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## The Rhetoric of Public Dialogue

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# The Rhetoric of Public Dialogue

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You stand in the back of the room as a difficult public meeting unfolds—say, in Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A. In a nondescript community center in a lower middle-class urban neighborhood, two dozen or so well-meaning parents have gathered, most of whom are worried about their children remaining in an aging school where mold appears to present a health problem. Several school district administrators, also sincere, have been invited to address the issue. They assure the parents that the threat is probably minimal, and that they don't want to take action now before they get definitive evidence. The district obviously doesn't want negative publicity. Further, the administrators remind the group, although the district can finance a health risk study, closing the school even temporarily now would be a costly move that the district could not afford—especially because voters have consistently voted down bond issues.

Some of the parents are very worried, but in this working-class community they have few resources—and little time—with which to protest. They know the district is underfunded and doesn't have the money for an extensive cleanup program. Others don't know enough about the mold, or about district finances, to be deeply concerned, but they think the problem bears watching and want to be kept informed. Some African-American parents are convinced that administrators wouldn't have tolerated such a health hazard for a single day in an all-white school. A small group, both black and white, seem to be passionate and ready to march on the school district headquarters if necessary.

A dynamic and charismatic woman rises to persuade the group to mobilize, to contact the newspaper and local television stations, to march on the district headquarters, and to begin to organize a strike by holding their children out of school. The "powers that be," she argues, "have victimized our children for the last time. We can't let our children get sicker and sicker while the school board delays and delays. Make them treat our children like the rich white suburban districts treat their children!" The excitement of the moment, combined with the frustration of inaction, generates enthusiastic responses from most of the audience. The woman volunteers to be the media spokesperson and to

organize volunteers into work teams. Several people begin animated conversations, affirming how good it feels to be "doing something at last," to be "making a difference," to "have the issues defined for us," to "have a leader." "We've talked enough," one man said. "Now is the time for action." Off to the side, some others are silent, and appear perplexed.

It is hard to be neutral about children's safety, or about the power of entrenched interests that often oppose grassroots citizen action. Observers might be justified in asking some pointed questions, however. Is this striking example of skillful individual speaking also a good example of effective communication? Activism is affirmed, and a voice previously unheard has been raised. Something will get done; the light of public opinion will shine on what may be a bad condition. Yet, in the language of the enthusiastic man who wanted more action and fewer words, when have we "talked enough"? Are there conditions in which persuasion and polarization can be disruptive and more nuanced processes of public dialogue might be more helpful?

This kind of public meeting sketches the opportunities of dialogue in public, but also the dilemmas of concerned citizens participating in the public sphere. The issues of our hypothetical yet recognizable event, in fact, are those that characterize a wide range of citizen options in democratic decision-making: How do we act in concert on significant issues, inviting and hearing relevant voices, while still recognizing the need to translate talk into social action? What is the relationship between individual leadership and group decision-making? How, as we consider both public speaking and public listening, do participants hold their own ground while remaining open to the new insights others may bring? What is the relationship between deliberation and information, and how can media in general—and journalism in particular—clarify that relation? What kinds of dialogic tensions are introduced when minority groups must also encounter a history of nonrecognition and diminished identity in the public sphere? What are the realistic sites and boundaries of public talk, and how can we skillfully clear the physical and psychological spaces for realistic dia-

logue? Which decisions are amenable to democratic deliberation, and which must rely on deeper and perhaps more expert testimony?

The radical ambiguity of such a context illustrates some crucial differences in how Western society, at least, respects—and even conceptualizes—communication. For example, many would assume that a public meeting held in the absence of full scientific or technical information about a subject would be pointless or, at best, merely cathartic. Others might just as naturally assume that the meeting should be an arena in which various interests are not only expressed but confronted with competing interests in a winner-loser format. Public gatherings are commonly treated as sites for individual persuasion, individual resistance, individual tolerance, and individual rhetoric. Communication is imagined to be what one person, group, or argument does to another. A speaker who mobilizes sentiments in favor of her perspective is generally presumed to be engaging in effective communication.

In an alternate and rapidly emerging perspective, however, communication effectiveness is less readily

identified with individual achievement or with rapid action. Nor is it as readily associated with the goals of social persuasion as they have been traditionally defined. Aristotle's well known definition of rhetoric as the art of finding the available means of persuasion in a situation has been expanded in recent years to include more invitational and facilitative rhetorical styles and more inclusive rhetorical goals. If traditional persuasion advanced the goal of changing minds and attitudes, then that clearly applied to many communication plans. Also relevant was Kenneth Burke's (1967) reminder that rhetoric depends as well upon social processes of identification. Yet such perspectives could also leave unexamined those communication encounters in which minds and voices meet collaboratively to shape perspectives that might not have developed by individual effort alone. Further, although "dialogue" is hardly a new concept, more theorists and practitioners than ever are now concerned with tracing its processes and values through the demands of difficult and confrontive public communication settings.

## I. Introduction: The Timeliness of Dialogue in Public

Our purpose is to chart the contributions of contemporary theorists and practitioners of dialogue to public sphere thinking, especially in the West, and to unfold, when possible, the rhetorical patterns inherent in their appeals. We highlight major ideas and contributions, and focus, when appropriate, on conceptual overlaps and commonalities across the various approaches. We offer an interdisciplinary bibliographic essay to lend a sense of coherence to a chaotic-looking field.

Although we will not forge ideological arguments for or against the writers we survey, perhaps some biases will become obvious as the analysis unfolds. It would be both wise and fair to divulge them here, to the extent that we realize them ourselves. First, we are committed to the full social and political inclusion of previously unheard voices, and we suspect that cultural issues have for too long been dismissed as politically irrelevant. Inclusion means more than just telling someone they have a say; it also involves an expressed willingness to listen. Second, consistent with Barbara Herrnstein Smith (1997) and in contrast to claims from Lynne Cheney (1996) and others, we seriously question the objectivist position that transcendent or universal

norms of truth are automatically applicable in public discourse, and doubt that any focused discussion of social communication can ever be apolitical. This need not brand us as relativists in the sense that every position is equally justifiable, but it does suggest that our approach to communication is at least a contextualist one. It matters what one says, but it also matters where one is, and with whom, and what expectations, values, and traditions are at play. Third, although we respect individual skills approaches to communication improvement and encourage the argumentative tradition of communication study, we regard these as only partial responses to contemporary dilemmas of democracy and intergroup conflict. The sum of individual achievements is often quite different from collaborative achievement; dialogue is a more synergistic, interdependent, and unpredictable process than many imagine. Finally, we acknowledge something of a Westernist inclination, even while trying to be sensitive to the full range of globally persuasive political and cultural discourses. We do not apologize for a sustained faith in the fullest possible participation by everyday citizens in their own government, wherever that government may

be, and the fullest possible public communication of those citizens with their representatives and—perhaps most important—with each other.

### A. Informal Definitions

The key terms of rhetoric, public, and dialogue are obviously central. As James Aune (1994) notes in clearing a space for his own rhetorical study of Marxist public philosophy, rhetoric is a highly ambiguous term with multiple meanings in contemporary society: “It functions simultaneously as a term of abuse in ordinary language (‘mere rhetoric’), as a conceptual system (‘Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*’), as a distinct stance toward discourse production (‘the rhetorical tradition’), and as a characteristic set of arguments (‘Reagan’s rhetoric’)” (p. 50). Our own use of rhetoric most nearly coincides with Aune’s final connotation, although it transcends it, too. Political theorist Iris Marion Young (1997) finds the term “rhetoric” especially useful because it “announces the situatedness of communication” (p. 71). Clearly, we will not be applying Aristotle’s classical definition of rhetoric narrowly and literally, as we are concerned with the construction of contexts, and how talk helps us to understand them, far more than in traditional approaches to persuasion. We will use rhetoric in this wider sense, one that two of us discussed elsewhere (Cissna & Anderson, 2002) as “patterns of talking and thinking about ongoing communication challenges”:

[Such rhetorics are] similar to speech habits if we think of speech, as Buber did, as the elemental, existential way humans constitute themselves in and for the world. For example, there is in some circles a “rhetoric” of so-called American individualism that embeds in our talk the view that rights are individually possessed and useful in pressing individuals’ claims against others within an inherently competitive social framework. Another rhetoric, as a way of talking about society, commonly assumes that voting and majority rule are the fundamental tenets of democracy that always trump other goals and interests. (p. 251)

A particularly good example of this perspective, and one that has been persuasive within the communitarian movement, is Mary Ann Glendon’s (1991) evocation and critique of Western culture’s extant “rhetoric of rights” (pp. 171-183). In *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*, she seeks to “refine” this rhetoric, but first she shows how it is built into our linguistic frames and our talk about what is reasonable in the world. In other words, a rhetoric—as

we use it here—does not point to the inherently “real” way things actually are, but to how certain people talk about the reality they experience and, thus, how reflexively they shape and constitute that very reality. Rhetorics—plural—are thus ultimately contingent, and depend upon the circumstances in which people find themselves (and find themselves out). In this essay, of course, we are suggesting that contemporary descriptions of the potential of public dialogue in the West tend to form a reasonably consistent overall frame for discourse, a rhetoric that implies several subrhetorics.

The second central term, “public,” can be vexing and complex in unexpected ways, as Dewey (1927), Lippmann (1922), Arendt (1959), and other political philosophers demonstrate. For our purposes here, we rely on vernacular understandings as much as possible. “Public” acts and sentiments are those that openly acknowledge a relatively wide and possibly unanticipated range of auditors. In public, communicators forego a degree of control that they maintain (or imagine) in private or personalized interchanges; publicity means that others’ meanings may mesh unpredictably with one’s own intentions. Speaking in public means that communicators manage their meanings with less certainty. In public, we may be admired and revered, but also misquoted and reviled in ways beyond our control and even outside our knowledge. Public communication removes communicators even further from a sense of ownership or authorship of messages; it opens out, in fact, into a condition of unintended coauthorship. We’re not much concerned here with the wider argument about whether scholars should focus on *the public*, *a public*, or *publics*. Certainly there are overlapping spheres of talk that merge, emerge, and remerge in social life. We want to suggest merely that the basis of a genuinely public life is talk in the open, and, as James Carey (1991) would have it:

The important thing about public conversation is that, in an old saw of E. M. Forster, we don’t know what we think until we hear what we say. Conversation not only forms opinion; it also forms memory. We remember best the things that we say, the things that we say in response to someone else with whom we are engaged. (p. 121)

Through freely chosen, if risky, conversation, we create a public realm into which we can speak, and in which we discover we have more to say. The implications of the rhetoric-public connection for democracy are enormous.

The third term, “dialogue,” is especially important for communication professionals. Although two of us have attempted previously to describe in some detail a specific approach to, and definition of, dialogue—one that emphasizes what we call “moments of meeting” (Anderson & Cissna, 1997; Cissna & Anderson, 1998, 2002)—we recognize that many different approaches to dialogue validly capture different implications of the process. In communication studies, the works of Buber (e.g., 1965), Gadamer (e.g., 1982), Bakhtin (e.g., 1986), and Habermas (e.g., 1984) have been particularly influential, although they have been applied in different ways in different corners of the discipline. To paraphrase perhaps too simplistically:

- *Martin Buber* wants to conceive of dialogue as moments in which communicators “turn toward” each other in full recognition of how particular and unique the “other” is, confirming him or her while remaining fully ready to be surprised by what the other offers. The famous “I-Thou” distinction was Buber’s way of saying that relation is the primary fact of human existence, and that—as he and his interpreters are fond of saying—“all real living is meeting” (Buber, 1958, p. 11).
- *Hans-Georg Gadamer*, in his philosophical hermeneutics, emphasizes that dialogue is the basic mode of human understanding; we communicate not to *reproduce* each other’s meanings internally, but to *produce* unique meanings from the interpretive interchange that might be unpredictable from knowing communicators’ individual intentions. To interpret or to know, we question texts dialogically (which are themselves answers to other questions) and allow texts to question us. Words are not tools of communication, but the environment in which communication becomes possible in the first place. Thus, if we are truly in conversation with another, Gadamer thought, the conversation is not being conducted, but instead the conversation conducts us, taking us over in surprising ways.
- *Mikhail Bakhtin*, who perhaps takes dialogue in more directions than other theorists, conceives of the process not just in terms of texts or face-to-face speech behaviors, but assumes that dialogue is woven into the very basis of language itself. Language is inherently dialogic—each word reverberating with the history of its voicings—and through language human experience becomes inherently multiple. A self or a consciousness to Bakhtin is not a singular possession, is not “mine” or “yours,” but instead inherently depends upon otherness.

- *Jürgen Habermas* explores how consensus and agreement form in public, and this is seen by some as a foundation for a genuinely public sphere. Although he used the term dialogue only occasionally (if pointedly), he contrasted dialogic concepts such as the “ideal speech situation” (one that can lead to consensus through the force of better arguments offered by communicators with equal access and equal opportunities to speak and question others’ speech) to the often monological and authoritarian consciousness by which people are subjugated. Although the ideal speech situation has been criticized as being excessively abstract, Habermas was attempting to suggest that competent communicators *concretely* anticipate that their interlocutors will communicate in these ways before they begin to offer reasons for their actions. Thus, the basis of reason and reason-giving, and therefore the basis of conversation and deliberation, is a sense of dialogue.

Most theorists and practitioners who study public dialogue appear to focus on communication conditions in which communicators are somehow present and available for each other’s genuine address, who are willing to be surprised by outcomes they cannot predict in advance, and who are willing to value the sheer differentness of other people’s contributions. The outcomes may resemble consensus, but they may also resemble conflict. In fact, as we will see, some conceptualizations of dialogue value conflict as a productive dialogic element and do not presume that convergence is a necessary criterion for dialogue’s worth. The critic Robert Grudin (1996) believes that the unique value of dialogue can be attributed to two basic factors—reciprocity and strangeness. The role of dialogue in public life is to provide what we need most in order to understand our potential: the support of mutual presence and a sense of being with others (reciprocity), combined with the shock of learning what we don’t already know or have (strangeness). It provides the productive dialectical tensions of similarity and difference, of comfort and disorientation, of collaboration and conflict.

### *B. The Scope of the Essay*

Interest in dialogue has exploded over the past two decades. This renewed appreciation has cut across disciplinary boundaries and has involved academic theorists and applied practitioners alike. We will present representative sources in two substantive divisions, following this introduction. First, we summarize rhetorical themes that have been crucial to advocates of a more dialogic public sphere, including concepts represented

within such trends as deliberative democracy and multiculturalism. The specific subrhetorics we examine are access/space, difference/voice, deliberation, and civility. Extending the rhetorical themes of public dialogue, we also highlight the controversial movement of public or civic journalism—the international implications of which were summarized for readers of *Communication Research Trends* readers several years ago by media scholar John Pauly (1999). Public journalists consider dialogic responses to the information requirements of the public, and justify or question journalism's institutional responsibilities for democratic deliberation and decision-making. In the essay's second major section, we examine a wide variety of specific institutional programs and projects (many of which offer an online presence) that have been designed to facilitate new forms of public dialogue.

A conceptual terrain this large needs fences. Of course, we will not attempt to survey the wide literature in interpersonal or small group dialogue, nor will we have the space to probe much into the many works that advise intergroup and intercultural dialogue. General works in the theory of dialogue, too, are best surveyed elsewhere. Nor is this a good venue to place our own work in this larger context (e.g., Anderson, Dardenne, & Killenberg, 1994; Anderson, Cissna, & Arnett, 1994; Cissna & Anderson, 2002), a task we will leave to others.

While our scope is wide, we regret omissions. This kind of essay cannot include more than a representative sample of authors and organizations impor-

tant to dialogue studies, but readers who are familiar with this literature could identify sources that might have been included as readily as our choices. We have gravitated toward high profile authors in scholarly and public life, and toward books, organizations, and websites with particularly striking relevance for communication specialists. We excluded one obviously relevant area, however—the extensive legal literature in free speech and free expression. Although clearly applicable to the study of dialogue, it is a dauntingly large area of concern that deserves a bibliographic essay devoted exclusively to it. Theoretical works on the dimensions of dialogue were generally not included in our survey either, although we suspect that various connections to them will be clear in our analyses.

In addition, we have taken the decade of the 1990s and beyond as our area of primary interest. This decision to focus on the past 10 to 15 years isn't wholly arbitrary, however; advocates of public journalism and other political commentators typically note that various crass and polarizing election practices of the 1980s jarred social and political commentators in new ways (see Rosen, 1999; Yankelovich, 1991, 1999). In the face of an increasingly thin and trivialized public sphere, they especially emphasized the need to reinvigorate public life and reinvestigate Dewey's notion of a more conversational polity. Although some important investigations of public dialogue predate 1990, the years since then have generated unparalleled interest.

## II. Dialogue as a Hinge Concept in Recent Public Life

Earlier we suggested that one understanding of rhetoric situates it as a patterned process of talk within which people develop not only their own messages, and not only their own styles of listening and observing messages, but also their shared expectations for the appropriate or credible or moral outcomes for public talk. That is, the presence of a rhetoric suggests ethical implications, and has a *telos* and an *ethos* as well as a *praxis*. We consider dialogue to be a hinge concept because it clarifies so many ethical and pragmatic communication concerns, showing their interdependence.

### A. Tuning a Rhetorical Perspective

If we are attuned to rhetoric, the social role of dialogue becomes clearer. Communication is far more than just a representation of reality, but in dynamic and reflexive ways it actually constitutes the reality to which it also responds. A social constructionist—for this is the name commonly attached to such an approach—does not assume that reality's somethings are invented capriciously from empty nothingness, nor that anything can mean anything in the loose sense in which some parodists of postmodern philosophy might imply (Hacking, 1999). Instead, constructionist thinkers want to specify as carefully as possible how actual talk is the context in which rhetorical judgments

about reality are formed, asserted, and become socially persuasive. This is similar to how the discursive psychologist and communication theorist John Shotter (1993) describes his “rhetorical-responsive version” of social constructionist philosophy. In the following points, we paraphrase Shotter’s rhetorical premises developed in the introductory essay (pp. 1-16) of his *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life*:

- All behavior is subject to argumentative evaluation in the context of previous argument.
- Social construction of meaning occurs through action that functions to change persons’ attitudes and perceptions; that is, practical meaning relies on broadly persuasive—though not individualistic—processes.
- Social and cultural expectations do not develop as literal agreements about beliefs, values, and meanings, but as processes more similar to the classical rhetorical concept of *topoi*, or ideational “places,” that offer “dilemmatic themes or ‘commonplaces’ for use by us as resources, from which we can draw the two or more sides of an argument” (p. 14).
- Language lends what Shotter calls “first form” to ill-defined social phenomena such as acts and feelings that are “only vaguely or partially ordered” in our common understandings before we talk about them (p. 14). Thus, we build common life by creating a vocabulary for useful and subsequent critique, and, in what Shotter calls the “most important characteristic” of rhetoric, perceive through our language as much as we perceive through our senses.

