

Building Bridges Through Talk: Exploring the Role of Dialogue in Developing Bridging Social Capital



Linda Doornbosch-Akse and Mark van Vuuren

Abstract This chapter examines the role of dialogue in building connections across socio-cultural and ideological divides. Applying the lens of dialogue, it seeks to promote bridging social capital in an increasingly fragmented and polarized society. Social capital is often seen as the glue that holds societies together. The central idea of social capital is that social networks and relationships matter, and provide individuals and groups with useful and beneficial resources in two ways. *Bonding social capital* refers to horizontal ties between individuals within the same social group who are similar to each other. *Bridging social capital* refers to ties between individuals or social groups who are dissimilar and which cross socio-economic and cultural divides. For a stable and healthy society, both forms of social capital are needed, but especially bridging social capital is important for reconciling democracy and diversity. Moreover, social relationships with others have a positive impact on individuals' well-being and life-satisfaction. This chapter explores the crossroads of two related, yet separated, areas of scholarship, namely social capital and dialogue studies. By reviewing their literatures and identifying areas where these disciplines might be brought together, it aims to demonstrate how dialogue can be used as a positive intervention to create bridging social capital. It will show how characteristics of dialogue foster the process of relationship building between people who are different. However, to successfully intervene in the formation of bridging social capital, it is crucial to consider the context in which it is built and maintained. Therefore, research needs to examine the *purpose* (why), the *places* (where), and the *people* (who) in the *process* (how) of building bridging social capital. As communication is crucial to cultivate relationships, this chapter asserts that creating bridging social capital is essentially a communicative accomplishment. The underlying long-term and challenging goal of building bridges through talk is to promote a more inclusive, empathetic, civil, and compassionate society.

L. Doornbosch-Akse (✉) · M. van Vuuren
University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands
e-mail: l.m.akse@utwente.nl

M. van Vuuren
e-mail: h.a.van.vuuren@utwente.nl

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2019
L. E. Van Zyl and S. Rothmann Sr. (eds.), *Theoretical Approaches
to Multi-Cultural Positive Psychological Interventions*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20583-6_22

Keywords Bonding · Bridging · Mutual understanding · Social capital · Social inclusion polarization · Trust

1 Introduction

In our network society where people have never been more connected, there is a growing sense of disconnection and division (Turkle, 2011). Putnam (2000) portrayed how individuals have become disconnected from family, friends, neighbours, and social structures since the 1950s. Over the last decades, Bishop and Cushing (2009) have noted the phenomenon of ‘ideological migration’. People have sorted themselves geographically, culturally, politically, and economically into like-minded communities. Furthermore, identity politics is undermining modern western democracies. The demands of recognition by specific identity groups (based on e.g. nation, religion, race, ethnicity, and gender) has severely fragmented the social cohesion that was once the foundation of political consensus and collaboration. Moreover, the cultural and ideological diversity threatens a common sense of belonging (Fukuyama, 2018). In an age of globalization and societies who have become increasingly diverse, most people live in tribes with those who share their lifestyle, values, and beliefs.

While division and self-segregation are not new phenomena in modern Western democracies, people nowadays have fewer opportunities to engage with those who are dissimilar. The geographic clustering in increasingly homogeneous communities, the splintered media landscape, the personalized web, and the general decline of trust in people and institutions (Edelman, 2018), have led to a society where people tend to live in their own bubbles (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2017). As a result, they don’t know or interact with others who have fundamentally different worldviews, values, or identities.

The risk of fragmentation and clustering into like-minded communities is that it endangers shared conversations, experiences, and understandings, that are the lifeblood of a healthy democracy (Sunstein, 2017). In a democracy, people need to be confronted with opposing views. Instead, we are living in echo-chambers hearing views that reinforce our own. Democracy requires reliance on shared facts. However, people are being offered parallel and separate universes (Pariser, 2011). The result of this self-sorting is that individuals and communities have grown more extreme in their opinions and societies have become increasingly polarized. In the civic atmosphere of polarization and debate and the absence of multi-dimensional human connection, people see others with different identities or perspectives as an out-group or threat: “People are often left with thin, one-dimensional stories of “the other”: what they can glean from news reports and from their own circle” (Stains, 2016, p. 1523). To rebuild trust and relations, conversation and connections across differences are crucial for the benefit of individuals and society.

This chapter aims to promote bridging social capital in an increasingly fragmented and polarized society. The civil society forms an excellent place to build relations between people with fundamentally different backgrounds, values, and identities.

Yet, as the formation of bridging social capital can be strenuous and challenging (Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2004), this chapter emphasizes to use dialogue as a *process* to build relationships within existing networks/communities (e.g. educational, religious and local communities). To grasp the role of dialogue in building relationships across social cleavages, it will explore crossroads of two flourishing, yet separated, areas of scholarship that have evolved parallel over the last decades, namely social capital and dialogue studies.

By reviewing the literature and identifying areas where these disciplines might be brought together, it aims to demonstrate how dialogue can be used as a positive intervention to cultivate bridging social capital. It will show how characteristics of dialogue foster the process of relationship building between people who are different.

Furthermore, to successfully intervene in the formation of bridging social capital, it is crucial to consider the context in which capital is built and maintained. Therefore, the proposed intervention will not only include the *process* (how), but also the *purpose* (why), the *places* (where), and the *people* (who) which are involved.

This chapter has its roots in communication scholarship but finds a solid base in the broader field of social sciences, notably in the area of social well-being. Whereas most studies within the clinical and psychological tradition emphasize private features of well-being (Keyes, 1998), social scientists acknowledge that individuals are “embedded in social structures and communication” and that their well-being is associated with “the social nature of life and its challenges” (Keyes, 1998, p. 122). There is substantial evidence “that individuals with richer networks of active social relationships tend to be more satisfied and happier with their lives” (Amati, Meggiolaro, Rivellini, & Zaccarin, 2018). Positive relationships with others also contribute to a sense of belonging and community which increases social well-being of individuals (Prati, Cicognani, & Cinzia, 2017). The focus on the relational aspects of life (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003) implies the study of communication which is crucial in developing relationships. Consequently, this chapter asserts that creating bridging social capital is essentially a communicative accomplishment. The underlying goal of building bridges through talk is to promote a more inclusive, empathetic, civil, and compassionate society.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first section gives a brief overview of the relevant literature on both social capital and dialogue studies. Next, it will identify areas where these disciplines can be brought together and present dialogue as an intervention to develop bridging social capital. Dimensions of dialogue will be unpacked to show how practical communication-based interventions like storytelling, shared language, narratives, and the exploration of identities contributes to bridging divides between people who are different. Finally, it will present future directions and conclusions.

2 Theoretical Background

To provide a solid foundation for the proposed intervention to promote bridging social capital, the following section will give an overview of the relevant literature on social capital and dialogue.

2.1 Social Capital

Over the last decades, the concept of social capital has become increasingly popular in a wide range of social science disciplines (Adler & Kwon, 2002). However, opinions are divided on how social capital should be defined and measured (Lillbacka, 2006). To understand the role of dialogue in the formation of bridging social capital, this summary will discuss definitions of (bridging) social capital, goals and benefits, characteristics and dimensions, contextual factors, the relationship with the field of communication, and the measurement of the concept.

2.1.1 Definitions

Due to the highly contextual nature of social capital and its multidisciplinary character, it is crucial to discuss the relation to the field and context in which the concept is studied. This study has its roots in the communication scholarship and focuses on building relationships across social cleavages to promote individuals' well-being and social cohesion. Therefore, the following section will more closely examine the *relational* aspects of *bridging social capital*.

