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The Council of Europe's *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*: an analysis using the ethic of care

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ABSTRACT This article examines what an ethic of care could offer to discussions about Europe's increasing cultural diversity by analyzing the important *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* published by the Council of Europe in 2008. The authors consider the White Paper from the perspective of the political ethic of care and thus examine its adequacy in dealing with issues of care. Their point of departure is that policy texts display normative ways of speaking about certain issues – in this case, issues of diversity, multiculturalism and citizenship in Europe. They first contextualize the discussions for promoting intercultural dialogue in the Council of Europe and analyze the normative framework of the White Paper. Then, they use the care perspective as a lens to comment on notions of diversity, multiculturalism and citizenship. Finally, they discuss how the notion of care as a citizenship issue could contribute towards further development of discussions on citizenship education and intercultural dialogue in Europe.

Recent years have witnessed increasing cultural diversity in Europe, generating a continuing challenge about how to balance unity and diversity in contemporary multicultural societies (Fortier, 2005). Unity without diversity results in hegemony and oppression; diversity without unity leads to separatism and fragmentation (Banks, 2007). The challenge to all multicultural societies is to recognize diversity and yet at the same time promote social cohesion. However, there are divergent views on how far one can go to recognize diversity, while maintaining social cohesion.

The dominant moral conceptions in pursuing the national interests of governments have been grounded in the language of citizenship rights, equality and universal law (Held, 2004). An alternative moral approach is the *ethic of care* (Sevenhuijsen, 1993; Tronto, 1993; Hekman, 1995; Clement, 1996; Held, 2004). Among its characteristics is the view of individuals as relational and interdependent, regardless of citizenship rights associated with the national interests of governments. As Held writes:

> Rather than assuming, as do the dominant moral theories, that moral relations are to be seen
> as entered into voluntarily by free and equal individuals, the ethics of care is developed for
> the realities as well of unequal power and unchosen relations. (Held, 2004, p. 143)

In other words, the ethic of care acknowledges that there are unequal power relations in the global transnational arena and thus focuses on how to promote trust, social bonds, cooperation and caring relations. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the national interests of governments may often be in conflict with caring as a democratic practice that *includes* rather than excludes individuals (Knijn &

Kremer, 1997; Sevenhuijsen, 1998). Consequently, it is worthwhile to ask: Does the ethic of care provide a different answer to the challenge of diversity in Europe than the prevailing approaches which assume that the nation state is the natural social and political form of the modern world (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002)?

In this article, we examine what an ethic of care could offer to discussions about Europe's increasing cultural diversity by analyzing the important *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* (*WPID*) published by the Council of Europe. This document was launched in 2008 – the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue – by the Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and outlines recommendations and policy orientations for future action regarding the promotion of intercultural dialogue in Europe. We consider the *WPID* from the perspective of the political ethic of care (Sevenhuijsen, 1998) to trace the normative framework of this document and to examine its adequacy in dealing with issues of care. Our point of departure is that policy texts display normative ways of speaking about certain issues – in this case, issues of diversity, multiculturalism and citizenship in Europe. We first contextualize the discussions for promoting intercultural dialogue in the Council of Europe and analyze the normative framework of the *WPID*. Then, we use the care perspective as a lens to comment on notions of diversity, multiculturalism and citizenship. Finally, we discuss how the notion of care as a citizenship issue (Knijn & Kremer, 1997; Sevenhuijsen, 1998) could contribute towards further development of discussions on citizenship education and intercultural dialogue in Europe.

Contextualizing the *WPID*

Cultural diversity and multiculturalism are not new phenomena. While the concepts of intercultural education, communication and multiculturalism have been part of the academic, policy and public discourses since the 1970s, the notion of 'intercultural dialogue' is a fairly recent concept in discussions of international relations. In the last decade, there has been a proliferation of scholarly studies, international conferences and summits organized by governments and non-governmental organizations on the nature and potential of intercultural dialogue.[1] Despite these efforts, the concept of intercultural dialogue remains 'vague and muddled' (Mitias & Al-Jasmi, 2004, p. 143) because individuals, organizations and states set different priorities over the meaning and significance of intercultural dialogue (Jalali, 2003).