In other words, talk matters because it is far more than a tool for reflecting or representing underlying social reality. It is, rather, deeply generative. Critics who are alert to rhetorics, then, might serve as antennae for social and cultural trends that contribute to democratic inclusiveness, or trends that threaten it.

Different authors acknowledge rhetoric in different ways, of course, and we should not assume that all authors we survey will share our constructionist perspective. However, this rhetorical lens appears to help identify which rhetorical themes predominate in the contemporary dialogue about public dialogue. For example, one feature seems especially prominent in this literature—the persistent concern for access to dialogic opportunities.

### **The Rhetoric of Access and Space**

Dialogue depends on who is present and on their commitment to staying. These aren’t the only things it relies on, of course, but it would seem wrongheaded to

praise the benefits of dialogue in the abstract, apart from the presence of those who have an important investment in how it turns out. “Dialogue” (as a singular package or thing) doesn’t exist; “dialogue with . . .” exists. It would be comforting to think that the word “public” as a modifier in front of dialogue would mean that relevant human presence could be counted on, but that is true only if certain conditions are met.

For example, a number of writers have commented on how modern life has diminished the available forums that offer norms of dialogue. Of course, the classic contemporary treatment of dialogic access is Habermas’s somewhat controversial concept of the “ideal speech situation,” most descriptions of which predate the period of our primary concern here. Habermas (1984) has argued that those engaged in meaningful interaction communicate pragmatically as if they expect an agreement (a substantive consensus, for instance, on a policy issue) to be possible—presupposing a set of hoped-for but often hypothetical conditions. The purpose of the conditions is to attempt to create an “undistorted” brand of communicative understanding that is not readily subject to domination by power interests. Examples of such conditions include the assumption that cooperative processes best lead to mutually agreed-upon interpretations of truth, that communicators trust that the force of better arguments will be recognized in discourse, that communicators will have equal access to such public talk, and that, once involved in such discourse, communicators will have equal opportunities to make claims, express personal feelings and beliefs, and advance arguments about others’ perspectives. Habermas, it seems, grounds his call for rational dialogue in a procedural rhetoric of access, one that defines participants as equal partners in a definitional venture by which a form of truth is sought.

As Sara Evans and Harry Boyte (1992) argue in their book *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America*, citizens have become mere consumers of political messages and appeals rather than participants in political processes. The change is not directly attributable to villains we can easily blame; rather, our participation has been undermined by the erosion of access to the kind of places that stimulate free talk and our vigorous assertions of what we think:

The central argument of this book is that particular sorts of public places in the community, what we call free spaces, are the environments in which people are able to learn a new self-

respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue. Put simply, free spaces are settings between private lives and large-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence, and vision. These are, in the main, voluntary forms of association with a relatively open and participatory character—many religious organizations, clubs, self-help and mutual aid societies, reform groups, neighborhood, civic, and ethnic groups, and a host of other associations grounded in the fabric of community life. The sustained public vitality and egalitarianism of free spaces are strikingly unlike the “public” face of reactionary or backward-looking protests. Democratic action depends upon these free spaces, where people experience a schooling in citizenship and learn a vision of the common good in the course of struggling for change. (pp. 17-18)

As they analyze various U.S. movements that have solidified human dignity in realms of civil rights, labor, and gender relations, among others, Evans and Boyte found “dramatic differences” and one commonality: “In each case we find the common characteristics of free spaces . . . communal roots, autonomy, and public character” (p. 24). Thus, they advocate the dialogic potential of the free spaces for enhancing talk and sharing concerns that they find in these organizational commitments. At the same time, there is cause for concern if social critic Robert Putnam’s (2000) analysis in *Bowling Alone* is accurate. Putnam uses the bowling metaphor to indicate that more Americans, at least, are reducing their organizational and associational ties outside the home and workplace; in this trend, he perceives a threat to democratic dialogue. He agrees, it would seem, that free spaces are crucial for a democratic community, even when the spaces are not sites specifically designed for direct dialogue across racial, ethnic, political, or generational differences.

In a similar vein, if a less political one than either the Evans and Boyte or Putnam books, sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1999) has investigated quasi-public opportunities for dialogue in *The Great Good Place*. After surveying various types of social and experiential evidence, he suggests that industrialized society is gradually eliminating what he calls “third places”—those settings that involve conversations of identity that are not intrinsically related to home (first places) or work (second places). Without excessive nostalgia, he passionately and unapologetically elevates the roles many

of these places played—and could play again—in our development as full persons and citizens. Barber shops and beauty shops, taverns, bridge clubs, community centers, bookstores, cafés, and other third places invite participation without agendas; their very openness invites dialogic talk that explores unanticipated agendas. Although written by an academic, this book also has resonated with a wider popular audience.

Christopher Phillips’s (2001) book on dialogic access, *Socrates Café: A Fresh Taste of Philosophy*, also was intended for this wider nonacademic public. Yet, as the subtitle suggests, Phillips’s approach also can reach a wide range of intellectually inclined readers who are curious about how substantive conversations about serious issues can be sparked in public. Phillips believes that dialogues need clear but minimal sponsorship if citizens are to learn to question private and public issues of common social concern. Once together, people willingly test their assumptions about life’s problems, showing them, perhaps, that even seemingly unique and personalized issues are shared by others. These learning dialogues assume that answers are not known in advance, and Phillips, as a convener, does not have a stake in defining them for the inquirers. He encourages genuine inquiry and questioning, which is more than just asking a lot of questions. Socrates’s approach “reveals people to themselves, . . . [and] makes them see what their opinions really amount to” (p. 20). Although Phillips argues that this can be crucial for people, “I do not think that Socrates felt that habitual use of this method ‘makes people happier.’ The fulfillment that comes from Socratizing comes only at a price—it could well make us *unhappier*, more uncertain, more troubled, as well as more fulfilled” (p. 21). With this reminder, Phillips underscores an essential insight—dialogue in itself is not necessarily an emotional salve for participants. It can unmask or even create new conflicts as well as help people deal with previous ones.

Margaret J. Wheatley’s (2002) *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* is probably the least academic book included in this essay. In it, this experienced organizational consultant describes the kind of suggestions and questions that have been effective for her in “hosting” dialogues and conversations for professionals over the past decade or more. Although her language is simple, it is hardly simplistic; in fact, its tone accents the kind of access that scholarly theorists such as Buber and Dewey would also advocate. She acknowledges an

equal potential for participation, curiosity about persons, assisted listening, slowing down for reflection about common problems, a recognition that humans naturally think conversationally, and a recognition that dialogue is often “messy” (p. 29). Later in the book, she also discusses a series of invitational conversation “starters” that have involved people with each other. For example, one of them—“When have I experienced working for the common good?”—has implications that link the community-based concerns of Evans and Boyte (1992) and Oldenburg (1999) with the fears of political philosophers who worry that cultural issues of difference may be dismissed too readily in treatments of dialogic access.

Perhaps the most vexing problems of dialogic access involve the question of how to invite the fullest possible range of interests in politically charged deliberations. Although democratic participation would seem to rest most fundamentally on an unproblematic assumption of full and equal access to the structures of public dialogue and political participation, it hardly takes a career historian to understand that many groups have felt excluded from realistic access, even when access has been nominally guaranteed. Some feminist cultural theorists, including Anne Phillips (1993) and Iris Marion Young (1990), point out that impartial structures such as universal citizenship, equal treatment, and the right to vote do not mitigate group differences in practice; they only sound, well, “ideal.”

According to this perspective, a public rhetoric of impartiality spreads the fiction that such identities are or should be meaningless. Discussing Young’s work, Phillips describes how granting historically oppressed minorities a say in deliberations can be a less than fully dialogic move. Often, according to Phillips (1993):

We are allowed to voice, but are not encouraged to press, our own specific concerns. Fairness is then conceived as a matter of putting oneself in the other person’s shoes—but, as a number of recent feminist theorists have noted, there is an unfortunate asymmetry in this. The injunction can sound positive enough when addressed to those in comfortable positions of power, who do not need shaking out of their specific and narrow concerns. The same injunction can be totally disabling for those less fortunately placed. When an oppressed group is called upon to put its own partial needs aside, it is being asked to legitimate its own oppression. (p. 94)

Such thinkers stress that access to power is a complicated thing, and that fully dialogic conceptions cannot be based on simple generalizations of equality, impartiality, and open invitations to participate. (Indeed, in many ways, this is the basis of Young’s critique of Habermas’s “ideal speech situation” [see Habermas, 1984; Young, 1990].) These generalizations can lead to a “mechanical interpretation of fairness” that simply “suppresses difference” (Young, 1990, p. 11). Further, “sometimes recognizing particular rights for groups is the only way to promote their full participation. Some fear that such differential treatment again stigmatizes these groups. I show how this is true only if we continue to understand difference as opposition—identifying equality with sameness and difference with deviance or devaluation” (p. 11).

When some theorists (Young, at times, among them) suggest quota representations of some marginalized groups (women, ethnic minorities) in certain political dialogues, and even veto powers in issues central to the concerns of those groups, they raise not only puzzling logistical issues for allies and opponents alike, but intensely problematic philosophical issues for theorists of liberal dialogue. Phillips is not ready to go that far, but reasons that public life may need an enhanced concern for how groups with specific identities can be consulted in special ways, gaining potent access to the dialogues of power when and where they are most affected: “Political equality is not guaranteed by the equal right to vote, nor gender neutrality by the abstractions of the liberal individual. Abstract individualism imposes a unitary conception of human needs and concerns, and this serves to marginalize those groups who may differ from the dominant norm” (p. 95).

In sum, the rhetoric of access often is expressed through emphasizing the context of dialogue. More specifically, dialogue is not just a set of behaviors and interpretations, but in addition is considered a place—or, stated differently, a space marked off with special boundaries of expectation and preparation. Many of the theorists surveyed here believe that experts cannot will dialogue, or even “teach” it in the traditional sense of that word. Instead, they create or cultivate spaces within which dialogue is more likely to spark. Organizational consultant William Isaacs (1999) calls this an “architecture of the invisible” in his book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*. He recognizes the field-based nature of dialogue and operationalizes it in terms of “setting the container” for dialogue. Dialogue is not capable of being “managed,” but

it is more likely to occur in some situated or “contained” places, in which special preparations for its unique demands have been made. This is a very different rhetorical move from how most people imagine that dialogue occurs; those who aspire to dialogue often assume that experts must “teach” dialogue, “conduct” it, or “manage” its outcomes. In this newer rhetorical portrait of dialogic space that we are describing, consultants do not attempt to “do a dialogue” for a group (although some consultants still describe their task that way), but rather they help a group get out of its own way, clearing the kind of space necessary for new learning to develop.

Dialogue facilitators talk of social and cultural “clearings” in which conflict-confronting dialogue no longer seems like pie-in-the-sky optimism, even when persons and groups are separated by wide gulfs between their cultural traditions or seemingly incommensurate value premises. In fact, as we show in the next section, conflict is an essential element in current thinking about dialogue.

### **The Rhetoric of Difference and Voice**

“The key figure in public life is the stranger,” wrote Parker Palmer (1985, p. 56), the noted educator and one of our ablest commentators on the relation between community and spirituality. What could he mean?

Some citizens might impulsively assume instead that the most important public figure is the leader. Or that the ally, perhaps, is key for them—or the representative, the spokesperson, the neighbor, or the mediator. Yet dialogue, its most helpful theorists and philosophers remind us, gains most of its power from the dissimilarities of its participants and ideas, and not—as some optimists would have it—from how much we agree or how tranquilly we talk. In dialogue, we confront what and who we are not, and in doing so discover more of who we can be. Any opportunity for dialogue that promises well-being and consensus is surely guilty of false advertising or naïveté. This is not to assume that well-being and consensus are improbable events; they may be enabled in positive ways by dialogue, but dialogue might also show different people how distant their goals and values really are. Most contemporary dialogue theorists argue that without difference, we have no potential to learn, and no confirmation that is meaningful. Without conflict, we lose our perspective on what needs to be done.

The difference-dialogue link has inspired many recent explorations of political theory and social controversy. Most of them depend at least implicitly upon

the concept of culture—a term, as Raymond Williams (1976) once famously observed, that is one of the most complicated words in the English language (p. 76).

We previously mentioned the feminist perspective of Iris Marion Young, who warns that we should not over-rely on assumptions of equality in, and extensions of equal access to, public forums if it is full democratic dialogue that we desire. She extends her argument controversially and at times courageously into the midst of the fray over group difference, and the difference it should make. In her most famous book, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) as well as in more recent work (1997), her point about dialogue appears to be that it is both a guarantor and outcome of just social policy. Genuine justice in a multicultural and pluralistic social order, however, is never merely “distributive”; it cannot depend on a conception in which justice or dialogic fairness are dispensed equally for all, as if they were products:

The distributive paradigm defines social justice as the morally proper distribution of social benefits and burdens among society’s members. Paramount among these are wealth, income, and other material resources. The distributive definition of justice often includes, however, nonmaterial social goods such as rights, opportunity, power, and self-respect. (1990, p. 16)

If she is right, the distributive paradigm characterizes conceptions of justice from a wide variety of political points of view—conservative, liberal, even Marxist. From this perspective, the public’s need is to find ways to arrange better distribution of material and moral resources, moving them from the powerful groups that control them to less powerful groups.

It all sounds egalitarian and fair. Young, however, offers a dialogic critique of this paradigm. For her, power (along with rights, self-respect, and other non-material dimensions of justice) cannot be considered as products to be held and dispensed. Instead, they are relations. From her perspective, justice results from a dialogue of recognitions, and recognitions respond to the actual lived differences in how groups have been treated, are being treated, and will be treated. And justice demands that groups often *not* be treated alike (for example, if they have born clearly different kinds of historical stigma). Rhetorics of “impartiality,” evidently a god-term of the highest democratic order, have not served society well in cultural conflicts. A consistent theory of impartiality, Young believes,

assumes a monologic moral reason, a single subject attempting to get out of its myopic point of view. If one assumes instead that moral reason is dialogic, the product of discussion among differently situated subjects all of whom desire recognition and acknowledgment from the others, then there is no need for a universal point of view to pull people out of egoism. (p. 106)

Even Habermas, Young claims, who has also advanced “the project of a moral reason that recognizes the plurality of subjects” (p. 106) and who has developed a “conception of dialogic reason” (p. 107), is still bound by his commitment to a universalizable normative reason that unintentionally ignores much of how oppression actually works. What we need is not for marginalized groups to be told they are equal and that they are to be treated impartially in receiving rights dispensed by authorities—this legitimates older authority structures. Rather, political structures must ensure the clash and clamor of voices from these groups that often hold different social and cultural agendas. It is not helpful for powerful groups to be considered “unmarked” or assumed to be normative, and their positions the “default” (presumably correct) ones; their positions must be represented and justified in the dialogue as well, along with those less powerful. “If normative reason is dialogic,” Young reasons, “just norms are most likely to arise from the real interaction of people with different points of view who are drawn out of themselves by being forced to confront and listen to others. Just decisionmaking structures must thus be democratic, ensuring a voice and vote to all the particular groups involved in and affected by the decisions” (p. 116). This defines justice as a dialogue of mutual recognitions, not as a condition in which weak groups wait for distributions of power or resources from those more powerful.

Charles Taylor emphasizes the concept of *recognition* in his influential essay, “The Politics of Recognition” (see Taylor, 1994, pp. 25-73). Working from premises similar to those of Buber and especially of Bakhtin, and against what he considers the almost overwhelmingly monological character of Western philosophy, Taylor argues for a dialogical conception of human identity and experience. We should point out that his case resembles, especially as social theorizing, a more detailed treatment of this idea in Edward Sampson’s (1993) *Celebrating the Other: A Dialogic Account of Human Nature*. In response to essentialist assumptions, dialogic thinkers such as Taylor and Sampson suggest that persons are who they are not

because this is how they must be (as if determined by monolithic traditions of ethnic, racial, or social training), but because of how they have interacted with, compared themselves with, and renegotiated their identities with those whose identities differ from their own.

This active, reflexive, and ongoing process applies not only to private relations, say in families, but also in public processes within which groups acknowledge power relations. Taylor (1994) writes:

Thus discovering my own identity doesn’t mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others. (p. 34)

From this point Taylor reasons that although identity has always been dialogical, *recognition* has taken on new importance for public dialogue in recent times. In previous eras, identity was less problematic and often given or ascribed. Modernization has helped create, however, alternative public conceptions of the rhetoric of difference in dialogue—a “politics of universalism” and a “politics of difference.” The former asks us to be “difference-blind” in many ways, recognizing the place of all groups in an important larger unity. The latter asks citizens to “particularize” our respect and celebrate the differences and distinctions themselves. “The reproach the first makes to the second is just that it violates the principle of nondiscrimination. The reproach the second makes to the first is that it negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them” (p. 43).

Although Taylor’s definition of the problem of a dialogic public is similar to Young’s, his response to the dilemmas of that public is to be less sure of multicultural particularism as an answer. Finding value in both basic positions, he appears to favor solutions that guarantee “survival” for unique cultural resources while negotiating the common good. In developing this, he relies on the dialogic theorist Gadamer in commending a “fusion of horizons” as citizens acknowledge both more local and more extended contexts (p. 67). The book in which Taylor’s is the focus essay, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Taylor, 1994) also features an orienting essay by its editor, Amy Gutmann, and responses from the prominent social critics K. Anthony Appiah, Jürgen Habermas, Steven C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, and Susan Wolf.

A book that is consistent with Taylor's concept of dialogic recognition, and one that features a similarly conversational format, is K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann's exploration of race and justice, *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race* (1996). Their interchange is introduced by Appiah's essay arguing that race itself is an unhelpful and scientifically suspect concept, although a dialogue about racial identity is absolutely crucial for a democracy. He does warn that we should not reduce group identity to essentialist, automatic, and monological identifications: For example, a person does not believe anything necessarily because she is white or because he is black, or because they are Irish or Latino. Appiah suggests that identity is not just a collective phenomenon, and that if allowed to become too identified with collective thought, identities can "go imperial" (p. 103). African-Americans do not all agree on appropriate remedies for racism, and feminist styles of identity are also diverse, although some public discourse suggests monolithic points of view. Dialogic conceptions would "police this imperialism of identity—an imperialism as visible in racial identities as anywhere else" (p. 103).