In exploring the concept of social capital, many scholars have criticized the conceptual heterogeneity and the difficulty of its measurement. Yet, despite multiple theoretical perspectives, there is a consensus that social capital is derived from social relations. Social capital can be described as “the goodwill available to individuals and groups. Its source lies in the structure and the content of the actor’s social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 23). Based on the founding concepts of Bourdieu and Coleman, and current concepts of Burt, Putnam, and Lin, Häuberer (2011) defines social capital as “a property of relationships among individuals that are a resource actors can use and benefit from” (p. 249). Rostila (2010) argues that *social resources* are the actual ‘capital’ or ‘benefit’ that people derive from their networks/relations. These resources “evolve in accessible networks or social structures characterized by mutual trust” (p. 321). Prior definitions demonstrate that social capital is a resource, individuals can benefit from. In addition, Putnam (2000) underlines the importance of social capital as a collective resource and the benefits for society as a whole. Social capital is the glue that holds communities together and makes them work as a collective. It supports the idea that people rely on relationships with others to fulfill

social, cultural, and economic needs. Social capital enables collective action and, therefore, is a key component to building and maintaining a healthy democracy. This chapter emphasizes that relationships are the core of social capital and will use the following definition: *Social capital is an actual and potential resource individuals and groups can benefit from, based on goodwill and embedded in social relations.*

Amongst the numerous classifications, an important distinction can be made between bonding and bridging types of social capital (Putnam, 2000). *Bonding social capital* can be described as horizontal ties between individuals within the same social group who are similar to each other and have a shared social identity. These are often personal relationships with *strong ties*; close friends, family members and neighbours whom will help you in times of crisis or give personal support. Bonding social capital is often associated with strong norms and ‘thick trust’ (or: ‘particularized trust’) (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000; Sander & Lowney, 2006). *Bridging social capital* are *horizontal* ties between individuals who are dissimilar and which cross social divides (e.g. race, class, religion) or between social groups. These are often more impersonal relationships with *weak ties*, acquaintances whom you do not know very well, but whom you can ask for small favors. Bridging social capital is often associated with reciprocity and ‘thin trust’ (or: ‘generalized trust’) (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000; Sander & Lowney, 2006). This chapter will focus on how to promote bridging social capital in a fragmented multicultural society. To enhance a positive change for individuals and society, it is fundamental to intervene in social relationships.

2.1.2 Goals and Benefits

To understand the impact of bridging social capital for individuals’ well-being and the broader community, it is critical to examine its goals and benefits. Yet, specific goals of social capital depend on the context and the underlying goals of individuals, networks, associations, or organizations: “Social capital is usually developed in pursuit of a particular goal or set of goals and not for its own sake” (Putnam et al., 2004, p. 10). Research shows that both bonding and bridging social capital have positive outcomes for individuals and society. Social capital can make a positive contribution to a range of areas of well-being: e.g. education, employment, community safety, health, happiness (OECD, 2002). For individuals, social networks and relationships provide access to different types of social support: instrumental (aid & service), emotional (empathy, love, trust & caring), informational (advice & information), and appraisal (self-evaluation: constructive feedback, affirmation) (House, 1981 as cited in Heaney & Israel, 2008).

Nonetheless, in our fragmented, multicultural society, especially bridging social capital is “important for reconciling democracy and diversity” (Putnam et al., 2004, p. 279). Bridging social capital is also considered as “more valuable for the creation of collective resources as they facilitate cooperation between dissimilar people in a given social structure” (Rostila, 2010, p. 313). Research shows that for bridging social

capital more ties are better than fewer ties (Friedkin, 1982), and that the diversity of the weak-tie network leads to greater gains (Burt, 1992).

Bridging social capital has been linked to a wide range of benefits. It enables the acquiring of new information (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000) and helps people to expand their perspectives (broaden their worldviews); it gives access to power; it improves integration in the larger group (Adler & Kwon, 2002); and it promotes connections between heterogeneous groups and fosters social inclusion (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000). Bridging social capital also helps to cross divides by building trust and maintaining channels of communication between disputing groups, especially for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (Villalonga-Olives, Adams, & Kawachi, 2016). At a societal level, bridging social capital promotes civic engagement, economic well-being, and external (societal) trust (Adler & Kwon, 2002). In addition, Claridge (2018a, 2018b) summarizes the following benefits: bridging social capital crosses the boundaries of individuals and groups with different social backgrounds; attributes to increase tolerance and acceptance of others with different values and beliefs; it allows different groups to share and exchange information and ideas and it promotes innovation; it builds a consensus among groups with diverse interests.

Dark sides of social capital. Despite the fact that most studies focus on positive outcomes, some dark sides have been identified, most notably of bonding social capital. With the rise of the internet people expected an increase of bridging social capital, but just as in the real-world people tend to cluster into (filter) bubbles with like-minded others: “We’re getting a lot of bonding but very little bridging that creates our sense of the “public”—the space where we address the problems that transcend our niches and narrow self-interests” (Pariser, 2011, p. 17). Furthermore, inequality, exclusion of others, restrictions of individual freedoms, distrust and lack of cooperation are some of the negative outcomes of (bonding) social capital (Ayios, Jeurissen, Manning, & Spence, 2013). In their overview, Adler & Kwon (2002) define two types of risks of social capital. High internal linkages combined with low external linkages (bonding social capital), may create a situation where internal solidarity undermines the actor’s integration into the broader whole. Such ties may lead to isolation and fragmentation. The other potential risk is a situation with high external ties but low internal ties (bridging social capital). “Durkheim’s analysis of anomie provides an example; city life simultaneously increases contact with outsiders and undermines community solidarity, thus weakening collective norms” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 32)

2.1.3 Characteristics and Dimensions

To intervene in the processes of creating bridging social capital, this section will explore two important dimensions of the concept. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) make the distinction between the *cognitive* (shared goals and values among actors) and *relational* (trust between actors) dimension of social capital. A third type is the *structural* dimension (connections among actors), which forms an important pre-

condition for the development of relational and cognitive social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Claridge, 2018a, 2018b). In this chapter, social capital is considered a relational construct. Therefore, it will discuss in further detail characteristics of the relational and cognitive dimension. The *relational dimension* focuses on the particular relationships that people have and the nature of these relationships. Key facets of this dimension are: “trust and trustworthiness (Fukuyma, 1995; Putnam, 1993), norms and sanctions (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995), obligations and expectations (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1990; Granovetter, 1973; Mauss, 1954), and identity and identification (Hakanson & Snehota, 1995; Merton, 1986)” (as cited in Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 244). The *cognitive dimension* can be described as “resources providing shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning among parties (Cicourel, 1973)” (as cited in Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 244). Knowledge and meaning are always embedded in a social context. Two ways to achieve a sharing context are (1) shared language and vocabulary and (2) shared narratives; which means myths, stories, and metaphors (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In addition, Claridge (2018a, 2018b) also mentions ‘shared values, attitudes, and beliefs’. Moreover, Putnam underlines the power of storytelling as an important mechanism of social connection. As stories help us to relate to one another (Putnam et al., 2004).

In sum, the *relational dimension* focuses on the nature and quality of actual relationships between people and includes feelings of trust within a specific social context, whereas the *cognitive dimension* relates to the shared understanding, goals, and values between people (Claridge, 2018a, 2018b).

2.1.4 Contextual Factors

Context, like the civil society (Robinson, 2011), is crucial for the creation and maintenance of social capital as relationships and shared values are deeply rooted in local circumstances which makes their meaning highly subjective. Social settings in which relationships are formed can be formal and informal, with either open (bridging) and/or closed (bonding) ties. When considering the access to social networks, two types of contextual factors are relevant: *collective assets* (e.g. economy, technology, and culture) and *individual’s characteristics* (e.g. ethnicity, gender and social standing) (Häuberer, 2011). Other scholars mention the impact of structural factors (e.g. inequality, level of education, and ethnic-racial composition of a population) (Cloete, 2014), and personality (Venkatanathan, Karapanos, Kostakos, & Gonçalves, 2012) in generating social capital. Attention to these factors is important to sensitize oneself for the impact of context on the formation of social capital.

2.1.5 Social Capital and the Field of Communication

Given the focus on building relationships, this chapter proposes a communicative approach of bridging social capital. However, “the literature about social capital and how it can be developed shows a rare connection with theories about communication

or just simple communication tactics” (Van der Kroon, Ten Pierick, De Vlieger, & Backus, 2002, p. 32). Authors (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986) who describe a link between social capital, communication and collaboration often only mention that face-to-face communication, dialogue and group facilitation are important features to achieve successful collaboration, but do not reveal how communication contributes to building social capital (Van der Kroon et al., 2002).

