the end of the

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<sup>19</sup> That each group is structured to mostly promote one type of dialogue does not mean each group does so in the best way possible. More research should be done on the comparative effectiveness of different formats within the same type of dialogue group.

Cold War, they organized talks between Soviet and American citizens via HAM radio. They strongly believed that high ignorance and fear engendered continued war. Politicians had not resolved any issues, so more creative and different approaches – that is, citizen dialogues – had to be tried alongside of Track I diplomacy (Interview 10; Interview 11). After the Cold War, the Traubmans’ started to be involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In May 1991, the Traubmans and the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation “helped bring a small team of Palestinian and Israeli citizen-leaders from the Middle East to a week-long conference in the California redwoods. These women and men forged and signed a historic document, Framework for a Public Peace Process, calling for concerned citizens of both communities to join in Dialogue (Traubman 2006, Our Story).” The Traubmans helped present the paper to the Knesset (Interview 10).

Once back in the Bay Area, they formed the first West Coast dialogue group in July 1992. Libby invited her Jewish American friends, but wanted to include Palestinians and did not know any. Her daughter worked at a local restaurant run by a Palestinian family, so Libby went to the restaurant and invited them to a meeting. They did not come. She tried again multiple times. Finally, she told them that they should tell her if they do not intend to come or alternatively come when they say that they will. One Palestinian said, “you really want to hear our opinions, don’t you?” and at the next meeting, they arrived. Libby cried with joy and that was the first Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue. A higher rate of members dropped out at first due to sharp disagreements and pressure from relatives, but eventually a core group stayed active and eventually expanded to the six groups active today (Interview 11).

## **B. Community Dialogue**

Community Dialogue was started in October 1997 by thirty people “who did not see eye to eye but for pragmatic reasons decided it was not worth fighting.” They wanted to “transform the conflict so that it would be non-violent regardless of the solution (Interview 1).” The founding members of Community Dialogue advertised in the papers to create a strong and diverse core group (Interview 1).

Community Dialogue originally started as a way to “inform the public of the political process” (particularly the Good Friday Agreements) and to “demystify” it so that civilians could “vote knowledgeably” instead of accepting a politician’s explanation. In other words, Community Dialogue “helped people eat elephants” by digesting the elephant “in small bits.” CD still publishes around three leaflets a year if important issues arise that CD feels should be clearly explained (Interview 4). But CD has changed and now conducts face-to-face dialogues to promote understanding politics vis-a-vis others (Interview 1; Interview 4).

## **C. Deliberative Polling Weekends**

Fishkin developed the idea of Deliberative Polling to empirically test the academic ideas of deliberative democracy. So far, over 25 sessions have been held all over the world. All but the most recent deliberative weekend have been held in advanced Western democracies on a wide variety of issues. They are usually heavily televised. Fishkin describes some of his Deliberative Polls:

In Britain, the deliberative weekends have been held in Manchester and televised in Channel 4’s ‘Power and the People’ series. The topics have been crime policy (April 1994), Britain’s role in the European Union (June 1995), the future of Britain’s monarchy (July 1996), the May 1997 General Election (April 1997), and the future of the National Health Service (July 1998). The American national event was the National Issues Convention, whose deliberative weekend took place



in Austin, Texas, in January 1996. The topics there were the state of the American economy, America's role in the world and the American family. The Danish Deliberative Poll, deliberating in Odense in August 2000, concerned Denmark's national referendum on whether to adopt the euro. The first Australian Deliberative Poll, deliberating in Canberra, in October 1999, concerned the national referendum two weeks later on Australia's becoming a republic. (Luskin & Fishkin & Jowell 2002, 7)

Fishkin's most recent deliberative weekend was held in the Zeguo Township in Wenling City, China. The city had a budget surplus and was not sure where to best invest the surplus. They asked Fishkin to conduct a Deliberative Poll where randomly selected citizens would assemble to vote between six different options for where the city should spend its money. The local government was worried that without transparency, the citizens would riot (as they do in neighboring cities) because of perceived government corruption. It is the first time a government has agreed to implement the results of a Deliberative Polling Weekend (McCormick 2006). His next Deliberative Poll will be in the city of Marousi, Greece, where one of the two main political parties, PASOK, has agreed to use this method to decide on their mayoral candidate (Unknown Author 2006, Deliberative Polling in the Municipality of Marousi, Greece.)

## ***II. Organizational Structure: Size, Time***

### **A. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue**

#### **1. Dialogue groups**

Throughout the years, the exact number and location of the dialogue groups in the Bay Area have varied. Currently, there are six local groups, one each in San Mateo, San Francisco, the East Bay, Napa, and two in Silicon Valley. The Traubmans facilitate one of the Silicon Valley groups, along with the San Francisco and San Mateo group

(Interview 15). Many of the groups group meets once a month for around three hours each time. Around fifteen participants will attend each session. A participant will volunteer to host the group at his or her house and provide refreshments. As people arrive, they meet and mingle, then gather in a large circle in the living room for discussion (Interview 10; Interview 11).

## **2. Other Activities**

The staggering numbers of initiatives the Traubmans have instigated or otherwise been involved with are too many to name. One major endeavor is the Palestinian-Jewish Family Peacemakers Summer Camp that since September 1993 has gathered American-Jewish, Israeli, and Palestinian families to dialogue together. Other activities include: helping others to start their own dialogue groups, organizing demonstrations of dialogue on college campuses, flying kites for peace in San Francisco, writing letters to the Department of State, and publishing a cookbook of Israeli and Palestinian recipes (Traubman 2006, *Our Jewish Palestinian Living Room Dialogue in California*).

The organization of these activities fosters “human relationships” dialogue. The dialogue groups meet once a month for an indefinitely long period of time, which allows people unlimited time and opportunity to deeply get to know each other and so build interpersonal trust through empathy.