Gutmann's response grounds these issues in the pragmatics of public policy—for instance, in the implementation of "color conscious" policies such as affirmative action and preferential hiring to substitute for a naïve faith that color blind policies can be fair in the absence of persistent dialogue about historical and contextual roadblocks to impartiality. Still, Gutmann acknowledges how color consciousness can lead to regrettable effects, too, such as unfairness in isolated cases presumably in the service of overall fairness and a larger sense of cultural confirmation (e.g., pp. 122, 177-178). One example may be in the area of preferential hiring of minorities where satisfactory job qualifications are clear for all applicants, but larger "social goods" might need to be considered also. Definitions of necessary qualifications are often far from clear for a given job. At times, what appears to be unfairness to individual applicants might need to be balanced against the community's need to make inroads against historical stereotyping and racism through the choice of minority applicants (who are also well qualified for the positions). Although many people rightfully have strong opinions about "correct" answers to such dilemmas, such choices should be at least open for moral dialogue (pp. 122-123).

Michael Lerner and Cornel West discussed these and similar issues in their bestseller from 1996, *Jews &*

*Blacks: A Dialogue on Race, Religion, and Culture in America*. These two noted intellectuals connected Jewish and African-American perspectives directly in a dialogue of uncommon good will, yet their meeting nevertheless featured confrontive talk. Spending days and weeks together in conversation, they created and edited a text from the recordings, and in their book the rest of us can find aspects of ourselves as well. These representatives of two groups of "pariah people" (p. 1) met in a context of strained relations between Jews and Blacks in the 1990s that stood in stark contrast to the history of Black-Jewish collaboration in the civil rights movement at mid-century. What kind of dialogue, they seemed to ask, is possible amid so much mutual suspicion of exploitation and hate that boils just beneath the surface of civic participation? West argues toward the end of the book:

I'm calling for a dialogue about the relative failure or success of the U.S. experiment in democracy. That is, something bigger than both communities. We don't want to limit our dialogue just to prophetic Black folk and prophetic Jews, although these may be the ones who really lead the way and open up the possibilities for dialogue . . . .

One dimension would be to create links between the grassroots members of neighborhood organizations, and get them involved in dialogue. Dialogue is a form of struggle: It's not just chitchat. Create a dialogue that focuses not just on the vulnerability of both groups, but on these larger issues of justice, democracy, and the crisis in our own communities. Then try to hammer out some programs that relate to the everyday lives of these groups. (pp. 266-267)

Although Lerner is congenial to the suggestion, West goes on to state a caveat about how public such a set of dialogues can be. Having "living room dialogues" is one thing, but what about when the glare of media attention might intrude? "The less hopeful side is that, once one gets above ground, the conversation becomes more shrill, more sensationalist and polarized, so that the possibilities of bridging the chasm become more difficult" (p. 267). With this comment, West capsulizes a particular difficulty in a technologically networked world: What is the potential for difficult dialogue to make a public difference when media attention could remind participants and observers constantly of how many simultaneous audiences they have to deal with? Among dialogue theorists, Buber was also especially concerned that too much publicity could undermine the

genuineness and spontaneity that are among the hallmarks of dialogue.

Another political philosopher has developed her own influential approach to cultural differences and public dialogue in recent years—Seyla Benhabib in *Situating the Self* (1992) and in *The Claims of Culture* (2002). While generally supporting Habermas's dialogical conceptions of reason, she focuses more on cultures and their challenges to what we think we know about norms of communication. The claims of culture to which she refers in the title of her latest book are our impulses to assert individualities "in the face of . . . interdependencies"; such claims "can be realized only through risky dialogues with other cultures that can lead to estrangement and contestation as well as comprehension and mutual learning" (2002, p. xiv). Supporting a form of multicultural ideal, Benhabib nevertheless rejects what she calls "strong multiculturalism" or "mosaic multiculturalism"—approaches that to her assume that boundaries can be rigidly defined and that dialogue will still be available for open-minded and well-meaning people. Differences are crucial, she believes, but difference by itself is not a goal for public dialogue. Her interest is in the concept of "enlarged mentality" with which we can explore civic perspectives (p. 115).

Many readers of this journal will be intrigued by Benhabib's application of dialogue to issues of globalization and cosmopolitan citizenship. World citizens face intense challenges as some cultural boundaries disintegrate while others are reasserted with increasing rapidity. Everywhere the "we" (traditionally employed in a rhetoric of solidarity) risks becoming in a new era a term of misunderstanding and struggle. Many persons and movements will rise to claim that dialogue is too contentious and difficult, that it provides false answers, and that the "true" answers are not only purer and less negotiable but can be found in some specific and supposedly pure doctrine (such as knowing with absolute certainty where "evil" resides in the world).

Accepting difference and recognizing its worth is not in the agenda for some groups that aggressively counter a more globalized dialogue. "Rejectionist fundamentalists" in these groups, Benhabib (2002) warns, "find it most difficult to live in a globalized world of uncertainty, hybridity, fluidity, and contestation. Unable to make the daily compromises that the practice of any firmly held religious belief in the contemporary world would require, these groups declare war on global civilization or consume themselves in acts of apoca-

lyptic fervor; often they do both" (p. 186). She summarizes the greatest challenge for democracies: "to retain their dearly won civil liberties, political freedoms, and representative deliberative institutions, while defusing the fundamentalists' dream of purity and of a world without moral ambivalence and compromise. The negotiation of complex cultural dialogues in a global civilization is now our lot" (p. 186). News reports since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the U.S. underscore the importance of Benhabib's message, although sincere commentators certainly disagree on which nations and groups might qualify as "rejectionist fundamentalists."

Three especially interesting but quite different books on dialogue directly address the rhetorical problem of how to respond to dialogic conflict. Taken together, they affirm both philosophically and pragmatically that a rhetoric of difference is a primary criterion of dialogue at any elemental level. The first, political scientist William R. Caspary's *Dewey on Democracy* (2000), describes the famous philosopher's conceptions of a conversational public sphere from the standpoint of what Caspary labels "conflict-resolution." "Dewey envisions vital dialogue that includes elements of empirical investigation, interpretation, critique, narrative, ethical deliberation, conflict, and conflict-resolution" (p. 9). Further, he relates Deweyan ideas of conversation and dialogue to contemporary experiments in political justice and cooperative decision-making. Early in the book, Caspary concludes that "the whole thrust of [Dewey's] Pragmatism, his experimentalism, is that the appropriate settlement of a conflict cannot be known a priori" (p. 38). In the absence of predictable outcomes, what is important is to bring—not force—parties together with full access to each other and full recognition of the possible consequences of their misunderstandings.

A second important book on managing conflict among differences was written by two members of the Public Dialogue Consortium, a group whose efforts we will describe later in more detail. Communication scholars W. Barnett Pearce and Stephen W. Littlejohn's (1997) *Moral Conflict: When Social Worlds Collide* is divided into three main parts: "Moral Conflict," "Communication and the Expression of Difference," and "Toward a Transcendental Discourse." Their work in conflict and dialogue is based on "coordinated management of meaning theory," a general theory of communication developed by Pearce and others, and also is based on insights developed by mediating and manag-

ing moral conflicts where parties perceive their positions to be incommensurate and untranslatable. Throughout, the authors are realistic enough to stress that dialogue in public is dangerous for communicators (e.g., they may in fact actually be persuaded by others' arguments, they may be perceived by supporters as weak for even entertaining opposing views, etc.), but they are also optimistic enough to believe that transcendent or cosmopolitan rhetoric (talk that transcends divisions) can emerge from authentic meeting. Along the way, the authors survey model projects of public dialogue, a task we will extend and update in the second major part of this essay.

The third book on conflicts and conflict management is closely connected to Pearce and Littlejohn's concern with moral conflict: Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson's (1996) *Democracy and Disagreement: Why Moral Conflict Cannot Be Avoided in Politics, and What Should Be Done About It*. This book, a high profile contribution to applied politics, calls into question a variety of assumptions often held (though perhaps naively) by partners in public "dialogues"—such as the values attached to openness, certainty, clarity, neutrality, and toleration. A capsule claim: "When democratic citizens morally disagree about public policy, what should they do? They should deliberate with one another, seeking moral agreement when they can, and maintaining mutual respect when they cannot" (p. 346). Despite the apparent simplicity of the claim, the authors usefully complicate the questions behind it. Gutmann and Thompson explicitly ground their approach to difference in their recognition that citizen "deliberation," properly understood as a set of reciprocal responsibilities, becomes the soul of a truly democratic process.

### **The Rhetoric of Deliberation**

Much of the rhetoric of public dialogue depends upon a particular form of mutual talk: the process of deciding together the policies that will guide free citizens in constructing—and constraining—their own brands of power. Theorists of the public lately have come to call this process "deliberation" and its political incarnation "deliberative democracy." Selecting a short list of authors is disconcerting and dangerous, but necessary; many others also deserve attention, including Young and Gutmann and Thompson, mentioned earlier. In terms of public communication, our highlighted theorists tend to describe deliberation as a directed, relatively convergent rhetorical form of dialogue, in which participants collaborate in order to make civic

decisions, not primarily to explore possible futures spontaneously or creatively. Creative people function well in deliberative group work, but creativity with regard to outcomes is not necessarily a primary goal of deliberative dialogue. Recalling again the early 20th century public philosophy of Dewey, they offer rhetorical claims for deliberative democratic processes that respect pluralized conceptions of society as well as individual and group difference, yet they also argue that dialogue should be experienced in larger contexts of community awareness.

Probably the strongest contributions to a rhetoric of deliberation from within communication studies have come from media historian and critic James Carey. Eve Munson and Catherine Warren's (1997) edited volume, *James Carey: A Critical Reader*, celebrates Carey's contributions through his own writing and through the other researchers he has influenced so deeply. Carey's work both recapitulates and extends Dewey, providing readers with valuable lessons in the history of how we've conceptualized public media and public responsibilities in the 20th and early 21st centuries. He also extends Jeffersonian democratic principles in arguing for deliberative conversation, as in this observation from the famous 1991 essay we cited earlier, "'A Republic, If You Can Keep It': Liberty and Public Life in the Age of Glasnost," reprinted in Munson and Warren's book:

Public life stands for a form of politics in which, in Jefferson's phrase, "we could all be participators in the government of our affairs." Political equality in its most primitive mode probably means simply the right to be seen and heard. When one or a few dominate the life of a people, the others, denied the opportunity to be seen and heard, despair of public joy and go in search of private pleasure. Only when citizens can speak and act with some promise that their fellows will see and hear and remember will the passions that are true and lasting grow. (Carey, 1997, pp. 225-226)

As we will see in a later section of this essay, Carey delineates a special role for the press in encouraging and maintaining this passionate conversation.

James Bohman (1996) stands back a bit from the more pragmatic concerns of communication media to offer a philosopher's definitions of democracy and its relation to dialogic reason. His powerful book, *Public Deliberation*, describes how "such discussions of deliberation concern the way in which the practical reasoning of agents enters into political making," and how advo-

cates of more democratic deliberation “demand . . . a more rational political order in which decision making at least involves the public use of reason” (p. 2). In a sense, Bohman wants to meld Dewey with Habermas; thus, his concerns are different from Carey’s, but in some ways his appeals to the power of public reason complement Carey’s optimism about conversational participation. As does Carey in a different way, Bohman responds thoughtfully to critics who argue that deliberative concepts of democratic dialogue sound nice, but are ultimately impractical.

Benjamin Barber’s recent work on deliberation in democracy is summarized in *A Place for Us: How to Make Society Civil and Democracy Strong* (1998b). In this book, along with another collection of essays published in the same year, *A Passion for Democracy: American Essays* (1998a), Barber advances his well known concept of “strong democracy” first advocated in the 1984 book of that title. Barber believes that libertarian and communitarian perspectives on democracy each have a number of advantages but that their tendency “to conflate private with civil space (whether in the form of markets or of communities) condemns us to stark political choices that are neither desirable nor realistic” (1998b, p. 34). Instead, a “strong democratic perspective” regards public and private realms as distinctive and suggests a third domain that “mediates” them. This “civic” domain consists of a pluralistic network of voluntary associational civic communities characterized by conversations that are essentially public and open, yet accountable to “constituent member communities” that are in some ways private. In this mix, Barber invests his faith in a conversational mode of deliberation using “good reasons.” Strong democracy is not simply the outcome of a collision of interests, nor an accession to imagined overarching community values, nor an aggregation of opinions, nor an aimless conversational noodling to explore possibilities.

The goal of increased deliberative dialogue in public is far more than aspirational or theoretical advocacy however, having inspired a number of specific and successful projects at the local, national, and international levels. One of the most interesting and revolutionary action programs encouraging public deliberative dialogue is James Fishkin’s “deliberative opinion poll” experiment, which was justified and described in several books of the 1990s, including his own *Democracy and Deliberation* (1991), *The Dialogue of Justice* (1992), and *The Voice of the People* (1995). In the next major section of our essay, we discuss other

programs that involve a rhetoric of deliberation and the books produced by their principals, especially the National Issues Forums (Mathews, 1994, 1999) and the Public Dialogue Consortium (Spano, 2001). Here, however, we summarize Fishkin’s fascinating project that shows directly how public dialogue can produce more informed and effective deliberation.

Fishkin’s concept of dialogue may be somewhat narrower than that of some communication scholars, as he identifies it in one place with “reasoned debate designed to persuade on grounds conscientiously believed by the participants to be valid and appropriate.” He continues: “For an act of expression to contribute to political dialogue, its crucial normative and empirical premises must (a) be held with conviction by the actors and (b) be sufficiently exposed or open to analysis that they can be critically examined and debated by others” (1992, p. 147). It appears from this definition that “dialogue” could describe a meeting of two or more entrenched sides in which neither side ever intends to budge, as long as public scrutiny of their positions is the result. Still, when Fishkin puts his ideas into the applied arena, it is clear that he respects the willingness of people to shift their attitudes in response to better information and to be surprised by new ideas. Thus, his deliberative opinion poll program, which has been implemented in several high profile experiments in England and the United States, is a genuine contribution to the literature of public dialogue.

In brief, Fishkin believes that traditional public opinion polls—through which politicians receive guidance—are not evidence of “public” opinion at all. Instead, they aggregate private opinions that are often uninformed by accurate knowledge and untested by encounters with different perspectives. Further, public opinion pollsters often produce public opinion where there was no sustained opinion set before the questions were asked. (Pollsters who ask about nonexistent bills or bogus charges about candidates will get a wide range of pro and con opinions about “events” that never happened.) One answer to this dilemma is to sponsor dialogic occasions where citizen representatives from across the political spectrum are brought together to hear subject-matter experts testify, and then to discuss together the implications of political and social actions. Fishkin reports that such encounters produce a far more sophisticated understanding of political challenges, a more realistic set of assessments of political alternatives, and a more empathic willingness to consider the opinions and life experiences of other citizens. The

result far more closely approaches a genuinely *public* opinion.

### The Rhetoric of Civility

Clearly, the rhetoric of deliberation depends upon access, as well as upon respect for and recognition of difference. Pleas to submerge difference under the guise of equality or equal opportunity, or under the banners of rationality or politeness, are often seen by dialogue scholars as being problematic and as likely to subvert the process. Yet, at the same time, extreme assertions of different identities obviously can be troubling, and, at worst, even destructive to dialogue partners' attempts to engage each other. Difference is not inherently dialogic, nor is "togetherness." Difference and sameness, or distance and proximity, are tensions that are balanced by successful communicators in the public sphere. Buber knew as much when he discussed the relative contributions to dialogue of "distance" and "relation." When we want deliberative synergy or genuine breakthroughs in how we manage our moral worlds, distance is not necessarily bad; similarity is not necessarily good.

A rhetoric of civility may be one way of approaching this kind of optimal tension. Civility, at least, is a term that enjoys wide currency in the public discussion of how democracy can work. As with all terms, there are nuances in how it is understood and used, however. Deborah Tannen, for example, overtly distances herself from the term from the very first sentence of the first chapter of her 1998 bestseller, *The Argument Culture: Moving From Debate to Dialogue*. In it, she advocates a vigorous public dialogue over prevailing assumptions of polarized rhetoric: "This is not another book about civility. 'Civility' suggests a superficial, pinky-in-the-air veneer of politeness spread thin over human relations like a layer of marmalade over toast. This book is about a pervasive warlike atmosphere that makes us approach public dialogue, and just about anything we need to accomplish, as if it were a fight" (p. 3).

Law professor Stephen L. Carter (1998), however, defines civility differently in *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy*—although he admits that well-meaning people naturally find it hard to agree on what constitutes civil or uncivil public behavior. For Carter, though, civility "is the sum of the many sacrifices we are called to make for the sake of living together" (p. 11). Carter hopes to reassert a moral component to civility that was lost when "rules of behavior . . . moved from the realm of morality to

the realm of pragmatics" and etiquette became just a way to get what you want without ruffling others' feathers. "The task of those who would construct a society based on civility—and of this book—is thus to re-entangle etiquette and ethics," writes Carter (p. 12). It would be interesting to participate in a dialogue with Tannen and Carter, as their perspectives are so different yet so strangely complementary. Both worry about loud and intransigent disagreement, yet while one does not find a dialogic remedy in civility, the other goes even further to offer etiquette as that remedy.

Political theorist Mark Kingwell (1995) believes that some conception of civility is indeed related to political dialogue, but it appears to be a version that differs from those of both Tannen and Carter. In his award-winning study *A Civil Tongue: Justice, Dialogue, and the Politics of Pluralism*, Kingwell defines the scope of his argument:

We are . . . attempting to specify conversational conditions under which citizens can begin to negotiate their political differences. Here it makes sense to speak of justice *as* civility. So, in keeping with the dialogic emphasis of this study, I shall argue that civility is indeed a basic civic virtue, but one primarily focused on political conversation. It is a feature of our talk about justice, not our attitude about the results of that conversation. In that sense, I have in mind the idea of a vibrant and politically engaged set of conversational practices, all of them governed by a commitment to self-restraint and sensitivity. (p. 26)

In this way, Kingwell's civility is a commitment of citizen to citizen, as listeners and speakers, but cannot be the etiquette-based code Carter would most appreciate. For Kingwell, civil dialogic morality grows out of a willingness to participate in conversations about just solutions to public problems, not from a series of behavioral obligations or requirements.

