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FACILITATED DIALOUGE BETWEEN DOMINANT & MINORITIZED GROUPS AS AN  
EFFECTIVE MEANS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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## ABSTRACT

Natural and created social inequities exist within every society that exists. A prime product of this inequity is conflict, a direct barrier to the social cohesiveness of any society. Inequity divides social groups into dominant and minoritized regarding different conflicts. However, while civilizations have progressed in many areas, conflict resolution is not one of them. This paper highlights facilitated dialogue as a novel approach to conflict resolution that deserves more attention. This paper also details a methodology of facilitated dialogue studied over three years as a part of *World in Conversation / A Center for Public Diplomacy*. It also examines a series of dialogues carried out regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as an example of facilitated dialogue in practice, highlighting the attitudinal changes of participants, points of conflict, major themes of discussion, and effects of the facilitator.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction & Literature Review

Intergroup conflict has been a pervasive and counterproductive aspect of history since the beginning of humankind. Where barbaric and nomadic tribes once roamed, more modern and ostensibly inclusive societies exist today. Despite global interconnectedness through technology and many tremendously diverse cities and areas, people almost always tend to establish homogenous social groups. As documented by McPherson, Smith-Loven, and Cook, the principle of homophily – that similarity breeds connection – infiltrates nearly every interpersonal network humans have (McPherson et al. 2001). This inherent structural foundation widens the gaps between different social groups, and gives rise to different categorical attributes used to outline different groups, race and ethnicity being the foremost among them (McPherson et al. 2001). With income inequality gaps, civil rights concerns, and other societal issues intensifying these divides, there often arises unequal structural power dynamics between different social groups. With the ubiquity and perhaps immortality of intergroup conflict in the world, this paper seeks to explore facilitated dialogue as an approach to help transform cultural environments in order to make conflict resolution between dominant and minoritized groups a more probable outcome in conflict scenarios. It also examines the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a case study for intergroup conflict, and seeks to identify motivators and patterns that could improve dialogues.

While every society has a degree of inimitability and distinctiveness, this paper divides all social groups into either “dominant” or “minoritized” groups based upon the

power dynamics of each given conflict scenario. This means that dominant and minoritized groups are always established vis-à-vis each other. Power dynamics are likewise relational, and are produced from numerous factors including population percentages, historical and structural inequities, and social prestige, to name a few. It follows that members of dominant groups will typically have more social power than members of minoritized groups. These societally ingrained power dynamics give members of each group a greater likelihood to hold certain attitudes or feelings with regards to the opposing group. Being the single most divisive actor in intergroup relations, race in a conflict lens can be used as a model for the general attitudes of both dominant and minoritized groups, whether or not race is the primary motor in a given conflict scenario. In many cases, whether or not a social group is dominant or minoritized is directly linked with the race and ethnicity of their members.

In looking at racial prejudice as a fixed conflict scenario, Herbert Blumer noted four typical feelings that dominant groups hold against minoritized groups. These were feeling superior, believing that the minoritized group is fundamentally different, feeling entitled to aspects of privilege, and holding a fear that the minoritized group seeks to undermine the dominant group in some way (Blumer, 1958). Keeping in line with relational definitions, de Finney et al. define members of racially minoritized groups to be outside of dominant norms, and as being perceived to be “less than” or an “other” by the dominant group (de Finney, Dean, Loiselle, Saraceno 2011). While there is no extant literature that details general attitudes of minoritized groups towards their dominant counterparts, one can presume that feelings likely revolve around believing that the dominant group is partly, if not wholly, responsible for perceived injustices against the minoritized group. Knowing the general attitudes that both the dominant and minoritized groups hold against each other in a given

conflict scenario is helpful – though not compulsory – as these attitudes are integral to facilitated dialogue.

Facilitated dialogue is a process in which participants discuss contentious and relevant topics with the goal to understand one another rather than push personal agendas. While facilitated dialogue is a relatively recent practice in the professional field, there is a baseline definition in place for what constitutes a facilitated dialogue, as well as several recognized attributes of dialogue. Ximena Zuniga et al. define intergroup dialogue as “facilitated, face-to-face encounters that cultivate meaningful engagement between members of two or more social identity groups with a history of conflict or potential conflict” (Zúñiga, Naagda, Sevig 2002). This paper equates facilitated dialogue with this working definition of intergroup dialogue. Other characteristics of facilitated dialogue include the fostering of an open environment in which participants are willing to both speak and listen, as well as the promotion of critical thought and collaboration (Dessel, Rogge, Garlington, 2006).

Facilitated dialogue is not debate, though it encourages different perspectives to be shared. Neither is it therapy, though it seeks to invoke empathic connection among participants. Rather, facilitated dialogue can be thought of as a separate process that combines elements of the two to create an environment and experience for participants to engage with others, express their beliefs, and examine new ones. In this way facilitated dialogue aims to extend both knowledge and understanding without fear of retribution.

To further expound on the facilitated feature of the conversation, each dialogue session is led or co-led by facilitators who are committed to a neutral position. In some cases, the facilitators could belong to the social groups represented in the dialogue, or could house an identity outwardly separate from the participatory social groups. For example, a race-

relations dialogue between white people and people of color could be co-led by one white facilitator and one person of color facilitator. Similarly, a dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis could be co-led by an Israeli facilitator and a Palestinian facilitator. The facilitators could also belong to social groups entirely unrelated to the specific conflicts. While knowledge of the conflict scenario in play can be useful, it is not necessary for a facilitator taking a neutral position. This is because the techniques trained facilitators utilize are detached from any individual conflict scenario. Ultimately the most important feature of the facilitated nature of the conversation is that there is a designated third party committed to taking a neutral position.

Given the variety across different facilitated dialogue programs, there is some flexibility in dialogue structure. Some programs require facilitators to undergo rigorous and extensive training before leading discussions, while other programs appoint facilitators based on professional distinction in a similar field such as counseling or human relations (Zúñiga, Naagda, Sevig 2002). Moreover, there is no set standard for facilitated dialogue; some programs have the same participants over several sessions while others have participants meet only once.

Gorsky and Caspi establish dialogue as potential method to mediate learning – theorizing that learning is mediated through intrapersonal dialogue and facilitated through interpersonal dialogue (Gorsky, Caspi 2005). Intrapersonal dialogue is defined to include the mental processes engaged in purposeful learning, including self-reflection, internal didactic conversations, and general self-thinking about a particular subject. Interpersonal dialogue refers to the relationship between dialogue participants engaging in thought-provoking activities, including hypothesizing, questioning, and explaining subject matter. Scheyett and

Kim have shown that facilitated dialogue is capable of eliciting positive changes in attitudes, though the study was carried out with the absence of a conflict scenario (Scheyett, Kim 2004). Nevertheless, the results were promising for the prospect of facilitated dialogue. In situations of conflict, the ideal culture of conflict resolution would have members of both the dominant and minoritized groups actively pursuing common goals of peace, collaborating with one another, and holding hope for future reconciliation.

However, no model is without shortcomings. All facilitated dialogues between dominant and minoritized groups inherently encounter potential limitations that arise from power dynamics. As noted by Dessel, Rogge, and Garlington, there are major concerns surrounding facilitated dialogue's ability to "truly overcome" the power dynamics between dominant and minoritized groups. These dynamics could be blatantly obvious, such as Arab participants having to speak in non-native Hebrew to speak to Jewish participants. They could also be subtler, such as minoritized groups desiring more action and less talk versus a more reserved approach from dominant groups (Dessel, Rogge, Garlington, 2006).

This paper distinguishes two separate forms of power dynamics. The first would be conflict scenario dynamics. These stem from wide arrays of historical and social structural imbalances in areas such as access to resource acquisition, underrepresentation, and income inequality, to name a few. Examples of this in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would be the fact that Israel is an occupying force in the West Bank in control over the Palestinians, Israeli ability to limit Palestinian water supply, and Israeli superiority in military technology. Conflict scenario dynamics also include cultural perceptions of dynamics at large. For example, Palestinians and Israelis hold widespread belief that the other side does not want

peace; regardless of whether that assumption is true, it contributes to a dynamic that relevantly affects how conversation among conflicting parties take place.

The second form of power dynamics this paper delineates comes in the form of dialogue group dynamics. These arise from within the assemblage of dialogue's participants. These include but are not limited to imbalances in gender, race, socioeconomic status, political and personal leanings, and could be extended even further to include how different personalities interact with each other. Examples of this could be having only two women in a group of ten participants, having a sole participant espouse conservative views in a largely liberal participant group, having a dialogue in which a few participants dominate the conversation, or having a group in which participants feel attached or unattached to a particular issue. These dialogue group dynamics are much more difficult to assess purely on the basis of their prevalence.

The complexities of each conflict scenario's power dynamics, coupled with any given dialogue group's power dynamics, makes the complete neutralization of imbalances in conversational dynamics impossible. However, the minimization of these dynamics— or even the exploitation of them to the benefit of a group — is a central process of facilitated dialogue and its aims. Through the use of a neutral position, facilitators seek to manage the rules of engagement in communication. Just as a referee in a sporting match sets the boundaries for opposing teams and manage the terms of the match, facilitators who take a neutral position set the boundaries for conversation and manage group process and inquiry.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been one of the most polarizing conflicts in recent history. The conflict affects not only Palestinians and Israelis, but also Jewish and Arab diaspora. As a highly impassioned conflict with clearly demarcated divisions between the

dominant and minoritized groups, it serves as a valuable conflict scenario for facilitated dialogue. Moreover, its widespread global implications alongside the historical and ongoing oppression of a people make it a valuable conflict to examine in more detail with regards to reconciliation.

As regards facilitated dialogue, a great deal of ink has been spilled in trying to understand what helps move the Palestinian-Israeli conversation between Arabs and Jews in a productive direction. In terms of conflict scenario dynamics, Maoz and Ifat note a massive power asymmetry that raised questions on the feasibility of facilitated dialogue to change negative attitudes. However, they also found that upon engaging in facilitated dialogue workshops, participants did indeed undergo attitudinal changes, as youth on both sides were able to break down stereotypes. However they note that their results are potentially limited by their sampling of only youth. Furthermore, they question whether or not the changes observed through facilitated dialogue on a micro level could result in broader impact on a societal level (Maoz, Ifat, 2000).

Others have discovered insights into particular patterns that arise in dialogue between Arabs and Jews. In a study examining silence as a conversational dynamic, Smith and Bekerman found that Arab participants would often use silence to maintain control and avoid vulnerability. In contrast, Jewish participants would tend to dominate talking time and repeatedly question their Arab counterparts (Smith, Bekerman, 2011). It is important to note that this particular study was carried out between Jewish Israelis and Arab Israelis; the dynamics that arise are expected to be different from other dynamics, and the generalizability to all members who identify with the conflict is suspect.