## **B. Community Dialogue**

### **1. Residentials**

Residentials are the focus of Community Dialogue. Residentials occur as frequently as possible depending on funding and the capacity of Community Dialogue to

organize them. Usually they are held once a month and cover the cost of room, meals, and programming for all participants. Residentials bring together a diverse group of roughly 35 participants for a one and a half day retreat. Upon arrival, participants and facilitators gather in a large conference room for introductions and ground rules. Great attention is paid to ensure that people respect each other's opinion despite disagreement, and to allow each other to speak without interruption (which fosters "authenticity"). This emphasis on equality and on requiring everyone to listen to everyone else for the entire process means that 100% attendance is expected. Community Dialogue has turned away famous politicians who arrived late (Interview 1).

Once the dialogue starts, participants discuss issues in both small and large group settings to allow for both in-depth, intimate discussion and exposure to many different opinions. Participants alternate between splitting into small groups of 10-15 people each to discuss an issue, and then returning back to the large group to share the main points of the small group discussion. The issue will then be discussed with the group as a whole until time for the next small group discussion (Interview 1). Community Dialogue remains neutral as an organization when it comes to the outcomes of discussions it holds. Facilitators acknowledge that participants might clarify differences through dialogue and then decide that they cannot tolerate the other. Facilitators of course hope that the opposite will happen, and participants will learn to compromise and tolerate each other. The neutrality of CD, in addition to time and resource constraints, hampers their ability and desire to track changes in previous participants over the long term (Interview 2; Interview 4).

## **2. Other Activities**

In addition to the residentials, Community Dialogue facilitators run numerous smaller groups in local communities. The composition and content of these groups vary dramatically based on the facilitator and their personal preferences for how such a group should be organized, but all of them involve at least mostly the same participants meeting once a week. These groups are most active in the spring and fall. During the winter not much political activity (including dialogue) occurs between Christmas and New Year's. During the summer there is too much hot-headed political activity to maintain the emotional calm need for dialogue (Interview 5).

There are four types of small group dialogues that all capacity-build for the residentials. After attending small groups for a period of time, facilitators will recommend participants to sign up for a residential. Women's Seminars in particular aim to increase the participation of women by enabling them to articulate their thoughts without being overshadowed by men.<sup>20</sup> These groups are held either for ten weeks or indefinitely. One facilitator explained that groups should be held for a limited duration because otherwise discussions become comfortable and social rather than thought provoking, and would also mean reaching fewer new people (Interview 5). Another facilitator took a different approach, saying that the more new thoughts participants want to discuss, the better, and that continuous discussions reach new people through the turnover rate (Interview 6).

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<sup>20</sup> One Catholic male participant I spoke with told me that the better-off Protestant men "in business suits" tended to speak at the expense of the Protestant women (Interview 3). One facilitator claimed that since the Protestant identity had been externally enforced by Britain for decades and is now removed, Protestants are less able to articulate their identity than Catholics. The interviewee also claimed that Catholic women were more articulate and were accorded more rights because they were more involved in community work while oppressed. For example, one Catholic woman told me that because she lives in Northern Ireland, which is run by laws created by Protestants, she cannot be legally considered the head of the household. In the Republic of Ireland as a woman she could be considered the head of the household (Interview 5).

Single-Identity Groups are similar to Women's Seminars in that they are held for people from within a particular political perspective once a week and focus on discussion. The final two groups generate discussion through activity. Theatre Group writes a play together once a year and through choosing scenarios and deciding on appropriate diction, the participants learn how to see through each other's eyes. The Film Series Group aims to attract a younger audience through fliers by hosting free movie showings with discussion at interfaces. CD feels that interfaces should be targeted because residents have no alternative way to dialogue (Interview 5). The Film Series Group and Theatre Group will be considered dialogue groups despite the activities involved, because those activities directly instigate dialogue.

In terms of size and time, residentials are structured to promote "political interest" dialogue while the small groups are structured to promote "human relationships" dialogue. The residentials are an entire weekend, but the same people only meet once and so the participants do not deeply get to know one another. In terms of size, the residentials are also too large to get to know all the participants, and although the participants sometimes break into smaller groups, those groups change constantly. Thus, the residentials do not focus on fostering interpersonal trust through getting to know others, although that is of course inevitable. Instead, the residentials focus on exposing participants to as many other participants as possible. This broad exposure to various political opinions furthers "political interest" dialogue because one must know other opinions in order to take them into consideration. Yet CD also conducts weekly dialogues that are more similar to "human relationships" dialogue in terms of time and

size in that the same people meet regularly in (usually) smaller groups so that there is time for people to learn to deeply understand each other.<sup>21</sup>

### **C. Deliberative Polling Weekends**

The organizational structure of the Deliberative Polling Weekends is similar to that of Community Dialogue but on a much larger scale. Hundreds of citizens at a time are paid to attend a weekend retreat in a hotel. The small groups do not change every session like at Community Dialogue, and are randomly assigned for the weekend (Park & Jowell & McPherson Unknown Year, 4-5). At the end of the weekend, participants are asked to vote on a particular policy to be implemented. In Fishkin's words:

“A random sample is interviewed, invited to a common site for a weekend of discussion, provided carefully balanced briefing materials laying out the major arguments for and against given policy proposals or electoral choices, and reinterviewed at the end of the weekend. The discussion alternate between small group sessions led by trained moderators and plenary sessions in which participants get to put questions composed by their small group to panels of policy experts, decision-makers, and sometimes politicians. The proceedings have always, so far, been televised, either live or taped and edited into a documentary. (Fishkin & Luskin 2002, 6)

The large size does not make the residential conducive to interpersonal trust or empathy building, although that effect is somewhat mitigated by meeting in the same small group throughout the weekend. Yet a weekend is still not enough time to deeply get to know others. That citizens vote at the end of the weekend, even in confidence – especially in the cases where citizens know that the results of the vote will influence

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<sup>21</sup> Another reason for serving many people with less repetition is anonymity. The more often a group meets, the more chance someone will leak who attends (Interview 9). Until recently attending dialogue came with high social stigma. Sinn Fein told members not to attend Community Dialogue so as to present a united face to Protestants (Bland Personal Interview, 2006). Protestants felt that CD was biased for various reasons (Interview 6; Interview 7).

decisions – makes the organization of these groups substantially different from that of Community Dialogue. Citizens are pressured to choose sides, which fosters “rational arguments” through helping citizens decide how to argue and choose between arguments. For CD the goal is the opposite – CD tries to muddle the lines between arguments and discover “underlying interests” that show participants they do not have to choose sides on an issue. CD participants are also supposed to continue ruminating over their dialogue experiences, and so a pressure to achieve some final outcome and cast one’s opinion decisively might be counterproductive (Interview 2).