Further, Kingwell distances his dialogic civility somewhat from the ways that other dialogue theorists, such as Habermas (1984) and Fishkin (1992), approach civility and similar ideas; in his opinion, their conceptions depend too much upon relatively narrow assumptions of reason. Late in the book, he addresses the limits of civility, arguing that dialogue partners can agree to be, paradoxically, "sincerely insincere":

We may hide our deep disagreements about certain issues, but circumstance compels us to agree on one crucial point, that we must go on talking together if we are going to succeed in living

together. The real force of this response is to get us to see that social life is, in some sense, a matter of finding our full interests only by talking to one another, not conceiving them as fixed beforehand and therefore as ammunition in a conflict among voices. (p. 238)

Further, “civility, understood in dialogic terms, can fold itself reflectively into justificatory talk. When you suspect that my civility hides an instrumental end, that suspicion must itself become part of the discussion. And when it does, our conversation will not carry on as before. . . . Power relations are therefore not allowed to lie beneath conversation, there to be obscured or covered up by strategically fine talk” (pp. 238-239). In this eye-opening move, Kingwell is true both to dialogic scholarship, such as the hermeneutical requirement to keep the conversation going, and to the practical demands contained within everyday encounters of power.

Communication scholars interested in dialogue have also taken up the topic of civility in two extended treatments. The more rhetorically oriented of them, if less dialogical in its emphasis, is Harold Barrett’s (1991) *Rhetoric and Civility: Human Development, Narcissism, and the Good Audience*. Barrett deals relatively indirectly with the implications of dialogue, although he associates attitudes of rhetorical civility with the philosophy of Buber. Barrett believes incivility “prevents all but temporary rhetorical success with mature, rhetorically disposed others; the very being of the mature individual rejects uncivil acts. . . .” (p. 148), although it’s not entirely clear how dialogically he is defining “rhetorical success” or “the mature individual.” Nevertheless, Barrett offers eight “elements of civility” (pp. 148-150) that can lead to sustained rhetorical success: (a) “knowledge and awareness” (both of self and others); (b) “will” (a willingness to engage through speech); (c) “respect” (beginning with self-respect and extending to others); (d) “courage” (“putting it on the line”); (e) “ability” (“rhetorical acumen and strength,” conceived in terms of strategic rhetorical choices); (f) “independence” (“autonomy of being”); (g) “freedom” (in terms of individual “prerogative”); and (h) “responsibility” (a trustworthy “social regard” and “good treatment of others”). Despite the alignment he suggests with Buber’s dialogue, and although it is not hard to agree that these factors could be relevant for civil interchanges, Barrett’s is a more individualistic and strategic approach to civility than Kingwell’s dialogic view.

The most thorough dialogic presentation of civility in the communication discipline to date is found in

Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson’s *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age: Community, Hope, and Interpersonal Relationships* (1999). If Barrett’s view can be thought of as a rhetorical approach to interpersonal behavior, Arnett and Arneson’s book conversely might be described as an interpersonal approach to public rhetoric. In a series of chapters on the contributions of interpersonal theorists and philosophers, the authors gradually develop the notion that dialogue is effective in conditions of public mutual respect. Their “presupposition,” that “interpersonal communication from a privatized, therapeutic, feeling perspective has exhausted itself” (p. 281), leads them to look to the public realm for dialogic redemption. As does Kingwell, Arnett and Arneson stress the need to keep conversations going, moving forward, while power is exercised and unique concerns are voiced. What constitutes the foundation for “dialogic civility”? Respect for the other, they respond, understood historically and in the context of constantly evolving narratives, solidifies relationships. Civility tunes persons to how narratives organize their lives, separately and together, and asks us to listen with respect to those narratives.

At times, citizens need structural or institutional help in finding context for such narratives of civility, and for keeping the conversations going in their lives. A group of journalists and media theorists believe they have found one way to assist civic dialogue in this way.

### *B. The Special Case of Public Journalism*

Public journalism, one of the most significant media reform movements in recent years in the United States, also has important implications for journalistic practice worldwide (Pauly, 1999). It attempts to address persistent problems of a weak or thin public sphere, and tries to invigorate civil conversation in new ways and with new ideas that contemporary mainstream journalism often neglects. Its advocates stress the need for forums of community talk to improve the quality of citizens’ participation in public decision-making. It challenges journalists to reduce their reliance on traditional norms of objective detachment and, in effect, redefine the role of media in the lives of the public. Realizing the promise of effective public dialogue is essentially the goal of its proponents, as public journalism responds to the need to solidify communities through democratic participation. According to its critics, however, it undermines traditional strengths of journalism, substituting trendiness in their

place. In this essay, we do not have the space for a full assessment of the justifications or the critiques, but it might be helpful to place this movement in the context of a rhetoric of public dialogue.

### **Dialogic Justifications for a Public Journalism**

The concept of public journalism (also discussed by some commentators as “civic journalism” or “communitarian journalism”) entered the contested terrain of journalism’s proper social role in the late 1980s. Jay Rosen, the New York University professor that some call the theoretical leader of the reform, reports that his motivation grew from his research into the early 20th century debate between John Dewey and Walter Lippmann, who had disagreed about what kind of involvement individual citizens should have in the ideal public arena. Lippmann invested his faith in experts, but Dewey’s faith in the deliberative potential of common citizens was persuasive to Rosen and inspired his program of institutional reform. Rosen (1999) asks an important question in the title of his recent book, *What are Journalists For?*, and answers that the public is necessarily a part of democracy and journalism is the social institution that is perfectly positioned to sustain public dialogue. He challenges journalists to take up “a different task . . . : not just to inform a public that may or may not emerge, but to improve the chances that it will emerge” (p. 19).

Rosen’s ideal of a people’s journalism, already brewing in the late 1980s, was reinforced by his encounter with Davis “Buzz” Merritt, the long-time editor of the *Wichita Eagle* and the man Rosen calls the original public journalist. Merritt championed two of the first public journalism experiments in 1989 and 1990 at his Kansas paper, and it would be fair to observe that most of the successful public journalism projects have been implemented at similar mid-level dailies as well. Merritt’s book, *Public Journalism and Public Life*, published in 1998 in a second edition, describes his evolution as a journalistic champion of dialogue. Merritt, the movement’s foremost practitioner, ironically stresses its philosophy more than its practice. These two reformers agree, however, that the practical purpose of public journalism is simply to make public life go well. Rosen and Merritt saw the problems in the media from the perspectives of an academic and a practitioner, and both identified the need for a change. Journalism must not only listen better to citizens in its own role of communicating the news, but must also help citizens to listen better to each other.

As Dewey (1927) showed, social networks and our democratic social system depend on the strength of conversation in a truly public space. Information is necessary to claim an educated public and therefore for democracy to function in the most literal sense, yet information is not enough. The ideal Dewey described has inspired others to search for new conversational public forums in contemporary democracy, and journalism provides an obvious forum to actualize the rhetoric of dialogic access and space (see Christians, Ferré, & Fackler, 1993).

The uniquely populist institution of journalism elevates the one focus that makes it capable of fulfilling the dialogic needs of a democracy: *the client*. No other private organization can claim the public citizenry as a client in quite the ways journalists are able to emphasize. As Carey (1999) so succinctly points out, “Insofar as journalism is grounded, it is grounded in the public; insofar as journalism has a client, the client is the public” (p. 48). Journalists can structure and enact a rhetoric of access, ratify a rhetoric of difference, enable a rhetoric of informed deliberation, and encourage a rhetoric of civility. Through print and electronic media, journalists are able to reach into the homes and minds of anyone willing to pay attention. No other profession, no other private institution, can claim this same potential to educate, combined with the potential to become a site for dialogic response.

Journalism, especially as it has developed in 20th century North America, holds itself to a high standard because of its unique position as a social institution. Carey (1999), in fact, refers to a public mission of sorts when he writes that “journalism only makes sense in relation to the public and public life. Therefore the fundamental ethical problem in journalism is to reconstitute the public, to bring it back into existence” (p. 52). Carey critiques the many journalists who define their craft merely by the mission to report objective news to the public. Public journalism asks reporters who attempt simply to relay the news objectively to conceive of their job differently, in effect to work harder to solicit and help structure public involvement. Mainstream journalism neglects this opportunity, if the journalist and best-selling author James Fallows (1996) is correct: “The institution of journalism is not doing its job well now. It is irresponsible with its power. The damage has spread to the public life Americans all share. The damage can be corrected, but not until journalism comes to terms with what it has lost” (p. 9). What the profession has lost, if public journalists are

right, is its involvement in helping its various communities and publics define their own interests.

Arthur Charity (1995) has written the how-to book of the public journalism literature. His manual of effective practice recognizes that journalism is an oral as well as a written communication craft. Further, *Doing Public Journalism* points out the many connections between interpersonal and public kinds of dialogue; for example, the questions a reporter asks will often determine the answers that she or he will receive, as well as the story that can ultimately be written. The interpersonal communication skills of reporters are just as important to Charity as their writing skills. Reporters should realize that, in a realistic sense, they are participants in community events, and that their listening and questioning should be expressions of a rejuvenated role as citizens especially concerned with dialogue, not just as detached observers. Listening skills really do make a difference, according to Charity. Newspaper coverage should be determined by “‘public listening,’ the art of keeping the newspaper grounded in the concerns of the public” (p. 16). Here is one of Charity’s (1995) examples of how a more public journalism can be grounded in public listening:

The *Des Moines Register* launched its public listening in 1993 by requiring all full-time news personnel to conduct at least four face-to-face interviews with residents of the metropolitan area, just to find out what was on their minds. It pooled ideas from the 600 conversations to create questions for a subsequent telephone poll, which led in turn to a five-article series identifying key issues for the region. (p. 34)

### **Evaluations and Critiques of Public Journalism Philosophy and Practice**

Public journalism advocates appear to celebrate the amorphous character of the movement (Glasser, 1999, p. 5). Clear definitions are hard to find in their writings, although in fairness, journalism itself is a complex profession that has been notoriously resistant to definitive statements about its essential nature. Still, public journalism supporters seem to agree that journalists need to do more than just report the news. At the same time, a group of firmly opposed critics have publicized the problems with reformers’ suggestions, and reasserted the importance of objectivity in reporting the news.

In the last decade, many collections attempting to characterize the spirit and practices of public journalism have paid close attention to both strengths and weaknesses (Baird, Loges, & Rosenbaum, 1999;

Black, 1997a; Esterowicz & Roberts, 2000; Glasser, 1999; Graber, McQuail, & Norris, 1998; Lambeth, Meyer, & Thorson, 1998). Academicians and practitioners alike have written essays of enthusiastic agreement, cautious optimism, or vehement criticism. The editors of these books realize that public journalism’s philosophy is vulnerable, but so is the traditional journalism that is the object of dialogic reform.

*Public Journalism and Political Knowledge*, edited by Eksterowicz and Roberts (2000), focuses on the consequences of journalism for our system of participatory democracy. The editors offer a political analysis, and frame public journalism as a reaction to developments in a complex political system instead of as a simple reaction to the flailing newspaper industry in need of a new slogan. They argue that we are now experiencing societal apathy despite the production of more news information than ever before. The essays deal with the history, the practice, and the future of the movement. Rosen wrote the foreword, and William Woo, Thomas Warhover, Lewis Friedland, and others contributed strong chapters. The overriding argument of the book hints at one of the biggest points of contention in this debate: public journalism has something to do with journalism, but everything to do with the quality of public life. Journalism should define itself as being in service to larger public goals.

Graber, McQuail, and Norris’s (1998) collection, *The Politics of News, The News of Politics*, makes largely the same political point, but at a more general level. Their book’s well-known essayists, including Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Walter Cronkite, and Michael Schudson, do not deal strictly with the public or civic journalism controversies. Instead, many of them argue that political theorists and journalists have ignored each other for hundreds of years, and that this begins to explain the obvious discomfort when the two disciplines are implicated in common projects or goals, or are seen as interdependent.

Baird, Loges, and Rosenbaum (1999) offer *The Media and Morality*, a similar reader that also does not focus solely on the public journalism debate. Their authors examine the larger context of media responsibility, specifically the tensions between the role of protecting the public and the goal of media profitability. This book affirms that the contemporary media system is in trouble. Public journalism is reviewed in the introduction and conclusion and also carefully critiqued in chapters by Michael Schudson and Doug Underwood. Understanding the movement in the context of possible

moral and economic crises for the press raises the possibility that reform will be possible only for journalists who recognize the weaknesses of their profession. When concerns over the bottom line finally become unavoidable, some authors believe the issues of reengagement with the public will be unavoidable as well.

Journalists' ethics are scrutinized again in Jeremy Iggers's (1998) *Good News, Bad News*. His basic belief is that journalism cannot cure itself by a rededication to traditional values. Instead, by evoking issues similar to our earlier "rhetorics," he challenges journalists to embrace values of "access, diversity, and an emphasis on explanation, context, and narrative as opposed to the conception of news in terms of concrete, discrete events" (p. 9). The final chapter analyzes the history and philosophy of public journalism, applauds the effort, and carefully points out its weaknesses. He challenges public journalism to become "journalism *with* the public" by supporting the same type of public listening that Charity described (p. 149). "True public listening involves a more open-ended conversation and a greater degree of mutuality. The interview becomes a conversation that is not only a vehicle for the reporter to get the story, but also a way for the interviewees to tell theirs" (p. 150). Iggers's deeply theoretical and ethically driven book reinforces the public journalism movement because of the problems he identifies within traditional objectivity-oriented journalism. At the same time, he tests the idea by questioning its implications and its future. Any future journalism must still be clear, fair-minded, independent from pressures from special interests, and aggressive in its response to public events.

Theodore Glasser's (1999a) scholarly collection scrutinizes the movement's core principles. *The Idea of Public Journalism* takes a cue from Merritt in stressing the importance of capturing the idea before becoming too involved with the practice. The rhetoric of most essays is forward-looking. Authors such as Cole Campbell, Jay Rosen, James Carey, John Pauly, and Clifford Christians take seriously the task of building a philosophy through critique and conversation. "The continuing debate," as Glasser (1999b) puts it, "concerns not only the challenge public journalism poses but, of course, the challenges it faces" (p. xxxi).

Media ethicist Jay Black also offers credible support in his 1997 anthology, *Mixed News: The Public/Civic/Communitarian Journalism Debate*. The book includes strong voices representing several sides of the movement. In his introduction, Black (1997b)

notes that every author in the book recognizes that "journalism is important to democracy, that things are not going as well as they should be, that some new techniques and theories are being tried out, that some of them are better than others, and that along the way we'd better not lose sight of journalism's fundamental missions and mandates" (p. vi). In ways similar to those of Baird et al. (1999), Black and some other authors focus on the fact that traditional journalists carefully (and rightfully) scrutinize community leaders and world events, but often fail to turn a critical eye toward their own practice.

Lambeth, Meyer, and Thorson (1998) assembled yet another reader, *Assessing Public Journalism*. Its essays, often written by the editors but also by central figures such as Rosen and Merritt, attempt to negotiate and reconcile the various definitions of the movement and to evaluate the contributions of particular public journalism programs. The editors and contributors also hope to encourage the types of research projects and feedback mechanisms necessary to determine whether the theoretical promise of public journalism is achieved in practice.

Although many chapters in anthologies warn of the dangers and tradeoffs in this new philosophy, none oppose it as vehemently as do John Merrill and Don Corrigan. These two staunch critics support a rationalistic tradition of journalism, one that applauds freedom of the press and the high goals of objectivity and respect for individualistic enterprise. They balk at the challenges coming from academics, whom they perceive as non-practitioners, and the evangelists of the newsroom who have climbed aboard the public journalism bandwagon.

John Merrill, for many years a leading spokesperson for liberalism in journalism, has co-authored *Twilight of Press Freedom: The Rise of People's Journalism* (2001) with Peter Gade and Frederick Blevens. Their book traces the intellectual thought leading to the development of communitarian, or what they call "anti-Enlightenment," thought. Their historical overview of public journalism's genesis summarily warns readers of the dangers of communitarian appeals—among them, the waning of press freedom and the increasing enticements of "boosterism." According to Merrill et al. (2001), the critics of public journalism "feel that journalists should not be involved in the public sphere—in community boosterism—and should not be actors but observers and recorders of the passing scene" (p. 111). At times, their vigorous critique resists communitarian appeals through a sardonic tone:

The various communities that will spring up within nations, at least if the communitarians' dream comes true, should have a say in who makes the editorial decisions that affect them every day. So what is the logical solution? A democratic community press. In other words, the citizens of a community would elect the editors of their newspaper or newspapers. The editor would serve for a certain term just as do elected political officials, and if the citizens of a community do not feel that the paper is fulfilling their expectations, then a new editor could be elected. As with political elections, the people would then have journalistic representatives who are truly responsible to them. (p. 198)

Merrill et al. thus mock the newer community-based appeals of public journalism, preferring the traditional strengths of objective detachment they equate with genuine press freedom.

Similarly, Don Corrigan's (1999) book, *The Public Journalism Movement in America: Evangelists in the Newsroom*, explores the faddishness and the impracticalities of public journalism's ideal. His basic concern is that media credibility suffers if reporters and editors are allowed to display the attachment and involvement that public journalism describes. Corrigan (1999) calls advocates "evangelists" because of what he perceives as their almost religious devotion to their cause and because of their desire to convert others to their philosophy:

It is not difficult to make the case that public journalism advocates are in the business of providing enlightenment and making converts. In less than a decade of existence, leaders in the public journalism movement have sponsored hundreds of seminars, conferences, and workshops. In a virtual leap of faith, hundreds of editors, reporters, and journalism educators have entered their journalistic revival tents to hear their message and adopt at least some of the movement's tenets and practices. (p. 1)

Corrigan's critique concludes with a chapter detailing what he boldly calls "The Real Problems Facing Journalism" (p. 169)—a set of observations in which he agrees with Merrill et al. that the institution of journalism stands to lose far more than it might gain from its embrace of popular culture and its immersion in community values.

The media sociologist Michael Schudson is another critic, though he aligns himself with many of

the values of a more publicly oriented journalism. His cautionary critique is well represented in the public journalism literature, appearing, for instance, in the collections of Graber et al. (1998) and Glasser (1999). Schudson (1999) points out that public journalism, as currently envisioned, is not well tailored to the modern communities of America: "Public journalism tends to invoke . . . the 'neighborhood of nostalgia,' the stable, secure, homey world located back somewhere in immigrant ethnic neighborhoods of the early 20th century or in the settled communities of the 19th century cities. But urban life is not like that today" (p. 128). Schudson clearly believes the type of public commons envisioned by public journalists is an antiquated ideal.