Research indicates that “the translation of the concept of social capital into communication research is dominated by a small group of political communication scholars” (Lee & Sohn, 2016, p. 728). Rojas, Shah, and Friedland (2011), for example, tried to advance a communicative approach to social capital. They consider communication as a fundamental source of societal integration. “Connections among people and between people and institutions are central to community life, the democratic ideal of participation, and any definition of social capital” (Rojas et al., 2011, p. 689). While most scholars focus on social ties, they indicate the importance of *communication* that flows through these ties. This is consistent with Coleman (1990) who asserts that “an important form of social capital is the potential for information that inheres in social relations” (p. 310). A communicative approach values the exchange of information and shared meaning between individuals and groups, and facilitates collective action (Rojas et al., 2011). Communicative social capital can be defined as “both the structural feature embedded in social ties and a resource of the individual comprised in information flows, with the interactions among these elements producing a range of pathways to participation and the reconstruction of social capital” (Rojas et al., 2011, p. 695). Therefore, “it is critical to reconceptualize social capital as a communication phenomenon because it is precisely through communication within networks that social ties are sustained and gain their mobilizing potential” (Rojas et al., 2011, p. 695). Despite the valuable perspectives and insights of their research, the impact of this communicative approach of social capital is restricted due to the focus on the field of mass media (news exposure and consumption) and civic engagement (societal integration).

To explain how communication contributes to building social capital, Van der Kroon et al. (2002) developed a framework in which they disclose how communication issues like patterned flows of information, mutual understanding, signaling and shared language are related to creating social capital. They consider dialogue as one of the most important communication tactics which facilitates collaboration and therefore promotes social capital. This chapter takes the relational and communicative approach of social capital a step further by presenting dialogue as a positive intervention to build connections across socio-cultural cleavages for the greater well-being of individuals and society.

2.1.6 Measurement

To unlock the many benefits of bridging social capital, it is crucial to understand the ways it is measured. According to Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, “bridging social capital (i.e. friendships across lines of race, religion, class, etc.) is the most impor-

tant under-measured form of social connections for many outcomes” (Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi, 2009, p. 186). The tacit and relational nature of social capital makes it hard to measure (OECD, 2001). Moreover, the “lack of consensus about the exact and actual meaning of the concept means that we cannot simply discuss various operationalization’s of social capital and assess their validity and reliability” (van Deth, 2003, p. 81). Another complicating factor is that social capital can be measured on different levels: (a) social capital can be found in networks of individuals (micro level) and/or be seen as a collective good: in groups (meso level) or society (macro level). To grasp the complex multidimensional concept, research often focuses on indicators of social capital as *trust*, *networks*, and *norms*. Despite the lack of agreement in the literature about the conceptualization and operationalization, most scholars agree that social capital comprises both structural aspects (networks) and cultural aspects (norms and values, trust). Van Deth (2003) displays that research of social capital can be divided into studies which locate the source of social capital in the formal structure of the ties that make up the social network (*structural aspects*) or focus on the content and quality of those ties (*cultural aspects*). In current research of social capital polling methods and the use of straightforward survey questions dominate the field. Available alternative approaches are limited and mainly consist of the use of official statistics (e.g. published by government agencies) as inverse indicators (van Deth, 2003).

To gain insight in the *relational aspects* of social capital, research has to observe actual relationships. Instead of relying on polls with information on perceptions, additional methods (experiments, content analyses, official statistics etc.) must be used (van Deth, 2003). Furthermore, it is critical to examine the processes where social capital is built and maintained. In sum, to understand how to develop social capital, individual relations (micro-level) in specific contexts (informal settings with open ties) where people unite and cooperate with one another need to be studied. This is very complex. Therefore, a focus on dialogue as an intervention could be helpful to build connections between dissimilar individuals and groups.

2.2 Dialogue

Just like social capital research, dialogue studies have a multidisciplinary character and include different approaches. Dialogue is a still-evolving practice, trying to understand how connections between people with different worldviews, values, and identities can be promoted. Intergroup dialogue as a “face-to-face facilitated conversation between members of two or more social identity groups...” is a promising approach to “...create new levels of understanding, relating, and action” (Zúñiga, 2003, pp. 8–9). In addition, Stains (2016) portrays dialogue as a possible solution to overcome challenges to constructive public engagement. Firstly, with the decline of social capital and the phenomenon of ‘ideological migration’, there are fewer opportunities for human connection across divides. Those with different values, identities or perspectives are often seen as threats (Stains, 2016). Furthermore, confrontational

modes of communication dominate the public sphere (Stains, 2016; Escobar, 2009). Tannen (2013) uses the term ‘argument culture’ to describe how people approach the world with an adversarial frame in mind. Finally, polarization is one of the biggest challenges to our modern Western democracies. (Blankenhorn, 2015; Stains, 2016) “In a healthy community people are connected in a variety of ways (civic, religious, political, and other contexts). They are aware of how their values intertwine and overlap and they collaborate on shared interests as a matter of course” (Stains, 2016, p. 1525). In a polarized context without meaningful connections with others who are dissimilar, people start to define themselves in terms of ‘we’ and ‘they’. A dialogic approach helps to promote a more inclusive, empathetic and civil society.

To explore the role of dialogue in developing bridging social capital, the following section will discuss the relevant literature of (intergroup) dialogue, with a focus on dialogic communication scholarship. The brief summary contains definitions, goals and benefits, characteristics, contextual factors, the relationship with the field of communication and measurement of dialogue.

2.2.1 Definitions

Dialogue studies include a broad field of scholarships and practices and have many approaches and definitions. “Dialogue has become a key cultural term in many academic and public discourses” (Carbaugh, Boromisza-Habashi, & Ge, 2006, p. 27). In many situations and in spheres of intercultural relations, dialogue is considered to be a particularly productive form of communication. Despite the wide range of (general) qualities that are attributed to dialogue, the particular meaning of the concept depends on the context (Carbaugh et al., 2006). Dialogue discussed in this chapter will focus on the universal basic human need for connection and social belonging. It will refer to dialogue as a specific form of social interaction and reflected upon as a way of engaging, communicating and relating with people who are different from us.

David Bohm, one of the most cited authors on dialogue, explains that ‘dialogue’ has its origins in the Greek word ‘dialogos’: ‘dia’ meaning ‘through’ and ‘logos’ meaning ‘word’. “The picture of the image that this derivation suggests is of a stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which will emerge some new understanding... And this shared meaning is the ‘glue’ or ‘cement’ that holds people and societies together” (Bohm, 1996, p. 2). Dialogue and social capital have in common that they both are seen as the glue that holds people and societies together.

In order to provide insight in the diversification and the multidisciplinary nature of dialogue studies, Escobar (2009) displays a categorization where three traditions (formalist, hermeneutic, and pragmatic) converge (Table 1).

Dialogue in the hermeneutic tradition is characterized by ‘questioning, rather than arguing’ and aims to achieve openness to new insights through a process of mutual exploration and understanding (Escobar, 2009). In this tradition dialogue is a form of *social reflection* which allows a process of creation of shared understanding between

Table 1 Three traditions that converge in dialogue studies

Model	Prototype of dialogue	Key ideas	Why dialogue?
<p>FORMALIST (Habermas) <i>Dialogue as social deliberation</i></p>	<p>Rational argument Deliberative emphasis</p>	<p>Based on reasoned, open, reciprocal and un-coerced arguments, participants reach understanding on how to coordinate their activities through normative commitments.</p>	<p>It serves as a social building block, based on communication rather than manipulation or coercion. It is a source of normative validity.</p>
<p>HERMENEUTIC (Gadamer, Bohm) <i>Dialogue as social reflection</i></p>	<p>Social and cultural inquiry; Epistemic emphasis</p>	<p>Questioning, rather than arguing, achieves participant’s openness to new insights based on mutual exploration that might foster unforeseen creativity.</p>	<p>It allows a process of creation of shared understanding by widening individuals’ standpoints through a process of reciprocal reflection.</p>
<p>PRAGMATIC (Dewey, Freire) <i>Dialogue as social action</i></p>	<p>Sharing common experience towards solving problems Action emphasis</p>	<p>Continuous interaction improves the abilities to solve common problems. It gives place to collective intelligence that surpasses specialized expertise and is grounded in diversified experience.</p>	<p>It redefines the role of technical expertise by counterbalancing it with simultaneous reliance on experience and local knowledge. Dialogue builds citizens and communities, rather than assuming them as preconditions to will-forming public talk.</p>

Adapted from Escobar (2009, pp. 51–52) based on Linder (2001)

individuals and groups with different backgrounds, values and (social) identities. Consequently, the hermeneutic view of dialogue forms a solid foundation to explore how to cultivate bridging social capital.