### ***III. Aspects of Discussion: Pace and Focus***

#### **A. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue**

The Traubmans create a slow pace of discussion through the focus on personal stories. They encourage participants, especially newcomers who have not been heard before, to tell their story – to explain their family history in depth, and to explain what emotional moment brought them to the dialogue. The rest of the time is spent dialoguing on whatever other issues people bring up, usually current news (Interview 10). The focus on “personal stories” and “therapeutic practices,” as well as the slow pace, fosters interpersonal trust-building and prejudice-reducing – “human relationships” dialogue – through refusing generalizations and harsh speech and instead learning about the others.

#### **B. Community Dialogue**

The pace of discussion at Community Dialogue is quite different from the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue – the facilitators keep a quick pace of back and forth (Interview 1). The focus is also political – people discuss their reactions and thoughts on

an issue such as policing. Facilitators decide ahead of time on the overall theme for each residential, as well as on the particular issues to discuss. However, these themes remain vague, and conversations are allowed to drift in whatever direction the participants find interesting and useful to discuss (Interview 4). Conversations are informal, honest in tone, and can get heated (Interview 1).<sup>22</sup> To explain their beliefs they may end up discussing their personal history (Interview 2; Interview 5), but not necessarily. The faster pace and focus on political issues allows participants to hear each other's thoughts and so fosters "political interest" dialogue.

The pace and focus of the small groups also promotes "political interest" dialogue. Like the residentials, the pace of discussion is fast and the focus ranges over many topics to provide exposure to many topics. The focus also remains political to a large extent. Some small group facilitators do focus more on "human relationships" modes than others, but mainly they all still ask participants Bland's Three Questions to transform perceptions of interest into recognizing needs (Interview 4).

More research needs to be done on different structural possibilities for a dialogue group with a given goal -- it is possible that the fast pace of CD does not most effectively build common political vision. One facilitator expressed his deep frustration with the pace and focus on quick back-and-forth on issues, which especially occurs in the small groups that only meet once or a few times, because often these sessions resemble debates where people try to convince, instead of understand, each other (Interview 1).

Another issue with the intensity that comes with the fast speed of CD is that it does not provide enough emotional support. One participant told me that a friend was

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<sup>22</sup> However, plenty of time is allotted to take breaks from the intense political discussions to get tea, eat meals, and socialize at the hotel bar in the evenings (Interview 1). Breaks allow participants some time to get to know each other on an interpersonal level.



extremely upset after attending the dialogue and needed such support. That participant also recommended more story telling to understand people's backgrounds (Interview 7). On the other hand, a slower pace requires more time, which might not be worth the sacrifice of reducing the number of participants, the broader range of viewpoints, and the risk of becoming a comfortable social group that no longer challenges each other's perspectives. Leaving participants emotionally shaken might even be beneficial to CD's strategy of transforming how people perceive politics.

### **C. Deliberative Polling Weekends**

The focus of discussion is based on given materials presenting facts from different perspectives.<sup>23</sup> This limits the nature of the discussion inherently by clearly delineating different set sides and what arguments those sides present. Fishkin's groups try to discuss the relative merits and demerits of various sides to decide which solution they believe is the best one possible (discussed earlier, also Fishkin & Luskin 2004, 5). These clear arguments with identifiable trade-offs are conducive to "rational arguments." As mentioned earlier with regards to voting, to delineate sides would be the exact opposite of what CD as a "political interest" group tries to do: CD seeks to obfuscate sides and create grey ground.<sup>24</sup>

## **IV. Location**

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<sup>23</sup> I unfortunately do not have much information on the pace of discussion.

<sup>24</sup> Community Dialogue, through creating this space that is neither black nor white, touches upon Bakhtin's ideas of dialogic imagination. Community Dialogue, as Bakhtin would say, is trying to break away from the conception of people as "monads" with clear boundaries (Morson & Emerson 1990, 50). One facilitator described that "dialogue is controversial so people become objects of suspicion in their community, especially if they changed, so it produces people who can't be boxed –neither fish nor fowl, so it gives people problems." Participants "should leave with many questions," "spread doubt everywhere" and act as "prophets of confusion" to "destabilize the status-quo (Interview 1)." As Bakhtin puts similar ideas: "The word, directed toward its object . . . weaves in and out of complex inter-relationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group (Morson & Emerson 1990, 52)."

## **A. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue**

The Traubmans bring Israeli-Americans, American-Jews, and Palestinian-Americans together in America, which creates an emotional distance from the conflict. Not being in the thick of things helps maintain the calm pace and the ability to deeply self-reflect. It also helps to insulate dialogue meetings from outbreaks of violence and so fragile, newly-built interpersonal can withstand tension caused by the ongoing conflict. Meetings are also held in each other's homes over food, which would intuitively seem like an interpersonal trust-building measure. Thus, location helps the slow pace of dialogue and the focus on personal stories instead of politics, which furthers the goals of "human relationships" dialogue (Bland. Personal Interview. May 10, 2006).

## **B. Community Dialogue**

The location of the residentials is still partially isolated, and the small groups not at all. The residentials are usually held in hotels removed from Belfast, such as in a county on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The isolated location helps to create the emotional distance necessary for dialogue, but on the other hand is still not very isolated (especially compared to the Traubmans who work thousands of miles away from the area on which they focus). The distance also works against "human relationships" dialogue because the same participants will not want to endure such long drives on a regular basis in order to meet each other many times (Interview 2). Small groups are held within neighborhoods caught up by violence, even if to greater and lesser degrees, with fast-paced, intense dialogue the natural result.