Antiquated or not, the ideal of the public commons is one potential space for dialogue, and it is difficult to imagine a democracy that matters without opportunities for civic dialogue. Somewhat ironically, within this single reform movement, the advocates and critics, along with theorists and practitioners, come together to create exactly the type of deliberation about the movement that the movement hopes to create for democracy. This kind of free deliberative conflict is similar to the dialogue that public journalism hopes to generate between news professionals and readers. This candid play of ideas is the crux of the conflict over its mission. Should we expect journalists to do more than just report the news? Can we depend on journalists to support a wider sharing of ideas crucial for public decision-making? If journalists take more responsibility for facilitating public dialogue, do they become too closely involved in making the news they are expected to cover? Academics and practitioners within this controversy have created a space for dialogue (see Anderson et al., 1994) that might not determine the best answers to our questions, but might just nudge us closer to defining the issues realistically—and defining them together.

Public journalism is only one especially visible example of a large-scale project for grounding public dialogue. Many others have coalesced in recent years around the concerns and values of a variety of social and cultural groups. In the next major section of our essay, we survey different forms of such projects, many of which can be consulted online.

### III. Enhancing the Prospects for Public Dialogue: Projects and Programs of Dialogic Response

Since we first discussed the organized projects in public dialogue (Cissna, 1995; Cissna & Anderson, 1997), the number of people, groups, and organizations committed to some version of public dialogue has burgeoned. Either this notion is truly catching on or the popularity and availability of the World Wide Web allows far more groups to make their efforts available to others—probably both. So great are the numbers of dialogue practitioners of one kind or another that in the fall of 2002 hundreds of individuals and representatives of 50 organizations met outside Washington, D.C. in a National Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation (see [www.thataway.org/ncdd/conference/conference.htm](http://www.thataway.org/ncdd/conference/conference.htm)). Enthused by the conference and excited by the potential for collaborative work among organizations promoting dialogue and deliberation, the participants decided to continue their association and formed a National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) (see [www.thataway.org/ncdd/coalition/start.htm](http://www.thataway.org/ncdd/coalition/start.htm)). Although the organization is still young, its very existence suggests that a critical mass may have been reached and that dialogic approaches to deliberation and public decision-making may be poised to have a significant impact on U.S. society.

In this section, we survey many important efforts to promote public dialogue in the U.S. Difficulties of language and culture make it difficult to expand the survey internationally in any significant way, although virtually all of the programs stress the kind of awareness of group difference that help them become truly cosmopolitan in their appeal. Of the many scores of organizations (and hundreds of people) that we might consider, we have space to discuss only a few of the more prominent ones. Because of the increasingly widespread availability of the Internet and its popularity as an information outlet, this brief section emphasizes information and groups that are available on the web. The NCDD and most of the organizations we discuss here have links on their websites to other groups that are doing similar work (e.g., [www.thataway.org/ncdd/resources/resources.htm](http://www.thataway.org/ncdd/resources/resources.htm)). The NCDD website and the website of its cousin organization, the Dialogue to Action Initiative (see [www.thataway.org/dialogue/](http://www.thataway.org/dialogue/)

[info/contents.htm](http://www.thataway.org/dialogue/info/contents.htm)), contain a great many resources that would be helpful in understanding and conducting community dialogue, and the website of the Western Justice Center contains a searchable directory of more than 400 organizations that provide resources, training, or experiences in dialogue ([www.westernjustice.org/org.cfm](http://www.westernjustice.org/org.cfm); Hutson, 2001). We offer this essay as an initial sampler, a foundation from which to explore these developments more fully and broadly.

First, we consider several organizations that encourage public dialogue as it can be widely applied across topics and geographical areas. For the most part, each of these organizations has developed its own model of promoting dialogue. Then, we consider a number of organizations that focus primarily if not exclusively on dialogue related to a particular content area—for example, race relations, religion, the environment, the arts, or international relations. These organizations are more likely to have borrowed their models of public dialogue from other sources. Finally, we consider several other significant and influential models of public dialogue. Schoem and Hurtado (2001) provide another useful source of information on various approaches to organizing and facilitating public dialogue.

#### *A. General Models and Applications of Public Dialogue*

##### **Public Conversations Project**

The Public Conversations Project (PCP) began in 1989 when a group of successful Cambridge, Massachusetts, family therapists noticed that public talk about certain public issues closely resembled the kinds of “stuck” conversations they often noticed in families. Polarized conversations of both types were highly predictable; questions were rarely genuine ones, where the asker wanted to hear and was willing to listen to an honest answer; partisans exalted their own side while dismissing others; and participants listened to each other only well and long enough to find negative attributes and rarely to deepen their understanding of others’ concerns. These therapists thought that their knowledge of how to deal with difficult private con-

versations in marital and family relationships might be applicable to conversations of national and public importance.

They selected abortion as the first public issue they would deal with and convened a series of meetings between proponents of pro-choice and pro-life positions who were not representatives of organizations that advanced those views. Later, they convened a group that contained leaders of various Boston-area pro-choice and pro-life groups. After five and one-half years and more than 150 hours of meeting together with two facilitators, entirely privately and confidentially, the group of six decided to write an article together for the *Boston Globe* ("Talking with the Enemy," published January 28, 2001; see [www.publicconversations.org/pcp/resources/resource\\_detail.asp?ref\\_id=102](http://www.publicconversations.org/pcp/resources/resource_detail.asp?ref_id=102)) detailing what they had been doing, and two years later, as we were finalizing this essay and after more than seven years of meeting and talking together, they participated in an extensive interview on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* (January 19, 2003) (available at [www.npr.org/news/specials/roevwade/conversations.html](http://www.npr.org/news/specials/roevwade/conversations.html)).

The PCP did not stay with abortion, though, as its sole topic, although it is, perhaps, still best known for that work. They have now worked with environmental issues, religious and cultural differences, sexual orientation, population, and social and economic differences. They also offer training workshops in dialogue as well as a variety of consulting services.

Dialogue in the PCP model constitutes a kind of constructive "conversation that is designed and facilitated with the goals of building trust, increasing mutual understanding, improving communication and shifting relationships in constructive directions" ([www.publicconversations.org/pcp/index.asp?page\\_id=163&catid=49](http://www.publicconversations.org/pcp/index.asp?page_id=163&catid=49)). Their website offers an extensive "PCP Dialogue Tool Box" that explains their approach to structuring and facilitating dialogue and provides numerous resources that would be helpful to any dialogue planner or facilitator. They also provide specific guidance on facilitating conversations in families and communities related to the September 11, 2001 attacks and related to the (at the time of this writing) potential U.S.-Iraq war, as well as providing their model for facilitating dialogue related specifically to abortion ([www.publicconversations.org/pcp/index.asp?page\\_id=172&catid=1](http://www.publicconversations.org/pcp/index.asp?page_id=172&catid=1)).

Perhaps more than any other dialogue practitioner group, the PCP plans encounters very carefully, from

the initial telephone conversations, to written invitations, to a pre-dialogue dinner, through seating arrangements, and opening and closing questions, to assessment and follow-up. Basic ground rules, which they typically call "agreements," are developed from their experience as well as the participants' concerns that are expressed in their pre-meeting conversations. These agreements generally include speaking personally; honoring the right to pass; sharing speaking time; respecting confidentiality; staying on the topic; calling people by the names they prefer; and asking honest, rather than rhetorical, questions. They encourage participants to speak up if they feel interrupted, to clarify what they mean when they feel misunderstood, to describe when they feel hurt or disrespected by another participant, and to express any anger, confusion, or discomfort explicitly with the group. The positive outcomes of dialogue are likely to be in the relational realm; those six pro-choice and pro-life leaders did not change their minds about their own positions or their commitments to the importance of their work, nor were they expected to. They did, though, develop trusting relationships with one another that allowed each of them to understand the others' positions better and to gain the trust of their political opponents.

### National Issues Forums

One of the most visible and sustained demonstrations of public deliberative dialogue has been the National Issues Forums project sponsored by the Kettering Foundation. The foundation's president, David Mathews, explains the NIF philosophy in his book, *Politics for People: Finding a Responsible Public Voice* (1994, 1999), now in its second edition. Mathews and the NIF counter the assumptions of apathy that are grounded, for example, in the public belief that problems are either too intractable or too technical for everyday citizens action to master.

The Kettering Foundation developed a model for bringing people together to talk about important public issues, much like a contemporary American town meeting. In their view, involving people in serious deliberative discussions about important issues is *the* essential ingredient in a healthy democracy. Mathews (1994) distinguishes between what he calls "deliberative dialogue" and other kinds of talk: "Dialogue . . . refers to a particular type of talk that promotes the reasoning required for making choices." It involves a "serious and intense interaction among people, one so

intensive that it changes the participants and produces new insights.” It is not debate or casual discussion; it is thoughtful, reflective, and exploratory, and “listening carefully to one another is more important than speaking eloquently” (p. 68). The Kettering Foundation is primarily a research organization, although it enters into partnerships with other organizations that share its interests. Although the foundation works in a number of areas and on a variety of problems, the primary question that guides its research is a deceptively simple one: “What does it take to make democracy work as it should?” ([www.kettering.org/History/history.html](http://www.kettering.org/History/history.html)).

These commitments of the Kettering Foundation and David Mathews developed into a national network of citizens and over 5000 organizations called the National Issues Forums. The NIF forums bring community members and leaders together to talk about particular issues that they face. The forums, in turn, are run by Public Policy Institutes, which is where NIF teaches its method of doing what they call deliberative democracy ([www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)).

Participants are expected to be interested but not necessarily well-informed about the issue of a forum before they begin, because the process is designed to allow participants to learn as they proceed. The moderator is crucial to the program’s success. Although he or she need not be an expert on the issue, the moderator must be thoroughly prepared. Before the discussion, the moderator typically allows participants to “vote” for one of four distinct positions regarding the issue; they will vote again at the end. The moderator makes clear that the format will be discussion and deliberation, not debate, and that the forum’s participants are charged with doing “choice work”—that is, with making sound decisions, not as individuals, but as members of a community. Participants are exposed to NIF-produced materials relevant to whichever contentious and hard-to-discuss issue they are considering. Typically, a video is shown to start deliberation. The moderator, then, asks participants about their personal experiences with the issue. During the deliberation process, the moderator asks questions that cause participants to “consider, weigh, and wrestle with the conflicts of values found within and among the choices” (NIF, 1994-1995, p. 1). Finally, the moderator helps the group move toward a choice, a sense of shared purpose and direction, and the post-forum ballot is completed.

### **Study Circles Resource Center**

The Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) was founded in 1989, although the concept of “study cir-

cles” is much older, being based in the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle tradition from the 1870s ([www.studycircles.org/pages/scrc.html](http://www.studycircles.org/pages/scrc.html)). The SCRC “is dedicated to finding ways for all kinds of people to engage in dialogue and problem solving on critical social and political issues.” Many hundreds of communities across the country have developed study circle programs, which are intended to develop large-scale community dialogue that will lead to action and change ([www.studycircles.org/pages/who.html](http://www.studycircles.org/pages/who.html)). They focus on a great many issues that face communities—race relations, education, crime, diversity, growth, policing, and many others—and they work with high schools and colleges as well communities and community organizations. Their model is dialogic.

The SCRC study circles are guided by five commitments: (a) “create opportunities for everyone’s voice to be heard,” rather than leaving all difficult issues to experts and government officials; (b) “make the dialogue diverse,” by incorporating people of widely differing backgrounds within a safe structure where they can explore their differences; (c) “make the dialogue productive,” because they go beyond the typical adversarial relationships to explore areas of agreement and disagreement, and because they seek creative task-oriented alternatives; (d) “connect the dialogue to short-term and long-term change,” as participants from across a community talk and work together; and (e) “make democratic dialogue for action and change a routine part of our public life” ([www.studycircles.org/pages/fivecommit.html](http://www.studycircles.org/pages/fivecommit.html)). We can note the obvious similarities between these commitments and the rhetorics of public dialogue, described earlier, that have emerged from the recent work of social critics and political theorists.

A study circle involves a small group of people from diverse backgrounds who discuss an issue, typically over several meetings. Everyone’s voice is intended to be equal, and participants are encouraged to understand the views of the others. A facilitator helps the group remain focused on the issue and attempts to assure the dialogic quality of the conversation. In a large-scale study circle program, multiple circles are meeting throughout a neighborhood, city, county, or region to discuss the same issue. After the round of study circle meetings, the participants come together in one large community meeting to explore the action-oriented ideas that emerge in the individual study circles ([www.studycircles.org/pages.what.html](http://www.studycircles.org/pages.what.html)). The SCRC provides elaborate guides for *Organizing Community Wide Dialogue for Action and Change* and for *Training*

*Study Circle Facilitators* ([www.studycircles.org/pages/hap.html](http://www.studycircles.org/pages/hap.html)). Recent SCRC-affiliated events include a five-town community study circles program in Camden, Maine; a community study circle program in Springdale, Arkansas that presented suggestions to its school board; and a police-citizen partnership in Owensboro, Kentucky that was an outgrowth of study circles in that community ([www.studycircles.org/pages/new.html](http://www.studycircles.org/pages/new.html)).

Perhaps no format has been as widely adopted by those interested in conducting public dialogue as that of the study circle. Several of the organizations mentioned below incorporate aspects of the study circle program in their work—even the Public Conversations Project, which notes that when they began talking about “dialogue” the term was not widely used and had a fresh ring, which has since been lost. The PCP laments that people now use the term dialogue to refer to many different kinds of conversations, only some of which are similar to those they intend; yet, the SCRC is one of the organizations to which the PCP refers people interested in receiving dialogically oriented training. Study circles materials also are used by the Civic Practices Network ([www.cpn.org](http://www.cpn.org)), the Western Justice Center ([www.westernjustice.org](http://www.westernjustice.org)), and the Co-Intelligence Institute ([www.co-intelligence.org/index.html](http://www.co-intelligence.org/index.html)). Study circle materials are used in conjunction with a PBS video, “A More Perfect Union” ([www.pbs.org/ampu/scg.html](http://www.pbs.org/ampu/scg.html)); with National Adult Literacy programs in Canada ([www.nald.ca/clr/study/study.htm](http://www.nald.ca/clr/study/study.htm)); and by large cities (Kansas City, KS; [www.kumc.edu/uwwy/studycircles.html](http://www.kumc.edu/uwwy/studycircles.html) and [www.emkf.org/pages/278.cfm](http://www.emkf.org/pages/278.cfm)), small towns (Guilderland, New York; [www.guilderlandstudycircles.org/about.htm](http://www.guilderlandstudycircles.org/about.htm)), and many in-between (see [www.coj.net](http://www.coj.net); [www.madison.com/communities/studycirc/](http://www.madison.com/communities/studycirc/)).

### **Public Dialogue Consortium**

The Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) is a group of communication teacher-scholars and other consultants and practitioners who share a commitment to promoting communication in the public sphere that is “humane, constructive, and beneficial to all” ([www.publicdialogue.org/pdc/index.html](http://www.publicdialogue.org/pdc/index.html)). Members of the PDC have impressive scholarly credentials and have written a number of important books and articles on public dialogue (e.g., Pearce, 2001; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; Pearce & Pearce, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, forthcoming; Spano, 2001). They attempt to develop opportunities for public dialogue in which (a) “participation is inclusive rather than exclusive,” (b)

“the freedom to speak is joined by the right to be heard and the responsibility to listen,” (c) “differences are treated as resources rather than barriers,” (d) “conflict is handled collaboratively rather than adversarially,” and (e) “decisions are made creatively rather than defensively.” They attempt to understand problems systemically, looking for patterns, connections, and contexts, and they think of community as containing many different and varied social worlds. They describe dialogue as “the ability to state your perspectives, values, and desires while remaining open to the perspectives, values, and desires of others,” which “creates the conditions for trust and respect and opens up possibilities for enriched actions” ([www.publicdialogue.org/working/index.html](http://www.publicdialogue.org/working/index.html)).

The largest and best known of the PDC projects is the Cupertino Community Project, described fully in Shawn Spano’s (2001) book, *Public Dialogue and Participatory Democracy: The Cupertino Community Project* (see also [www.publicdialogue.org/projects/index.html](http://www.publicdialogue.org/projects/index.html)). Cupertino, California, a small to medium sized town an hour or so south of San Francisco, had a population that was trying to grapple with rapid cultural and economic changes. In 13 years, the Asian population of Cupertino had more than doubled, from 17% to 42%. Many long-time residents found the changing demographic difficult to accept, and many of the new residents did not like the reception they received ([www.westerncity.com/CupertinoDec99.htm](http://www.westerncity.com/CupertinoDec99.htm)).

The PDC approached the city about initiating a community-wide project in public dialogue. As the project developed, it moved through four phases, even while recognizing the work that remains to be done: (a) “Giving Voice to Community Concerns,” which involved a series of focus groups to elicit concerns, issues, and ideas; (b) “Eliciting Visions and Action Plans,” during which inter-generational interviews (conducted by trained high school students) and “dialogue group meetings” about two of those issues, culminating in a Town Hall Meeting; (c) “Working Through City Leaders,” during which they engaged in follow-up team-building activities within community leadership groups, including the City Council, which hosted a two-day city-wide leadership event; and (d) “Sustaining Public Dialogue,” which involved building a “communicative infrastructure that attempted to institutionalize the mechanisms, processes, and spaces for promoting public dialogue through the formation of a Citizens of Cupertino Cross Cultural Consortium (5Cs)” (Spano, 2001; [www.publicdialogue.org/projects/](http://www.publicdialogue.org/projects/)

*Cupertino.html*). Over the first three years of the project, more than 100 citizens volunteered to be trained in dialogue and facilitative skills, and 2500 citizens participated in the series of town meetings, public workshops, and community forums. The 5Cs group continues to meet and function as of this writing ([www.cupertino.org/cupertino\\_living/community\\_outreach/cultural\\_outreach/5cs?index.as](http://www.cupertino.org/cupertino_living/community_outreach/cultural_outreach/5cs?index.as)).

Two of the principals of the PDC, Barnett and Kimberly Pearce, also share a dialogically oriented private consulting practice, Pearce Associates, through which they provide dialogically oriented training, workshops, and consulting, including creating possibilities for public dialogue, to communities, educational institutions, organizations, and professional individuals ([www.pearceassociates.com/Frame1.html](http://www.pearceassociates.com/Frame1.html)).

### *B. Content-Specific Public Dialogue Programs*

Other public dialogue programs focus on particular social issues rather than on generalized models for dialogue facilitation. Here we consider programs that promote dialogue primarily in the areas of race relations, inter-religious encounters, environmental policy, the arts, and international relations.