In defining the concept, this chapter will focus on *intergroup dialogue* as its goals are closely related to bridging social capital. Intergroup dialogue can be described as a “face-to-face facilitated conversation between members of two or more social identity groups that strives to create new levels of understanding, relating, and action” (Zúñiga, 2003, pp. 8–9). Dessel and Rogge (2008) define the concept as “a facilitated group experience that may occur once or may be sustained over time and is designed to give individuals and groups safe and structured opportunity to explore attitudes about polarizing societal issues” (p. 201). Practitioners in the field confirm the power of dialogue in building relationships and understanding. Essential Partners—an orga-

nization specialized in conducting intergroup dialogue in various settings—refers to dialogue as a “conversation in which people who have different beliefs and perspectives seek to develop mutual understanding. While doing so, they typically experience a softening of stereotypes and develop more trusting relationships. They often gain fresh perspectives on the costs of the conflict and begin to see new possibilities for interaction and action outside the dialogue room” (Herzig & Chasin, 2006, p. 4). This chapter emphasizes that social relationships between people who are different are at the heart of intergroup dialogue and will use the following definition: *intergroup dialogue is a facilitated face-to-face conversation—that may occur once or may be sustained over time—between people who have different backgrounds, worldviews, values or identities, which is designed to give individuals and groups a safe and structured opportunity to develop trust, relationships, mutual understanding, and collective action.*

2.2.2 Goals and Benefits

To measure the effect of dialogue for participants and whether it achieves desired outcomes, it is essential to identify and operationalize specific goals (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). “In the dialogue we create an empty space where we don’t have an object, we don’t have an agenda or program. We just talk with each other, and we are not committed to accomplishing anything. Nobody has to agree to anything. We simply listen to all opinions... Listening to all the opinions will bring us together” (Bohm, 1996, p. 13). So, dialogue has no fixed goal or prearranged/determined agenda. Dialogue is open-ended, whereas other forms of communication often seek closure (Escobar, 2011). Consequently, dialogue as a method can be distinguished from practices like debate, mediation, and deliberation which have specific goals, like convincing others, resolving a conflict or decision-making.

Although dialogue has no specific goals, the broad aim is to build understanding and relationships (Escobar, 2011). Dialogue seeks “to promote respectful inquiry, and to stimulate a new sort of conversation that allows important issues to surface freely” (Maiese, 2003).

Escobar (2011) presents the following overview of dialogue goals:

1. Learning enhanced understanding of a range of views, values, feelings, and positions.
2. Building a common language: bridging the gap between specialized jargons. This is critical in public engagement as we face the paradox of the world that is increasingly interconnected, and yet, even more fragmented in terms of specialized languages.
3. Co-creating meaning working towards shared interpretations that foster collective intelligence to deal with complex issues.
4. Building relationships that enable collaborative platforms and critical co-inquiry.
5. Defusing polarization, overcoming stereotypes, and building trust.

6. Discovery: finding of alternative pathways that are not the product of mere negotiation or bargaining, but the result of broadening and deepening perspectives through learning, exploration, and creative thinking (p. 33).

Given its focus on bridging social capital, this chapter focuses on goals of intergroup dialogue which include “relationship building, civic participation, and social change” (Dessel & Rogge, 2008, p. 199). Benefits of intergroup dialogue are the breakdown of stereotypes, improvement of (polarized) relationships, and amelioration of cooperation. In addition, intergroup dialogue enables critical self-reflection and perspective-taking, which are crucial to attitude change. Furthermore, it offers the opportunity for participants to examine social norms and ideologies that guide their (unconscious) beliefs. Other positive effects of intergroup dialogue are improved relationships between individuals and groups who hold (historically) opposing social identities and who view others as the out-group. Research shows that learning about other social groups fosters a reappraisal and recategorization of outgroups and the generation of empathy and positive emotion (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). Dialogue practitioners Herzig and Chasin (2006) underline the power of dialogue in building relationships and mutual understanding. “Through dialogue, people who seem intractably opposed often change the way they view and relate to each other—even as they maintain the commitments that underlie their views. They often discover shared values and concerns which may lead to collaborative actions that were previously unthinkable” (p. 2). Above-mentioned goals and benefits of dialogue depend on specific contextual factors, which will be discussed in a further section.

2.2.3 Characteristics

As mentioned before, intergroup dialogue is a facilitated group experience that is designed to give different individuals and groups a safe and structured opportunity to explore attitudes and to develop mutual understanding. “Characteristics of dialogue include fostering an environment that enables participants to speak and listen in the present while understanding the contributions of the past and the unfolding of the future” (Dessel, Rogge, & Garlington, 2006, p. 304). Dialogue helps to identify assumptions, suspend judgements, enables inquiry and reflection, promotes genuine and effective listening, and supports collective thought and collaboration (Maiese, 2003). Practitioners in the field assert that intergroup dialogue stimulates new ideas and opens up possibilities for change by creating a safe environment, inviting people to share personal stories, and by exploring grey areas of their own beliefs (Herzig & Chasin, 2006). Other characteristics of dialogue that can be discerned are: (a) building a safe space, (b) openness, (c) respect, (c) storytelling, (d) listening, (e) suspending automatic response, judgement, and certainty, (f) collaborative inquiry, (g) finding common ground and exploring differences, and (h) balancing advocacy and inquiry (Escobar, 2011). The final section of this chapter will unpack relevant features of dialogue that contribute to the formation of bridging social capital.

2.2.4 Contextual Factors

Due to the multidisciplinary character of intergroup dialogue scholarship, dialogue has its practice in a number of fields, e.g. “social work, political science, social psychology, and communications” (Dessel & Rogge, 2008, p. 212). The specific goals and outcomes of dialogue depend on the context and culture in which it takes place. For example, “In highly polarized situations, differences in cultural norms may contribute to participants difficulty in communicating with and understanding each other” (Dessel & Rogge, 2008, pp. 216–217). The current ‘argument culture’ where people have adversarial frames in mind, influences and determines the effects of dialogue. Furthermore, individual values and cultural assumptions affect the outcomes dialogue (Bohm, 1996). In communication, people have different interests and basic assumptions about the meaning of life. “Most of these basic assumptions come from society and are rooted in culture, race, religion, and economic background” (Maiese, 2003). In addition, in a post-modern multicultural society where people no longer have one absolute truth, dialogue enables people with different backgrounds and identities to communicate their beliefs, values, and experiences. Moreover, the impact of dialogue—as a way of communicating and relating—depends on individual characteristics and personality traits. Research shows that individual differences and societal norms are important factors that impact intergroup dialogue (Pettigrew, 1998). Other scholars insist that dialogue requires specific skills (e.g. good listening, openness to new ideas and experiences, and suspending judgements and assumptions) which vary greatly amongst individuals. In sum, to evaluate the benefits and outcomes of dialogue, research needs to consider relevant societal and individual factors of the context in which dialogue takes place.

2.2.5 Dialogue and the Field of Communication

In the growing field of dialogic communication scholarship, a distinction can be made between the descriptive and the prescriptive streams of dialogue research (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). The descriptive study of dialogue “understands dialogue as a defining quality of human being” (Escobar, 2009, p. 52) and is “concerned with actual conversational exchanges” (Walton, 2000, p. 333). The prescriptive study of dialogue considers dialogue as a communicative ideal which can be achieved through principled practices. Dialogue refers to a special kind of contact (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). In prescriptive dialogue, “certain kinds of rules are laid down precisely” (Walton, 2000, p. 334).

In a plural fragmented society where conversations and relations between people who are dissimilar have become challenging and rare, prescriptive dialogue can be a first step in building more trusting relations. “The value of the formal dialogue is that it can be applied to an actual dialogue in a given case, and used as a tool to help analyze the case” (Walton, 2000, p. 334). Consequently, formal dialogue fosters ‘new possibilities for informal interaction outside the dialogue room’.

2.2.6 Measurement

This chapter follows Dessel and Rogge (2008) in their assessment of intergroup dialogue research and evaluation. They assert that scholars of intergroup dialogue need to define indicator variables of successful processes and outcomes. However, there is an ongoing debate among dialogue scholars about the value of assessing outcomes, as the impact of dialogue is often not immediate and hard to objectively measure. Dialogue practitioners (e.g. Essential partners) underline that causality is hard to prove as contextual factors and individual characteristics affect the outcomes of dialogue.