## **C. Deliberative Polling Weekends**

The geographic location is less relevant for Fishkin since the problems at hand are not usually ones where particular locations hold much deeper meaning. For example, debating who should be the next president is probably similarly meaningful throughout most of the U.S. Deliberative Polling Weekends, like Community Dialogue residentials, are held in hotels. For Fishkin, who brings together people to discuss problems that are not often deeply contentious, hotels are not necessary to create emotional distance. Rather, the Deliberative Polling Weekends need to bring large numbers of people who normally live very far apart together. Doing so furthers “public spiritedness” dialogue by allowing people from the opposite sides of a country to see why others have particular stakes in certain outcomes.

## ***V. Participants: Selection, Balance***

### **A. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue**

In the dialogue group, most participants already know each other and have been in attendance for years. Like Community Dialogue, most participants are middle-aged adults. American Jews are heavily represented, followed by Israeli and Palestinian Americans (Jewish, Muslim and Christian). Approximately two thirds of a group falls into one of the above categories, while the remaining one third comes from a wide variety of backgrounds (Interview 10). A description sent in an email update gives a feel for both the emails and participants:

We had a moving 165th meeting last night, with Palestinian and Jewish representation from Arava, and an 11th grade high school exchange student from Gaza, two Holocaust refugees with their daughter and 13-year-old grandson, a Stanford student and many others. At the home of a former IDF soldier who patrolled Ramallah, there was an original Palestinian refugee from Jerusalem, and the Salems who now divide their time between California and Ramallah. A

young Japanese Buddhist guest added a lot, as well. We are still learning a lot from each other (Traubman 2006, 165<sup>th</sup> Meeting Email).

The participants usually live in America, although most American-Jews and Muslim-Americans do not participate in dialogue. Sometimes Israelis visiting relatives in the U.S. come to a meeting (often without telling their relatives, who would disapprove) (Interview 10). One long-standing Israeli-American participant expressed frustration at the many Bay Area Israelis who refuse to attend. He says that they move to America but only have Israeli friends and want to recreate the Israel they left behind (Interview 14).

When I asked what draws people to their dialogue groups, the Traubmans answered that it often has to do with personal healing. They told me “some come because they feel guilty for living here, some for therapy, and others to get psychologically ready to return (Interview 10).” Telling stories does not only foster understanding, but also healing. Palestinians often come to “vent” because they are not used to being heard, although it takes longer before Palestinian women speak (Interview 10). That participants want to tell personal stories as a form of therapy are all indications of “human relationships” dialogue.

Participants are highly self-selected. People hear about dialogue groups through the Traubmans or from friends who attend. Sometimes people find the group through the website. Thus, the participants are highly self-selected for wanting to heal themselves and understand the other on a personal level. A possible issue that arises because of self-selection is balance – the Traubmans are Jewish and the balance of the dialogue group is toward Jews. Especially given the lack of a Palestinian co-facilitator, recruiting amongst personal contacts means fewer Palestinians coming into the group.

The imbalance in participants may also change the dynamic to be more slow-paced and thus more conducive to trust-building dialogue. The majority of those who attend might not be the ones as interested in partisan activism but rather self-reflection, because they were selecting to join a slow-paced, interpersonally oriented group.

## **B. Community Dialogue**

Community Dialogue recruits participants via word of mouth and contacting organizations such as political parties, religious institutions, and social services, which results in a high participate rate from local leaders. Most of their participants are local leaders; a few unconnected citizens or high-level politicians attend as well (Interview 1; Interview 2). Due to the difference in target audience, the smaller time commitment, and the different recruiting techniques, CD often brings together participants with a wider range of perspectives in comparison to the Traubmans' dialogues.

Historically, it was difficult for Community Dialogue to bring in participants from the IRA, Sinn Fein, (who considered CD overly 'do-good' without results) the Orange Order, and DUP. More people from these parties are attending now,<sup>25</sup> and facilitators encourage these participants to think of what they need as individuals versus what the party line claims they want as much as possible (Interview 1).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Nobody knows for sure why more attend now, but proposed reasons are: Protestants have decided to stop complaining about what is being done to them and are trying to figure out how to help themselves instead; Sinn Fein wants to be seen as open-minded; parties want to better understand their opponents; parties want to convince participants of their perspective; people are realizing that they are in this peace process for the long haul and trying to figure out how to make it work (Interview 2); and most optimistically, that Community Dialogue's reputation for integrity and professionalism has spread more and more widely (Interview 1; Interview 2). The current problem CD faces is recruiting more minority and youth participants (Interview 5).

<sup>26</sup> To hear the other side of the story: a local Sinn Fein politician told me that the party line *is* always what people want, as Sinn Fein dialogues with its constituents and is willing to dialogue with everyone else as well (Interview 9).

The annual number of participants varies depending on high-level political activity. The attendance rate depends on whether the government in Stormont is devolved or not – if it is in session, attendance can drop to 400. Usually around 1,200 people attend annually. One CD organizer explained this phenomenon by saying that when the government is devolved people take more responsibility upon themselves for the political process, and also are not afraid of obstructing the higher level process (Interview 5).

Including a wide range of perspectives and many new participants at each residential increases the pace of dialogue. A fast pace, coupled with the free flow from topic to topic, ensures that a range of topics are covered. These factors are more conducive to intense political discussion and hence “political interest” dialogue than “human relationships” dialogue, although both occur.

### **C. Deliberative Polling Weekends**

Deliberative Polling groups are not self-selected, but rather participants are randomly selected. The selection is designed to approximate the relevant population so that demographically representative citizens will meet, discuss, and then vote on an issue. For example, if a deliberative democracy group is done in Texas and if Texas is say, 40% Caucasian Republicans, then the organizers of the Deliberative Democracy session will try to recruit 40% Caucasian Republicans. Within that category the citizens will be randomly selected. Selected citizens will repeatedly be called and enticed to attend. If after numerous tries citizens still do not choose to attend those citizens have sometimes been used as a quasi-control group to compare change in voting patterns. Fishkin found that those who choose to attend are wealthier, well-educated, and younger than those who

choose not to attend, but that overall these differences are not significant (Fishkin & Luskin 2004, 8-12.)

