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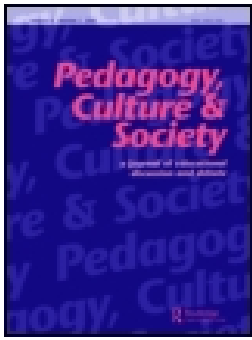
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Concluding remarks on intercultural communication pedagogy and the question of the other

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ABSTRACT

This paper constitutes the concluding remarks paper to the special issue of *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, titled 'Intercultural Communication Pedagogy and the Question of the Other'. The paper presents our own reflections of the broader implications and possible conclusions that can be drawn from contributing papers. Here, we argue that there is one notion, which has been overlooked in the field of Intercultural Communication Pedagogy, namely, the political. In this paper, we argue that the political should not be negated, or relegated, at the expense of the ethical – instead, the political should be included in addressing and redressing the ethics of Intercultural Communication Pedagogy. We reject the liberal doxa that Intercultural Communication Pedagogy should be conceptualised along the lines of non-conflict with the other, e.g., through understanding the other or having a dialogue with the other. Instead, we propose conceptualising the self and other relation in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy as a permanent antagonism, a permanent crisis, without resolution. In outlining our argument, we discuss some conceptual issues surrounding some postpositivist approaches and offer a way forward for Intercultural Communication Pedagogy through an engagement with the political.

Introduction: reviewing the special issue

There is, generally, a degree of trepidation in offering a conclusion to any special issue. The issue at hand is that the act of 'bringing the papers together' might suggest a point of finitude, which as the reader will know, for the ethical relations discussed in the contributions to this special issue, finitude is undesirable and even impossible. Broadly speaking, the contributors of this special issue have addressed, one or more, of the following questions:

(1) What ontological assumptions does intercultural communication pedagogy make in its efforts to build social cohesion and peace across cultural divides? What is the problem, if any, with these assumptions?

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(2) What non-words, concepts and theories may be used to reconceptualise the ethical relation between self and other in intercultural communication pedagogy? What transformative impact, if any, may these non-words, concepts and theories make on the practice of intercultural communication pedagogy so that it moves the dialogue with the other on without reaching a conclusion?

(3) How might continuing the dialogue with the other in intercultural communication pedagogy generate possibilities for critical resistance to perceived injustice without resorting to grounded principles to do so? What possible implications and tentative conclusions might social justice pedagogues and intercultural communication education policy makers draw from such dialogue?

In engaging with these questions, the contributing papers contained in this special issue grapple with a number of interrelated research themes in relation to Intercultural Communication Pedagogy. In recent times, scholarly debates in the field have argued for moving the field beyond culture as an analytical category associated with, or imperative of, the self and other relation (see e.g., Dervin and Simpson 2021). This brings the reader to important questions: well, if I am not 'meeting' or 'engaging in' culture with the other, then who and what am I engaging with? And, by what means am I meeting and engaging with the other? In engaging with these questions perhaps there is another often overlooked notion which can be deemed central to Intercultural Communication Pedagogy, namely, the notion of time (Biesta this issue). To meet and to engage have temporal significance in the sense that the self and other relation in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy has historically been determined by the here and now (Ferri this issue). Questions of time and temporality (Biesta this issue) bring us to another important juncture namely, to what extent can *I* make sense of this contemporality and what does this mean for *my* ethical responsibilities (Biesta this issue; Manoff and Ruitenberg this issue)? In attempting to address these questions, one needs to take into consideration the conceptual limitations of the knowing subject and how the knowing subject has been positioned as the all-encompassing bearer of truth and knowledge in intercultural communication (Simpson 2022a). If I am limited in what I can experience, in what I know, and how I engage and come into contact with the other, then simply, what do I do? What can I do? This shift marks a reconceptualisation from the self as the knowing subject to the self as an acting subject (Bakhtin 2012). Pedagogy, and pedagogical acts, bring forth questions of ethics (Biesta this issue; Manoff and Ruitenberg this issue) in terms of problematising the (im)possibility of the subject to act ethically in intercultural encounters (Biesta this issue; Manoff and Ruitenberg this issue; Ferri this issue; Frimberger this issue). Pedagogy, in this sense, heightens the instability and precariousness of the self and other rather than offering a sense of finitude or a solution to resolve the self and other relation (Biesta this issue; Manoff and Ruitenberg this issue). Yet, at the time of writing, supranational organisations in education continue to propose ways to offer a sense of finitude to the self and other relation which has implications for educational policy, pedagogical practices and for ethical relations (see e.g., Zembylas this issue). This prevailing doxa of educational policy functions as a form of governmentality in demarcating how the (Intercultural) subject should behave and act (see Zembylas this issue; Simpson and Dervin 2020). Central to this special issue is that it we (as co-editors) feel it is important to