To measure the outcomes of dialogue, most scholars have used pre-experimental designs. Qualitative data analysis methods—except qualitative surveys—have been very limited. To examine the long-term effects, a range of methods and longitudinal studies are needed. Also, rigorous approaches to data-collection (e.g. recording interviews and coding), will contribute to the knowledge base of dialogue (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). Furthermore, the different methods and lack of uniform protocols makes it hard to compare the results of dialogue or to replicate the methods used. In future research established dialogue protocols need to be used, to achieve more uniformity (Dessel & Rogge, 2008).

Most studies of dialogue use convenience samples, rather than random samples (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). Despite the advantages of random samples, practitioners in the field of dialogue assert that voluntary participation in dialogue is crucial to foster ownership and responsibility. Participants have to show commitment in order to achieve the goals of dialogue. To advance dialogue research, scholars need to closely consider various methods and measuring instruments.

The preceding sections attempted to give an introductory outline of relevant findings in research on the field of social capital and dialogue. The next section will outline potential synergy between both fields and present dialogue as a positive intervention to develop bridging social capital.

3 Towards a Positive Psychological Intervention: Building Bridges Through Talk

Over the last decades, the fields of dialogue and social capital appear to have evolved in parallel. Yet, a number of scholars made important connections between both scholarships. Especially research in the field of deliberation partly overlaps and intersects with intergroup dialogue (Dessel & Rogge, 2008) and offers relevant data, insights, and expertise with regard to the role of dialogue in the formation of (bridging) social capital. After providing a brief overview of relevant crossroads between the fields of dialogue and social capital, this section will propose dialogue as a positive intervention in developing bridging social capital. Consequently, it will show how specific characteristics of dialogue foster the process of relationship building

between people who are different. As the nature of social capital is highly contextual, it emphasizes that to successfully intervene in the *process* (how) of building bridging social capital, it is crucial to consider the *purpose* (why), the *places* (where), and the *people* (who) which are involved.

Making the Connection: Crossroads of Dialogue and Social Capital

Over the past decades, scholars have developed important modes of public conversation in order to strengthen the foundations of civil society. Recently, a number of scholars have argued that dialogue should be considered as complementary to deliberation. Whereas the study of dialogue has its roots in social work (and/or philosophy), the concept of deliberation has largely grown out of political philosophy. Most conceptualizations of deliberation emphasize democratic principles such as fairness, equity, reasoned analysis, and focus on the public good. However, the emphasis on the reasoned arguments makes it hard to address conflicts based on moral differences (Black, 2008). Dialogue instead “is a way that groups can constructively deal with moral and cultural differences” (Black, 2008, p. 93). Dialogue comprises both cognitive and emotional aspects: “Dialogue is a special kind of communicative relationship; the kind of relationship which broadens worldviews, reshapes perspectives, and speaks to both our cognitive and emotional capacities for mutual engagement” (Escobar, 2011, p. 16). To promote meaningful interactions in a culture of polarization and debate, it is essential to identify both the content and the relational level of communication. Dialogue not only fosters the exchange of knowledge but also promotes empathy and understanding. Escobar (2011) states that deliberative dialogue enables “patterns that are crucial for building community resilience and social capital” (pp. 6–7). Important key features of deliberate dialogue—which can be related to the formation of bridging social capital—are: (a) the sharing of personal narratives, (b) provocative and open-ended questions (posed by one participant to another), (c) the questioning of some fundamental assumptions, and (d) the collective search for common ground. In the following section, relevant features that foster the creation of bridging social capital will be further unpacked.

By analyzing public conversations and their power to unite or divide people, Lohman and Van Til (2011) demonstrate how public deliberation and sustained dialogue can strengthen the social fabric of civil society. When Robinson (2011) displays the potential contribution of public deliberation to develop social capital, he underlines the importance of studying the *processes* in building relations. In a fragmented society with a decline of trust and the increasing influence of professionals and political state, ordinary people often feel disconnected. Encouraging deliberate discourse within and among groups helps people to engage in meaningful decision-making and facilitates building social capital. Like Van den Kroon et al. (2002), Robinson argues that dialogue can be considered one of the most important *processes* to create social capital. Dialogue facilitates the exchange of information and ideas and reveals people’s interest. It enables people to interact and relate, and promotes collective knowledge and achieving common goals (Robinson, 2011).

Aside from the field of deliberative dialogue, scholars and practitioners in other fields (e.g., community psychology, community development, civic or public jour-

nalism, education) emphasize the importance of (face-to-face) communication in building trust, relations, and a shared understanding within communities. Research of social capital could benefit from expertise, data, and findings of other disciplines to advance the knowledge of building connections across social cleavages.

Despite valuable insights of scholars and practitioners in various research fields, the processes by which bridging social capital is built seems to be an under-studied topic that deserves more attention (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). Understanding the processes of relationship building between people who are different, takes time and effort. To gain more insight, future research needs to observe and analyze amongst others personal (face-to-face) interactions, cooperative action, and the development of collective identification, shared norms, and understanding (Dryden-Peterson, 2010).

Dialogue as a Positive Intervention to Build Bridging Social capital

The presented overview of social capital and dialogue scholarship shows a strong potential for synergy between both concepts. Bourdieu (1986) posits that social capital resides in relationships, and relationships are created through exchange. Research in the fields of communication and deliberation underlines the potential of dialogue as a process to build and use social capital. Therefore, dialogue can be seen as a positive intervention in building social capital which is a core component in enhancing social well-being (e.g. happiness, life satisfaction, health) and has an important role in maintaining a healthy democracy.

In sum, this chapter emphasizes that *social relationships* are at the core of dialogue and bridging social capital. *Bridging social capital* can be described as horizontal ties between individuals and groups who are dissimilar and which cross social cleavages. *Intergroup dialogue*—as a facilitated conversation gives people who are dissimilar, a safe opportunity to explore attitudes and seek mutual understanding. For that reason, dialogue is a promising intervention to create connections between people with different backgrounds and identities.

In order to better understand how to create bridging social capital, research needs to examine the *relational aspects* of the concept. Following Rostila (2010), *structural* (networks) and *cultural* aspects (trust, norms, and values) are considered as preconditions for social capital. To foster relationships across divides, that are a valuable resource to individuals and society, *communication* is essential. *Dialogue* (as a specific form of communication) is an important *process* (intervention) that enables people who are different to develop more trusting relationships. While specific *goals and benefits* of dialogue depend on the context, it is crucial to examine *individual relationships* and relevant *contextual factors* (*structural* and *individual*) in the places (*formal and informal settings*) where bridging social capital is built and maintained.

Dialogue in Action: Purpose, Places, People and Processes in Building Bridging Social Capital

This paragraph explains how to use dialogue as a positive intervention to create bridging social capital. It will show how characteristics of dialogue can be used as practical

communication-based interventions to promote relationships between people who are not alike. Key features of dialogue will be related to specific goals/benefits (see Sect. 2.1.2) and/or characteristics (see Sect. 2.1.3) of bridging social capital. However, to develop a successful intervention, it is important to consider the context in which social capital is built and maintained. This implicates that besides studying the *processes (how)*, also the *purpose (why)*, *the places (where)*, and the *people (who)* need to be considered.

Purpose

The main purpose of bridging social capital is to provide individuals and groups with valuable resources they can use and benefit from. Developing a **shared language and vocabulary**...enables to **co-create meaning** and facilitates **access to these resources**.

The *cognitive dimension* of social capital refers to resources providing shared representations, interpretations, and meaning among different groups or individuals (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). To benefit from these resources, meaningful interactions are essential. Communication between different individuals and groups requires at least some shared context. Shared language and vocabulary and shared narratives are ways to achieve a shared context. In addition, “language is not a neutral medium” “...we create our social world as we collectively name them and try to make sense of them” (Escobar, 2011, p. 8). Thus, shared language is critical as reality is made of language. However, our multicultural network society in which people are increasingly interconnected, is at the same time more fragmented than ever, also in terms of (specialized) languages. Furthermore, in our post-modern culture, our understanding of truth has radically changed and has impacted the way we communicate. Nowadays, people no longer believe in a universal objective truth. The existence of truth is dependent on context, situation and time. As a result, the truth has become more dynamic and relational. The value of dialogue is that it enables people to develop a shared language and context and see others perspectives. Finally, the clustering in like-minded communities has led to an increasing polarization and more extremism. As a result, creating a shared context between people who frame topics differently, use their own metaphors and narratives, and demonize others and outgroups, is often hard and challenging. Scholars like Haidt (2012) and Lakoff and Johnson (2003) offer valuable insights on how to overcome (language) barriers by investigating underlying moral values, metaphors, frames and (cognitive) biases. Haidt and others use the Moral Foundations Theory to explain how different moral values determine why people frame issues differently. Based on research findings they give directions how to bridge (moral) gaps, for example by reframing topics. Lakoff, who is well-known for his research on metaphors, explains how (unconscious) metaphors structure our perceptions and understanding. Examining language and metaphors helps to understand how people think and to overcome (cognitive) biases and differences.