Representative participants enable discussion that captures the most salient arguments and interests at stake. Including a representative sample of the population is not necessarily conducive to “public spiritedness” dialogue, as “political interest” dialogue could be done with a representative sample as well.

Gundersen argues that representative selection does not best promote Habermas’ ideals of discussion. Participants should be able to discuss *all* possible perspectives to find good solutions to problems, and not merely a *representative* sample of perspectives (Gundersen 2000, 72-73). Although not as practical, Gundersen’s idea allows for even the less common arguments to be considered based on merit, which fosters “rational arguments.” If Deliberative Polling Weekends were to be structured purely to promote “rational” deliberations Gundersen’s ideas should be strongly considered.

## ***VI. Type of Facilitator: Paid, Personally Involved***

### **A. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue**

The Traubmans are unpaid and need not fundraise for dialogue groups, which gives them freedom to create dialogue that accords with their beliefs. They deeply believe in dialogue as a way of transforming humanity onto a higher plane of the human spirit through the long, slow process of changing relationships. Although the Traubmans fundraise for the camps and other activities, their focus is on mediating the dialogue groups, which monetarily costs little (Interview 10). The lack of accountability and need to “show something” for their pains means that they do not need to show off large

numbers to entice funders. This freedom creates the conditions necessary for a “human relationships” dialogue.

## **B. Community Dialogue**

The facilitators have a large role in creating fast paced discussions, which do not enhance “human relationships” dialogue but do foster “political interest” dialogue.

Although style varies by person, facilitators tend to play the devil’s advocate to the point where participants have difficulty telling from what background the facilitators come.

They deftly lead conversations and ensure that everyone speaks, but do not control the conversations (Interview 2). Facilitators thus role-model people who can see all sides of an issue, and also set expectations for fast-paced discussion where many ideas are thrown out for consideration.

The range of backgrounds from which the facilitators come may also help CD attract diverse participants (Interview 2), which leads to faster-paced dialogue. One head facilitator (usually Brian Lennon) leads the large group discussions, and each small group uses a facilitator as well. Seven full time staff and an executive committee comprise the backbone of Community Dialogue. These facilitators are male, female, Jesuit, Catholic and Protestant Caucasians.

CD has local, paid staff that is extremely committed to CD – some of the staff are still founding members – and this enables “political interest” dialogue. Having native Irish and British facilitators makes for a depth of discussion not possible with the Traubmans or Fishkin, who do not know the details of issues in-depth. CD’s facilitators are more able to lead “political interest” discussion using their intimate knowledge of what particular sides believe and how those sides can change their outlooks (Interview 5).



### **C. Deliberative Polling Weekends**

Facilitator involvement is paid and consists of people impartial to the issues at hand. Consequently, facilitators are not as invested in the process, which means the intensity (pace and focus) of discussion should be lower and also that the emotion and meaning is probably less important to the facilitators. Since the content of the discussion is not necessarily intrinsically meaningful to facilitators, they should be more objective and so better focus on “rational” arguments.

## **VII. Conclusion of Section 3**

As seen through the three case studies different groups are structured to better facilitate different outcomes. The Traubmans use slow, indefinitely long, personal, isolated dialogue amongst people who are mainly ready to transform relationships. CD facilitators use local knowledge and a focus on politics to create fast paced dialogues of limited duration between people from a wide range of perspectives. Deliberative Polling Weekends use more objective facilitators to create short dialogues based on showing representative citizens factual information. The following chart summarizes the differences in structure between the dialogue groups:

**Table 6: The Structure of Dialogue Groups in the Three Cases**

<b>Aspects of Structure</b>	<b>Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue</b>	<b>CD</b>	<b>Deliberative Polling</b>
Time on dialogue	Long	Short (residential) medium/long (small groups)	Short
Pace of discussion	Slow	Fast (residential) fast/slow (small groups)	Unknown
Focus of discussion	Personal	Political –self	Political – public
Location of dialogue	Isolated	Partially isolated (a different part of Ireland)	Partially isolated (different part of the country)
Participant selection	Mainly self-selected	Word of mouth	Recruited
Type of facilitator	Partisan, removed but emotionally interested, volunteer	Bi-partisan, not removed, paid	Bi-partisan, removed, paid

## Section 4: Context and the Need for Future Research

Even after attempting to establish a typology of dialogue groups, the implications of the typology remain unclear. To test long-term efficacy of different dialogue types, one needs a theory of change. I will suggest a theory of change and a schema for determining which dialogue strategy will be most effective given a particular context. All the types of dialogues should be tested in each context according to the theory of change. Doing so will provide empirical confirmation (or disconfirmation) of whether or not the dialogue type I suggest seems to be the most effective one in that context.<sup>27</sup>

In this section I will present an overarching theory of change to encompass all dialogue groups. I will compare this overarching theory of change with the more specific theories of change each case espouses. After establishing these specific theories of change and showing how the cases are or are not structured to promote that change, I will propose a schema for contexts. Using the cases (and one additional hypothetical case) with their specific theories of change as examples, I will explain why I chose certain types of dialogue as best suited for different contexts.

### I. Theory of Change

The overarching theory of change is that dialogue groups bridge the gap between citizens and politicians to encourage tolerance. Dialogue groups attempt either to change public opinion by pulling citizens toward accepting the actions of politicians, or pushing politicians to follow public opinion. Dialogue groups help citizens define and articulate

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<sup>27</sup> Conducting such a test is difficult for many reasons, including the difficulty in differentiating between results from the dialogue group and results from other occurrences in the lives of the participants. Also, testing different types of dialogue in a context does not test the theory of change. It also does not test the efficacy of different organizational formats within the same type of dialogue. All of these issues present ripe areas for future research.

their opinions to politicians. Politicians will have an easier time with enforcement if they enforce decisions with which citizens agree.