resist and contest the ideologies and models proposed by supernational organisations in 'dealing with' the Intercultural (see e.g., Dasli 2019).

At this juncture, it is important to delineate our contribution (as co-editors) to this concluding paper of the special issue. This concluding paper of the special issue will address the two interrelated research questions, which constitute the third research question associated with this special issue, namely: How might continuing the dialogue with the other in intercultural communication pedagogy generate possibilities for critical resistance to perceived injustice without resorting to grounded principles to do so? And, what possible implications and tentative conclusions might social justice pedagogues and intercultural communication education policy makers draw from such dialogue? In addressing these interrelated questions, we argue that there is one specific notion which has been overlooked in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy, namely, the political (for conceptual discussions on the political, see e.g., Mouffe 2005a; Esposito 2019 amongst others). In this sense, we argue that the political should not be negated, or relegated, at the expense of the ethical – the political should be included in addressing and redressing the ethics of Intercultural Communication Pedagogy. In delineating our argument, the next section of the paper offers a conceptual discussion surrounding the conceptual inertia about the ways the/and other have been posited within Intercultural Communication Pedagogy before, in the later sections of the paper, we demonstrate our argument for engaging in the political.

Intercultural communication and the question of the other: problems of *I* and otherness

As the research field of Intercultural Communication and its adjacent fields have developed over time, events and situations interpreted as 'Intercultural' have been conceptualised through exclusively prioritising and focusing on the self's perceptions and interpretations of difference (Ferri 2018). As critical and poststructuralist approaches have become more prevalent in aspects of teaching and research on Intercultural Communication assumptions have been made in terms of whether or not the self (can) ever meet or have any degree of understanding about the other (Dervin and Simpson 2021). These lines of investigation perhaps mark what has been called the postpositivist shift in research and teaching on Intercultural Communication (Holliday and MacDonald 2020). One should hesitate to immediately jump on the bandwagon that Intercultural Communication Pedagogy is now postpositivist – as if the epistemological empiricism of positivism has been in some way defeated or moved beyond. As Ferri (2018) notes, Intercultural Communication as a research field is inherently positivist. From Hall's (1959) high- and low-order matrix for mapping culture, to Geert Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions of organisational culture, to Intercultural Communicative Competence models, as articulated by Byram (1997) and the assessment of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff 2006), the self is exclusively characterised through a hyper-rationalist lens which demarcates the subject all-knowledgeable and all-truthful (Simpson 2022a). Yet, since the self has been positioned egocentrically in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy there are implications, not only for the question of the other, but for the question of the self and whether the field can be characterised as being postpositivist.