#### **Race Relations**

Perhaps the most prominent recent effort to promote interracial dialogue involved President Clinton's Initiative on Race. In fact, during the Clinton administration, the U.S. government promoted two significant efforts at public dialogue. Immediately after Sheldon Hackney was confirmed as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, he began critiquing the quality of public discourse in the United States and promoting a "national conversation" on what it means to be an American (see Cissna & Anderson, 2002, pp. 233-235 for a brief discussion of this project). Clinton's Initiative on Race, called "One America in the 21st Century," was launched on June 14, 1997, in the wake of the earlier effort.

The goal of the One America project was to combine "thoughtful study, constructive dialogue, and positive action to address the continuing challenge of how to live and work more productively as One America in the 21st century" (<http://clinton3.nara.gov/initiatives/OneAmerica/overview.html>). Initially described as a one-year effort, the project was widespread and lasted to the end of Clinton's presidency. It included actions of the President, an Advisory Board, and various Cabinet agencies, but it also appealed to individual Americans and suggested "Ten Things Every

American Should Do to Promote Racial Reconciliation" (<http://clinton3.nara.gov/initiatives/OneAmerica/what.html>), one of which suggested that individual Americans should seek to promote public dialogue:

Initiate a constructive dialogue on race within your workplace, school, neighborhood, or religious community. The One America Dialogue Guide provides some useful ideas about how to construct a dialogue and lists some organizations that conduct dialogues and can help with facilitation.

The *One America Dialogue Guide: Conducting a Discussion on Race* was widely available, not only through the One America website (<http://clinton3.nara.gov/initiatives/OneAmerica/america.html>), but also through other such groups as Race Matters ([www.racematters.org/oneamericadialogueguide](http://www.racematters.org/oneamericadialogueguide)), NABRE ([www.jointcenter.org.nabre.whatsnew/index.htm](http://www.jointcenter.org.nabre.whatsnew/index.htm)), as well as the Dialogue to Action Initiative ([www.thataway.org/dialogue/res/res12.htm](http://www.thataway.org/dialogue/res/res12.htm)).

Dialogue, for Clinton's race initiative, involves a community forum with participants "from as many parts of the community as possible" (p. 1). Dialogue "emphasizes listening" and "invites discovery" (p. 1). It seeks to develop common values and "expects that participants will grow in understanding" and may even "decide to act together" toward common goals (p. 1). The guide describes a series of steps and even includes worksheets that will be helpful in convening a dialogue on race in one's community. It provides specific advice to a dialogue leader, including suggested ground rules, tips for the good dialogue leader, and possible responses to specific challenges the leader may face. Its appendix includes a version of a one-page chart detailing the differences between "debate" and "dialogue" (we first saw a version of such a chart contrasting debate and dialogue in an article by Public Conversations Project authors [Roth, Chasin, Chasin, Becker, & Herzig, 1992]; similar charts are now widely available on the websites of many groups).

By no means, though, was One America the first or the only program seeking to improve race relations in the United States, nor was it the only one to do so, at least in part, through the perspective of dialogue. The National Conference for Community and Justice (previously the National Conference of Christians and Jews) (see [www.nccj.org](http://www.nccj.org)) has developed a dialogic process that seeks to combat "bias, bigotry and racism" and promote "understanding and respect among all" ([www.nccj.org/nccj3.nsf/Programs/National+Conversation](http://www.nccj.org/nccj3.nsf/Programs/National+Conversation)). The

NCCJ began a National Conversation on Race, Ethnicity and Culture in 1995 that involves intergroup issues and functions both nationally and in local communities.

Hope in the Cities, begun in 1990, in Richmond, Virginia, developed a national presence in 1993 with a conference called "Healing the Heart of America: An Honest Conversation on Race, Reconciliation and Responsibility," which drew a thousand participants from 50 U.S. cities and 20 foreign countries. Since then, Hope in the Cities has spread to numerous communities across the country, convening interracial dialogues through "honest conversations," which aim not just at information sharing but at transformation ([www.hopeinthecities.org/About/about.htm](http://www.hopeinthecities.org/About/about.htm)).

The honest conversation model is another that has spread to other programs that promote interracial dialogue, including the Crossroads Program in the city of Euclid, Ohio ([www.ci.euclid.oh.us/Mayor/..LivabilityAward.htm](http://www.ci.euclid.oh.us/Mayor/..LivabilityAward.htm)); programs on many college and university campuses, including, for example, Oberlin College ([www.oberlin.edu/news-info/98sep/honest\\_conversations.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/news-info/98sep/honest_conversations.html)); and a remarkable "honest conversation" between Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the renowned historian, Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, and leader of the Presidential Initiative on Race, John Hope Franklin. Their conversation, joined by 21 high school students, became a PBS documentary, *Tutu and Franklin: A Journey Towards Peace* ([www.pbs.org/journeypiece/dialogue.html](http://www.pbs.org/journeypiece/dialogue.html)).

### Religion

Various dialogically oriented groups and organizations have focused their concerns on interreligious dialogue. The Global Dialogue Institute (GDI), founded by Leonard Swidler and Ashok Gangadean, is an especially prominent organization working to promote interreligious dialogue around the world. Although the Institute works with intercultural and interethnic issues, its primary emphasis has involved international, interreligious dialogue: "The purpose of the GDI is to promote dialogue in the broadest sense among individuals and groups of different religions and cultures, focusing especially though not exclusively on the 'opinion-shapers' of society, scholars, professionals, as well as institutional and business leaders" ([www.global-dialogue.org](http://www.global-dialogue.org)). The GDI publishes a journal (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*), includes a Center for Global Ethics, an Institute for Interreligious, Intercultural Dialogue, and has major inter-religious initiatives involving Indonesia ([www.global-dialogue.com/](http://www.global-dialogue.com/)

[indonesia2.htm](http://www.global-dialogue.com/indonesia2.htm)) and Bosnia ([http://astro.temple.edu/~dialogue/bosnia\\_index.htm](http://astro.temple.edu/~dialogue/bosnia_index.htm)).

The Institute for Interreligious, Intercultural Dialogue describes dialogue as a "conversation among persons or groups who differ on a subject, the primary purpose of which is for each party to learn from the other." Our age, they say, increasingly involves human beings moving out of an "Age of Monologue," in which, for millennia, human beings have talked primarily with others who were very much like themselves, to an "Age of Dialogue," in which we are having to learn to talk to people who are different than we are, ideologically, religiously, and culturally (<http://astro.temple.edu/~dialogue/iid/htm>). Swidler is the author of more than 50 books, many of which concern issues of interreligious dialogue (see [www.global-dialogue.com/swidlerbooks/swidlerbooksmain.htm](http://www.global-dialogue.com/swidlerbooks/swidlerbooksmain.htm)), including *Death or Dialogue?: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue* (Swidler, Cobb, Knitter, & Hellwig, 1990). GDI describes dialogue, which they have called "deep-dialogue," as having three dimensions (ethics, globality, and spirituality) and seven stages, which begin with "Radical Encountering of Difference: Self Faces the Other," and include "The Dialogical Awakening: A Radical Paradigm-Shift Self Inwardly Transformed," finally reaching "Personal and Global Transforming of Life and Behavior: Self Lives and Acts in a New Global Dialogical Consciousness" ([www.global-dialogue.com/sevenstages.htm](http://www.global-dialogue.com/sevenstages.htm)). The website does not describe how they facilitate a dialogue that moves a person or group through these stages, nor does it include the "10 ground rules" or the "12 steps" of deep dialogue that are mentioned.

The GDI is among the most far-reaching organizations attempting to promote interreligious dialogue, but other groups also urge dialogic action. The Dialogue Project, of Brooklyn, New York, brings together adult Palestinians, Jews/Israelis, and other supportive persons from various faiths for intense and intimate conversation in a "neutral and safe environment to learn about the Palestinian-Israeli and Middle East conflicts from each other's perspective" ([www.thedialogueproject.org/whoweare.htm](http://www.thedialogueproject.org/whoweare.htm)). Since March of 2001, 15 to 30 participants gather each month for two and one-half hours in a number of dialogue circles throughout the city. To the Dialogue Project, dialogue balances advocacy ("reasoning with supportive data") with inquiry ("suspension of reason and exposing your mental models and heart, giving the other person a 'window to your reasoning' and to your humanity" ([www.thedialogueproject.org/dialogue](http://www.thedialogueproject.org/dialogue)

.htm). It involves an exchange of ideas and experiences, suspending of opinion and judgments, truly listening to one another, staying in the dialogue even when another challenges one's deeply held beliefs, and contributing even one's half-formed ideas; often these decisions result in divergent views converging and leave all participants changed.

The Interfaith Council of Greater New York (IFCGNY) also promotes interfaith dialogue in the greater New York area, but it works more broadly, rather than focusing primarily on Israeli-Palestinians issues. Founded in 1996, the IFCGNY seeks to "bring various faith communities together to discuss the vital issues and concerns that beset today's society." They link these communities, especially the clergy and leaders of various faiths, and develop education curricula, conferences, and seminars. The principles of dialogue, which they describe in terms of five rights, responsibilities, and skills, are "instrumental to fostering relationship and reaching understanding among the different faith traditions" ([www.nycinterfaith.org/art\\_of\\_dialogue.htm](http://www.nycinterfaith.org/art_of_dialogue.htm)). For example, each person is to have the *right* to define himself or herself without being stereotypically labeled by others, the *responsibility* to question his or her assumptions about the other, and the *skills* to evaluate and articulate one's own attitudes and values within one's own religious tradition, as well as the *right* not to change or to be coerced to change, the *responsibility* to accept others as equal partners in the dialogue, and the *skills* to deal with different points of view while maintaining one's own integrity.

The Alliance for Spiritual Communication in Laguna Niguel, California (halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego), is an "interfaith, multicultural, nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening community" ([www.asc-spiritualcommunity.org/index.html](http://www.asc-spiritualcommunity.org/index.html)). As they describe it, the "heart of the work" of their Alliance is the practice of dialogue. They use guidelines that are intended to help them come to new understandings. Listening and being fully present with one another are fundamental, as is listening to the self. They describe dialogue as involving a willingness to suspend one's assumptions, to listen and speak without judgment, to recognize that all are equal partners in the dialogue, to keep the dialogue confidential, to express one's personal response to each topic, and to listen for understanding rather than agreement or disagreement. As do many other groups, all of these interreligious dialogue organizations emphasize differences between debate or discussion and dialogue.

## Environment

Other organizations seek to promote dialogue in the area of environmental protection and regulation. The California Environmental Dialogue engages business, corporate, environmental, and governmental leaders in collaborative dialogue in an effort to improve environmental protection while reducing costs to business, government, and society ([www.cedlink.org](http://www.cedlink.org)). The CED seeks to build relationships of trust that will transcend the history of adversarial relationships that typify this arena. As a result, CED has been able to speak credibly about improving environmental policy in several areas. CED works through a 28-member plenary group that, at the last update of the website, had been meeting two days every other month for five years, and through three working groups devoted to mobile sources, habitat, and strategic thinking. Their meetings are facilitated using a philosophy of dialogue and a series of ground rules ([www.cedlink.org/phil.htm](http://www.cedlink.org/phil.htm)), which include: (a) participation is non-partisan, (b) comments made in the meetings are not attributed publicly to individuals, (c) discussions are confidential, (d) how one listens is as important as how one speaks, (e) reasoning and assumptions are to be explicit, and (f) others' assumptions are explored without personal criticism. The model of dialogue utilized by CED does not attempt to hide conflict, but allows participants to speak and listen in ways that "encourage understanding, new thinking, and cooperation," build trust, develop relationships, and encourage novel and productive thinking and actions.

## Arts

The Americans for the Arts organization, through its Animating Democracy Initiative (ADI), seeks to foster "artistic activity that encourages civic dialogue" ([www.americansforthearts.org/AnimatingDemocracy/](http://www.americansforthearts.org/AnimatingDemocracy/)). *Animating Democracy: The Artistic Imagination as a Force in Civic Dialogue* (Bacon, Yuen, & Korza, 1999) provides a key resource. The group's premises are that democracy requires an informed and engaged public, and that the arts in several ways have and can continue to promote democratic involvement. They understand civic dialogue to refer to "dialogue in which people participate in public discussion about civic issues, policies, or decisions of consequence to their lives, communities, and society" ([www.americansforthearts.org/AnimatingDemocracy/about/key\\_terms.asp](http://www.americansforthearts.org/AnimatingDemocracy/about/key_terms.asp)). When civic dialogue is arts-based, "the artistic process and/or art/humanities presentation provides a key focus, catalyst, forum or form for public dialogue" on an issue.

The ADI functions largely as a network and resource for other individuals or groups that are interesting in pursuing artistic projects with a civic dialogue orientation. One can search their website by combining one of 15 public issues and one of eight artistic disciplines to locate examples of previous projects and to identify resources materials such as bibliographies, profiles, contacts, etc. For example, "immigration" and "music" yielded information about an American Composers Orchestra project, "Coming to America: Immigrant Sounds/Immigrant Voices," that linked the symphonic work of immigrant composers to questions about immigration and American identity; "environment" and "dance" revealed the work of the Mozambique National Ballet in "The Sacred Tree," which tells the story of the importance of forests to rural communities and of the need to protect them, especially from foreign logging interests; and "civil liberties" and "theatre" identified both the Dell 'Arte International's "Dentalium Project," which explores the economic, cultural, and political issues related to constructing a Native American casino in a small town in the Pacific northwest, and Perseverance Theatre's Alaskan tour of an adaptation of Moby Dick designed to engage that state's diverse citizenry in dialogue about such difficult issues as subsistence rights, the urban-rural divide, and the economy-environment struggle. The ADI also provides a forum for discussing "the many dimensions of civically engaged cultural activity" and, at least in the past, through the ADI Lab, has provided financial support for a number of these projects ([www.americansforthearts.org/AnimatingDemocracy/adilab/index.asp](http://www.americansforthearts.org/AnimatingDemocracy/adilab/index.asp)).

### **International Relations**

The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy is based on the idea that there are many tracks through which nations have diplomatic contact. Besides official, governmental actions, they identify conflict resolution professionals, business efforts, private citizens, the media, religion, activism, philanthropy, and research, training, and education, with none of these tracks being more important than, or independent of, the others ([www.imtd.org/index.htm](http://www.imtd.org/index.htm)). Intergroup dialogue is one of its primary tools. These dialogues can be one time events or a series of conversations that might last months or years; they can vary in structure and may be facilitated or not. The IMTD recognizes dialogue, though, as "a fundamental component in the process of peacebuilding." The IMTD approach to dialogue involves (a) creating a safe space, psychologically and

physically; (b) agreeing that learning is the purpose for meeting, rather than decision-making, task accomplishment, or persuasion; (c) using appropriate communication skills, such as telling the truth of one's own experience and listening carefully to the other's truth; and (d) surfacing the hidden beliefs, perceptions, assumptions, judgments, values, attitudes, stereotypes, emotions, hopes, fears, etc., that, they say, "lie like the iceberg under the surface" of a discussion ([www.imtd.org/initiatives-dialogues.htm](http://www.imtd.org/initiatives-dialogues.htm)). They have conducted dialogues of various kinds around the world in the interests of peacebuilding and diplomacy. The Kettering Foundation is also very active in international affairs under the direction of Harold Saunders (1999), author of *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts*, and former member of the White House National Security Council staff and Assistant Secretary of State.

### **C. Other Programs of Public Dialogue**

Other important organizations deserve mention, although they may be more limited in scope, more oriented toward private consulting, or more constrained in time or geography. We briefly highlight a few of the many other groups and projects that are involved in promoting public dialogue.

#### **Uniting America**

Uniting America is a project of The American Assembly. The project took two forms. Initially, over a four year period beginning in 1999, Uniting America organized a series of five national assemblies, each on a different topic, each involving 60 to 70 "key policy makers, academicians, national leaders, and community experts" who meet for four days, largely in small discussion groups, to produce a "broadly disseminated consensus statement that specifies concrete policy recommendations, and commitments to action by key players" ([www.unitingamerica.org/uniting/index.htm](http://www.unitingamerica.org/uniting/index.htm)). At the conclusion of this phase of the project, they began the National Dialogues, a series of community dialogues that follow up on the themes and issues identified in the final report from the first phase. These community dialogues began in the summer of 2002 and continue.

Organizers presume that Uniting America can function as a clearinghouse through which participants can share the results and lessons from their dialogues with others, forming a network of participating groups in every region of the country ([www.unitingamerica.org/dialogue/index.htm](http://www.unitingamerica.org/dialogue/index.htm)). They offer an extensive manual, "Conducting Your Community Dialogue" ([www](http://www)

[unitingamerica.org/dialogue/ndorg.htm](http://unitingamerica.org/dialogue/ndorg.htm)), designed to invite citizens to organize and carry out a community dialogue and to help them in doing so.

Although they bring together diverse participants with opposing views, they believe that what makes their “dialogue process unique is its emphasis on *building consensus*” (pp. 5-6). The steps this organization uses in “conducting an effective community dialogue” look very much like the problem solving process that has been taught in group discussion classes for the past 60 years—moving from defining the problem, to discussing possible solutions, to building consensus, to making commitments to action steps (pp. 10-14). The suggestions for facilitating also look more like suggestions for a discussion leader than for a facilitator of dialogue, at least as we and most of the organizations mentioned here envision those roles. Finally, the suggestion that one “establish a vision of success” at the outset sounds as though the preferred outcome is, at least in part, already known to the convener of the dialogue—a model very similar to what we have, in another work, critiqued as “convergent dialogue” (Hammond, Anderson, & Cissna, in press).

### **Future Search**

Future Search (FS) is a method of strategic planning that uses dialogue to allow people to discover their common ground and make concrete plans. The principles that guide FS meetings are (a) to “get the ‘whole system’ in the room” by inviting a representative cross-section of all the parties involved in the issue; (b) “explore the ‘whole elephant’ before seeking to fix any of it”; (c) “put common ground and future focus front and center while treating problems and conflicts as information, not action items”; and (d) “encourage self-management and responsibility for action by participants before, during, and after the future search” ([www.futuresearch.net/the\\_method/principles/index.cfm](http://www.futuresearch.net/the_method/principles/index.cfm)). FS facilitators see their task as keeping the group working together, rather than fixing problems, resolving differences, or motivating action, and assuring that no one becomes a scapegoat. The job of the facilitator is to attend to the “boundaries of time and task,” rather than to supply content, analysis, direction, interpretation, meaning, or synthesis ([www.futuresearch.net/the\\_method/overview/facilitating.cfm](http://www.futuresearch.net/the_method/overview/facilitating.cfm)). The Future Search methodology has been used to facilitate strategic planning by a university ([www.uwlax.edu/StrategicPlanning/future-search.html](http://www.uwlax.edu/StrategicPlanning/future-search.html)), by a variety of health care organizations ([www.well.com/user/bbear/weisbord\\_examples.html](http://www.well.com/user/bbear/weisbord_examples.html)), by local organizers to sup-

port neighborhood organizing in Kansas City, ([www.co-intelligence.org/S-futuresearchKC.html](http://www.co-intelligence.org/S-futuresearchKC.html)), and by many other organizations in many fields around the world ([www.futuresearch.net/the\\_method/applications/index.cfm](http://www.futuresearch.net/the_method/applications/index.cfm)). Aside from the website materials, Weisbord has described the process and its application in two books (Weisbord, 1992; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). Future Search dialogues may lead to increased convergence of opinions or consensus among participants, yet it may not be as likely as other models to lead to potentially more transforming changes; creativity and surprise evidently are not emphasized as much within a FS process as they are in some other models of dialogue.