Even if citizens and politicians are divided on many issues, it is hoped that transforming citizens through dialogue groups will enable them to push politicians toward compromise and peaceful accommodation. If there is no gap in opinion because citizens as well as politicians are serious about tolerance, then there is likely little need for dialogue groups. If there is no gap in opinion because nobody wants tolerance, then dialogue groups would not be useful unless they convinced citizens to promote tolerance. Note that this theory of change only holds for situations where citizen input can be influential. The case studies all profess to trying to bridge this gap.

### **A. Deliberative Polling**

Deliberative Polling is the most explicit in trying to bridge the gap between citizens and government. The Deliberative Polling method as developed by Fishkin was inspired by the deliberative democracy literature which tries to resolve the tension between needing citizen participation to prevent tyranny, (which would entail politicians pulling citizens along regardless of citizen's desires) but also needing citizens who do not rule by "the passions of the mob" (in which citizens push politicians to follow their unreasonable demands). The ideal situation would be to have citizens not only informed enough to prevent tyranny but also informed enough to create policies beneficial to their state (Fishkin 1995, 49-53, 143-53, 161-176). A striking example of a dialogue group utilizing this theory of change, as discussed earlier, was the most recent Deliberative Poll where a Chinese city government agreed to implement the results of a Deliberative Poll that decided how to allocate their budget surplus (McCormick 2006).

Fishkin structures his Deliberative Polls to legitimize the final vote and so convince politicians or citizens to implement the results. Fishkin's claim is that politicians should enact policies based on Deliberative Polls because the polls show how society would vote if it was informed. Alternatively, citizens could see the results of a Deliberative Polling Weekend and vote accordingly on the assumption that if they had attended they would have reached the same conclusions. His extensive use of media coverage fosters this second method (Fishkin 1991, 4). No evidence supports the idea that citizens would use the results of a Deliberative Poll when making decisions.

## **B. Community Dialogue**

Community Dialogue is the least clear about whether or not it tries to bridge a gap between citizens and politicians. Their website supports such a claim, explaining that one of their goals is to “[b]uild a ladder of communication between wider society and the negotiations (Holloway 2004, 6).” The goal of Community Dialogue is to help ensure that a peace process in Northern Ireland has grassroots support and is therefore stable. Inclusive dialogue throughout society should be encouraged, “otherwise a lasting settlement that we could all buy into [will] be more difficult to achieve (Holloway 2004, 6).” High-level politicians have been known to attend their residencies and so enable communication between citizens and politicians (Interview 1; Interview 2).

CD is not structured to encourage interactions between high-level politicians and citizens. CD provides no support for past participants who would want to do so. Community Dialogue would have trouble attracting its wide range of participants if it fostered an expectation that participants should later engage in interpersonal trust-

building activities. It does not follow up with former participants to maintain an image of being a safe, neutral environment.

Yet, CD recruits from local leaders for a reason. Although not high-level politicians, on a smaller scale CD's participants are the influential figures that could promote tolerance if they so chose. Participants are also chosen partially by community. If diverse local leaders from the same community attend residentials and learn to believe in a common political vision, CD may have helped a community lay the groundwork for creating tolerance (Interview 1).

Community Dialogue, unlike Deliberative Polling, seeks to spread its results by high attendance rates and not media attention. The return rate, and the rate of previous participants bringing in new ones, is high (Interview 2). CD aims for around two thirds new participants, and one third previous participants who can help set expectations during discussion and make new participants feel comfortable. If a previous participant wants to attend a second or third residential, he is told that he must bring at least two new participants first, which serves as a way to bring in new blood.

### **C. Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogues**

The Traubmans are also clear in their claims that dialogue will eventually change society toward a new, innovative social intelligence such that governments will change and citizens will live in harmony. They explain:

The public peace process is based on the assumption that there are things governments can do that people cannot; and there are things people can do that governments cannot. The public dialogue process and resulting action demonstrate that citizens have the freedom to be innovative and to create new, deeper relationships. While governments are the official bodies that make peace agreements, newer ideas and sustainable implementation depend on public

consent and involvement (Traubman 2006, Five Stages of the Public Peace Process).

By “new social intelligence” the Traubmans do not refer to politics in the standard sense, or to increased general intelligence. They instead believe that humans will be able to understand each other in a new, deeper way that will lead to world harmony. In their living room, the Traubmans keep posters describing models for a “new social intelligence.” One model is of a set of concentric circles, each representing the boundaries of one’s consciousness. Through dialogue, consciousness is expanded beyond the self, the family, friends and nation to something larger that encompasses all of humanity. The other model shows a triangle with “me” on one base, “you” on the other base, and “new social intelligence” as the top point linking the bases. These two models help show that the Traubmans believe that through dialogue, consciousness will expand and people will reach a “new social intelligence (Interview 10; Interview 11).”

Exactly how “new social intelligence” will lead to world peace is unclear, but the Traubmans’ use the “tipping point” theory of social innovation and apply it to the realm of politics to provide a partial answer. The tipping point theory explains that a few innovators will come up with an idea, which will then become embedded in society. More and more people will accept this idea, until it becomes unstoppable and changes society. The Traubmans believe that dialogue is an idea which will take hold slowly but eventually become unstoppable as it spreads, bringing “a new social intelligence” in its wake. Since the Traubmans feel that dialogue has not reached the point where it spreads rapidly, but rather is still becoming embedded (Interview 10) spending time on self-selected individuals who already believe in the idea makes sense.

Nonetheless, since it is assumed that if enough individuals conceive of social relationships in a new way then peace will be created, the Traubmans express frustration with the many participants who attend but do not spread the idea of dialogue. Sometimes the Traubmans have encouraged participants to speak at college campuses, which can inspire participants to more actively spread awareness of the dialogue process. Colleges are targeted because college students have more of a public voice than younger students (Interview 10). Such outreach should only be conducted when participants are ready, as they must first deeply understand each other. The Traubmans explain that “[w]e did not do any kind of public outreach for until over a year and a half, because we didn't feel we had anything to say until then. We needed time to build interpersonal trust and to learn, enabling our outreach to be successful (Traubman 2006, FAQ).”