Dervin (2016) argues that 'the other is not a uniform figure' (44) and that 'the other is also every one of us' (45). These two quotations seem slightly at odds insofar that the other is acknowledged through points of difference, which appear to be observable or knowable, yet, seemingly recognising and/encountering the other lies on the assumption that the other *is* every one of us. This assumption of engagement with the other can be problematic insofar as my assumptions of what the other is, how they behave, whether they understand me or not, can lead to my totalisation of the other, whilst at the same time *I* project my own sense of self upon the other by assuming that they are *other* (when they may or may not be). The danger here lies in that the postpositivist oeuvre, through postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches, may continue an empiricist line of thinking which equates the other with and to difference, whilst at the same time the self is constituted as the all-encompassing bearer of knowledge and truth (Simpson 2022a). If I say that I meet/encounter the other – who can prove or disprove this 'fact' otherwise?

Returning to Intercultural Communication and the Question of The Other means returning to Intercultural Communication Pedagogy and The Question of the Self. Or, to put this more explicitly, this movement involves questioning, *I*, *me* and, *myself*. This does not mean we are advocating for an egocentric or self-centric approach for Intercultural Communication Pedagogy, quite the contrary, as this special issue has evidenced, a mixture of eclectic perspectives addressing and redressing Intercultural Communication Pedagogy is essential in moving the field forward conceptually. Ultimately, as the papers in this special issue demonstrate, this movement requires bringing questions about the non-synthesisable ethical relation of the self-other to the foreground. At this juncture, it is important for us to be clear that we are not suggesting that the postpositivist turn in Intercultural Communication has led to an ethical turn in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy, but perhaps it ought to (if such a turn were to exist). This call for ethics in Intercultural Communication might not be new to readers versed in MacDonald and O'Regan (2013) or Phipps (2013) yet our point of departure lies in extending questions of ethics beyond the poststructuralist and postpositivist turn as implicitly argued by Holliday and MacDonald (2020).

The danger here is that some forms of dialogue (Holmes 2014) or ethical reciprocity (Holliday and MacDonald 2020) can be misinterpreted or misunderstood as an essential aspect of the self and other relation. This movement can be problematic as it can totalise the other through equating 'dialogue' or 'reciprocity' with sameness, which can negate the alterity of the other. As one of us (Ashley) has shown through dispelling some of the myths about Mikhail Bakhtin's (2012) approach of dialogism, a central component of dialogue, and of dialogism for Bakhtin, is a crisis of outsideness which means there is no point of reciprocity, nor point of stable evaluation, in the relation between the self and other (Simpson 2022a). Emmanuel Levinas in 'Otherwise Than Being, Or Beyond Essence' (Levinas 1998a) argues that the ethical relationship between self and other is contradictory. Insofar that my being (my egocentrism and selfhood) is dependent upon the other – yet I am articulating that I need to enter a dialogue with the other (though I am failing to recognise that there already exists a prerequisite relationship between *I* and the other). As Simon Critchley (2015) argues, 'In Levinas' ethics everything seems to be in reverse. It is a question of trying to think of that which precedes essence' (70). In this

sense, Levinas brings an important point to the foreground, namely, to what extent am *I* an ethical subject?

Whilst we argue it is important to constantly problematise the ethical relation of the self and other in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy, we also argue, in a way that departs slightly from Levinas, that it is important to bring the political into problematising the ethical relation of the self and other (see Esposito 2012). For Bauman (1997) the nation state facilitates the socio-political engendering of the self in relation to the other which often constructs binary relations (e.g., self/other, insider/outsider, familiar/strange). The socio-political systems and structures in which both self and other are constituted cannot be divorced from their contextual significance. In demonstrating this, the next section of this paper offers a critique of reflexivity in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy, before, in the subsequent sections of the paper we articulate our position of bringing the political into Intercultural Communication Pedagogy and The Question of The Other.

I-ness and reflexivity: beyond the totality of the subject?