Places

The structural dimension of social capital (networks and connections amongst people) forms an important precondition to create cognitive and relational social capital,

that are a resource people can benefit from (see Sect. 2.1.3). Social networks and connections facilitate social interaction which in turn promotes the development of trust and shared goals and values.

An important characteristic of dialogue that promotes bridging social capital in an increasingly polarized society, is to **create safe spaces** in order to **build trust and relationships between people who are different**.

For dialogue practitioners, the “challenge in creating spaces for public engagement is to reduce the fear of harm, enhance the reward experienced by participating, and enable people to connect with one another in meaningful ways” (Stains, 2016, p. 1528). Building a safe space is an important characteristic of dialogue as it allows free flow of ideas and helps to build trust (Escobar, 2011). Social capital as a relational construct depends heavily on trust. Bridging social capital is often linked to ‘thin trust’ (or ‘generalized’ or ‘social’ trust) which is “based more on community norms than personal experience” (Sander & Lowney, 2006, p. 24). With the lack of spontaneous social connections across sociocultural and ideological divides and a culture debate, dialogue provides safe spaces that enable people who are different, to develop shared goals, values, and more trusting relationships. Dialogue hereby contributes to the formation of bridging social capital.

The civil society with a wide range of networks of association is a relevant context where social capital is built and maintained (Robinson, 2011). As the formation of bridging social capital can be difficult and challenging, it is essential to reuse existing networks for new purposes (Putnam et al., 2004). For example, networks in educational, religious, and local communities offer excellent opportunities for heterogeneous groups to connect and communicate. Dialogue studies show various examples of dialogue (about divisive topics like gender and race) in *educational settings*. In a society where the majority of students are educated in schools with like-minded others, it is important to create opportunities for young people to interact, collaborate, and to achieve shared goals with those who are different (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). In *local communities*, initiatives like the *Concord Project*, *Living Room Conversations*, the *Public Dialogue Consortium*, the *World Café*, the *National Issues Forums*, *Study Circles* and organizations/networks like the *Knight Foundation* and the *National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation* facilitate dialogue to promote bridging social capital. Furthermore, recent studies in the field of community psychology show the potential of creative place making (e.g. innovative arts practices) to enhance social cohesion and more inclusive communities (Thomas, Pate, & Ranson, 2015). In *religious communities* churches used to be built around a geographical community, however, nowadays they are constructed around people with similar lifestyles and values (Bishop & Cushing, 2009). In *Winsome persuasion*, Muelhoff and Langer (2017) encourage Christians to engage in dialogue with those who are different, in a culture of debate. To cross social, cultural and racial boundaries various faith communities have started initiatives of dialogue—both inside and outside their communities—to build relationships across divides. The best way to create opportunities to bring people together depends on the level of trust that exists in a specific context (Sander & Lowney, 2006). In general, dialogue between individuals or small groups in a local context is a good way to promote bridging social capital. For larger

groups, activities like a celebration or sharing food are easy ways to unite people who are different. Activities with the purpose of undertaking joint goals or individual relationship building require more trust and smaller groups (Sander & Lowney, 2006). In addition, to promote social cohesion and inclusion it is important to pay attention to the physical and symbolical elements of the places where interactions between people who are different takes place (Thomas et al., 2015). Further research and collaboration between scholars and practitioners in different fields, helps to gain insight into how to build and strengthen heterogeneous social networks and communities.

People

As a form of face-to-face communication, the success of dialogue and building connections across divides, depends heavily on the people involved. Building bridging social capital requires specific skills from dialogue practitioners and participants. An important precondition to building relationships across social cleavages—in a culture of argument and debate—is to equip facilitators of dialogue and improve the capacity of participants to connect and communicate.

One of the key features of dialogue that involves facilitators and participants is creating an atmosphere of **openness**...to promote the **exchange of new ideas and broaden people's worldviews**.

Bridging social capital gives access to power, new information, and broadens people's worldviews. In our current society where people tend to live in their own tribes of like-minded people, others are often seen as an out-group or threat. Stereotyping, demonizing, and dehumanizing makes it hard to have meaningful interactions with others who are different. Moreover, in a digital age, *face-to-face interaction* is indispensable to create empathy and understanding (Turkle, 2016). Or, as Brown (2017) states 'people are hard to hate close-up'. Dialogue encourages an open-minded attitude and helps to create empathy, and to expand people's perspectives. Dialogue stimulates a divergent flow of communication, whereas other forms of communication often seek a convergent flow (Escobar, 2011). Participants of dialogue "are asked to be open to multiple voices, styles of communication and perspectives" (Escobar, 2011, p. 22). Dialogue practitioners underline the critical role of facilitators in creating an open atmosphere and achieving successful results. For example, skilled facilitators will carefully plan dialogue sessions and frame interventions of participants in the right way. In addition, communication agreements between participants—which are used in structured dialogue settings—contribute to achieving an open-mindset, as "(1) they discourage old ritualized patterns of communication and (2) foster a respectful, safe environment in which participants can have a purposeful, fresh, and personal exchange of ideas, inquiries, and experiences" (Herzig & Chasin, 2006, p. 9). Future research can benefit from the resources and experiences of dialogue scholars and practitioners to promote the exchange of ideas and expand people's worldviews, which are important goals of bridging social capital.

The broad aim of dialogue and bridging social capital is building understanding and relationships. Dialogue enables people who are different to **find common ground and explore differences**...in order to develop **respect and mutual understanding**.

Exploring common ground and differences implies that “participants need not only to understand (inquire), but also to make themselves understood (advocate)” (Escobar, 2011, p. 31). Dialogue promotes processes that support speaking, as well as listening (Stains, 2016). It also invites participants to recognize and respect different perspectives (Escobar, 2011). Research shows that dialogue promotes a greater awareness of others’ positions, values, and worldviews. Bohm (1996) argues that dialogue enables collective thought which fosters trust and collaboration that are crucial to bridging social capital. Dialogue in the hermeneutic tradition allows a process of creation of shared understanding between individuals and groups with different backgrounds, values, and (social) identities (Escobar, 2009). Dialogue practitioners promote listening in order to understand, speaking to be understood, curiosity about others and oneself, and conversational resilience (trying to be genuinely interested even if it’s tough to listen) (Stains, 2016). In a culture of debate, it is crucial for people to develop strong social and communication skills to build relations with others (Crook, 2016). In order to promote a dialogic culture and to increase bridging social capital, research needs to address how to improve dialogic and interpersonal skills, especially for future generations.

In dialogue participants have to **suspend judgements and assumptions...in order to become aware of own (and others) beliefs and values.**

Dialogue calls for (temporarily) suspending one’s beliefs and assumptions. To foster dialogic communication, it is important that people are aware of their personal and cultural lenses (and values). In communication, people often express their (superficial) positions. Dialogue enables to explore the underlying interests, values, needs, and fears. Research on bridging social capital underlines the importance of shared norms and values as they promote the exchange of information, ideas, and innovation, and enable to achieve common goals. To explore underlying values, dialogue encourages people to control their automatic responses and suspend fundamental beliefs. This can be achieved by listening carefully, asking questions of genuine interest, and by bringing their assumptions into the open (Escobar, 2011; Herzig & Chasin, 2006). Practitioners of dialogue use thoughtful pauses to encourage reflection. “A truly fresh and constructive conversation often requires thoughtful pauses. These moments of silence are anything but empty” (Herzig & Chasin, 2006, p. 22). Pauses encourage participants to reflect on their assumptions, promote better listening and helps individuals to make thoughtful contributions. Furthermore, suspending judgements creates opportunities to learn from others and makes people feel respected and heard. To better understand how and which underlying values affect dialogue outcomes, future research needs to address specific cultural and personal values.