A question of methodology, analysis of dialogue has differed throughout research regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Three generally recognizable models of dialogue have been introduced in the field of facilitated dialogue. The first is the human relations model, in which the facilitators focus on building connections between participants without great discussion on outside power relations. The second is the confrontational model, in which the facilitator attempts to empower the minoritized group and the power asymmetries are highlighted. The third is the life story-telling model, seeks to combine the first two by having members of both sides share and discuss both family and personal stories. Using this third model, Bar-On et al. found that story-sharing allowed both Arabs and Jews to accept members of the other side on a personal level while challenging their own collective attitudes. (Bar-On et al., 2007).

In addition to discussing the three models discussed above, Steinberg and Bar-On have further developed a typology of discourse for conversation analysis. Speech was systemized in six categories of ideal ascending order: ethnocentric talk, attack, opening a window, recognition of differences, intellectual discussion, and dialogic moment (Steinberg, Bar-On, 2002). There is some potential for ambiguity here on what phrasings fit into what category, and while the typology could potentially serve as a useful standard for both analyzing the quality of dialogue occurring and progression of participants, the unique extent of verbal and emotional cues in every conversation raises questions on the limited scope of dialogue typology. Moreover, the assessment of dialogue progression may simply be too all encompassing to effectively make use of such a typology.

## Chapter 2

### A Methodology of Dialogue: The World in Conversation Model

#### World in Conversation

*World in Conversation / A Center for Public Diplomacy* is an organization at The Pennsylvania State University with a self-proclaimed mission “to provide facilitated dialogues that expand perspectives and invite greater understanding between people, locally and globally<sup>1</sup>.” A student-driven center, undergraduate students a part of World in Conversation undergo over two-hundred hours of facilitation training before facilitating their local and global programs. While facilitating these dialogues, they continue to practice facilitation and cultivate a more refined skillset geared towards facilitating dialogue.

86% of participants in World in Conversation’s dialogues reported the experience fostering their own critical thought, 75% reported encountering unfamiliar perspectives, 89% reported feeling an open enough atmosphere to share any views, and 78% reported more effective communication in the facilitated dialogues than in most conversation about the topics discussed, and 74% reported a desire to continue the conversation about the topics discussed in their social circles<sup>1</sup>. The success of World in Conversation to have impactful dialogues with singular ninety minute sessions with a relatively random assortment of participants leads to interest in their methodology and hope for greater impact with minor changes, such as more or longer dialogue sessions and participants knowingly in direct conflict with each other.

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<sup>1</sup> This information is taken from World in Conversation’s 2016-2017 End of Year Report found on their website.

What follows is an illumination of the methodology World in Conversation facilitators learn and use for those dialogues, interspersed with some commentary on the theory behind the mechanisms. Since World in Conversation is an organization dedicated to improving facilitation practices, it continues to develop its growing theoretical reservoir every year. Thus what follows is not to be taken as an all-encompassing summation of the World in Conversation methodology, but rather a condensation of various features and techniques used that have survived many iterations of the organization's continuing operations.

## **Facilitator**

The central feature of facilitated dialogue that separates it from other forms of communication is the presence of a dedicated third party facilitator. Facilitators can be understood on some level as referees of communication; they are there to ensure that everyone is playing by the "rules" of dialogue, to listen for understanding and collaboration. By and large, facilitation is valuable and sometimes necessary because most people are poor communicators. In the prevailing culture, conflict is shied away from, and it can be daunting to approach members of opposing groups. This rarely leads to productive conversation outside of dialogue, and the discussions that *do* occur tend to become heated quickly, fizzle out, and die. A facilitator's primary job is to bring the conversation to life. As such, facilitators seek to remove the impediments to open, honest, and intellectually stimulating discussion.

A facilitator is in a position of both power and trust. As a recognized third party, they are in the driver's seat of the dialogue. This responsibility requires that facilitators have a strong grasp of the appropriate facilitation mindset: They must be committed to taking a neutral

position. They are constantly aware of both content – *what* is being discussed in the dialogue – and process – *how* the participants are communicating in the dialogue. They must be determined in the use of Socratic Inquiry. They must be primarily interested in the good of the group rather than personal desires. They must seek to continually build connections among the participants, and aim to generate empathic connection. They must be aware of the dynamics affecting the dialogue and use them to advance the group forward. They must dive into dialogue actively searching for conflict to transform and resolve, rather than avoid points of disagreement.

Facilitators use the tools outlined below to achieve these ends.

### **Neutral Position**

It is obvious why designated third party facilitators should keep a rigid adherence to taking a neutral position, but what does it look like to take one? A concept that appears simple on the exterior, committing to a neutral position is not easy, and can be difficult to master. In fact, some would argue that taking a fully neutral position may be impossible. Claiming that conveying bias is inherently unavoidable, they contend that the authority a facilitator has in directing discussion coupled with the subconscious desires to lead to self-serving exploration will always lead to biased facilitation. Moreover, some claim that even if facilitators were able to avoid vocal impartiality, unconscious body language gives more credence to some participants and their perspectives than others. Every year at World in Conversation there are some facilitators who struggle with the idea of a neutral position, and others who cite the above reasons. Despite this perhaps nitpicky view of a neutral position, from a broader lens, a commitment to a neutral position is certainly possible since it relies on the perceptions of the

facilitators by the participants. Ultimately, if participants feel a facilitator is taking a neutral position, the facilitator is succeeding in taking one.

In the World in Conversation model, commitment to a neutral position is carried out by *taking all sides*. This means that facilitators empower and support every participant and every viewpoint shared, regardless of whether it is the principal perspective in the room. This entails that the facilitator refuses to neglect any one position because the majority disagree with it. Instead, the facilitator should try to enable every participant to share their honest perspectives, opting for conflict in lieu of conformity. Once there is conflict in the room, taking a neutral position becomes an active and engaged process; facilitators take all sides by mediating effective communication among conflicting parties that does not discount any one perspective. Just as there are inequities in society, so too are there inequities in dialogue. A facilitator committed to a neutral position aims to create and maintain a level playing field for the dialogue, with the requisite knowledge that it may be a near impossible task. The very real inequities in these conversations only points to the need of a third party facilitator committed to a neutral position.

### **Socratic Inquiry**

The term “dialogue” is a deliberate reference to Plato’s Socratic dialogues. In those dialogues, Socrates famously draws on a technique of examination and questioning called the Socratic Method. Socrates would notoriously use questions in argumentation with various interlocutors to obtain a greater understanding of a particular concept. In the World in Conversation model of dialogue facilitators make use of a slightly altered version of the Socratic Method called Socratic Inquiry.

The key difference between the two approaches is the mindset of the facilitator. In the Platonic dialogues, Socrates often used his questions in the service of exposing the interlocutor's beliefs and often leading to a path of contradiction that would show the interlocutor's position on an issue to be incorrect. In this way, Socrates sought to teach, and went about his elenctic questioning with that underlying motive. In Socratic Inquiry, the facilitator must abandon this motive. Instead, the facilitator seeks paths of collaborative exploration rather than argumentation. Together, the facilitator aims to better understand the essence of a topic or concept rather than to ensure the participants leave with a particular understanding of set of beliefs.

Nevertheless, it is labeled Socratic Inquiry because it shares a remarkable set of characteristics. Like the Socratic Method, one of the goals of Socratic Inquiry is to generate confusion, or *aporia*. Furthermore, both techniques achieve this through a relentless questioning of assumptions typically taken for granted. A fundamental belief displayed in both techniques is that the questions being asked are more important than the often simplistic answers readily available elsewhere. A facilitator employing Socratic Inquiry opts to create an environment in which participants – especially those in conflict – are collaboratively working together to arrive at a shared and often more nuanced understanding of the issue at hand.

### **Open Ended Questions**

As the primary navigator of the dialogue utilizing Socratic Inquiry, the questions facilitators ask are of high importance. In the World in Conversation model, facilitators are trained to ask questions in a specific manner, and taught to avoid asking them in other ostensibly valuable ones. The following table is often given to facilitators-in-training as a guideline for

what constitutes a truly open ended question. At World in Conversation, an “open ended” question takes on some additional constraints not traditionally narrowing the definition. The chief goal of an open ended question is to seek an unscripted, detailed response from participants without imposing assumptions upon them.

	<b>Closed</b>	<b>*Open Ended*</b>
<b>Begins with</b>	Do Does Is And various others	What How <del>Why</del> (attack, judgment, accusatory)
<b>Answers look like</b>	Yes/No One Word I don't know Maybe, sure Location, Fact, #	A story Unscripted More explored responses

As seen above, facilitators are instructed to avoid using “why” to begin questions, because it carries with it an implicit assumption that a justification is required and expected by the participant. In practice this is easy to observe. For example, consider this hypothetical situation: two new acquaintances have randomly paired with each other as freshman roommates. They have similar schedules, and no morning classes. Roommate A uses her morning time to sleep, while Roommate B goes to bed early and wakes up sharply at 4AM every day. Roommate A finds this curious, maybe a little irritating, so she asks Roommate B “why do you wake up at 4AM every morning?” This question immediately places Roommate B on the defensive. However she responds, she must justify the reason why she wakes up at 4AM every morning. After all, that *is* what was asked of her. However, consider the same situation in which Roommate A asks instead “what inspired you to wake up at 4AM every morning?” In this second version, a larger net is cast on the potential responses from Roommate B, along with a

lower accusatory tone. In this second version, Roommate B is more likely to provide an unscripted and more personal answer.

This hypothetical may appear basic, because it is. The reality is that most people in society default to the first “why” type question rather than an alternative more exploratory question. The same goes for the general balance of closed to open ended questions. In general most people are comfortable asking limited questions and receiving purely binary answers. The issue with this lies in the broad range of individual experiences, and the equally broad range of interpretative measures at each individual’s preference. With these factors in mind, it is clear that the words used, and the interpretations of different words greatly matter in the service of dialogue, and especially so in situations of conflict.

Consider this infamous thought experiment of William James’ squirrel:

“Some years ago, being with a camping party in the mountains, I returned from a solitary ramble to find every one engaged in a ferocious metaphysical dispute. The corpus of the dispute was a squirrel – a live squirrel supposed to be clinging to one side of a tree-trunk; while over against the tree’s opposite side a human being was imagined to stand. This human witness tries to get sight of the squirrel by moving rapidly round the tree, but no matter how fast he goes, the squirrel moves as fast in the opposite direction, and always keeps the tree between himself and the man, so that never a glimpse of him is caught.