In recent years, it has been argued that Intercultural Communication Pedagogy has paradigmatically shifted towards a critical (Dasli and Diaz 2017) and reflexive turn (Byrd-Clark and Dervin 2014) in teaching and research. Arguably, these processes and forces should be viewed from within a wider shift in social sciences research and arising from postpositivist approaches to interpret social phenomena (Hamati-Ataya 2012). Hamati-Ataya (2012) succinctly argues that for postpositivists of the postmodern or poststructuralist tradition, their epistemic positions are founded upon the critique of 'positivism's obliviousness to its own constitutive impact upon the reality it claims to "re-present"' (302). Reflexivity, therefore, claims to turn the question inward within the knowing subject in acknowledging that the subject is constituted by its own engagement with subject-object relations. For Hamati-Ataya (2012) the knowing subject, through a sense of moral reflexivity, connects the ways knowledge is produced to *my* 'dynamically evolving judgements of the good' (302). The ethical and/or moral praxis between *I* and subject-object relations can lead to a hyper-relativist, if not nihilist, interpretation of reflexivity in which the self is constituted as both *I* and *me* (Bonner 2001). For Bonner (2001) this 'risks an excessive self-absorption on the part of the inquirer' (269) which seemingly resonates with Esposito's (2009) notion of an overspill of self – whereby, the pre-eminence of the self simultaneously totalises and violates itself and the other.

For example, in Intercultural Communication, this point may be evidenced by an academic in higher education reflexively engaging in practices addressing the extent to which they co-construct knowledge with their students and whether the ways the knowledge is constructed refrain from preventing a sense of epistemic prejudice in the ways the teaching materials are discussed. Yet, there is a simple uncomfortable truth here, that there is no way of knowing whether the self is 'truly' engaging in these reflexive activities or not or whether they believe in preventing the reproduction of epistemic prejudice in their teaching materials, or not. The danger here is that the self, posturing itself as a 'reflexive self', moralises a judgement criterion through their own sense of self and super-imposes this judgement criterion upon their self and over the other. Hamati-Ataya (2013) argues that scholarship on reflexivity, instead of dismantling normative epistemologies 'appear[s] to converge into a common epistemic, normative or empirical project'

(670). The paradox of postpositivist reflection and reflexivity is that is has become a self-referential process in demarcating *who* is better at doing reflexivity rather than engendering some form of social change (Hamati-Ataya 2013).

The implication for Intercultural Communication Pedagogy is that in attempting to move beyond positivism – to a postpositivist position – some scholars using reflexivity might fall back into positivist tendencies in terms of how knowledge about the self and other is conceptualised. Instead of voicing or critiquing one's internal biases and prejudices some forms of reflexivity can posture towards a superaddressee – a body of perceived normative appropriateness, an authority (Blommaert 2007). In this sense, a researcher may say they are using reflexivity as a tool in their research and/or teaching but they could easily be orientating their reflexivity as a way to masquerade their *real* intentions. At this juncture, Bakhtin's (2012) work on dialogism might offer a site to reconfigure the self and other relation in the sense that reflexivity should lead to a multiplicity of voices, which mark the non-synthesisable junctures between the self and other. Dialogic forms of reflexivity should not lead to normativity or uniformity; instead, the self and other should use reflexivity to interrupt any normative or empiricist assumptions (Simpson 2022b). Bakhtin reminds us, through the notion of outsideness, that the call to outsideness acts simultaneously as an ethical movement towards the other and within the self (Simpson 2022a). This movement though is precarious and perhaps destined to fail, as the crisis of outsideness means there can be no stable ethical reciprocity between self and other; the self and other relation is almost like taking a jump into the unknown. Yet, this does not mean the self cannot, and should not, do anything. The following section takes this discussion forward by problematising a non-totalisible relation with the self and other for Intercultural Communication Pedagogy.

Levinas, ethics and politics: a site for critical resistance?