Although migrations have always been part of European history, migration to the European continent has increased in the last few decades. Europe has attracted migrants in search of a better life and asylum-seekers and refugees from across the world due to various economic, political and environmental crises. In this new context, issues of recognition, pluralism, tolerance and social cohesion have become central to debates about national interests and citizenship rights in European governments and inter- or non-governmental organizations (Fortier, 2005).

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1949 and comprises 47 member states. Its aims include protecting human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law; the Council is particularly interested in seeking solutions to problems such as discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance (Council of Europe, 2008). The Council's work leads to conventions, agreements and policy recommendations to member governments, and member states use these conventions and agreements to amend their own legislation.

Within the Council of Europe, a view of intercultural education, communication and multiculturalism has emerged over the years. Following a series of summits and conferences organized since the 1990s, the Council of Europe has come to explicitly endorse intercultural dialogue (at the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government, Warsaw, May 2005) as a means of 'promoting awareness, understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, as well as preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and the cohesion of society' (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 8). Since then, the promotion of intercultural dialogue has been a major political priority of the Council of Europe, and this approach has been developed in projects in history, education for democratic citizenship, modern foreign languages and religion.

The 'Faro Declaration' (October 2005) adopted by European ministers for cultural affairs placed the strategy for the promotion of intercultural dialogue in the context of the overall efforts of the Council of Europe to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, to strengthen social

cohesion, peace and stability. In 2006, the Committee of Ministers launched the preparations for the *WPID*. The aim of the White Paper process was to identify how to 'promote intensified intercultural dialogue within and between societies in Europe and dialogue between Europe and its neighbours' (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 8). It should also provide guidance on analytical and methodological tools and standards. The White Paper is addressed to all stakeholders that are in a position to promote intercultural dialogue in Europe – that is, policy makers and administrators; educators; the media; civil-society organizations, including migrant and religious communities; youth organizations; and social partners.

The White Paper process included a wide-scale consultation on intercultural dialogue (between January and June 2007) that involved discussions and dialogue events with relevant committees and stakeholders, as well as questionnaires sent out to governmental and non-governmental organizations and religious communities in all member states. The publication of the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: 'living together as equals in dignity'* in May 2008 was a highlight of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The *WPID* formulates the political orientations of the Council of Europe in the area of intercultural dialogue. Given that the Council has published very few White Papers in the past, the publication of the *WPID* is considered an important event. In the following section, we will first analyze the text of the *WPID* to show its normative framework and then look at this framework through the lens of care.

The *WPID* and Its Normative Framework

Problems and Solutions

In the opening paragraphs of the *WPID*, '[m]anaging Europe's increasing cultural diversity ... in a democratic manner' (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 4) is constructed as the main problem. A key realization in the *WPID* is that 'old approaches to the management of cultural diversity [are] no longer adequate' (p. 9). By 'old approaches', the *WPID* refers to the preferred policy approaches in the past – that is, those of multiculturalism and assimilation, both of which have been found inadequate. The solution to this problem in order to achieve more inclusive societies, according to the *WPID*, is that 'a new approach, and intercultural dialogue [is] the route to follow' (p. 9).

The 'intercultural approach', as this new approach is called, 'offers a forward-looking model for managing cultural diversity' and is grounded in 'human rights, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law' (p. 4). The challenge of living together in a diverse society, as it is pointed out, 'could only be met if we can live together as equals in dignity' (p. 10). European identity, then, can only be realized if it is based 'on shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage and cultural diversity' (p. 4).

Intercultural dialogue in the *WPID* is conceptually framed as an important way through which diversity can be appreciated, while sustaining social cohesion. It is defined as 'an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect' (pp. 10, 17). Intercultural dialogue, then, 'aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other' (p. 17). The *WPID* further emphasizes that intercultural dialogue is a powerful instrument of mediation and reconciliation, because it addresses real concerns about social fragmentation, while fostering social cohesion and integration.

The *WPID* also claims that democratic societies have an obligation to constantly offer opportunities for dialogue. Intercultural dialogue is therefore important in avoiding 'the pitfalls of identity policies' (p. 18) and remaining open to the challenges of modern societies without relinquishing one's cultural roots. For this reason, the *WPID* adopts five conditions for establishing and sustaining intercultural dialogue: (1) human rights, democracy and the rule of law; (2) equal dignity and mutual respect; (3) gender equality; (4) combating the barriers that prevent intercultural dialogue; and (5) freedom of religion.