The resultant metaphysical problem now is this: *Does the man go round the squirrel or not?* He goes round the tree, sure enough, and the squirrel is on the tree; but does he go round the squirrel? In the unlimited leisure of the wilderness, discussion had been worn threadbare. Every one had taken sides, and was obstinate; and the numbers on both sides were even. Each side, when I appeared therefore appealed to me to make it a majority.

Mindful of the scholastic adage that whenever you meet a contradiction you must make a distinction, I immediately sought and found one, as follows: “Which party is right,” I said, “depends on what you practically mean by ‘going round’ the squirrel. If you mean passing from the north of him to the east, then to the south, then to the west, and then to the north of him again, obviously the man does go round him, for he occupies these successive positions. But if on the contrary you mean being first in front of him, then on the right of him, then behind him, then on his left, and finally in front again, it is quite as obvious that the man fails to go round him, for by the compensating movements the squirrel makes, he keeps his belly turned towards the man all the time, and his back turned away. Make the distinction, and there is no occasion for any farther dispute. You are both right and both wrong according as you conceive the verb ‘to go round’ in one practical fashion or the other” (James).

William James would have been an shrewd facilitator; when a facilitator encounters contradiction or conflict, if a question is posed it should be to seek a distinction among the conflicting parties. This is often done with the full awareness that many conflicts are at their cores definitional. It is for this very reason that asking a binary question such as “do you support X political candidate” is often unproductive, compared to a more probing question such as “what about X political candidate appeals or does not appeal to you?” For facilitators wielding Socratic Inquiry, asking the right questions is one of their primary tools for moving the dialogue forward.

### **Reflective Listening**

Asking questions, however, is only a singular aspect of facilitation. Perhaps more important skills for any facilitator to master are active and reflective listening. Active listening is

largely what it seems; facilitators are taught to listen intently to what a participant is saying to obtain the best possible understanding of what is being communicated. The only major addition to this is an extra instruction to listen to not only what a participant is saying, but also how they are saying it. Is there emotion or passion behind the words? Does the participant's intention match the literal meaning of what she vocalizes? What is a participant *really* saying, and what is she crucially leaving unsaid?

A powerful and necessary skill for facilitators is the ability to reflectively listen. When reflectively listening, facilitators either focus the dialogue on a moment by operating as a mirror to the participants, or progress the dialogue using key words. This skill has many uses, including affirmation of participants, clarification of different positions, and thematic framing of the dialogue. Facilitators can reflect individual participants or the group as a whole, and each has its benefits. Often, hearing a perspective again in the same or different terms – no matter who it originally belonged to – can shift the understanding of that perspective for different participants. Even the reflection of a participant's own perspective can stimulate critical thought or trigger new insight into that position.

World in Conversation breaks down the technique of reflective listening into four categories: verbatim, simple translation, far out translation, and connecting the dots. In a verbatim reflection, a facilitator merely repeats something a participant said word for word. Verbatim reflections are particularly useful when a participant says something powerful or exceptionally noteworthy but might get overlooked because of the pace of the dialogue or a variety of other factors. In a simple translation, the facilitator essentially rearranges the words used by a participant. In a far out translation, the facilitator deliberately stretches what a participant said to uncertain lengths. The participant can then react by agreeing to the far out

idea, or rejecting it and further clarifying her position. In a connecting the dots reflection, the facilitator synthesizes information she has received and outputs it to a participant or the group.

When reflectively listening, facilitators are ensuring that each participant is being heard and understood by the room, allowing more space for participants to express their perspectives, and orienting the group to what is being said, what is being agreed upon, and what themes have been arising in the dialogue. Foundationally, reflective listening is an effective tool that encourages others to listen by being listened to. After all, in no instance – whether at a negotiation table or in a dialogue – are people willing to take others seriously if they do not feel the same respect is being reciprocated to themselves.

### **Management & Direction**

A central attribute of a good facilitator is the ability to manage conflict and direct discussion. Facilitators must be intentional in their management of both content and process. With regards to content, a facilitator uses their own judgment in the value of discussing each separate topic. However, the cardinal rule is to work with the content that arises in the room. As Socrates put it himself in Plato's *Republic*, "Whithersoever the wind of the argument blows, there lies our course" (Book 3. 394d). That said, if a conversation veers off track or what is being immediately discussed is judged by the facilitator as unfruitful, the facilitator has the discretion to nudge the dialogue towards a different path. The facilitator must be mindful however of maintaining close attention to a neutral position, and not approaching the dialogue with the mindset to teach, but rather to learn together.

With regards to process, a facilitator must be diligently aware of how the participants are speaking and relating to each other. General rules include avoiding lengthy monologues where possible, while also keeping in mind that the manner in which people participate can differ. In the collective desire to seek truth, participants support each other much like a basketball team supports each other; while there is only one ball and analogously one speaker at a time, teammates play “off ball” listening intently to the speaker as the ball is passed around. It is up to the facilitator to build chemistry within the team. This is done through connection building methods such as having participants speak directly to or reflect each other, and drawing out similarities participants have amongst each other.

When a facilitator encounters a monopolizer, or a situation in which the facilitator deems it in the best interest of the group to hear from a different person than the current speaker, they cut off the monopolizer using the S.A.R method. S.A.R. is an acronym for Stop, Affirm, Redirect. The facilitator stops the speaker using a variety of ways – often simply saying her name, affirms her for sharing – usually done through reflective listening, and redirects the figurative speaking stick to another participant in the group. This simple tool used effectively can be a massive boost to participant engagement and how the dialogue flows as a whole.

Managing both content and process should not be viewed as a rudimentary task. Facilitators have to make in the moment decisions about whether to slow things down and focus discussion on a specific issue, or follow up on a participant or story shared earlier, or direct the group into an individual, cultural, or societal examination. They may actively decide to avoid hypotheticals if they notice participants having trouble grasping on to concrete subjects, instead opting for more personal stories. They often have to initiate a process dubbed “steering into the curve,” in which facilitators actively drive the group to explore a conflict or topic that visibly

makes participants feel slightly uneasy. The natural tendency of most people is to avoid the uncomfortable and contentious topics that separate them. Hence, having a facilitator present to ensure productive discussion about important risky topics is crucial to bridging divides.

## **Rapport**

One of the most important foundational skills for a new facilitator to master is the ability to build rapport. At World in Conversation, rapport is equated to relationships of trust. This is not only limited to trust among participants, but also includes trust between a participant and the facilitator. Building rapport is vital to a facilitator's success because it affects the entirety of the group dynamic; if a participant does not trust others in the room they might feel so uncomfortable as to disengage from the conversation – or worse – fail to engage truthfully in the dialogue. A facilitator's first task is to get people to talk, and it is much easier to do so by actively building relationships of trust.

Facilitators are given simple instruction to do this by sparking their own genuine curiosities about anything participants are wearing, sharing, carrying, presenting, speaking, etc. The more rapport is built, the easier it becomes for a facilitator to focus on other aspects of the dialogue, and the less difficulty there is in sparking participant-participant engagement, as trust is often a precursor to generating empathic connection. It is also significant to note that rapport building occurs throughout the entirety of the dialogue. This goes back to the critical role of a technique like reflective listening; if a participant feels heard and respected, their trust in the facilitator and the participant increases. If they feel dismissed, misunderstood, or overlooked, their trust dwindles.

## Chapter 3

### A Theoretical Basis For Facilitated Dialogue

Conflict exists everywhere in the world. Intergroup conflict is not a recent phenomenon. Imbalanced societies are a natural occurrence. In a world where hatred and prejudice is rampant, there will always be a need for effective conflict resolution methods. Societies are mere conglomerations of people, and prosperous societies require internal intergroup peace for long-lasting success. There is no scenario in which it is better to be with intergroup conflict than without. Societal groups are essentially smaller societies, in that they are mere conglomerations of the *same* people. Social groups have their own distinct cultures, and for one group's behaviors towards an opposing group to change, there must be a change in culture. Political leaders have shown time and time again they are not reliable sources in achieving peace. Even if political peace is achieved in many cases, political and structural reparations are overwhelmingly unable to successfully bridge public divides. This often serves to exacerbate conflicts because there are very few systems in place to confront and resolve conflict between different social groups in a given society. Fostering positive beliefs to create a culture of conflict resolution is necessary to bridge gaps between opposing groups, as is cultivating systems and structures to sustainably promote and obtain reconciliation.

For cultural attitudes to change, there must be exposure to different perspectives. Within social groups people are ingrained with the same ideologies, prejudices, and beliefs. Furthermore, it is highly likely that members of the same group share similar experiences, and that those experiences are distinctly different from shared experiences within opposing groups.

Culture is a powerful channel to intake information, and in conflict scenarios most if not all of the information members learn about the opposing group is from within their own culture. Often negative, this information finds itself repeatedly justified by real experiences people go through. It is an aspect of human nature to be reluctant to accept different ideas and contradicting perspectives.

Given the high degree of power and influence culture has in each social group, a positive change in culture is the best way to achieve intergroup peace, and perhaps the only viable long term route. A positive change would include members of a social group developing hope for the future, desiring collaboration with others, and directly replacing negatively charged stereotypes with more a more holistic cross-cultural understanding of others. Hence, approaches best able to address cultural recalcitrance should be sought after in the public space by policy makers and grassroots organizations alike seeking to foster true public diplomacy and social cohesiveness.

Facilitated dialogue is one such approach. The underlying foundation of every facilitated dialogue is controlled exposure to different ideas. Facilitators hold each dialogue as a space for exploration and understanding rather than for argumentation and obstinacy. This pushes participants to fully grapple with contradictory perspectives instead of immediately casting them off as meaningless or unrewarding. Participants are encouraged to speak to each other as well as for themselves. This provides two key components to an attitude-shifting dialogue: participants discussing their own perspectives, and participants listening to opposing perspectives. For many participants, a facilitated dialogue is the first opportunity they have to engage members of opposing groups in serious conversation. These two components allow for both intrapersonal and interpersonal learning to occur.

Facilitated dialogue operates under the assumption that the vast majority of human beings does not inherently desire conflict, and are capable of resolving conflict by collaborating together. This is significant because in any given conflict scenario widespread feelings of unhealthy disagreement and deleterious dispute are present between opposing groups. At the core of facilitated dialogue is the belief that individuals in conflicts benefit from a third party facilitating processes of critical thought, examination, and resolution. Each facilitated dialogue serves as a microcosm of the larger conflict scenario; if participants in the dialogue are capable of achieving peace on an interpersonal level, then members of each social group should be capable of achieving peace on an intergroup level. The next question that needs to be answered is how facilitated dialogue begets cultural change. Peace between individuals of opposing groups only goes so far. At the end of the day, until cultural changes are made, members of each group are likely to continue to socialize with one another rather than with members of the opposing group, which may lead to paths of less desirable outcomes. If facilitation were incapable of changing the status quo in the lives of individuals in different social groups, there would be no point in dialogue.