It goes without saying, that the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas can be considered to be a postpositivist thinker insofar that Levinas rejected the empiricism of positivism (Levinas 1998a). But what does this mean for politics, ethics and the relation between self and other? As Critchley and Bernasconi (2002) note, for Levinas, ethics can be understood as 'the non-totalisable relation to the other human being' (24), whereas politics can be understood as 'the relation to what Levinas calls the third party, that is, to all others that make up society' (24). The problem at hand here is that the philosophical logic of Western modernity (with its pre-eminence on the rational and enlightened subject) extends through how Levinas conceptualises politics, Levinas' attempts to break away from politics as a form of totality through the ethical responsibility of the face-to-face (Critchley and Bernasconi 2002). Totalised relations of politics (e.g., in the structuring of who is included and excluded in the political apparatus of nation states) becomes irreducible to Levinasian ethics. Here, Levinas turns the question not away from ethics but towards ethics based upon, 'the face-to-face, infinite responsibility, proximity, the other within the same, peace' (Critchley and Bernasconi 2002, 24). In this sense, an ethical relation is one where I face the other (Levinas 1998a). In 'Entre nous: On Thinking-of-the-other' (Levinas 1998b) Levinas argues 'the face *signifies* otherwise. In it, the infinite resistance of a being to our power is affirmed precisely in opposition to the will to murder which defines it' (10). Levinas (1998b) reaffirms his argument by saying 'the face is not

a figure of speech – it means by itself' (10). Thus, the face, as the meeting place for both speech and language, becomes the ethical point of relationality between self and other. Although, Levinas reminds us, in perhaps a similar way which one of us (Ashley) has engaged with questions of dialogical ethics found within Mikhail Bakhtin's works (Simpson 2022a,2022b), in the sense that I can never possess the other person (Levinas 1998b). Thus, I may meet the other but I can never know what the other demands from me, nor can I ensure that the relationship between I and the other can be ethical.

In 'The Problem with Levinas' Simon Critchley (2015) argues that Levinas' later works (for example, in 'Otherwise than Being' [Levinas 1998a]), 'the face gets replaced by the distinction between the Saying and the Said. Crudely, the Saying is ethical and the Said is ontological, meaning that the Said is propositional' (73).

Critchley (2015) goes on to say that,

> The Saying is that pre-propositional experience of language that takes place in relation to the Other. As soon as the saying is expressed philosophically, it becomes the Said . . . .in other words, there is no pure Saying.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 *(76)*

For Critchley (2015) this marks a paradox in Levinas' thinking insofar as Levinas' attempt to depart from, or move beyond, ontology requires a form of ontology. This brings us to another problem in Levinas' thinking, in returning to the earlier critique that Levinas' is unable to move beyond a pre-eminence of the self based on Western modernity (e.g., in the privileging of the self as the knowing subject). Critchley (2015) argues, this shows 'Levinas' statist and androcentric vision of justice, politics, and everything' (73). In this sense, the paradox for Levinas is seemingly the pre-eminence of the self, or to put this another way, the problem exclusively lies with Levinas' conceptualisation of *I*. The paradox of Levinas' call to ethics, a movement which involves the other, is that Levinas' logic can exacerbate the self's violence towards the other. Levinas argues that the self no longer requires the other in order to fulfil the self's being or subjectivity in the world (Critchley 2015). In this sense, I am who I am, I do not need the other, I determine whether I wish to engage with the other or not. Critchley (2015) goes on to argue that, for Levinas, the self and other relation therefore takes on a fraternal relationship, he argues, 'so, contained in Levinas' politics of friendship, as Derrida would say, is a very classical idea of brotherhood' (107). The problem with Levinas' politics of friendship is it fails to acknowledge that politics requires an adversary in which the social and the political are both constituted by antagonistic relations (see e.g., Chantal Mouffe 2005a work on the political). In this sense, the social and political require an enemy which Levinas does not consider (Esposito 2019).