Like Community Dialogue, the structure of the Jewish-Palestinian dialogues is not necessarily conducive to this theory of change. One tradeoff with having a self-selected group that enjoys personal reflection through slow-paced dialogue is that these individuals might be less interested in spreading dialogue. Another possible tradeoff entailed in bringing together the same participants is that the dialogues do not reach a large number of people directly.

The Traubmans hope to mitigate the problem of having only a few people involved through indirect exposure to dialogue. High levels of media attention, a comprehensive website, and an extensive email list (2,700 people and institutions (Interview 15)) is hoped to indirectly teach that Jews and Palestinians can live together in harmony. An example of inundating people with trust-inspiring messages can be seen by one link on their enormous website. It is named “What Others Are Doing . . .



Successfully (400 encouraging stories) (Traubman 2006, *A Family's Endeavors Toward A Culture of Meaning*).”

#### **D. Overview**

Whether or not a dialogue group narrows the gap between citizens and politicians can be tested in various ways. To test if citizens become more willing to live with a politician's actions despite disagreements, one could evaluate whether citizens more fully understand the motivations of the politicians. Fishkin explains this logic: “The more you know, think, and talk about some domain in which decisions are taken by a democratically chosen elite, the more you tend to appreciate the constraints, competing demands, and tradeoffs decision-makers face (Fishkin & Luskin 2002, 3).” Of course, as with dialogue in general, greater understanding also runs the risk of clarifying exactly why people disagree. Yet Community Dialogue distributes leaflets explaining various policy measures and Deliberative Polling also distributes a packet of explanatory information on an issue (Fishkin & Luskin 2004, 7).

Citizens can be tested for whether or not they are more likely to push politicians toward peace after attending a dialogue group by measuring an increase in their political participation. There are a number of ways to promote peace. For example: one could vote for more tolerant parties, contact a local representative, teach one's children that the media is overly simplistic, or refuse to support extremist activities. One politician from Northern Ireland told me that even though civil society is weak there, he is strongly influence by even small gestures such as a nod of encouragement when walking down the street (Interview 13). Not all of these activities directly bridge the gap between citizens

and politicians. Bland argues that many local peace-building activities strengthen communities without necessarily impacting politicians (Personal Interview 2006).

## **II. Context**

Now that a theory of change has been established, I will present my schema of context, which is based upon determining the nature of a problem according to its level of severity. I suggest that level of severity can be characterized according to three factors. The first is whether or not people are trying to find solutions through non-violent means. For non-violent methods to succeed, there must be a consensus in the population for non-violence and also a way to contain extremists who try to use violence and undermine the power of those advocating non-violence. The second level of severity is when there is a consensus (that cannot be undermined) to use non-violent solutions, but there is no consensus on what the character of a solution will be. Those participating in the conflict are still extremely torn as to what an acceptable solution would look like although it will be non-violent. The third level of severity is when there is a consensus on non-violence, and on the character of the solution, but no consensus on implementation of the solution. People have agreed to a solution in theory, but are reluctant to carry it out.

Each of the different types of dialogue groups is appropriate to one of the three levels of severity of the problem discussed above. “Human relationships” dialogue groups are relevant given consensus on non-violence but nothing else because of their ability to increase interpersonal trust. They are also relevant in contexts where there is consensus on non-violence and on the character of the solution but not on implementation, because of their ability to reduce prejudice. “Political interest” dialogue group are more relevant given contexts where there is only a consensus on non-violence.

“Public spiritedness” groups are most relevant when there is a consensus on all three of the levels mentioned earlier: non-violence, the character of the solution, and implementation of the solution. By a group being “relevant” I mean that the group is the most salient way in which citizens can address the problems inherent in the context.

I will provide four examples of contexts to make the claim of contextually dependent dialogue more concrete. When there is no agreement on non-violence, citizens should focus their efforts on creating a consensus for non-violence. Building trust can promote non-violence because increased trust can lead to increased pressure on politicians to agree to peace. Israel/Palestine is an example of a context in which violence and distrust runs deep. Solutions to the conflict have been proposed over and over again – solutions that would make all sides better off. The Geneva Accords serve as an example. Yet peace has not been reached. Even where a common vision for the future could be agreed upon, neither side trusts the other to uphold an agreement.<sup>28</sup> Israelis do not trust that Palestinians will keep the peace in the long run due to alleged or professed Palestinian goals to eventually conquer Israel. Palestinians do not trust Israelis to actually want peace as opposed to using peace as a pretext for annexing more and more land (Ross 2006a).

Dialogue groups working to build interpersonal trust can improve the situation by building the belief that the other, as a decent human being, is also serious about long-term peace and able to live a non-violent life. Thus, “human relations” dialogue groups, by

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<sup>28</sup> One could argue that it is actually do to lack of common political vision that there is no interpersonal trust in Israel. Debating whether common political visions lead to trust or vice versa can sound like “the chicken or the egg” story. But I suggest that in order to discuss visions for the future one must first be willing to discuss at all, and that takes interpersonal trust in the absence of peace. More research should be done on this topic.

increasing positive relationships and empathy, are a mechanism by which citizens can build interpersonal trust, and so are relevant to violent contexts.

In contexts where there is only consensus on non-violence but not on the character of the solution or on implementation, the consensus on non-violence creates a fragile peace. The first concern for citizens is to improve the stability of the situation through increasing the robustness of the peace. For example, in Northern Ireland the Good Friday Peace Agreements have constrained all the major parties to achieving their aims non-violently. Nonetheless, the country is still bitterly divided and is struggling to reach consensus on the character of a government so that Britain will relinquish direct rule. In this context, citizens need to learn to think critically for themselves and define what they need for themselves, instead of following polarizing rhetoric. They also must broaden their thinking to include what “the other” needs so as to create a lasting peace. “Political interest” dialogue groups help citizens determine their political needs given the needs of the other and so create the groundwork for addressing the most relevant problem at hand: how to create an enduring peace.