The first, most obvious, and most impactful result of effective facilitated dialogue is the immediate attitudinal change in the participants. Culture is a summation of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the people. The more people who believe a certain set of ideas or hold a certain stereotype, the more weight those ideas have in influencing the culture. People who enter a dialogue with negative attitudes and subsequently exit the dialogue with more positive attitudes are tangible units of change in their culture. When enough people transform negative attitudes into positive ones, cultural attitudes change as well. This principle can be extended to more specific attitudes and behaviors.

For example, an issue typically found in conflict scenarios is that members of the dominant group fail to see a pressing need for a call to action in establishing reconciliation with minoritized groups. This may be due to their position in society, which often shields them from the usually harsher reality faced by the minoritized group, and often removes them in their perspective from the conflict. If enough members of the dominant group become aware of their privilege and the typically harsher realities faced by minoritized groups – thus leading to more members harboring positive attitude shifts towards reconciliation – then a cultural change can take place where members of the dominant group are far more likely to seek peace and reconciliation. This would be a major contribution to crafting a culture of conflict resolution. To use the same example pattern, members of minoritized groups may initially feel that members of the dominant group do not care for active reconciliation because they actively enjoy their privileged position in society. Upon dialogue in which it might become apparent to these participants that most members of the dominant group are unaware of their privilege, they may actively seek to engage with members of the dominant group to more effectively obtain reconciliation.

The second major result of effective facilitated dialogue is the ripple effect in public diplomacy. Every member in a given social group has some level of sociocultural influence on their peers. Beliefs, ideas, and prejudices are all transferred from person to person on a daily basis. Perhaps the simplest example of this process is the cultural medium of familial relations. Parents directly transfer many of their ideas and prejudices to their children. In a similar vein, every member of a societal group exerts some degree of weight on the beliefs and prejudices of others in the group. An immediate positive impact on ten members of a social group may snowball into a more subtle positive impact on fifty members of the same group, or one hundred,

or more. These newly affected members impacted by the original few may consequently bring about positive change in their own social circles. Each newly affected member broadcasts their newfound perspectives to others, and this cumulative alteration of attitudes contributes considerably towards achieving a culture of conflict resolution. It is this ripple effect that makes facilitated dialogue such an appealing method for inducing widespread positive shifts in culture.

A third key outcome of effective facilitated dialogue is the bridge building between members of opposing groups. As stated before, for many participants a facilitated dialogue is their first serious conversation with members of the opposing group on relevant issues. This may be due to the stigma or general uncomfortability of surrounding relevant issues that dissuades members from engaging in serious discussion. It may also be in part due to social organization rendering natural intergroup discussion impractical or impossible. In either of these cases, it is useful for members who leave facilitated dialogue sessions to create new connections with members of the opposing groups. Friendships that develop outside of dialogue are living examples of palpable peace and reconciliation. Ultimately, this is one of the most desirable goals of facilitated conversation between dominant and minoritized groups – to demonstrably resolve conflict. However, for a viable long-term solution, individual examples of tangible reconciliation alone are not the sole aim of facilitated dialogue, and should not be viewed as such.

From a cursory outlook, it may seem difficult to believe that facilitated dialogue works. Bringing together people who harbor ill will towards one another, instructing them to discuss sensitive topics, and having them attempt to understand testing perspectives may sound a little too idealistic. However, precisely because it seems farfetched, facilitated dialogue works. A relatively new approach to conflict resolution, facilitated dialogue does what is consistently shied away from: confrontation through direct and honest discussion. In a constant state of affairs

facilitated dialogue initiates dynamic change of the status quo by arranging crucial face-to-face interactions in service of resolving conflict.

Instead of having members of opposing groups intensify their negative attitudes towards one another through their own cultures, facilitated dialogue promotes a direct addressing of the issues. Once participants from opposing groups meet at the table, discussion rarely gets out of control as the facilitators implement various techniques to ensure fruitful conversation is taking place. Thus, if tensions and emotions spike within dialogue, skilled facilitators can actually use these to effectively move the conversation forward. An example of this would be a facilitator reflecting that a participant who lashes out aggressively in anger may be doing so out of a more visceral, passive feeling of fear. This may help both the angry participant and members of the opposing group to understand his or her position more lucidly. An encounter like this may result in both groups discussing the deeper reason for fear instead of simply casting more anger into the dialogue. These moments exemplify the concept in facilitated dialogue of transforming conflict into collaboration.

Within the group, facilitated dialogue can effectively evoke positive change in individuals by providing opportunities to the participants. In any given facilitated dialogue space participants are allowed and encouraged to speak without limitations. Participants are supported in detailing their personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings to people who are actively listening. Participants are pushed to listen for understanding and empathy by the facilitators. Moreover, the symmetrical balance within the group helps safeguard against potentially problematic dynamics of dialogue. For example, a participant may not feel an overbearing pressure to represent his group because he is surrounded by peers who can provide assistance if needed. Likewise, a participant may feel empowered to challenge the opposing group for the

same reason. In any facilitated dialogue, participants are given the power and ability to explore and understand issues in a way that is not readily available outside of dialogue.

In addition to providing sustained face-to-face communication between opposing groups, facilitated dialogue brings social awareness to the forefront of discussion. As mentioned earlier, power dynamics and systematic forces play an integral role in the conflict between dominant and minoritized groups. In the facilitated dialogue approach, participants are able to engage in thoughtful discussion about personal, interpersonal, cultural, and structural issues. Oppressive systemic problems and sociopolitical barriers can be elucidated from different perspectives. Perhaps more importantly, both dominant and minoritized groups discuss and examine these perpetuating aspects of conflict together. Facilitated dialogue sets the stage for reconciliation by displaying reconciliation in action. While simply discussing problems does not immediately solve them, for many participants – especially those in the dominant group – a facilitated conversation with the opposing group may bring about newfound awareness to societal issues surrounding the conflict.

In supplement to practical action that may result after the dialogues and real attitudinal changes that may arise, there is an additional process that occurs through facilitated dialogue. Performativity refers to the concept of language that tangibly affects the world and can be considered as social action. Making a promise is a prime example of a performative utterance. After a promise is made, one person expects the other to follow through on that promise. There are expectations and consequences that are formed after the initial promise is vocalized. A facilitated dialogue can in the same way be seen as an ongoing process of performativity. The ideas, stories, and conflicts discussed within a group of people produces an effect upon the participants that has the ability to fundamentally alter their actions after leaving a dialogue.

## Chapter 4

### Dialogue Case Study: Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

#### Methodology

This paper is largely an examination, exploration, and analysis of facilitated dialogue as a process. Much of the background used to fuel this analysis comes from three years of direct and intense work in the field of facilitated dialogue, under the methods of *World in Conversation / A Center for Public Diplomacy* at The Pennsylvania State University. While that should not be ignored, this paper also undergoes a second layer of inquiry by deliberately conducting and deeply researching a series of dialogues centered about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This is done in order to shed more light on motivators within that particular conflict while also providing a focused case study of facilitated dialogue to examine. What follows is the methodology used to carry out and evaluate that set of dialogues.

In order to obtain participants who satisfy the study requirements (Palestinians/Arabs and Israelis/Jews at Penn State), this study used a snowball non-random sampling method. This was coordinated through scouring personal networks of Palestinians/Arabs at Penn State, and subsequently urging selected members to branch out into their own networks to find other interested participants. For the Jewish/Israeli side this was coordinated through Penn State Hillel and its organizational director, who found students who recently traveled to Israel or had interest in the conversations. They were subsequently urged to search their own networks for additional potential participants.

For this dialogue series, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict scenario was examined; the study brought together three Arab participants and three Jewish participants who engaged in and completed six two-hour dialogue sessions over the course of fifteen weeks. One sole neutral facilitator led the dialogues. The facilitator selected was Dr. Laurie Mulvey – the Executive Director of World in Conversation – who has over thirty years of experience in the field of facilitation. The dialogues were observed while they occurred and notes and observations were taken. Each dialogue was also audio-visually recorded. After each dialogue, there was a debrief session between the investigator and the facilitator, in which discussion on important moments, themes, and patterns from the dialogue were noticed. This helped direct the focus of the next dialogue. The facilitator was aware a number of facilitation frameworks, including all three models mentioned earlier. Nevertheless the facilitator chiefly used the World in Conversation model of dialogue for this series.

Once all of the dialogue sessions were completed, the collected data was reviewed and evaluated. This consisted of re-watching the dialogues and making additional notes and observations, paying special attention to larger patterns of facilitation process and content that arose. Attitudinal surveys were used to help direct and focus the research towards valuable paths of study. These surveys aided in uncovering the general effectiveness of this dialogue series' ability to generate empathic connection as well as shed light on notable moments throughout the dialogues. This information was combined with the larger observations that arose throughout repeated analysis of the data. A great deal of analysis focused on techniques of facilitation and the ability of the facilitator to foster an open space for communication, connection building, and critical thought on both an intrapersonal and interpersonal level.

The attitudinal surveys (see appendix) were administered the day of and prior to the first dialogue session as well as the day of and after the final dialogue session. The attitudinal surveys' primary purpose was merely to help point data review towards important moments, for more structured analysis of the data. The individual attitudinal changes were assessed to gather a general understanding of how the dialogues affected each participant.

This study followed all of the ethical guidelines for human studies research. Participants provided informed consent, which entailed any potential risks with their participation (namely feeling emotional or mental strain). These risks were essential to the dialogue process and expected to arise in conflict scenarios, and in this study were minimized through the use of a facilitator who can actively work to transform conflict into collaboration. Participants were also aware of the numerous benefits their participation may involve, including a more cohesive and peaceful social structure outside of the study in addition to the satisfaction of exploring their own personal curiosities. It is safe to say that these and other benefits of this study heavily outweighed the risks of participation. All surveys were conducted anonymously, with the use of colored pens to track individual changes. No participant was able to see the surveys the other participants will fill out, as access was restricted exclusively to the primary researcher.

### **Findings: Individual Attitudinal Changes**

By and large the attitudinal changes for each participant about character traits the members of the opposing group possessed were heavily positive. While most of the data is analogously skewed, there were some differences between each group with regards to attitudinal changes.

Beginning with the dominant group, for the Jewish participants, most general discomfortability with both Arabs and Palestinians dissipated. Similarly beliefs that Arabs and Palestinians held dangerous views that threatened their identities also decreased. Jewish participants reported more favorable beliefs that Arabs and Palestinians are open minded, thoughtful, friendly, and willing to compromise to achieve peace. Finally, two of the three Jewish participants had drastic positive changes on how much hope they had that the conflict would be peacefully resolved, while the third Jewish participant became slightly less hopeful.