### **Bohmian Approach to Dialogue**

Although we can find no evidence that it is still active, Peter Senge (1990) and Bill Isaacs (1993, 1999), through what was called for a time the “MIT Dialogue Project,” developed a consulting and training approach based on David Bohm’s (1990, 1996; Bohm, Factor, & Garrett, 1991) concepts. Senge seems to have gone on to the Society for Organizational Learning and Isaacs to a consulting group called Dialogos, and neither responded to e-mail inquiries about the status of the Dialogue Project at MIT.

Perhaps the most prominent consultants now working in this tradition are Glenda Gerard and Linda Ellinor, authors of *Dialogue: Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation* (Ellinor & Gerard, 1998) and principals of The Dialogue Group ([www.thedialoguegrouponline.com/whatsdialogue.html](http://www.thedialoguegrouponline.com/whatsdialogue.html)). Their approach to dialogue is based on (a) suspending judgment; (b) identifying assumptions; (c) listening carefully, to others and to the group; and (d) inquiring and reflecting. The Dialogue Group seems to do primarily organizational consulting for profit and not-for-profit organizations. Indeed, practitioners working within the Bohmian framework seem to be more involved in organizational consulting and personal growth than in organizing community or national public dialogue (e.g., Ross, 1998; Simmons, 1999).

### **Cafés**

The World Café uses the café as a metaphor for creating collaborative dialogue within communities, businesses, and governments. The guiding principles of the World Café are (a) “clarify the context,” (b) provide “hospitable space,” (c) “explore questions that matter,” (d) “encourage everyone’s contribution,” (e) “connect diverse perspectives,” (f) “listen together and notice patterns,” and (g) “share collective discoveries” ([www.theworldcafe.com/knowhow.html](http://www.theworldcafe.com/knowhow.html)). Cafés seek to

stimulate innovative thinking, engage participation, deepen relationship, enhance ownership of outcomes, and create meaningful dialogic experience between a speaker and an audience and among large groups of people. Typically, the facility for a Café is arranged as much as possible like an actual café—with a large number of small, preferably round, tables, scattered somewhat haphazardly, each covered with a tablecloth of sorts (ideally something participants can write on) and perhaps some flowers or something that will help people feel comfortable. Four or five people are seated at each table and, after 20-30 minutes, one of them remains as “host” of the next round while the others serve as “ambassadors of meaning” to new conversations at other tables. After several rounds, participants can return to their original tables to synthesize their discoveries; sometimes a new question is posed for an additional round; typically, a conversation among the whole group in the style of a town-meeting completes the Café and allows patterns to be identified and possibilities for action to emerge. “Café to Go,” a brief reference guide to conducting and facilitating Cafés, is available at [www.theworldcafe.com/pegasus02.html](http://www.theworldcafe.com/pegasus02.html).

Conversation Café takes these two terms literally, and seeks to promote dialogically oriented conversations at in real cafés around the country “where people can have weekly drop in dialogues about the key inner and outer issues of our times” ([www.conversationcafe.org/aboutus.html](http://www.conversationcafe.org/aboutus.html)). They seek to create a more “empowered citizenship,” not only to help people be more effective human beings, but to be more effective citizens and agents of social change. A Conversation Café involves an hour and a half of “hosted conversation, held in a public setting.” The ingredients to a successful Conversation Café are showing up, physically, mentally, and emotionally; shutting up, to allow one to listen deeply to others; and speaking up, to risk saying what’s real for you about the topic or issue being explored ([www.conversationcafe.org/join\\_story.html](http://www.conversationcafe.org/join_story.html)). The Conversation Collaborative links a number of conversation-based Café-type groups around the country (see [www.conversationcafe.org/explore\\_coll.html](http://www.conversationcafe.org/explore_coll.html)).

### **Utne Reader Salons**

The cover story of the March/April 1991 issue of the *Utne Reader* concerned “Salons.” Subtitled “How to Revive the Endangered Art of Conversation and Start a Revolution in Your Living Room,” the issue concluded with an invitation to its readers to return a coupon and participate in a salon. They received over

8,000 responses, and within a short time the “Neighborhood Salon Association” had over 500 active salons nationwide. Eventually, *Utne* discontinued supporting the NSA, although many of those groups continue to meet—influenced by the initial story, follow-up articles in 1992, 1993, 1994, and a book-length “guide to salons” (Sandra, 1997). Later, the *Utne Reader* developed the online “Café Utne” ([www.utne.com/cafe](http://www.utne.com/cafe)), which, in seven years, has had more than 125,000 participants. Their most recent book, *Salons: The Joy of Conversation* (Sandra & Spayde, 2001), describes a long history of salons, explains how to get a salon started, considers how to participate and lead a successful salon, and discusses other salon traditions, including Study Circles, book clubs, and the online salons.

### **Yankelovich**

Daniel Yankelovich is a social scientist best known for a distinguished career in public opinion polling. He came to see many limitations in how he and other pollsters conceived of such fundamental social concepts as “effective communication” and “the public.” In recent years, Yankelovich has founded two companies that do dialogic work: a private consulting firm, Viewpoint Learning, Inc. and the not-for-profit Public Agenda, and has written a popular book on *The Magic of Dialogue* (1999). Viewpoint Learning advances the idea that learning through dialogue is indispensable to people in positions of organizational leadership because it allows them to understand other points of view and incorporate those within their own ([www.viewpointlearning.com/ourpurpose.html](http://www.viewpointlearning.com/ourpurpose.html)). Like many dialogue practitioners, they distinguish between dialogue and debate—where the goal of debate is winning and the goal of dialogue is learning, through mutual understanding, mutual trust, and mutual respect ([www.viewpointlearning.com/dialogue.html](http://www.viewpointlearning.com/dialogue.html)). They offer various workshops, training, and consulting services that teach a dialogic approach to organizational leadership.

Yankelovich is also founder and chairman of Public Agenda, which, among other projects and services, seeks through community dialogue to enhance public engagement in a community ([www.publicagenda.org/aboutpa/pubengagequestions.htm](http://www.publicagenda.org/aboutpa/pubengagequestions.htm)). In unique ways, Yankelovich’s work exemplifies a wide range of public dialogue experience. He is a practitioner turned theorist, a writer and organizer, and a realist whose faith in dialogue has been strengthened by his encounters with a public that expects that cultural and political differences can energize democracy.

## IV. Conclusion

We began our essay with a hypothetical public meeting in which sincere people disagreed not only about what to do, but also about whether any of them had enough of the right kinds of information necessary in order to take any decisive action at all. We attempted to fold into the example a wide variety of challenges relevant to public dialogue—strong commitments, ego-involvements, cultural differences, and reasonable distinctions between individual leadership, persuasion, polarized debate, and genuine public dialogue. We are hardly the only observers who have become more concerned in the past decade or two about how public life might be made more inclusive. Therefore, we have attempted to take a basically rhetorical view of recent suggestions for enhancing public dialogue.

Many scholars and practitioners now pay close attention to how people and groups meet in public contexts where their differences matter enough to be recognized. Public dialogue, we discovered, is not a radical or soft ideal that can be dismissed easily. Instead, it is increasingly being conceived as a necessity for citizen involvement, democratic participation, and cultural understanding. As important authors and organizations converge on dialogic approaches, they make it a more realistic alternative to alienation or acquiescence. It is encouraging to discover so many people who believe that citizen involvement can grow to meet challenges of globalism, cultural diversity, and political controversy.

After defining basic terms, we surveyed important and overlapping rhetorical expressions of public dialogue. The rhetoric of access describes how dialogue depends on a relatively clear and open space—physical and psychological—within which people can encounter each other creatively and hear new ideas. A rhetoric of difference stresses the need for talk to take into account how distinctive and often conflicting voices need not be merged into a bland sameness for dialogue to be successful. Further, many theorists and commentators of public dialogue offer their suggestions in the spirit of a rhetoric of deliberation; that is, they see dialogue as contributing to the quality of decision-making through democratic participation. Finally, many authors suggest forms of a rhetoric of civility, through which dialogue participants share ideas while extending respect to others' positions as well. We then examine the public journalism movement as an exemplar of dialogic access, difference, deliberation, and civility.

In our second major section, we discussed the increased momentum with which contemporary organizations are adopting dialogic practices, and we survey representative projects. Groups like the Public Conversations Project develop general models of dialogue and apply them to often divisive and seemingly intractable public controversies. National and local groups concerned with content-specific problems such as race, religion, and the environment also urge the viability of dialogue processes. We also describe a number of other dialogue programs that set their sights on even more specific social problems, including organizational dialogue and the café notions that bring ordinary citizens back in touch with each other.

While discussing the scope of these efforts, we could not avoid two observations. First, although the trend toward dialogue is encouraging, and although a survey such as ours might suggest that dialogic responses are becoming dominant in contemporary culture, we should not be overly confident. We find many dialogue programs because we look for them. It is wise to remember that antidialogic tendencies are also dominant in other sectors of the public sphere: hate groups, defensive governments, and single-issue zealots also are increasing their efforts on the Internet and in public life, encouraging citizens to *avoid* listening to alternative perspectives.

Second, our review of organizations and websites—undertaken in tandem with the review of academic and popular writing about public dialogue—disclosed a surprisingly large gap between theorists and practitioners. Although the public journalism movement is a partial exception to this divisiveness, even that issue is characterized by many traditional journalists and academics as an “us vs. them” controversy. On most websites of practicing dialogue groups, the gap is more subtle; still, we find it striking how few references are made to the philosophical and conceptual bases for dialogue, or to the theorists that encourage a nuanced view of dialogue. Theorists must also do a better job of exposing their notions in the crucible of daily life, as Fishkin and others have done. Techniques and methods are important to know; the basic ideas on which they are founded are also important. We hope our essay here, limited as it is, makes some contribution toward the blending of scholarly and applied work in dialogue.

## Afterword

*William E. Biernatzki, S.J., General Editor*

A central concern for all who are interested in promoting genuine dialogue is the rarity of the genuine article in human society. As a species, we seem to have developed the capacity for confrontation and debate to a far greater degree than our capacity for true deliberation and constructive dialogue.

Perhaps this is a residual survival trait held over from our primitive ancestors' need to respond decisively to potentially lethal attacks by the forces of nature, wild beasts and human enemies. You cannot sit down and dialogue with a hungry bear or wolf pack! Later, conflicts between clans, tribes and nation-states overshadowed confrontations with natural enemies. "Nature, red in tooth and claw," took a back seat to *Homo homini lupus est*—"man is a wolf to man."

Heroic efforts have been made, as civilizations developed, to overcome this tendency. Orderly life in complex states required some degree of dialogue and compromise among their inhabitants as well as with other states. Nevertheless, the preference for debate and confrontation continues. Our love for courtroom dramas and shootouts between the stereotyped "good guys" and "bad guys" in cinema, TV and other media is ample testimony to this. "Self-respect" in interpersonal situations often seems to demand domination of the other rather than a serious effort to consider alternative views. "Compromise" implies weakness, rather than reasonableness. Fiction that features serious dialogue instead of conflict is considered "boring." "Rhetoric," itself, as has been amply noted above, often has meant using words and argumentation to gain the upper hand, rather than to seek truth and mutually agreeable solutions.

Awareness of these human propensities is growing. Most of the authors cited in the main essay above share that awareness and are trying to work towards more peaceful and truly dialogical ways in which to conduct human affairs. Do a majority of people in the world, or even within each country recognize the problem? Almost definitely not. Differences of opinion easily lead to debate, and too often to violence and open warfare. A priori opinions blind us to the validity of others' arguments. A healthy unwillingness to compromise fundamental moral principles can be quickly broadened

to encompass minor points that may affect "face" or our self-image but are irrelevant to principle. Of course the competitive drive for a larger share of the world's tangible and intangible goods is always present.

At this writing, the preference for confrontation seems dangerously evident in international relations. Considerations of true, long term national interest become lost as leaders of nations pursue policies designed to "save face" for them personally and to preserve the chimera of "national honor," but can only lead to war and ultimate self-destruction. Specific examples of this are too numerous to cite, and fresh ones bloom abundantly in each morning's news like desert flowers after a rain.

The decay of dialogue is perhaps misnamed, since "decay" implies the deterioration of a previously healthy organism. Dialogue has suffered from stunted development throughout history, and consequently has always been in an unhealthy condition. That condition is a social problem. Like so many social problems, it is rooted in individual behavior and can only be corrected by changing both individuals' behavior patterns and the social patterns on which they depend. Dialogue and civility, like charity, begin at home. Old habits die hard, and one of our oldest habits is confrontation.

Even the best intended efforts to create a civil public dialogue often fall into the very faults they are intended to correct. The discussion of public journalism, above, took note of a tendency sometimes to be satisfied with juxtaposing the polar extremes of a debate, rather than moving beyond that to fair consideration of both views to achieve as much consensus as possible. To lay both sides of an issue on the table is a start towards dialogue, but only a start.

Communicators, especially those working in religious media, have a special obligation to seek true dialogue. Insofar as possible they should put aside debate techniques and confrontational attitudes. Where fundamental moral principles are at stake, of course, they must stand their ground. Even there, however, they should seek the common elements on which both they and their interlocutors can agree. After areas of agreement are known is time enough to explore the points of disagreement, with civility and reason, avoiding "rhet-

oric” in the bad sense of arguing to gain the upper hand without regard for truth.

That’s easy to say, but given the depth of the cart tracks in the road we follow, it is much harder to do. Those ruts have been dug into our culture by millennia of confrontation, and to steer out of them takes real effort. But conscience should demand it, and the preservation of civilized life certainly does.

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## Journals Received

*Communication Research Trends* receives communication journals from around the world. As space permits, *Trends* will summarize key themes and report on journal contents. However, for a more up-to-date summary of these journals, please see our website at <http://cscs.scu.edu/Trends/journals>.

## Featured Review

### *Children, Young People and Media Globalisation*

In its last issue (Volume 21, No. 4), *Communication Research Trends* reviewed the state of the discussion of Media Globalization. Here we present a review of a recent book that advances the globalization debate.

**von Felitzen, Cecilia and Ulla Carlsson** (Eds.). *Children, Young People and Media Globalisation*. Göteborg, Sweden: The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media. Nordicom: Göteborg University, 2002. Pp. 262. Yearbook 2002 ISSN 1403-4700; ISBN 91-89471-15-6 (pb.) n.p.

In their edited volume, Cecilia von Felitzen and Ulla Carlsson bring together the first collection of articles to touch upon the media globalization experience of children and youth across the globe. In the foreword, Carlsson presents the rationale for focusing on youth within the growing literature on media and globalization. Children and youth under the age of 18 constitute over one-third of the world population and many of the efforts of media companies and advertisers are oriented toward reaching this valuable “market” (pp. 8-9). At the same time, Carlsson cautions, any inquiry into the experience of young people and media globalization must note the striking differences in the economic circumstances and media environments available to children of different regions and countries.

Von Felitzen’s introductory chapter locates the dimensions of media globalization covered in the book. Reflective of the area of globalization studies more generally, this volume includes articles that deal with the structure and ownership of media, policy implications, and audience reception. In her introduction, von Felitzen provides a detailed road-map to each of the articles that follow. Because the articles chosen for the volume cover considerable ground topically, and vary in their approach and depth of analysis, von Felitzen’s excellent synthesis gives the book more coherence.

The first three articles in the book, writes von Felitzen, “elucidate—with said focus on children, young people and the media—the relations of the prevailing media globalisation process to economy and market forces, political processes, technological development, dominance/dependence between countries and rich and poor people, cultural identity and human/children’s rights” (p. 14).

Robert McChesney brings the growing commercial media market aimed at children and youth into his analysis of an increasingly consolidated global media system dominated by nine or ten transnational corporations. After analyzing some of the damaging consequences of the present commercial system on children (e.g., through its emphasis on materialism or violent programming), he challenges governments and policy-makers to act on behalf of children in crafting media policies that will protect the well-being of children.

Cees Hamelink begins his analysis of the consequences of media globalization by considering the rights of children as laid out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations Assembly in 1989. Hamelink summarizes the articles from the Convention that have implications for protecting the rights of children for freedom of expression, and freedom in seeking information of all kind from a diversity of national and international sources. Hamelink then considers the areas in which children’s rights are most threatened by the prevailing global media system.

While Hamelink lays out a global agenda of policy issues guided by ethical and humanitarian framework, Francis Nyamnjoh brings many of these concerns into specific focus by considering the possible outcomes of media globalization on African children. He acknowledges that economic conditions prevent most African cultures and children from being in the entertainment and information flow produced by global media industries. Those that do have access to media are often exposed to imported programming not produced with the cultural interests of African children in mind. Even so, Nyamnjoh warns of an overly simplistic approach to studying children, media, and globalization. He reminds us that, “Children everywhere may appear to be chasing after the same media products, but they bring along with them specific cultural traits that lead to diversity in their consumption of those products” (p. 51).

The next four articles in the book deal with the production and distribution of specific content aimed at children. Joseph Tobin examines the production of Pokémon cultural and media products. His analysis positions the creation of Pokémon within Japan’s robust domestic cultural industry, and describes the strategies and tensions in adapting Pokémon for a global, especially Western, market.

Tim Westcott turns his attention to the production strategies of three U.S.-based companies—Cartoon Network, Disney, and Nickelodeon—involved in the creation of animated programming for a domestic and global market. While the three companies have come to dominate the children's market in the U.S. and are aggressively pursuing markets abroad, Westcott points to a number of factors that potentially limit the dominance of these companies abroad, including regulations that place quotas on foreign programs and how the threat of competition posed from these players has encouraged indigenous production in some, especially European, countries.