In contexts with consensus on non-violence and the character of a solution, but not on implementation, dialogue groups that reduce prejudice are the most relevant. Implementation only comes when people are willing to believe that they will benefit by implementing the solution. They will not believe that implementation is beneficial if their stereotypes convince them that they should avoid working with people from the other side. For example, in America there is a consensus that African Americans and Caucasians should not use violence to resolve problems over racial differences, and there is also consensus that racial differences should be dealt with through equality before the

law (Jim Crow laws are unacceptable, as are lynchings). Yet there is still a lot of tension over consensus on implementation. Despite laws in the books, discrimination is still a pervasive problem. “Human relationships” dialogue groups directly address the problem of discrimination by reducing prejudice.

In contexts with consensus on all three levels, citizens can help resolve conflicts through finding the best possible solutions for all citizens involved, which is exactly what “public spiritedness” dialogue attempts to accomplish. “Public spiritedness” dialogue is most relevant to contexts where people are willing to think outside their own interests and have strong norms of ethical citizenship. For example, in the United States citizens do not consider using violence over energy issues, and agree that energy should be supplied through private utility companies. There is consensus on implementation as well in that citizens allow private companies to make their own decisions. However, questions still arise as to the details of implementation: should companies invest in solar power, wind, coal, or nuclear energy? “Public spiritedness” dialogue groups look at all sides of the issue objectively to find what answer would benefit the United States. They provide a method for resolving disagreements that lead to logical solutions maximizing everyone’s benefit. The following table summarizes my contextualization of the three conflicts:

**Table 7: Context According to the Problem’s Level of Severity**

0 = inability to use non-violent solutions

1 = consensus to use non-violent solutions (not underminable by extremists)

2 = consensus on the character of the non-violent solution

3 = consensus on implementation

<b>Severity of Context</b>	0	1	1,2	1,2,3
<b>Recommended Dialogue Group and example</b>	“Human relationships” dialogue to build interpersonal trust E.g. Israel	“Political interest” dialogue to build belief in common political vision E.g. Ireland	“Human relationships” dialogue to reduce prejudice E.g. racism in U.S.	“Public spiritedness” to find mutually agreeable solutions to the details of a problem E.g. in which types of power should utility companies invest

The focus of each dialogue group intuitively accords with the context of the problem that the dialogue group is trying to address. None of the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue or Community Dialogue’s activities touch deeply upon “rational arguments” modes of interaction, which is intuitively understandable given the contexts of Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland. In Israel, there is no consensus to use non-violence, and in Ireland that consensus is still weak and there is no consensus on the character of the state. In such situations, asking for public-spirited debate on solutions best for everyone seems like an outrageously tall task. In a deeply divided society, it is difficult to ask people to think for the good of others.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Fishkin’s Deliberative Polling Weekends have also not focused on the most divisive issues for its context (such as abortion), and so the lack of strong individual interests compared to contexts such as Northern Ireland and Israel may reflect that. Fishkin supplies participants with packets of information presenting data on many possible options, further reinforcing the lack of expectation that individuals have strong interests.

## Conclusion

This paper attempts to answer the question of what types of dialogue groups exist in the field. To answer this question, interviews as well as political science and psychology literature were used in order to compile the different modes of interaction utilized by dialogue groups. These modes were found to cluster into three distinct categories by goal. “Contact theory,” “personal stories,” “therapeutic practices,” and “hidden common ground I” all work to transform relationships between people such that they become more positive. Thus, dialogue groups that rely on these modes of interaction were termed “human relationships” dialogue.

Similarly, “underlying interests,” “common ground II,” “authenticity,” and “linked fates” are modes of interaction that all focus on transforming perceptions of political interests to tolerate the interests of others. Dialogue groups based on these modes were termed “political interest” dialogue. Finally, “public spiritedness” dialogue that transforms people’s decision-making methods so that thinking for the good of all becomes the norm, bases itself on “rational arguments” mode of interaction. Through organizing dialogue groups according to mode of interaction, three types of dialogue emerged.

Three case studies were used illustrate these three types of dialogue. First, the modes of interactions used by the cases were established to show that each case corresponds to a different type of dialogue. Then, the organization structures of the groups were analyzed to see how the facilitators of these groups chose formats conducive to the type of dialogue used. Organizational structure was broken down into time spent

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on discussion, pace, focus (types of issues discussed and methods for discussing them), location, participant selection, and type of facilitator.

The three case studies all and functioned in democracies and so show examples dialogue groups where citizens have the theoretical ability to change their societies. The Traubman's Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogues, which gather together Jews, Palestinians, and others once a month in small groups. This dialogue group is the archetype of the "human relationships" dialogue. It utilizes all of the modes of interaction associated with "human relationships" and structures their meetings accordingly; participants meet regularly, in intimate sessions where they are encouraged to deeply understand each other.

Community Dialogue, facilitated by a number of people in Northern Ireland, presents a "political interest" dialogue group although it also utilizes many of the modes of interaction associated with "human relationships" dialogue. Through fast-paced political discussions, local leaders learn to identify their needs and what they would be willing to live with in the future, given that others have different political desires. In this way, the participants realize that it might be possible to have a common vision for the future.

Fishkin's Deliberative Polling randomly selects citizens that form a representative sample of a population to discuss solutions to problems. Many different modes of interaction were used, but the focus was on "rational arguments," the mode affiliated with "public spiritedness" dialogue. Participants learned to think for the sake of their entire society.



Many areas pertaining to dialogue groups are open for further research. I suggest departing from the existing literature by proposing that research should be done trying to identify for which contexts different types of dialogue might be most relevant. Some preliminary thoughts were presented on a definition for different contexts, and also which of the three types of dialogue delineated earlier would be most able to address the problems inherent in each of those contexts. Other areas for future research are: finding a systematic way to decide which modes of interaction should be included in a given schema, investigating why dialogue groups used modes of interactions apart from those pertinent to their focus, and analyzing which organizational structures are most effective at enhancing any particular type of dialogue.

Dialogue groups have been all but overlooked in the field of political science. Yet they, along with many similar endeavors, can conduct important work in promoting peace and stability within civil societies. Many questions remain unanswered as to when and where dialogue groups can most benefit a society. This paper provided a starting point for answering those questions by explaining what different types of dialogue try to accomplish and providing case studies showing how one can identify types of dialogue in practicing groups.

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