For the Arab participants, while general comfortability with members of the opposing group increased, the overall results were slightly more variable. Most of the Arab participants had slight decreases in their belief of willingness to compromise from the Jewish side. However, Arab participants did have a large increase in their belief that members of the opposing group were willing to listen. For most of the specific conflict related beliefs, there were no noticeable patterns, suggesting what the Arab participants took away from the dialogues was much less uniform than their Jewish counterparts.

### **Findings: Participants on Facilitative Process**

There was no single participant who felt that the presence of a facilitator in any way inhibited the dialogue. In fact, four of the six participants strongly agreed that the facilitator helped foster effective communication and helped them think more critically. This majority also strongly agreed that other members in the conflict would benefit from engaging in similar dialogue. The other two participants still slightly agreed to the above benefits of the facilitator, but were noncommittal on whether or not other members of the conflict would benefit from

similar dialogue. Of the six total participants, only one reported an unwillingness to engage in similar dialogues, while all other participants related a desire to engage in more dialogues.

When asked “what worked in these dialogues,” nearly all of the participants made mention of the facilitator in some capacity, with the vast majority of participants stating that they became more confident in expressing their views even if they initially feared sharing them. The facilitated nature of the dialogues allowed each participant – regardless of which side they belonged in – to undergo their own intrapersonal learning by both sharing personal perspectives and experiences, as well as listening to others. A few participants conveyed they had felt heard and truly listened to, while also mentioning they felt empowered to say everything they wanted to say. Some participants reported that on many topics in the dialogue they lacked an opinion because they had never had to deal with thinking about it – let alone with members of the opposing side – and that the dialogues aided them in discovering where they stand on different issues. One participant conveyed that taking week-long breaks in between dialogue sessions was valuable to process new information that would arise in each particular session.

All of the Jewish participants reported that the most important moments for their understanding and benefit involved personal stories and experiences from the Arab participants. The story telling allowed the Jewish participants to better visualize the struggles of the Arab side, empathize with Arabs, and better understand the impacts of the conflict on the minoritized side. Jewish participants reported broader understanding of the Arab and Palestinian perspectives, seeing more overlap among the interests and concerns of both sides, and general confusion of the situation as something more nuanced than previously thought.

Again, the Arab participants were slightly more variable in what was valuable during the dialogue sessions with regards to the conflict itself. However one thing that was clearly common

among them was an overwhelming frustration with the outcomes of the dialogues. Some of the Arab participants felt that many of the “challenges“ discussed in the first dialogue session were unresolved. One Arab participant felt that each dialogue reached a similar end point that seemed pointless. While one participant did report greater sympathy towards the Jewish side after hearing some personal stories, overall it was apparent that the Arab participants had hoped for more concrete changes than their Jewish counterparts; they desired to change opinions on specific issues or see the Jewish participants outwardly shift their positions.

### **Findings: Points of Conflict**

Throughout the dialogue sessions, several different points of conflict arose that were central to the group’s examination, exploration, and understanding of both the conflict as a whole and each other as individuals. With the basic understanding that discussing these points of conflict are integral to resolving them, what follows is a summative overview of each major point of conflict.

The participants disputed over whether the conflict is driven primarily by race or religion. All of the Jewish members were committed to the belief that the conflict is religiously driven, and that the core anti-Semitism comes from religious zealots in the Arab Muslim world. Some of the Arab participants echoed sentiments that Arabs in general exude a hatefulness towards Jews, however they did not go so far as to say the conflict was religious. One Arab participant staunchly claimed religion had no part in the conflict, citing discrimination and racism of the Israeli government against Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews in Israel, who exhibit darker skin tones and Arab-like complexion. Nevertheless, the issue of the conflict as religious or racial in nature

continued to develop as the group examined more topics, including Hamas and their infamous organizational charter, and various suicide bombings.

Another critical conflict explored in the group was the belief that Israel as a country is worthy of being good or beautiful. All of the Jewish participants continually repeated they felt inspired by stories of Jews settling in Israel and its location as a safe haven for Jews. All of the Arab participants felt strongly negative about Israel as an inspirational country, stating that the repeated atrocities it has committed and continues to commit deny its ability to be worthy of praise or virtue. Arab participants discussed not only the brutal actions towards Palestinians, but also mentioned Israel's pseudo-democratic character and discriminatory policies towards Arab Israelis. While the Jewish participants did not actively speak against these claims, they were by and large willing to overlook them, holding firm to their desire to support a country that affirms their identity as Jews. Arab participants directly questioned how the Jewish participants could engage in activities such as "birthright" – a trip Jewish diaspora and Jewish diaspora alone are allowed to take to Israel – and reconcile the inherently unfair actions to Palestinians. For the Arab participants, "supporting Israel" necessitated a direct justification of its heinous injustices, whereas for the Jewish participants "supporting Israel" was purely about preserving their Jewish identity and community.

The next major point of conflict that surfaced between the two groups was to what extent people were complicit with their government's actions. Arab participants pressed the idea that Israelis are responsible for the actions of the Israeli Defense Forces and the Israeli government as a whole towards Palestinians. Jewish participants sought to counter that idea, and in the process several other case studies were examined. For example, one Jewish participant brought up the genocide of Native Americans by the American government, and the bombing of Nagasaki by

American planes, and claimed that it would be unreasonable to extend the burden of those acts by the government on to the American citizens. Arab participants felt in general that time elapsed does not absolve the wrongdoer of their aggression, and that citizens must keep their leaders accountable.

Moral responsibility was the center of a lot of conversation. There was a clear conflict on what the responsibility of the dominant group should be. Precisely, the question of responsibility without culpability led to key divides between the two groups of participants. Arab participants held that people who have inherited privilege are burdened with a responsibility to mend history if they are connected to that historical injustice. This led to an interesting remark by a Jewish participant who mentioned there was a Jewish saying along the lines of “I didn’t break it but I still have to fix it.” However, this participant and the other Jewish participants were steadfast that responsibility dissipates with the passing of time, and also expressed a feeling of powerlessness to affect change. Ultimately, the Jewish participants said, life is unfair. One Arab participant responded by saying,

*“What do you mean? You believe in my right but you cannot give me my right? You are underestimating the trauma. You are writing off what it feels like to lose your house, your family, your rights; to grow up in a refugee camp, to have generations live unemployed and uneducated.”*

For some Arab participants, this perspective taken by the Jewish participants was irksome; it was suggested that the easiest rectification of injustice is through revenge and violence, and hence mending from privileged members of the dominant group was necessary, otherwise the cycle of violence would persist.

Another conflict on responsibility, Arab participants were quick to establish that the bulk of the conflict was created as a direct result from the transgressions of the Israeli Defense Forces and Israeli government. Jewish participants disagreed, maintaining that the Israeli Defense Forces have always operated out of retaliation, not transgression. This disagreement swelled to include the initial origination of the conflict, with discussion on, essentially, “who started it?” The Arab participants wanted to vocalize that Palestinian violence needed to be understood by Israelis as necessitated from the superior violence of Israel, an idea which the Jewish participants met with immediate resistance.

A significant point of conflict throughout these dialogue sessions was on the uniqueness of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a whole. Jewish participants continually expressed that the conflict was not unique or different than other conflicts in any important ways. They consistently sought to equate the circumstances and consequences of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with what they called the natural circumstances and consequences of all conflicts. On the other hand the Arab participants were persistent in defining attributes that made the Palestinian-Israeli conflict unique in relevant ways, referencing the status quo of illegal occupation, illegal settlement expansions, lack of the Israeli government to abide by international law, and other aspects of the conflict. They reasoned that the current products of the conflict did not have to remain in place, while the Jewish participants sought to explain some of the products as fixed due to the nature of all social conflicts.

Zionism as a concept was another point of conflict. After pressing the Jewish participants on what they considered and thought about Zionism, the Arab participants contended that Zionism was an inherently racist notion. This essential issue for the Arab participants is that by establishing the state of Israel as a “predominantly Jewish character” and thereby limiting who

can reside by their ethnic background, Zionism effectively discriminates against Palestinians who also have a claim to the land. Most of the Jewish participants reacted to this belief by defending Zionism as a nationalistic movement for the sake of the Jewish people, defending the Zionist call to a predominantly Jewish state out the need for Jewish safety.

Related to the last conflict, the issue of the Palestinian right to return inevitably arose between the two groups. However, the stance on this issue was much less uniform among the members of each group. While in general there was agreement by the Arab participants with each other that the Palestinian right of return *should* be honored in some capacity – the Jewish participants did not go so far in that agreement – some of the Arab participants questioned the realistic feasibility of such a return. This issue overlapped with the desire of the Jewish participants for an Israel that preserves its Jewish character. This seemingly led to an impasse; either the right to return is honored and Israel becomes a fully democratic state without a commitment to a predominantly Jewish character, or the right to return is disallowed and Israel remains predominantly Jewish at the expense of true democracy. All of the participants appeared to concur that Israel would not be able to be both truly democratic and maintain its predominantly Jewish character.

A point of conflict about violence, there was a clear dividing line between the Jewish participants and the Arab participants on what constitutes “extremism.” Jewish participants felt that the Israeli Defense Forces could not possibly be seen as extremist, nor could the U.S. military. However, the Arab participants contended that violence is only perceived as extreme when carried out by certain people. Discussion led to examining motive of actions, examining “winners” and “losers” in society’s view of history with the “losers” labeled as extremists. Arab participants called out Israeli leaders such as former Prime Minister Ben Gurion and Jewish

militant groups such as the Hagana and Irgun as Israeli extremists. This was met with strong resistance by some of the Jewish participants, again citing the nature of all conflict to be structured in a way that absolves responsibility. Overall, Arab participants were much more open to denouncing the acts of Palestinian militant groups and individual violence, while Jewish participants were far more likely to deflect or deny the same about Israeli leaders or militant groups.

In addition to the above major points of conflict between the Arab participants and the Jewish participants, there were also a few contentious issues that were discovered among the Arab participants. The most notable being on whether or not violence would emerge with less restrictions on Palestinians. A chief question that was carried out through all of the dialogues was whether or not violence was necessary or important to the development of the conflict. Two of the Arab participants had polar perspectives. One participant declared – in agreement with what some of the Jewish participants had expressed – that more freedom of movement and less restrictions on the Palestinians would lead to more Palestinian violence against Israel. The other participant disputed this notion and claimed it inherently unjust for anyone to decide prematurely for Palestinians that they would choose more violence, claiming that more equality and less oppression would incentivize Palestinians to opt for more nonviolent measures against their occupier.