As an extension of this thinking, examples of ethics and the political without an adversary, can be found in conceptual problems associated with some postpositivist and non-essentialist approaches in Intercultural Communication which can serve to sanitise the ethical and political relation between self and other – in bringing the self and other relation to a point of equivalence, of sameness (Dervin and Simpson 2021). The pre-eminence of the notion of self in such approaches means the egocentrism of the self (Esposito 2009) often marks the point in which the self negates the other, or the self becomes superseded in the other. These instances can be marked in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy through the sameness attributed to positivist and postpositivist approaches, for example, let's take discussions about culture in Byram's (1997)

positivist model and in Holliday and MacDonald's (2020) call for a greater sense of intersubjectivity in Intercultural Communication research. It is widely acknowledged that Byram's (1997) conceptualisation of culture equates culture to a nation-state level and acts as a synonym for nationality (Hoff 2014). In the conclusion of their (Holliday and MacDonald 2020) article Holliday and MacDonald argue that nationality should not be an 'a priori category in Intercultural research' (634) unless 'it emerges as a category, which is constituted intersubjectively in the interaction between the researcher and the research participants' (635). In other words, one should not contest 'culture' being used as a synonym for nationality if it is spoken by an all-knowledgeable rational subject as part of a given research process. What the research participant says seemingly cannot be contested as the rationalisation of the knowing subject means their utterances must be taken as a form of sacred writ, a form of *truth (Simpson 2022a). In both of these examples about culture the self and other relation reaches a point of equivalence or sameness through the way my biases and perceptions negate the other (Byram), and, through how the other's biases and perceptions negate me (Holliday and MacDonald). At this juncture, other relevant examples we could have picked include tolerance, respect and political correctness associated with the liberal lexicon of Intercultural Communication Pedagogy (for a critique of tolerance see Dasli 2017). The overwhelmingly liberal doxa in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy focuses on preventing conflict (as e.g., this might offend the other), preventing contestation (e.g., in terms of the 'truths' that my research participants are telling me), and preventing critiques of experiences (e.g., in what research participants self-identify as or what research participants label themselves as). In all these examples, there is a notion which has been often overlooked in Intercultural Communication (Dervin and Simpson 2021) (perhaps it has been deemed too controversial), that notion is the political. The subsequent section problematises whether the political can be brought into discussions on Intercultural Communication Pedagogy.

Reconfiguring intercultural communication pedagogy through the political

In recent decades, there has been significant scholarly interest in the political which has extended across most areas of the social sciences. It is important to acknowledge that there are different conceptual and theoretical approaches to the political. For example, Giorgio Agamben's (1998) project on *Homo Sacer* differs to Chantal Mouffe's poststructuralist reading of the political (2005a, Mouffe 2005b) which in turn differs from Roberto Esposito's (2019) affirmative philosophy. These are a small selection of a much larger number of scholars who engage in the political from different philosophical positions (see e.g., Negri 2008) but this concluding paper does not have the scope to map and trace all these trajectories.

Chantal Mouffe's (2005a, 2005b) poststructuralist interpretation of the political argues that liberal theories and philosophies are blind to the political because liberal approaches essentialise being as presence within the subject. If the subject says they are 'A' then they are 'A'. Whilst this argument may resonate with earlier sections of this paper, at this juncture it is important to delineate what we mean by the political. In conceptualising the political, Roberto Esposito's (2019) argues that Carl Schmitt undoubtedly influenced how the political is understood. For Esposito's (2019), politics starts with the antithesis between friend and enemy, which under differing forms of politics since modernity has

resulted in the 'the logical priority of first over the second, between enemy and friend' (21). Esposito's (2019) argues that the political is the most extreme form of antagonism – in this sense,

> the friend is merely what remains of a deeply rooted hostility that, initially confined to political relations, now permeates existence as a whole, mobilising it polemically. All that is needed to make the non-political political is for it to incorporate a conflictual trait *(21).*