In an article that centers on children's television production in New Zealand, Ruth Zanker provides a close analysis of the dynamics that are in play in a country where deregulation has paved a direct path for foreign media to play a competitive, if not dominant, role. With limited funds for the production of children's programming, how do "global hits" constrain the decisions made about the children's programming produced within New Zealand? How do other practices that accompany global hits, such as opportunities made possible by character licensing and merchandising, further affect the actions and priorities of media companies?

While many of the recent concerns about media globalization have focused on entertainment programming and advertising content, Clive Barnett examines a popular youth program produced within South Africa that blends educational content with a dramatic format, placing this within the larger context of media citizenship. Pointing to the need to reconceptualize "educational programming," Barnett makes the case for the role that educational broadcasting can play in "empowering people to take charge of everyday decision-making" (p. 102). Still, his case study reveals the "contradictions of producing public service broadcasting with universal social objectives, in a context in which public service broadcasters are increasingly dependent upon advertising for their continued operation" (p. 108).

In his recent review essay, "Globalization and the Media: The Debate Continues" (*Communication Research Trends*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 2002) Emile McAnany argues that while studies of globalization have tried to keep up with shifting media structures, attention to accounting for audience responses has been lacking. Through research on children in Denmark, Israel, Argentina, India, and Sierra Leone, a number of articles in this volume provide research perspectives on how children and young people utilize media content often pro-

duced outside of their own countries in ways that shape their identities, values, and everyday lives, though they vary considerably in their level of theorizing and analysis.

Kirsten Dotter's article deals with Danish children's reception of Disney programming, documenting the penetration of Disney programming and cultural products in the culture, and providing some data from in-depth interviews with Danish children in two age-groups. Her article provides some sense of "how" children see Disney (mostly as animated narratives) and outlines some of the ways that children interpret Disney content through lenses of age, gender, and region.

A varied set of media experiences (e.g., Teletubbies, wrestling shows) of Israeli children forms the empirical base for Dafna Lemish's article. From a wide-ranging set of studies, Lemish finds "evidence for at least three forms of mediation between the two extremes of the global and the local" (p. 128), which produces a hybrid culture for children that is both global and local in nature. Additionally, Lemish argues that Israeli children's reception of the media is shaped by the particular historical content of Israeli society today, where "issues of war and security, masculinity and force, militarization of civil society, egalitarian ethos, "us" and the "other" are central in children's construction of social life" (p. 133).

Though less comprehensive in its analysis, Roxana Morduchowicz provides data from a research project focusing on the ways in which Argentine children from severely economically deprived areas respond to TV. The economic circumstances of the children provide the social context by which to understand the centrality of television in the home and in the lives of the children.

Keval Kumar's article takes a different tack to studying media audiences. Rather than focus on responses of child or youth audiences to contemporary media portrayals, Kumar asks Indian audiences of different generations to recall media experiences from childhood and early youth. From these recollections, one can see how the meanings of events are shaped by the way an event was initially portrayed by the media, as well as the diverse interpretations given to events reflective of participants' social circumstances.

The last audience reception study deals with children's media use in Sierra Leone, a small country where the majority of the population are children and 57% of the population lives below the poverty line. Mohamed Zubairu Wai conducted a survey of over 2,300 young people living in Freetown (the largest city

in Sierra Leone where 36% of the country's population lives) looking at their access to media, amount of media use, and preference for content. This in-depth analysis illustrates the contradictions that can exist within the same country: Most children in Sierra Leone have access to few media, yet in Freetown the impact of media globalization is strongly felt through the predominance of foreign media programming, the aggressive commercial culture, and the challenges these raise for maintaining cultural identity.

The final article in the book by Kathryn Montgomery takes us away from media audiences and back to an examination of the interplay between media industries, content providers, and commercial interests. In this case, the focus is on a technology used by only 9% of the world's population—the Internet. In this volume, the value of this article is in foreshadowing some of the issues that will face more countries as the number of children and youth using the Internet increase and the clear need for discussions of appropriate policies with respect to the youth audience.

In the last 50 pages of the book, the editors include a collection of up-to-date statistics on age and life-expectancy indicators of the world population, education and literacy rates, child labor and economic indicators, and availability of media in the world. This is a fascinating and relevant compilation that provides a broader context for many of the articles, but equally importantly, a basis for constructing new research questions and agendas on the topic of children, media, and globalization. Indeed, an article that reflected upon some of these data and linked them to a research agenda would have been a welcome addition to the volume.

As the first edited collection in the area of children, young people, and media globalization, the book helps set an agenda for the questions future researchers and policy-makers will ask. While the articles are not equally comprehensive nor grounded in empirical evidence, they do provide a valuable look into the media industries producing content for youthful global audiences and the characteristics of those young audiences as shaped by their cultures and their particular economic, social, and political circumstances. Hopefully, this book will stimulate many more scholars to take up this important area of inquiry and to fashion projects that examine the process of media globalization over time.

References follow each chapter. However, there is no index to the entire volume.

—Christine M. Bachen  
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## Book Reviews

**David Bell.** *An Introduction to Cybercultures*. London: Routledge: 2001. Pp. 239. ISBN 0-415-24658-X (hb.) \$80.00, ISBN 0-415-24659 (pb.) \$22.95.

As are many of the books published by Routledge, this book is intensely involved with a circumscribed cluster of theorists. Though it is a valuable book for an academic library, especially for its bibliography, its weakness is a lack of clarity about its “imagined” reader. While the glossary includes such basics as a definition of “chat room,” it is written for an audience for whom elementary technology is entirely new, and yet that same reader would be someone very keen on abstract, sophisticated cultural theory, much of which is recognized as important, self-reflexive, and philosophically embedded in postmodernism. Despite its editorial shortcomings and contradictions, this book is a useful introduction to the theoretical underpinnings of that niche of academic cultural studies that addresses technology.

Rather than an introduction to cyberculture, as the title implies, it is more aptly titled an introduction to the cultural theories about cybercultures. Among the postmodernists whom Bell traces to an emerging theory of cyberspace, are Sherry Turkle, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault, and Paul Virilio. In order to explicate how theorists think about cyberspace, Bell examines different approaches to science and technology studies, social construction of technology and actor-network theory approaches, in order to find ways to think about relations between humans and machines. Moving from the center of the argument to the periphery, Bell also covers problems of “the body” or “posthuman” world of Cyborgs, and “sub” cultures arising from the pernicious opportunities created by technology

The most controversial issues among the theorists working in cultural studies who debate the impact of technology on the practices of daily life are the definition of community and how imagined communities differ from subcultures, the assumptions behind the creation of identities online. Bell outlines the argument about community, both those who think technology undermines social community and those who think it provides an unprecedented platform for community. Relying on the leading theoreticians including Benedict Anderson, Ferdinand Tönnies, Louis Wirth, James Slevin, Barry Wellman, and Miela Giulia, Bell outlines the argument about community as a whole within the broader approach to critical thinking about the concept of community in late modernity. As

Anderson's definitive theory suggested, nations themselves are imagined communities and they need material objects as totem and symbol, including flag, rituals, custom, and traditions. At the same time, threats to imagined communities exist, both to nation states and to those framed by self-identification, self-naming, and technology. One of these is globalization. Just how vast can the tribe be and still call itself a cluster? This is a provocative theoretical slate of thinkers and would be a useful springboard for discussion among students.

The most important chapter for educators and scholars, and the most serious of these controversies raised in this book is the penultimate one, about conducting research in cyberculture. Ethnography, or the study of how people behave in cyberspace is clearly fraught with possibility and ethical thin ice. That is what makes it interesting. As Bell summarizes, theorists have observed there is danger in the traditional participant-observer mode, something untenable in cyberspace about the researcher being on the virtual verandah. "Lurkers are people who watch things like chat rooms or MUDs without actively participating—a kind of virtual voyeurism" (p. 198). Yet participation transforms all aspects of the community, includes point of view, identity, and the conversation that itself supplies the text. In the opinion of this reviewer, here Bell is broaching a most important subject of a megatrend in research, and a key point about how cyberculture may transform academic research in the future: Monologue marks invalidity, while multilogue signals virtual reality, has the potential for objectivity. Uncertainty is the DNA of post-human research.

Bell tries to balance the abstraction of theory by personalizing his narrative. For a book immersed in the theory of the "decentered self," it is an intensively autobiographical account of the author's encounter with both the Internet and with the theories of the Internet. This autobiographical account includes (in chapter 2) a rather tedious account of his "storying" of his first uses of email, chat rooms, a brief history of the Internet and World Wide Web, the development of the material hardware and software that makes cyberspace possible. His autobiography "roams" through a range of "overlapping cyberspaces," including digital clocks and viruses, in order to contribute to our ongoing meaning-making processes" (p. 62). Nonetheless, Bell's approach yields a useful primer of the fundamentals of cultural theory as applied to the subjects in and about computer technology.

—Claire Hoertz Badaracco  
Marquette University

**Cutting, Joan.** *Pragmatics and Discourse: A Resource Book for Students.* London/New York: Routledge, 2002. Pp. xi, 187. ISBN 0-415-25357-8 (hb.) \$80.00; 0-415-25358-6 (pb.) \$23.95.

This introduction to the analysis of "language's relation to the contextual background features" of the use of language—its context, coherence, relevance, and function (pp. 1-2)—is a title in the series, "Routledge English Language Introductions." The author is Reader in Applied Linguistics at the University of Sunderland, U.K.

The book's subject matter is not syntax, "the way that words relate, without taking into account the world outside," nor semantics, "the study of what the words mean by themselves, out of context," but rather, how combinations of words are meaningful in contexts of situation, background knowledge, or "co-text," meanings derived from other parts of the text (p. 3).

This and the other books in the series are intended as "flexi-texts" that readers can use according to each one's style of study. Accordingly, they are divided into four sections: introduction, development, exploration, and extension. Each section is subdivided into six units with parallel contents relevant to that section. Thus, unit one deals with basic explanations of "context" in the "introduction" section, while unit one in the "development" section is concerned with "analysing the discourse in context," in the "exploration" section with "exploring the context of writing," and in the "extension" section with "context: knowledge and stereotypes."

Similarly, unit two is about "context," "analysing the co-text," "investigating co-text," and "co-text: repetition and reference," respectively, across the four sections. Other units follow the same pattern across the sections for "speech acts" (unit three), "conversation" (unit four), "the cooperative principle" (unit five), and "politeness" (unit six).

"Politeness," here, refers "to the choices that are made in language use, the linguistic expressions that give people space and show a friendly attitude to them." Again, for example in unit six, section one presents basic concepts about politeness, unit two develops "the principle of politeness," unit three discusses "applying politeness," and unit four supplies two texts from other sources as "readings in politeness" that describe research showing how people use politeness in concrete social and cultural situations.

Although the rigid matrix imposed on the material by the series format may seem, at first sight, unduly confining, it supplies a way of ordering content that

might otherwise be difficult to grasp. The texts supplied in unit six of each section help provide linkage between abstract and the reader's concrete experience.

References and a "glossarial index," are supplied.  
—William E. Biernatzki, S.J.

**Finnegan, Ruth.** *Communicating: The Multiple Modes of Human Interaction.* London/New York: Routledge, 2002. Pp. xxi, 306. ISBN 0-415-24117-0 (hb.) \$90.00; 0-415-24118-9 (pb.) \$27.95.

Many treatments of communication—"ways that human beings interconnect with each other"—concentrate, in the author's view, so much on words and their ramifications that other important dimensions of communication are neglected. "Words are indeed wonderful, and my personal and scholarly life has been imbued with them—but there is so much else too" (p. xv). Her effort to achieve "a wider view of communication" started from "an initial training in the beautiful works of Greek and Roman literature." To that she added a wider perspective focusing "on charting the modes by which people connect in the world.. [drawing] on the multifarious arts and artefacts which we humans create." In doing this she was influenced by her earlier research: on "story-telling in Sierra Leone, then oral poetries and performances in Africa and elsewhere, processes of literacy and orality, Fijian and English music-making, and urban tales.."(pp. xv-xvi).

Part one, "Foundations," consists of two chapters: "Communicating humans...but what does that mean?" and "How can we communicate? The basic resources of humans and other animals." Part two, "Channels of communication," has five chapters, corresponding to discussions of each of the five senses. Part three stresses "the multiple creativity in human communicating," with chapter eight, "a mix of arts," describing "the interwoven modes of human communicating" and "multiplicity and human interconnectedness," and chapter nine carrying these characteristics "through space and time."

Finnegan is cautious about comparing human and animal communication, "given our relative lack of knowledge" about the communication of most other species. "Nonetheless it is fair to say that certain characteristics of human communicating do indeed seem unparalleled—not only their multiply overlapping communicative modes but their ability to span far space and time through their material creations" (p. 260).

Abundant illustrations are integral to the text. Notes for each chapter, a long list of references, and an index are appended.  
—WEB

**Green, Eileen and Alison Adam** (Eds.). *Virtual Gender: Technology, Consumption, and Identity.* New York/London: Routledge, 2001. Pp. xxi, 330. ISBN 0-415-23314-3 (hb.), \$100.00, 0-415-23315-1 (pb.), \$27.95.

Gender's influence on our experience of information technology is a theme that runs through much of the history and sociology of the media. Among other subjects, scholars have repeatedly investigated inequalities of access to technology among males and females in schools and the workplace, uncovered differences in masculine and feminine orientations to communication tools, shown how the design of communication media socializes users into gender roles, and mused on how we use technologies to construct and deconstruct our gender identities.

Green and Adam present 16 essays about gender and information technology, some previously published in a special issue of the journal *Information, Communication, and Society*. The anthology brings together research conducted in Europe, North America, Africa, Australia, and, of course, on the Internet. Essays treat both male and female experiences, mainly with new media. Most of the essays are empirical in nature, using a broad range of research methods.

The essays in part one examine how gender shapes access to and uses of the Internet and email in several contexts, from the workplace to social life to international politics. Part two focuses on virtual reality, the multi-user online worlds known as MOOs, the telephone, and computer games as leisure spaces where we fashion our notions of gender and self. In part three, authors consider issues of online ethics and citizenship rights raised by cyberstalking, an Internet women's community, and the design of a digital city. Part four returns to questions of self-transformation through technology, analyzing the reasons for gender-switching online and proposing a new cyberfeminist orientation toward technology.

*Virtual Gender* should be accessible to advanced undergraduates in courses on gender and media, or technology and communication. It includes an annotated list of contributors and a subject index. Each essay is followed by references.

—Chad Raphael  
Santa Clara University

**Levinson, Paul.** *Digital McLuhan: A Guide to the Information Millennium.* New York/London: Routledge, 2002. Pp. vii, 226. ISBN 0-415-19251-X (hb.) \$50.00, ISBN 0-415-24911-0 (pb.) \$17.95.

Although the thought of Marshall McLuhan went into something of a hiatus after his death in 1980, the Canadian media theorist and pop icon has recently been undergoing something of a mini-revival. Particularly since the rise of the Internet, there has been a steadily growing interest in McLuhan. W. Terrence Gordon's thoroughly researched biography, *Escape into Understanding*, came out in 1997, and McLuhan's entire body of work is now being reprinted by Ginko Press. Not surprisingly, the new gush of McLuhan literature inspires a wide range of reactions, much as McLuhan himself did 40 years ago when he exploded onto the radar screen of popular culture with *Understanding Media* in 1964. (In the late 1960s, McLuhan was possibly the most famous academic after Einstein.) For some, McLuhan's erudite and playful explorations of media, literature, and popular culture evoked a powerful fascination. For others, McLuhan's ambiguous aphorisms and jarring prose awakened an equally strong repulsion.

Levinson worked with McLuhan in the 1970s and thus is well-positioned to present McLuhan's ideas to a new generation raised on digital media and the Internet. Older people who found McLuhan's thought inscrutable will be grateful to find Levinson's book more approachable than the primary works of McLuhan such as *The Gutenberg Galaxy* or *Understanding Media*. But despite its easier style, Levinson's book, *Digital McLuhan*, will evoke a similarly wide range of reactions. Some will find Levinson's book a lucid and helpful guide to 13 key insights in McLuhan's work. Others will find the book an uncritical rehash of the master's ideas.

In fact, *Digital McLuhan* is really two intertwining books. One presents McLuhan's ideas about media and their pervasive impact on our lives. The other book offers a sustained argument for the continuing relevance of McLuhan's work (properly understood) in making sense of the new digital media. Levinson offers helpful explanations of such McLuhan aphorisms as "the medium is the message" (no, McLuhan did not mean that content is unimportant, only that the medium has innate powerful effects regardless of content) and the contrast between "acoustic space" and "visual space" (yes, our concept of "space" as continuous and uniform is an unrecognized artifact of the technology of the phonetic alphabet).

Levinson does not back away from McLuhan's more extreme statements that seem to imply a reductionist media determinism. (Indeed Levinson himself admits to trafficking in the shock value of statements

such as that Hitler would never have been possible without radio or that Nixon lost the 1960 U.S. presidential election to Kennedy because he was "too hot" for the television medium. It is true that for McLuhan, history is shaped by the dominant forms of media technology.) Levinson affirms and amplifies McLuhan's claim that media technologies—indeed all technologies—achieve their effects without our concurrence and often without our awareness. For example, McLuhan argued that to understand social phenomena such as the Reformation or the widespread restlessness and dissent of the 1960s, one must examine the underlying hidden effects of the introduction of new media technologies that in McLuhan's judgment were creating the conditions for cultural upheaval.

But the key point that Levinson makes is that those who dismiss McLuhan as a technological determinist have failed to grasp the full implications of what McLuhan was saying about the interdependent influence of media technology and human culture. Levinson makes a serious case for the claim that the key insight of McLuhan was the possibility that we can and do influence the direction of technological evolution even as we must live with the often unperceived effects of our own creations. Levinson argues that McLuhan, especially in his final posthumous work, *Laws of Media*, offered a more open-ended and hopeful vision of our technological future in the endless pattern of reversal and retrieval in which the limitations of one media technology is contained and complemented by a succeeding media technology. An obvious example is the ephemerality and difficulty of programming television as that technology originally evolved. Levinson points out that this problem was overcome by the technology of the VCR which allowed the networks to store and organize televised material. Then as VCR technology became commercialized and cheap, it allowed the viewing audience to reorganize and ultimately to escape the rigid way networks provided their programming.

In the end, few McLuhan critics will find their negative views of McLuhan changed by Levinson's book. But those who are willing to accept analogical "explorations" in place of rigorous philosophical explanation or quantitative empirical research—or who simply want a very readable application of McLuhan's approach to the new Internet culture—will find *Digital McLuhan* a stimulating and enjoyable reflection on the continuing appeal of McLuhan's thought.

—Richard Cain  
Wheeling Jesuit University