There was also significant heated disagreement among the Arab participants on the possibility surrounding the conflict as a whole, and this disagreement was surely related to the discussion on violence highlighted above. One Arab participant asserted that through proper enforcement of international law Israel could be forced to abide to recognizable statutes and make significant strides to resolve the conflict. The other Arab participants were not so hopeful,

proclaiming that Israel has already “won” and by virtue of its power controls the enforceability of international law. They also disagreed on what actions the Palestinians should take; one participant believed Palestinians should actively seek to alter the structures imposed upon them by Israel, while another expressed that Palestinians best hope is to accept what has happened and make the most of their situation.

### **Findings: Content, Process, & Facilitator Effect**

There was an abundance of notable patterns, themes, issues, topics, and ideas that were introduced by and developed upon by the participants that can not be appropriately classified as points of conflict like the above. This section highlights many of the most noteworthy observations on both the content and process of the dialogue series, beginning with the latter. Observations on the effects of the active role of the facilitator and the direction often provided by the facilitator are discussed as a part of the process.

No discussion on process would be complete without first mentioning the group dynamics present in the room. Of the six participants, there was an equal number of Arabs and Jews, however there were an unequal number of men and women, with the women outnumbered in a 2:1 ratio. This gendered dynamic throughout the conversation often led to the men in the room more easily relating to each other than to the women. The second major dynamic in the room was the general asymmetry among the participants in prior knowledge of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Middle Eastern history; while all of the Arab participants seemed to display a broad knowledge base, only one of the Jewish participants appeared to have a similar level of knowledge entering the dialogues. The last major dynamic established early on in the dialogues

rests on the social structure of communication formed; one of the Arab participants operated on a highly articulate process of expression, much like a skilled storyteller. Other smaller dynamics that arose or changed throughout the group are detailed in the rest of the examination of process below.

From the very beginning of the first dialogue session it was expressed by all participants that they had the desire to meet and engage with the other side. This set a shared intention for the group to be willing to both speak and listen to each other. This was further reinforced by a reminder by the facilitator of confidentiality, which allowed for the trust in the group to be acknowledged and built upon. The facilitator also pushed for all participants to vocally commit to the designated and agreed upon dialogue times, in an effort to set boundaries that do not tether people indefinitely to each dialogue space.

There was a heavy use of metaphor in the dialogues that began in the first session and carried throughout to the last. This was often used by participants to explain concepts and beliefs in simpler terms. This metaphor use seemed to stimulate critical thought and help everyone process the information more capably. A prime example of this would be a metaphor brought up by one of the Arab participants about the ant and the hand. The participant describes Palestinians as an ant being squished by the hand that is Israel, and wanted it to be stated that “you cannot try to squish the ant and not expect the ant to sting back.” This metaphor and many others throughout the dialogue series helped ground the group in more accessible shared terminology, seemingly operating as a middle term that removes the self from the rhetoric of heavy conflict.

The positive effect of personal stories on the ability of the participants to better understand each other and their perspectives was pervasive throughout the dialogues. Participants often drew on personal stories as examples to make larger points. For example, an

Arab participant told a story of being denied entry into Gaza to see family, operationalizing the process of human rights denial. Another example is when an Arab participant described a cousin who declared hating Jews, but liked a mutual Jewish friend without knowing he was Jewish. This example was used to illustrate the power ignorance has in perpetuating cultural stigmas against the opposing group.

Part of the process that developed relatively quickly and briefly pointed out earlier, Jewish participants continually sought to explain the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as akin to any other conflict. This was often done in response to Arab participants questioning and challenging the Jewish participants to better understand the Palestinians and their behaviors. This process was constant throughout the entirety of the dialogue series with a sole exception; at one point the Holocaust was brought up by the Arab participants attempting to challenge the Jewish participants on the notion that trauma and effects of conflict dissipate as time passes. In response there was a unanimous and evident sentiment expressed by the Jewish participants that the Holocaust possessed a uniqueness in social conflict. Instead of viewing the Holocaust as just another broad abstraction of history – as they voiced about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and others – the Jewish participants insisted the Holocaust was special in its own right.

The inhibitive power the process of Jewish participants to write off the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as any other cannot be overstated. In this dialogue series the Jewish participants often defaulted to this line of reasoning to broadly deflect the Arab participants' remarks on disparaging aspects of Israel. This in turn led to frustration of the Arab participants in not obtaining the direct answers they were seeking on the challenges they posed to the Jewish participants.

A key process that significantly affected the course of the dialogue was that the “tiptoeing” of the dominant group in sharing concrete opinions. The Jewish participants often visibly hesitated to share their specific opinions and perspectives on whatever was being immediately discussed, especially if directly questioned by their Arab counterparts. This dynamic was heavily present in the earlier dialogue sessions, and never entirely disappeared. This was noticed by some of the Arab participants, one even vocalizing the dynamic to the Jewish participants in the second to last dialogue session. However, as the dialogues progressed there was a noticeable shift in how often the Jewish participants were willing to share, and often when pushed by the facilitator they were able to present their opinions more directly.

This may be intertwined with another noticeable process that affected the dominant group. On the side with power and generally aware of it the Jewish participants were not as comfortable confronting the conflicts in the group as the Arab participants. This was voiced by one of the Jewish participants who felt a lopsidedness in the conversation due to Israel exerting control over the Palestinians. In this way, the Jewish participants felt that the more oppression they could connect themselves to the more speaking authority they would be able to command. It is unclear whether the Arab participants felt the same way, however it is apparent that the Arab participants often drew on the harsher realities of the Palestinians to challenge the other side.

Another intriguing observation, the Jewish participants often displayed difficulty – or perhaps unwillingness – to relate and respond to the emoting of one Arab participant. This may have been in part due to the strong passion of the Arab participant contributing to further pressure on the Jewish participants to avoid reacting in what they perceived as inappropriate or inflammatory. It may also have been due to a momentary shock from encountering those perspectives and emotions from an Arab for the first time. As with the trepidation in general, this

process also shifted as the dialogues progressed. A few times in the last two dialogues one Jewish participant who had clear difficulty showing empathy with one Arab participant took the initiative without the help of the facilitator to reflect the latter's words and emotions. In one instance this Jewish participant empathetically told the Arab participant "*you have every right to be angry.*" While this process may seem simple, it was crucial in the generation of empathic connection and the development of relationships among the participants.

For the most part the Arab voices drove the conversations time and time again, often probing their Jewish counterparts with pointed questions on different issues. Examples of this include Arab participants presenting a perspective and asking Jewish participants what they disagree with, or Arab participants questioning Jewish participants on their opinion on what to do about right of return. This formed a process in which the Jewish participants were often put on the spot to respond to something instead of present something new. This can be intimidating, and may have led to increased uncomfortability for the Jewish participants to express specific opinions.

However, the process of expression being difficult was not exclusive to the Jewish participants. One Arab participant vocalized often feeling frustrated at not being able to express himself, stating an inability to share a lot of the underlying feelings felt. It is important to note that this same participant reported that while there was often a fear and frustration in sharing, the presence of the facilitator better helped him express thoughts more clearly.

An insightful process that highlights the development of the participants in the dialogue, was the general shift of some participants to more actively want to purely understand both sides of the conflict. For example one Arab participant who gave the impression of seeking to convince the other side a particular perspective was true and early in dialogue expressed a

lingering hatred for Israelis as “terrible people” explicitly asserted halfway into the dialogue sessions that it was important to look at both sides of any conflict, while also mentioning there was still room to take a side. This same participant self-reflected statements from the Jewish participants more often towards the end of the dialogue series, often conveying that despite disagreement with their perspectives, their positions made sense for their own self-preservation and pure self-interest. However this development was not limited to this one participant; as the dialogues progressed there were noticeably more instances of mutual recognition of oppression or justifiable complaints for each side.

In two separate instances of particularly heated moments of discussion had amongst the Arab participants, two of the Arab participants switched their speech temporarily to Arabic. Both times this was done after the speaker felt an important point was neglected by the other Arab participants. The use of native tongue in situations of animated disagreement within one’s own group is of great intrigue; it may have been borne out of a desire to exert authority in the message, or perhaps more likely to vent a more implicit anger that their fellow Arabs did not support the speaker’s particular position. In both moments, the positions the non-speaker Arabs were communicating were clearly opposed to the speaker Arab, and it would not be a stretch to say that those positions were supportive of what would typically be written off by Arabs as Israeli rhetoric.

A final note about process, there were several instances throughout the dialogue sessions in which all of the participants were able to laugh together, whether about something regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or something entirely out of the scope of the dialogues. This levity in many ways strengthened the group’s collective trust and ability to express freely.

Shifting to content, several valuable paths of inquiry arose in the dialogues. These observations reference topics and ideas that participants gravitated towards, but were not necessarily in conflict about. These can be generally thought of as points of group exploration that mediated collective exploration of the larger conflict that aided individual learning and understanding of relevant issues.

Early in the dialogues there was a strong desire of Arabs to better understand Jewishness and the various labels in Jewish culture. This type of cross-cultural expression seemed important to begin with to build trust between the two sides and establish a foundational understanding of each person. Related to this was discussion on the purpose of the dialogue, with each participant providing their individual aims in participating. This meta-discussion similarly grounded all of the participants in what to expect from others in the group. Bouncing off of the individual goals, at the end of the first dialogue there was a challenge given to each group by some of the members of each group. The Jewish participants' challenge was to make them feel that what they did mattered, while the Arab participants' challenge was to make them believe that violence is not necessary. This helped contextualize the dialogue for each participant moving forward.

Connected to the desire of the Arab participants to better understand Jewishness was the desire of Jewish participants to explain the historical treatment of Jews as a core feature of their Jewish identity. Citing anti-semitism in the past as well as the present, Jewish participants explained why the idea of Israel as a "safe haven" for Jews was so attractive, despite some roadblocks Arab participants pointed out such as Israel's Arab neighbors.

There was a great deal of conversation about morality, and more specifically the moral obligations prescribed to people based off of their social positions. One of the branches of this conversation focused on leadership and the importance or necessity of having leaders to enact

change. Participants were eager to explore motives for change, and the difficulties associated in creating change. Another branch delved into sociological examination of power, with one of the participants openly questioning to the group “who fights for the powerless?” This examination was carried out without participants identifying ties to any particular group, and led to less charged responses. At one moment an Arab participant jokingly observed that two of the Jewish participants sounded like “real Palestinian terrorists right now,” because their sentiments towards social injustice felt similar.