In this sense, all other antitheses (whether social, political, ethical, linguistic and so on) become constructed as political relations and are revealed as a hostility of the friend–enemy relation. Here it is important to delineate our take on the political. By the political we mean relations *of power, conflict and antagonism*. A focus on the political acknowledges the permanent coexistence and irreducibility of antagonistic forces inherent within societies (Esposito 2019). The form of Intercultural Communication Pedagogy suggested here acknowledges that antagonisms are essential in constructing the relation between self and other in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy. This approach, therefore, rejects postpositivist neutrality and apoliticality that pollutes both research and practice (Simpson 2022a). At this juncture, we also feel it is important to break from some poststructuralist readings of the political (e.g., Mouffe 2005a) insofar that they can reproduce some of the conceptual issues we have highlighted in previous sections of this paper arising from some approaches found within the interpretative paradigm of postpositivist research (see e.g., Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer 2002; on how critical realism can offer an alternative to the poststructuralist argument offered by Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

What does a reading of the political mean for Intercultural Communication Pedagogy and what does it mean for the self and other? There is perhaps a commonly held assumption in scholarship in Intercultural Communication that the subject belongs to given entities (e.g., spaces, places, something tangible or intangible, cultures, languages and so on). There is a danger that interpretivist research continues the positivist line of 'boxing-in' the subject to categories and labels insofar as postpositivist approaches act as an extension of positivism by reproducing methodological nationalism (R'Boul 2022). Experiences can never be neutral or apolitical, neither is it simply about researchers or teachers giving a sense of agency or voice (which often reproduces unequal power differentials), yet time and time again subjects in research and in teaching are given labels they cannot move beyond. Therefore, what if the political demands a reworking of the question, and instead asks: What if subject–subject, subject–object, object–subject have nothing in common? Esposito's (2019) argues that the process of alienation can be best articulated through the labourer and the commodity from labour – for Esposito, there is a breakdown in relation between property, the labourer and the body. As, the moment the body of the labourer is offered on the free market 'its product is made autonomous from the labour required to produce it, thereby becoming an exchangeable commodity' (106). For Esposito's (2019), the subject does not relate to or have a sense of belonging towards given objects, because the object goes on to violate and appropriate the subject to an object. This is what Esposito's (2019) calls the 'dematerialisation of the common' (107) – what belongs to everyone 'is first multiplied in the mercantile circuit and then reduced to financial instruments' (107). For Esposito's (2019) expropriation is both political and economic in producing a 'void of both objects and subjects' (107) – the

subject is 'sucked into the void of the object' (107). What is usually taken for granted in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy is what given subjects identify to or belong to as members of certain communities (whether linguistic, social, cultural and so on) and what they have in common. Yet, for Esposito's (2009) this marks the point at which community is now conceptualised as a point of enclosure for the subject – a point at which there is no common, yet the subject continues to be bound to the idea of the common (Esposito 2009). It is the totalisation of the community which emasculates the identities of the subject (Esposito 2009) through which the subject is perpetually excluded (Esposito 2019). There is seemingly a synergy here with R. D. Laing in 'Politics of experience and the bird of paradise' (Laing 1967) who argues,

> I cannot experience your experience. You cannot experience my experience. We are both invisible men [sic]. All men [sic] are invisible to one another   *(16).*

Laing's words resonate an urgent call to address whether notions of experience in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy continue to appropriate the subject as an object in the sense that a subject may feel the requirement to tell an interlocutor, for example, who they are, where they are from, the languages they speak, all of which can appropriate the subject to an object (Esposito 2019). In this sense, the subject may or may not belong to anything materially at all. If they do, perhaps I am imposing onto them a sense of what I feel they feel they should be orientated towards.