Finally, dialogue requires **collaborative inquiry...to explore common ground and support collaboration.**

Collaborative inquiry “refers to the shared investigation of issues that participants care about” (Escobar, 2011, p. 26). Dialogue requires a “willingness of the participants to place themselves at risk by sharing uncertainty and thus becoming somewhat vulnerable” (Escobar, 2011, p. 26). The fear of being vulnerable often has a negative impact on making connections with others who have different social backgrounds

(Brown, 2017). Co-inquiry includes asking genuine questions and developing shared language and narratives in order to explore common ground. Argyris' Ladder of Inference appears to be a useful tool to promote collaborative inquiry and the search for common ground (Escobar, 2011; Essential Partners, 2018). The ladder describes the mental processes that occur in our brain from receiving, selecting and interpreting data (or stories) to our conclusions or actions. It shows how psychological processes, underlying worldviews, values and assumptions, contextual factors (e.g. cultural, political) and our communication skills, affect our interactions with others who are dissimilar. As a result, the ladder helps to avoid misunderstandings, to improve communications between people with different backgrounds and beliefs. Also, it enables people who are different to find common ground and fosters collaboration. Therefore, it contributes to the formation of bridging social capital.

Processes

Following Robinson (2011), this chapter argues that dialogue can be seen as one of the most important processes to create bridging social capital.

Storytelling, as a critical feature of dialogue, helps to promote **shared narratives, sense-making, and humanity**.

“Sharing stories is one of our primary means of communication and sense making” (Escobar, 2011, p. 24). Stories allow people to talk about (world)views, values and beliefs and relate to their personal experiences. “Storytelling can promote dialogue in two ways. First, it helps participants co-create and manifest their identities in relation to one another and second, it enables them to imagine and appreciate each other’s perspectives” (Black, 2008, pp. 95–96). To promote human relationships and shared sense-making, dialogue practitioners invite participants to tell stories about their personal experiences, their values, and grey areas in their views (Essential Partners, 2018). Putnam et al. (2004) emphasize the power of storytelling as an important mechanism of social connection (and thus in building social capital). Stories help us to relate to one another as they promote a more fully-dimensional picture of people and emphasize common humanity. Storytelling, therefore, relates to characteristics of the cognitive social capital (shared language and narratives), and increases tolerance and acceptance of others with different values and beliefs, which are goals of bridging social capital.

In the process of building relations, identity can be considered as something which is created and negotiated through communication. **Exploring identities**, as an important characteristic of dialogue, therefore, fosters **social cohesion and inclusion**.

In general, people tend to act on behalf of their social identity. Strong identification with one group often leads to stereotyping and negative behavior against members of out-groups (Wieseke et al., 2012). Especially when people feel threatened in their identity, this may lead to polarization and division. Research indicates that the exclusion of others, distrust and lack of cooperation are some of the negative outcomes of bonding social capital. Dialogue plays a key role in shaping personal identity, as it represents “the process through which cultural values, beliefs, goals, and the like are formulated and lived” (Pearce & Pearce, 2004, p. 42 as cited in

Escobar 2009, p. 53). Through learning about others who have opposing social identities, intergroup dialogue builds relationships between people who are different and fosters reappraisal and recategorization of outgroups (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). Thus, dialogue promotes collective identification and enables people to develop broader identities (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). It, therefore, fosters social cohesion and inclusion which are important goals of bridging social capital. To understand how bridging social capital is created, negative outcomes of bonding social capital and the role of dialogue/communication in shaping identities need to be further examined.

Prior interventions demonstrate how key features of dialogue foster the formation of bridging social capital. This chapter explores the role of dialogue in building relationships between people who are different from a theoretical perspective and provides a theoretical framework. However, to grasp the implications of dialogue as a positive intervention to develop bridging social capital, practical research and the study of actual relationships is necessary. The following paragraph will give directions for future research and disclose the critical challenges that need to be addressed.

4 Directions for Future Research

Our current society has fewer possibilities for human interaction. Intergroup dialogue is a formal, structured way of conversation that facilitates communication across divides. However, these conversations often don't happen spontaneously and participation in dialogue is voluntary. As a result, the impact of the presented dialogic approach is limited. Future research needs to address how to foster and create inviting places where people who are different can connect and collaborate. To plant seeds of change, scholars of bridging social capital could partner with (intergroup) dialogue scholars (Nagda et al. 2009; Dessel & Rogge, 2008), collaborate with experienced dialogue practitioners, and explore how to reuse existing networks in different contexts.

Human relations are the core of dialogue and bridging social capital. Therefore, studies need to observe actual relationships and interactions in specific contexts (formal and informal settings, with open ties) where people unite and cooperate with one another. Nonetheless, this can be costly and time-consuming. In addition, the impact of dialogue is not immediate and/or in reality hard to objectively measure. Causality is difficult to prove as contextual factors and individual characteristics affect the outcomes. Scholars of future research need to examine appropriate qualitative methods (e.g. experiments, content analyses, observations), examine the context and advance the knowledge of outcome research. One way to achieve more uniformity and comparing the results is the use of dialogue protocols. For example, protocols from experienced dialogue practitioners (e.g. Reflective Structured Dialogue from Essential Partners) can be useful. In addition, longitudinal studies are needed to examine the long-term effects of dialogue. For dialogue practitioners, it is important

to equip facilitators and share their knowledge, to collaborate with scholars and to find resources to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions.

Dialogue—as a special form of face-to-face communication—requires specific (social) skills. Turkle (2016) argues that in our digital age where people have less face-to-face interactions, they often bear social skills as empathy, which are necessary for constructive dialogue. In addition, in a culture of debate, meaningful interactions between people who are different has become hard and challenging. The experience of dialogue practitioners could be used to improve dialogic skills of individuals to mobilize bridging social capital. Especially, educational settings offer excellent opportunities to equip the future generation with better social and communication skills.

5 Conclusion

In an increasingly fragmented and polarized society, building bridges through talk can be hard and challenging. This chapter proposes dialogue as a promising tool to cultivate relationships across divides. As a structured and facilitated form of (face-to-face) communication, dialogue enables connections between people with different backgrounds, values, and identities. To successfully intervene in building connections across divides, it is important to examine the context in which social capital is built and maintained. Therefore, research needs to include the *purpose*, the *places*, and the *people* which are involved in the *process* of the creation of bridging social capital. By viewing social capital through the lens of dialogue, this chapter asserts that developing bridging social capital is essentially a communicative accomplishment.

References

- Adler, P. S., & Kwon, S. (2002). Social capital: Prospects for a new concept. *Academy of Management Review*, 27, 17–40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4134367>.
- Amati, V., Meggiolaro, S., Rivellini, G., & Zaccarin, S. (2018). Social relations and life satisfaction: The role of friends. *Genus*, 74(1), 7.
- Ayios, A., Jeurissen, R., Manning, P., & Spence, L. J. (2013). Social capital: A review from an ethics perspective. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 23(1), 108–124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12040>.
- Bishop, B., & Cushing, R. G. (2009). *The big sort: Why the clustering of like-minded America is tearing us apart*. Boston: Mariner Books.
- Black, L. W. (2008). Deliberation, storytelling, and dialogic moments. *Communication Theory*, 18(1), 93–116. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00315.x>.
- Blankenhorn, D. (2015, December 22). Why polarization matters. *The American Interest*. Retrieved from <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/12/22/why-polarization-matters/>.
- Bohm, D. (1996). *On dialogue*. Zaltbommel, The Netherlands: Schouten & Nelissen.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Eds.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.