Discussion on military superiority and causal violence was important to members of both the dominant and minoritized group. Arab participants sought to explain Palestinian violence to their Jewish counterparts as resultant from Israeli aggression, while Jewish participants sought to explain the same to their Arab counterparts. For each side an understanding from the other on why people take the actions they do was crucial to moving forward. The topic of power asymmetry continued to surface throughout the dialogues, with discussion on the random unfairness in life and history. While every participant could agree to an ideal vision of society, some participants held to the belief that the ideal would always be separate from true reality, while others were more hopeful for positive change. These discussions went back and forth from abstract sociological examination of concepts of privilege and inequality to the practical application of those concepts to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and other conflicts as well. One Arab participant felt there was a responsibility for Jews to “fix history” regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict just as Germans have a responsibility to mend the suffering Jews faced in the Holocaust.

A massive talking point was the Jewish character of Israel. While this was prioritized differently by each individual participant, discussion on both the feasibility and consequences of

maintaining a Jewish majority in Israel were crucial to participants hoping to assess what courses of action to pursue outside of the dialogue. The appeal of Zionism to Jews and irritation of Zionism to Arabs was important to discussing the Jewish character of Israel.

Participants desired to explore the surrounding factors of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in addition to the conflict itself. Questions about the international importance of the conflict, potential uniqueness of it, and causes as related to religious or ethnic background were highlighted. Topics also fielded in this realm included the privileged positions of both Jewish and Arab diaspora in talking about the conflict, and censorship of minoritized groups in the media and on college campuses. With regards to rhetoric encompassing the conflict, participants examined how anger, blame, and emotion in general are perceived as regressive and unfairly shrugged off as unimportant.

There were also several moments in which the Jewish participants were reflecting on their support of Israel and the Arab participants were reflecting on their relationship to Palestine. The Jewish participants recognized two significant justifications that allowed them to support Israel. The first being pride in the identity built into the fabric of Israel as a country, and the second being the privilege of now having to worry about what happens to Palestinians. One Jewish participant stated plainly, "*I just don't deal with it.*" For the Palestinian-Arab participants, Palestine evoked "*great memories,*" and "*happiness.*" These participants conveyed relishing their physical connection to the land. This expression on both sides provided valuable context to how the individual participants saw themselves in relation to the conflict. There was a recognition from both parties that while the dominant group had to choose to be invested in the conflict, the minoritized group was inherently encased by it. One Jewish participant empathized

with one Arab participant, acknowledging that the choice to be removed from Israel and Palestine exists as a Jewish-American but not as an Arab-American.

Another significant topic of discussion was the utility and value of violence. The group examined together the extent to which violence could ironically resolve conflict. Violence, it was expressed, causes some sort of change, and change to the status quo is necessary to resolve conflict. There was also extensive conversation on the necessity of violence, and even if it were not necessary whether or not it would be a reasonable and useful path to trek.

The value the facilitator had in managing group process, directing content, building relationships of trust, connecting participants to each other, handling direct conflict, and fostering effective communication was considerable. Given the trepidation and fear many participants had going into the dialogues, the difficulty they reported in being able to express their thoughts and feelings, and numerous moments of intense emotional reaction and uncomfortability, there should be extreme doubts that such a dialogue could take place effectively without the presence of a facilitator. In addition to the strong reported affinities towards the facilitator in the administered surveys, described below are some of the major processes the facilitator undertook in guidance of the group.

Throughout the dialogues, and especially so early on, there was a strong inclination for participants to look at the facilitator even when responding to other participants. This may signal a level of comfort and security the participants had in the facilitator they may not have yet had with other participants. The very nature of the facilitator as an authority figure in the room likely supports this understanding. Using judgment, the facilitator allowed this to happen occasionally, however in moments of direct conflict or in some cases to help generate empathic connection, the facilitator would instruct the participants to look at and respond to each other. While the

facilitator used this technique to spur more interpersonal dialogue, there was also the use of clarifying questions and pointed questions to individuals to spur intrapersonal dialogue.

Often throughout the dialogues the facilitator stopped some reactionary responses from dominant speakers to ensure that all participants had the chance to answer a question that was posed to all. This technique proved especially valuable in this dialogue series due to the tendency of some Arab participants to want to jump in with immediate responses. In terms of group management, the facilitator sought to establish equitable participation in the dialogue by revisiting different participants' processes of understanding, even if some participants opted for more passive speaking roles.

The facilitator continually reflected complex ideas shared by participants, steered conversation back to divides among the participants, and drove the dialogue towards deeper consideration of the reasons. For example, instead of discussing the fact that people put bombs on their chests, the participants were better equipped to examine the driving forces behind that behavior and where the impetus originates from. Keen vigilance to points of conflict and disagreement motivated in large part the facilitators direction, consistently identifying conflicts among participants and ensuring any conflicts had room to be discussed and potentially resolved.

Furthermore, in those moments of conflict, the facilitator provided active direction to conflicting participants to better reach the essence of the conflict and what needed attention. For example, the facilitator would mediate challenges by asking one participant what was wanted from the other participant, thereby clarifying the conflict for both participants and providing an expectation for the waiting participant or participants on what was desired of them. Promoting empathic connection in while diffusing some encounters of tense conflict, the facilitator would

direct participants to share their thoughts and feelings towards what they are perceiving in others participants they are in conflict with.

The facilitator worked relentlessly to extract the personal views and feelings from the more abstract argumentation participants often dove into. However, the facilitator remained cognizant to strike what was judged to be an appropriate balance, as in many cases abstract discussion played a critical role in the progression of the dialogue. In addition to personally reflecting individual participants, the facilitator routinely guided participants to reflect each other, leading to more responsive reactions and trust among participants.

A larger structural element the facilitator brought was the orientation of the group at the beginning and end of each dialogue session. The facilitator did this by posing a question for all participants to answer at the very first dialogue session; at the end of each session the facilitator would synthesize learnings and provide an orienting thought to think about for the next session. In doing so, the facilitator would openly check-in with each individual participant about their inclinations to come back to another session and continue the conversation. This process communicated to the participants that after the dialogue session ended, no matter how it ended, there was still more discussion that could take place, leaving hope for more future collaboration between both parties.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **Implications**

It is evident that facilitated dialogue has the ability to be a powerful tool in promoting reconciliation between dominant and minoritized groups through an involved and active process and developed techniques in resolving conflict. Facilitated dialogue provides a means to achieve interpersonal peace between members of dominant and minoritized groups by inviting a greater understanding of each other broader understanding of the social forces encasing a given conflict. This in turn carries high potential to translate into intergroup peace and proliferate positive cultural attitudes towards peace and reconciliation.

The effectiveness of facilitated dialogue in the field of conflict resolution would carry great significance for policy makers and non-governmental organizations alike. An approach that is capable of sidestepping current barriers to peace and reconciliation between dominant and minoritized groups is worth substantial investment from a higher administrative scope. Currently, facilitated dialogue initiatives do not garner a great deal of support from policy makers or government officials. This is perhaps in part due to the relative novelty of dialogue programs. However, one cannot ignore the fundamental diffidence most individuals and societies show when faced with the task of confronting conflict.

The prevailing culture found in any given conflict scenario is one of segregation and avoidance between dominant and minoritized groups. History has shown that this current

paradigm needs to be injected with change. A culture of conflict resolution is not only conducive to obtaining peace between opposing parties, but also to maintaining it. Therefore, governments and NGOs concerned about intergroup peace should vigorously pursue any and all approaches that bring about a culture of conflict resolution. Facilitated dialogue programs are some of the only initiatives that are capable of successfully forming this promising and good-natured culture through true public diplomacy. If implemented on a broader scale, facilitated dialogue has potential to completely transform the field of conflict resolution and current peace building methods. If societies seek to live alongside each other with minimal conflict, they must continually refine the practical methods used to enact that vision. Facilitated dialogue shows promise as a tool for heavy use in the future.

The current transnational legislative and judiciary structures have their own limitations. While these systems are capable of a great deal, it will always fall short of achieving true public diplomacy, because that requires individuals relating to and understanding each other. Facilitated dialogue is a flexible process that can be implemented at all levels of government. It is a method that can be used to have productive discussion at town hall meetings, bipartisan congressional policy meetings, and international negotiation tables alike. All that is necessary is a trained facilitator.

Moreover, practical deliberation needs to be normalized through institutional structures. The current political system is heavily divided, and most discussion on any issue of significance in the United States quickly devolves into an “us vs. them” dispute that seeks to further one side’s position by denigrating the other’s. This state of affairs only leads to more conflict and less room for collaborative disagreement. Facilitated dialogue is a process that naturally seeks to break this binary.

## **Potential Limitations & Further Research**

There are some potential limitations with this study. From a larger perspective, there is no fully established standard for facilitated dialogue. The variation among facilitated dialogue programs is quite challenging to control for. Whether it be different facilitation training techniques, session durations, number of dialogues per program, environment, or other factors, the lack of a single accepted all-encompassing protocol makes it difficult to know which procedure is best. The purpose of this particular paper is to examine how facilitated dialogue shows potential as an effective means of conflict resolution, and discover what particular processes and techniques lead to valuable dialogue. In doing so, this paper focused on the World in Conversation model of facilitated dialogue. Other studies may be able to focus on other individual programs, program structures, or methods to determine the most efficient means of dialogue, if there is one.

In concentrating on the viability of facilitated dialogue, this paper established a rationale for its potential and illuminated specific methods and techniques in facilitation to achieve its ends. Further studies are needed to outline the ideal facilitated dialogue structure, if one were to exist. Moreover, further research is required to understand some broader aspects of facilitated dialogue, such as general attitudes of minoritized groups towards their dominant counterparts, and other problematic power dynamic issues. These would be useful in order to realize the full potential of facilitated dialogue initiatives and refine the practice for greater use. This paper additionally provided discussion on the sociocultural need to implement more facilitated dialogue initiatives into mainstream society, particularly through legislative and judiciary institutional structures.

Additional research that matches specific social issues to facilitated dialogue effectiveness would be extremely useful for dialogue programs specifically addressing those particular issues. Not all conflict is created equal. There are varying levels of intensity between conflict scenarios, and varying core problems between dominant and minoritized groups. This study broadly equates all conflict scenarios between dominant and minoritized groups, and hoped to make a convincing case for that generalization. However, it is certainly possible that facilitated dialogue success differs based on the given issues in a conflict scenario. Perhaps groups in conflict about human rights issues benefit more from facilitated dialogue programs than groups in conflict about income inequality. An analysis of the extent of conflict issues to which facilitated dialogue could be implemented could lead to valuable insights.

