

# TDI Structured Dialogue + Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Anna Malavisi

Department of Philosophy & Humanistic Studies  
Western Connecticut State University



# Outline

- Setting the context
- TDI & dialogue
- Freire & dialogue
- TDI + Freire
- Conclusion

# Setting the context

- What teams?
- Characteristics of Aid
- Why these teams?

# what teams?

- Researchers and practitioners working in the field of AID (global development and humanitarian aid);

# characteristics of AID

- a very complex endeavor
- requires a complex response
- thwarted by challenges and difficulties
- some successful programs & projects, others not so successful



# why these teams?

- **Teams (whether researchers/practitioners) are confronted with highly challenging issues:**
- tension between responding to the needs of the communities vs demands of donors
- structural injustice
- conflicting assumptions;
- power dynamics;
- implicit biases;
- ethical issues;
- epistemic injustice;

# TDI & Dialogue

- the foundation of TDI is philosophical;
- a philosophically structured dialogue

# TDI & Dialogue

- epistemology: knowledge
- metaphysics: nature of being and the world
- ethics: doing no harm



# TDI & Dialogue

- offers a concrete and tangible approach to critical dialogue by generating a space for it;
- can enable discussion and analysis of specific concerns that effect AID teams;

# TDI process



# TDI Structured Dialogue

- Uses structured dialogue as integrative power
- emphasizes two key integrative capabilities: reflexivity, perspective-taking

# how

## Reflexivity

- Team reflexivity as “the explicit and purposeful reflection on the team’s knowledge, strategy, and progress toward goals” (Salazar et al. 2017)

## Perspective-taking

- information elaboration, requiring team members “to invest cognitive energy in understanding” diverse perspectives and approaches through constructive discussion and integration of others’ viewpoints (Hoever et al., 2012, p.982)

## Mutual understanding

- Common ground is created by sharing, negotiating, and modifying concepts, theories, or issues in order to co-construct or co-create knowledge. (Repko 2012)

# TDI & Dialogue

- **Aim:** “to structure group discussion by enabling participants to connect their responses to one another and to philosophical assumptions that can complicate cross-disciplinary research”  
(Eigenbrode et al, p. 60)

# Freire + dialogue



- Paulo Freire (1921-1997), Brazilian educator and philosopher;
- critical pedagogy in literacy programs for poor Brazilians;
- process of *concientizacion* through dialogue;
- reflection-action: dialectical tension of theory and practice

# Freire + dialogue

- cannot be reduced to the depositing of ideas from one to another;
- nor a simple exchange of ideas;
- dialogue could only take place in the absence of domination of one over the other;
- presence of love, faith and humility;
- true dialogue cannot exist without hope or critical thinking;

# Freire + Dialogue

- Action - Reflection: word = work = praxis
- Sacrifice of action: verbalism
- Sacrifice of reflection: activism



# Freire + Dialogue

- humans are not built in silence but in word, in work, in action-reflection;
- dialogue is an existential necessity;

# Freire + Dialogue

- “the object of dialogical-libertarian action is not to ‘dislodge’ the oppressed from a mythological reality in order to ‘bind’ them to another reality. ....the object is to make it possible for the oppressed, by perceiving their adhesion, to opt to transform an unjust reality,” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 141)

# TDI & Freire

- Is TDI compatible with Freire's ideas?
- How can TDI through its structural dialogue process ensure that it works towards transforming an unjust reality?

# TDI + Freire

- the dialogical process needs to be reflection-action; not limited to a simple exchange of ideas;
- the process of *concientizacion* needs time, this may require structured dialogue as ongoing practice;
- needs to take place within a framework that espouses love, faith, hope and humility;
- critical thinking essential!!!

# another dimension of reflexivity

- Freire's dialogical approach/TDI is not only relevant for the oppressed but just as relevant for those working with the oppressed;
- reflexivity needs to take place about understanding the causes of structural injustice;

# Questions?



- Freire, P. 1972 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,
- Donovan, S. M., O'Rourke, M., Looney, C. (2015). Your hypothesis or mine? Terminological and conceptual variation across disciplines. *SAGE Open*. 5(2): 1–13.
- Hall, T. E., O'Rourke, M. (2014). Responding to communication challenges in transdisciplinary sustainability science. In K. Huutoniemi & P. Tapio (Eds.), *Heuristics for Transdisciplinary Sustainability Studies: Solution-oriented Approaches to Complex Problems*. Oxford: Routledge.
- National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research and Committee on Science Engineering and Public Policy (NAS). 2004. *Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- O'Rourke, M., Crowley, S. (2013). Philosophical intervention and cross-disciplinary science: The story of the Toolbox Project. *Synthese* 190: 1937–1954.
- O'Rourke, M., Crowley, S., Gonnerman, C. (2016). On the nature of cross-disciplinary integration: A philosophical framework. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 56: 62–70.
- Salazar, M. R. et al. (2017). Leader Integrative Capabilities: A Catalyst for Effective Interdisciplinary Teams. In K. L. Hall, A. L. Vogel, and R. T. Croyle (eds.), *Advancing Social and Behavioral Health Research through Cross-Disciplinary Team Science: Principles for Success*. Springer: Verlag.
- Schulz-Hardt, S., Brodbeck, F. C., Mojzisch, A., Kerschreiter, R., & Frey, D. (2006). Group decision making in hidden profile situations: Dissent as a facilitator for decision quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91, 1080–1093.
- Schnapp, L. M., Rotschy, L., Hall, T. E., Crowley, S., O'Rourke, M. (2012). How to talk to strangers: Facilitating knowledge sharing within translational health teams with the Toolbox dialogue method. *Translational Behavioral Medicine* 2(4): 469–479.