- Brown, B. (2017). *Braving the wilderness: The quest for true belonging and the courage to stand alone*. New York: Random House.
- Burt, R. S. (1992). *Structural holes: The social structure of competition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Carbaugh, D., Boromisza-Habashi, D., & Ge, X. (2006). Dialogue in cross-cultural perspective. In N. Aalto & E. Reuter (Eds.), *Aspects of intercultural dialogue* (pp. 27–46). Köln: SAXA Verlag.
- Claridge, T. (2018a, January 20). *Structural, cognitive, relational social capital*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/structural-cognitive-relational-social-capital/>.
- Claridge, T. (2018b, January 7). *What is bridging social capital?* Retrieved from <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/what-is-bridging-social-capital/>.
- Cloete, A. (2014). Social cohesion and social capital: Possible implications for the common good. *Verbum Et Ecclesia*, 35(3). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i3.1331>.
- Cicourel, A. V. (1973). *Cognitive sociology: Language and meaning in social interaction*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.
- Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Crook, J. R. (2016). Strategies for building social capital. In A.G. Greenberg et al. (Eds.), *Social capital and community well-being, Issues in Children's and Family's Lives* (pp. 141–159). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-33264-2_8.
- Dessel, A., Rogge, M., & Garlington, S. (2006). Using intergroup dialogue to promote social justice and change. *Social Work*, 51(4), 303–315.
- Dessel, A., & Rogge, M. E. (2008). Evaluation of intergroup dialogue: A review of the empirical literature. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 26(2), 199–238. <https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.230>.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2010). Bridging home: Building relationships between immigrant and long-time resident youth. *Teachers College Record*, 112(9), 2320–2351.
- Edelman. (2018, January 21). *Edelman Trust Barometer Executive Summary*. Retrieved from https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2018-10/2018_Edelman_TrustBarometer_Executive_Summary_Jan.pdf.
- Escobar, O. (2009). The dialogic turn: Dialogue for deliberation. *In-Spire Journal of Law, Politics and Societies*, 4(2), 42–70.
- Escobar, O. (2011). *Public dialogue and deliberation: A communication perspective for public engagement practitioners*. Edinburgh: UK Beacons for Public Engagement.
- Essential Partners. (2018, April). *Workshop: The power of dialogue, constructive conversations on divisive issues*. Cambridge, MA: Essential Partners.
- Friedkin, N. (1982). Information flow through strong and weak ties in inter-organizational social networks. *Social Networks*, 3(4), 273–285.
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. New York: Free Press.
- Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity politics: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380.
- Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Hakanson, H., & Snehota, I. (1995). *Developing relationships on business networks*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Häuberer, J. (2011). *Social capital theory: Towards a methodological foundation*. Wiesbaden, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften | Springer Fachmedien.
- Heaney, C. A., & Israel, B. A. (2008). Social networks and social support. In K. Glanz, B. K. Rimer, & K. Viswanath (Eds.), *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice*. A Wiley Imprint: San Francisco, CA.
- Herzig, M., & Chasin, L. (2006). *Fostering dialogue across divides: A nuts and bolts guide from essential partners*. Cambridge, MA: Essential Partners.
- House, J. S. (1981). *Work stress and social support*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Keyes, C. L. M. (1998). Social well-being. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 61(2), 121–140.

- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lee, C., & Sohn, D. (2016). Mapping the social capital research in communication. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 93(4), 728–749. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699015610074>.
- Lillbacka, R. (2006). Measuring social capital. *Acta Sociologica*, 49(2), 201–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699306064774>.
- Linder, S. H. (2001). An inquiry into dialogue, its challenges and justifications. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 24(7–8), 652–678.
- Lohman, R. A., & Van Til, J. (Eds.). (2011). *Resolving community conflicts and problems; Public deliberation and sustained dialogue*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.
- Maiese, M. (2003, September). Dialogue. *Beyond intractability*. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Retrieved from: <https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/dialogue>.
- Mauss, M. (1954). *The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic society*. New York: Free Press.
- Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure*. New York: Free Press.
- Muelhoff, T., & Langer, R. (2017). *Winsome persuasion. Christian influence in a post-Christian world*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press.
- Nagda, A., Gurin, P., Sorensen, N., & Zúñiga, X. (2009). Evaluating intergroup dialogue: Engaging diversity for personal and social responsibility. *Diversity & Democracy*, 12(1), 4–6.
- Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23(2), 242–266. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259373>.
- OECD. (2001). *The well-being of nations. The role of human and social capital*. Paris: OECD Publications.
- OECD. (2002). *Social capital and social wellbeing*. Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Robinson, D. (2011). Sustained dialogue and public deliberation: Making the connection. In R. A. Lohman & J. van Til (Eds.), *Resolving community conflicts and problems; Public deliberation and sustained dialogue*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.
- Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: How the new personalized web is changing what we read and how we think*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Pearce, W. B., & Pearce, K. A. (2004). Taking a communication perspective on dialogue. In R. Anderson, L. A. Baxter, & K. N. Cissna (Eds.), *Dialogue. Theorizing difference in communication studies* (pp. 39–56). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49(1), 65–85.
- Prati, G., Cicognani, E., & Cinzia, A. (2017). The influence of school sense of community on students' well-being: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 46, 917–924. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21982>.
- Putnam, R. D. (1993). The prosperous community: Social capital and public life. *American Prospect*, 13, 35–42.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of american community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Putnam, R. D., Feldstein, L. M., & Cohen, D. (2004). *Better together: Restoring the American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rojas, H., Shah, D. V., & Friedland, L. A. (2011). A communicative approach to social capital. *Journal of Communication*, 61(4), 689–712. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01571.x>.
- Rostila, M. (2010). The facets of social capital. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 41(3), 308–326. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2010.00454.x>.
- Sander, T. H., & Lowney, K. (2006). *Social Capital Building Toolkit, version 1.2*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University J. F. Kennedy School of Government.
- Schuller, T., Baron, S., & Field, J. (2000). Social capital: A review and critique. In S. Baron, J. Field, & T. Schuller (Eds.), *Social capital: Critical perspectives* (pp. 1–38). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Stains, R. (2016). Cultivating courageous communities through the practice and power of dialogue. *Mitchell Hamline Law Review*, 42(5), 1518–1545.
- Stewart, J., & Zediker, K. (2000). Dialogue as tensional, ethical practice. *Southern Journal of Communication*, 65(2–3), 224–242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10417940009373169>.
- Stiglitz, J. E., Sen, A., & Fitoussi, J. P. (2009). *Report by the commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress* (CMEPSP).
- Sunstein, C. R. (2017). *#Republic: Divided democracy in the age of social media*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tannen, D. (2013). The argument culture: Agonism & the Common Good. *Daedalus*, 142(2), 177–184. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_00211.
- Thomas, E., Pate, S., & Ranson, A. (2015). The crosstown initiative: Art, community, and placemaking in memphis. *Community Psychology*, 55, 74–88. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-014-9691-x>.
- Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.
- Turkle, S. (2016). *Reclaiming conversation: The power of talk in a digital age*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Van der Kroon, S. M. A., Ten Pierick, E., De Vlieger, J. J., Backus, G. B. C., & King R. P. (2002). *Social capital and communication*. The Hague: Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI).
- van Deth, J. W. (2003). Measuring social capital: Orthodoxies and continuing controversies. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6(1), 79–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570305057>.
- Venkatanathan, J., Karapanos, E., Kostakos, V., & Gonçalves, J. (2012). Network, personality and social capital. In *WebSci '12: Proceedings of the 3rd Annual ACM Web Science Conference* (pp. 326–329). New York, NY: ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2380718.2380760>.
- Villalonga-Olives, E., Adams, I., & Kawachi, I. (2016). The development of a bridging social capital questionnaire for use in population health research. *SSM—Population Health*, 2, 613–622. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2016.08.008>.
- Walton, D. (2000). The place of dialogue theory in logic, computer science and communication studies. *Synthese*, 123(3), 327–346.
- Wieseke, J., Kraus, F., Ahearne, M., & Mikolon, S. (2012). Multiple identification Foci and their countervailing effects on salespeople's negative headquarters stereotypes. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(3), 1–20.
- Wrzesniewski, A., Dutton, J. E., & Debebe, G. (2003). Interpersonal sensemaking and the meaning of work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 25, 93–135. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-3085\(03\)25003-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-3085(03)25003-6).
- Zúñiga, X. (2003). *Bridging differences through dialogue*. *About Campus*, 7(6), 8–16.

Linda Doornbosch-Akse is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication Science at the University of Twente, The Netherlands. Before pursuing her passion for science, she worked as a PR specialist for various organizations, and has - as a senior lecturer, thesis coordinator and project leader of a curriculum renewal - more than a decade of experience in the field of higher education. She currently lives in the USA, where she conducts research on the role of dialogue in bridging divides in an increasingly polarized society.

Mark van Vuuren is an associate professor of Organizational Communication at the University of Twente, Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences. His main research interest is the process of communication, specifically in the context of organizations. He studies identity work, work meanings, and the ways professionals make sense of the content and significance of their work, and how this comes about in their interacting and organizing.