An engagement with the political in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy is, therefore, essential in order to address and redress how subject and object positions are constituted (and in addressing and redressing the power differentials, which exist within these relations) and in addressing the role of the systemic within the ethics of the self and other relations. In line with Esposito's (2019) dematerialisation of the common it is also important to pay attention to the political economy of language and Intercultural Communication in the ways capitalist logics, structures and practices construct subjectivities and determine the grounds upon which the self and other relation is engendered (O'Regan 2021). As we have articulated, engaging with the political means acknowledging the limitations of some postpositivist approaches to Intercultural Communication Pedagogy and in exploring trajectories beyond this conceptual impasse (e.g., Esposito 2019). As we have argued though, it is debatable that Intercultural Communication Pedagogy can be considered as being postpositivist due to the ways that postpositivist approaches extend positivist thinking by metricizing and/or overtly rationalising the self and other relation. Therefore, we conclude this section of our paper by arguing that much more needs to be done in terms of moving the field beyond its current liberalist doxa (Dervin and Simpson 2021) in which an engagement with the political is necessary.

Conclusion: a way forward for intercultural communication pedagogy?

This paper has argued for the necessity of engaging with the political in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy. In doing so, some conceptual limitations of postpositivist approaches to Intercultural Communication Pedagogy have been drawn. These relate to an overspill of self (Esposito 2009) which results in the self egocentrically violating the other creating a convergence between sameness and otherness (Esposito 2012). Another conceptual implication is that this results in the self totalising itself and the ethical relation

with the other. The seeming pre-eminence of the self found within Intercultural Communication exacerbates intersubjective power differentials and means that the self runs the risk of speaking over or for the other or in rationalising experiences as given truths (Simpson 2022a). In departing the subject as a knowing subject, towards the subject as an acting subject, we have engaged with the political to highlight the necessity of antagonisms for shifting the prevailing liberal doxa (Esposito 2019).

Ethically, this does not mean that Intercultural Communication Pedagogy ought to be grounded in non-essentialist or apolitical approaches of 'non-conflict'. Neither does this mean that the goal of the self and other relation should be based upon understanding, ethical reciprocity or even dialogue. Bringing the political into the discussion means acknowledging that societies are inherently conflictual – this means that, ethically, for both the self and other it is permissible to reject relations, contest relations and to decide not to engage in relations – which can all be considered as being constitutive as acts of the political. In this sense, it is important for the self and other to disagree and to have conflict, insofar that this should shift 'the negative polarity to a potentially positive register' (Esposito 2019, 196). The politically negative should not be dismissed, instead, it should be used to reaccentuate societies (Esposito 2019).

We feel this is an important message amidst the popularity of differing Intercultural models used by supernational organisations (see Zemblyas this issue; Simpson and Dervin 2020; Dasli 2019) and the current trajectories surrounding research and teaching within the field. As with the ethical relation of the self and the other, guises of the intercultural ought to be rejected, dismissed and critiqued in acknowledging the wider implications of intercultural models for theory and practice. Another important consideration is to acknowledge the role of the systemic (namely, systems, i.e.,, political and economic) in discussions on Intercultural Communication Pedagogy as the tendency to offer reductionist societal snapshots should be avoided in considering the ways the political economy constructs and engenders both relations and dispositions (O'Regan 2021).

At this juncture, we feel that this concluding paper as part of the special issue points to a number of supplementary questions, which are required for further discussion in the field. It is not our purpose to propose these questions normatively or statically, rather, they should be seen as a starting point for further problematisation. These questions (we hope) will be of relevance to academics, students, teachers, and policymakers. The questions are also not an exclusive list and the reader may wish to edit or supplement them as they see fit:

Questions to consider going forward:

- How is the relationship between Intercultural Communication Pedagogy and the political constructed in educational research, practice and policymaking?
- To what extent does education attempt to introduce and/or sanitise the political in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy by imposing ideas from Liberal Modernity, such as *tolerance* and *respect*?
- To what extent does a political approach to Intercultural Communication Pedagogy facilitate a non-synthesisable relation between the self and other?
- To what extent are postpositivist approaches in Intercultural Communication Pedagogy falling back into positivist tendencies in terms of research and/or teaching? Can this fall into positivism be reversed?

- To what extent can discussions on the material be brought into the political in thinking about the ways the political economy constructs subjectivities and ethical relations?

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