Finally, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is both longstanding and highly complex. No singular study can accurately learn everything that leads to peace and reconciliation. This is especially true of this paper's examined dialogue series, which included participants physically removed from the conflict. Every group gathered for facilitated dialogue will be inherently different. While there may be patterns that arise and take shape that tend to display general truth, it is important to realize and appreciate the uniqueness any dialogue space may hold. The mark of any good facilitator is to work with the content in the room, which inevitably relies on the experiences and beliefs of the participants in the room. Hence, while it serves great value to understand general patterns and dynamics surrounding and orchestrating dialogue on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it is important to retain a flexible approach to every dialogue. The ideal facilitated dialogue is always keeping the next one in sight; facilitation without adaptation to specialized conflict and dialogue group dynamics is unlikely to succeed in changing the status quo of conflict.

Moreover, every dialogue group is unique in some regard. This paper's study was carried out in a college campus over six thousand miles away from Palestine and Israel. It consisted of viewpoints from people with vastly different social positions, different levels of entrenchment into different cultures, different friend groups, different parental upbringing, and an uncountable number of other differences. As with all groups, the diversity of human experience naturally leads to differences that significantly affect what is able to be understood, synthesized, and learned moving forward. Nevertheless, it is the recognition of these differences and adaptability to them that should elicit confidence in facilitated dialogue as an enduring means of conflict resolution.

## Appendix A

### Pre-Dialogue Surveys

Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements using the given response scale. Please answer as honestly as possible, your responses will not be shown to any participants under any and all circumstances.

1. I would feel nervous if I had to sit alone in a room with a Jew and start a conversation

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. I would feel nervous if I had to sit alone in a room with an Israeli and start a conversation

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I would feel uncomfortable if I were in a room full of Jews

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. I would feel uncomfortable if I were in a room full of Israelis

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. I feel that Jews have dangerous views and beliefs that threaten my identity

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. I feel that Israelis have dangerous views and beliefs that threaten my identity

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. I feel that Jews are open minded and can think clearly about things

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8. I feel that Israelis are open minded and can think clearly about things

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. I feel that Jews are friendly, emotionally responsive, and warm

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10. I feel that Israelis are friendly, emotionally responsive, and warm

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. I feel that members of the other side are willing to compromise to achieve peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

12. I feel that members of the other side are willing to understand my position

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

13. I feel that members of the other side do not want peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

14. I feel that members of the other side are irrationally angry

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

15. I feel that members of the other side will never understand me

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16. I feel that members of the other side are culturally driven against peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

17. I am in conflict with members of the other side

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

18. I feel that members of the other side have irrational beliefs and positions

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

19. I feel that members of the other side are unwilling to listen

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

20. I have hope that this conflict will be resolved peacefully

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

21. I can see myself being friends with members of the other side

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

22. I would be comfortable having a member of the other side live with me

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements using the given response scale. Please answer as honestly as possible, your responses will not be shown to any participants under any and all circumstances.

1. I would feel nervous if I had to sit alone in a room with an Arab and start a conversation

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. I would feel nervous if I had to sit alone in a room with a Palestinian and start a conversation

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I would feel uncomfortable if I were in a room full of Arabs

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. I would feel uncomfortable if I were in a room full of Palestinians

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. I feel that Arabs have dangerous views and beliefs that threaten my identity

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. I feel that Palestinians have dangerous views and beliefs that threaten my identity

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. I feel that Arabs are open minded and can think clearly about things

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8. I feel that Palestinians are open minded and can think clearly about things

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. I feel that Arabs are friendly, emotionally responsive, and warm

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10. I feel that Palestinians are friendly, emotionally responsive, and warm

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. I feel that members of the other side are willing to compromise to achieve peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

12. I feel that members of the other side are willing to understand my position

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

13. I feel that members of the other side do not want peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

14. I feel that members of the other side are irrationally angry

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

15. I feel that members of the other side will never understand me

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16. I feel that members of the other side are culturally driven against peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

17. I am in conflict with members of the other side

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

18. I feel that members of the other side have irrational beliefs and positions

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
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## Appendix B

### Post-Dialogue Surveys

Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements using the given response scale. Please answer as honestly as possible, your responses will not be shown to any participants under any and all circumstances.

11. I would feel nervous if I had to sit alone in a room with a Jew and start a conversation

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

12. I would feel nervous if I had to sit alone in a room with an Israeli and start a conversation

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

13. I would feel uncomfortable if I were in a room full of Jews

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

14. I would feel uncomfortable if I were in a room full of Israelis

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

15. I feel that Jews have dangerous views and beliefs that threaten my identity

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
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19. I feel that members of the other side are unwilling to listen

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

20. I have hope that this conflict will be resolved peacefully

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

21. I can see myself being friends with members of the other side

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

22. I would be comfortable having a member of the other side live with me

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

23. The facilitator helped foster effective communication in the dialogues

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

24. The facilitator helped me think more critically in the dialogues

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

25. Other members in this conflict would benefit from these dialogues

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following open-ended questions as honestly as you can, taking into consideration all of the dialogues you participated in during the past 15 weeks. Please detail as much as you can.

1. If there were any “transformative” moments for you, what were they and how were they transformative for you?

2. If there were any moments that you felt were important to your understanding of a member of the other side could you detail what happened?

3. What worked for you in these dialogues?

4. What did not work for you in these dialogues?

5. What was something you learned that was important to you in these dialogues, if anything?

6. How have these dialogues influenced you, your thoughts or beliefs, if at all?

7. Would you be willing to participate in similar dialogues again? Why or why not?

Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements using the given response scale. Please answer as honestly as possible, your responses will not be shown to any participants under any and all circumstances.

21. I would feel nervous if I had to sit alone in a room with an Arab and start a conversation

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

22. I would feel nervous if I had to sit alone in a room with a Palestinian and start a conversation

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

23. I would feel uncomfortable if I were in a room full of Arabs

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

24. I would feel uncomfortable if I were in a room full of Palestinians

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

25. I feel that Arabs have dangerous views and beliefs that threaten my identity

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

26. I feel that Palestinians have dangerous views and beliefs that threaten my identity

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

27. I feel that Arabs are open minded and can think clearly about things

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

28. I feel that Palestinians are open minded and can think clearly about things

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

29. I feel that Arabs are friendly, emotionally responsive, and warm

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

30. I feel that Palestinians are friendly, emotionally responsive, and warm

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. I feel that members of the other side are willing to compromise to achieve peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

12. I feel that members of the other side are willing to understand my position

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

13. I feel that members of the other side do not want peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

14. I feel that members of the other side are irrationally angry

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

15. I feel that members of the other side will never understand me

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16. I feel that members of the other side are culturally driven against peace

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

17. I am in conflict with members of the other side

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

18. I feel that members of the other side have irrational beliefs and positions

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

19. I feel that members of the other side are unwilling to listen

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

20. I have hope that this conflict will be resolved peacefully

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

21. I can see myself being friends with members of the other side

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

22. I would be comfortable having a member of the other side live with me

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

23. The facilitator helped foster effective communication in the dialogues

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

24. The facilitator helped me think more critically in the dialogues

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

25. Other members in this conflict would benefit from these dialogues

Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following open-ended questions as honestly as you can, taking into consideration all of the dialogues you participated in during the past 15 weeks. Please detail as much as you can.

1. If there were any “transformative” moments for you, what were they and how were they transformative for you?

2. If there were any moments that you felt were important to your understanding of a member of the other side could you detail what happened?

3. What worked for you in these dialogues?

4. What did not work for you in these dialogues?

5. What was something you learned that was important to you in these dialogues, if anything?

6. How have these dialogues influenced you, your thoughts or beliefs, if at all?

7. Would you be willing to participate in similar dialogues again? Why or why not?

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## ACADEMIC VITA

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### EDUCATION

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*The Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College*  
**Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy** May 2018  
Minors in Arabic & Sociology

*Georgetown University, School of Continuing Studies*  
**Semester in Washington Program – Law, Legislation, and Politics** Summer 2016

### EXPERIENCE

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**DA II Coordinator & Facilitation Coach – World In Conversation | Center for Public Diplomacy**  
Fall 2017 – Spring 2018

- Provided direct training to student facilitators through personal one-on-one coaching
- Taught the required weekly course for all student facilitators to work in the Center
- Interweaved logistical and administrative work to direct implementation of all nightly programs
- Lead and managed a team of student leaders to oversee training methods for the rest of the Center
- Conceptualized, assessed, and implemented innovative techniques of facilitation and conflict resolution within the Center

**Dialogue Assistant II – World In Conversation | Center for Public Diplomacy**  
Fall 2016 – Spring 2017

- Served as a student leader and supervisor for the other student facilitators in the Center
- Provided live support to facilitators during dialogues to teach facilitators new methods and skills

**Advocacy Intern – Syrian American Medical Society**  
Summer 2016

- Translated written and voice messages from doctors on the ground in Syria
- Attended issue-related events in D.C. to advance humanitarian outreach for displaced Syrians
- Wrote and developed content for SAMS' blog and other SAMS resources
- Researched and developed resources for long-term programming on congressional campaigns

**Advanced Facilitator – World In Conversation | Center for Public Diplomacy**  
Spring 2016 – Spring 2017

- Facilitated over 100 dialogues on race relations, climate change, gender relations, & terrorism

- Served on Task Forces to pioneer ideas resolving demographical issues at the university
- Facilitated conversation at the annual State of State conference about relevant community issues

### **Teaching Assistant – U.S. Race and Ethnic Relations, Dr. Sam Richards**

Fall 2015

- Learned foundational tools and techniques of conflict resolution for group facilitation
- Facilitated over 30 group discussions on topics relating to race, culture, gender, and current events

## **ACTIVITIES AND HONORS**

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5<sup>th</sup> Annual PSU State of State Conference, **Guest Speaker**

Spring 2018

- Delivered a talk on the increased minoritization of Arabs/Muslims in the US due to current events

Multicultural Undergraduate Law Association, *The Pennsylvania State University*

Spring 2018

Unbound Prometheus – An Intellectual Retreat

Summer 2017

- Intensive two-week study abroad program based in Kavala, Greece

Schreyer Honors College, **2016 & 2017 Honors Orientation Mentor**

Fall 2016 & Fall 2017

- Co-mentored groups of 8-12 incoming Schreyer scholars over a 3 day orientation program

Students for Justice in Palestine, **President**, *The Pennsylvania State University*

Fall 2015 – Fall 2016

- Organized events, promoted justice and peace, cultivated support for Palestinian human rights

Explore Law 2015, *The Pennsylvania State University Law School*

Summer 2015

Muslim Student Association, *The Pennsylvania State University*

Fall 2014 – May 2018

Islamic Center of Johnstown, **Religious Youth Director**

2012 – 2018

- Lead community prayers, deliver sermons, and mentor over 25 children bi-weekly

Paterno Fellow, *College of the Liberal Arts*

Academic Excellence Award, *Schreyer Honors College*

Dean's List

2015-2018