In analyzing the five conditions of intercultural dialogue, the *WPID* emphasizes that the rules of the 'dominant culture' cannot be used to justify discrimination, hate speech and exploitation on grounds of religion, race, ethnic origin, gender or other identity. The major barriers to intercultural

dialogue are racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, poverty and exploitation, which essentially refuse the very idea of dialogue. Democracy is therefore the foundation of intercultural dialogue, and democracy thrives when it helps individuals to be both 'contributors to' and 'beneficiaries of the well-being of the nation' (p. 20).

Finally, the *WPID* asserts that there are five distinct, yet interrelated, policy approaches to the promotion of intercultural dialogue: (1) the democratic governance of cultural diversity; (2) participation and democratic citizenship; (3) the acquisition of intercultural competences; (4) open spaces for dialogue; and (5) the promotion of intercultural dialogue in international relations. Each of these policy approaches is briefly discussed below, including the recommendations and policy orientations that are proposed by the *WPID* for future action.

First, the *WPID* claims that intercultural dialogue can be promoted when there is in place a political culture valuing diversity. This political culture is not grounded in the imposition of the will of the majority on the minority without ensuring an effective protection of human rights. As it is emphasized: 'A European society committed to combining unity and diversity cannot be a "winner takes all" society, but must suffuse the political arena with values of equality and mutual respect' (p. 25). Developing such a political culture entails that all stakeholders are proactive and involved. For this reason, the recommendations to develop democratic governance include the creation of institutional and legal frameworks (at national and local level) that guarantee human rights and the rule of law.

Second, the *WPID* argues for the importance of citizenship as a right and a responsibility, and 'invites us to think of others … as fellow citizens and equals' (p. 28). The *WPID* makes clear reference to 'the foreigners legally resident' (p. 28) in a country and advocates that their participation in democratic practices is a vehicle to promote intercultural dialogue. The recommendations to promote democratic citizenship and participation include the development of the necessary framework of dialogue through educational initiatives and practical arrangements that strengthen civic involvement, human rights for all, and the participation of all minorities in democratic practices.

The third policy approach discussed in the *WPID* focuses on learning and teaching intercultural competences that are crucial for the promotion of intercultural dialogue. Key competence areas are, according to the *WPID*, democratic citizenship, language and history. Primary, secondary, and higher education and research, as well as non-formal learning, play important roles. The recommendations for the development of these competences include their inclusion in designing and implementing curricula and study programmes at all levels of education.

The fourth policy approach concerns the development of spaces for dialogue that are open to all. Such spaces include physical spaces; schools, museums and heritage sites; cultural and social centres; communication and media forums; sport events; and the workplace. The recommendations for creating spaces to promote intercultural dialogue include initiatives through which public authorities and civil-society organizations are encouraged to provide a supportive framework for intercultural and interreligious encounters. Also, journalism can provide forums for intercultural dialogue if news is presented in a responsible manner through ethical codes.

Finally, the fifth policy approach refers to the application of the principles of international law, human rights and democracy as important means in facilitating mutual understanding. The *WPID* describes the cooperation of the Council of Europe with other international institutions and actors in contributing to intercultural dialogue at an international level. The recommendations to promote intercultural dialogue in international relations include: the engagement of local authorities in strengthening cooperation with partner institutions in other parts of Europe; the participation of civil-society organizations in cross-border partnerships; and the encouragement of the media to mobilize public opinion against intolerance and discrimination.

When examining the *WPID* as a whole, we may conclude that there are two different normative vocabularies at play that do not always fit together. The overarching framework is grounded in the emphasis on human rights, democracy and law, and seems to have a social-democratic orientation. This vocabulary, however, is joined by the taken-for-granted assumption that we are responsible only to those with whom we share citizenship rights. In other words, the *WPID* does not unseat the image of the citizen within classical definitions of citizenship in modern nation states. All the efforts and recommendations by the Council of Europe are grounded within the contemporary nation-

state framework with all its benefits and its limitations (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). How human rights (which are above any responsibility connected to citizenship rights) fit with classical assumptions about citizenship is a point that is further analyzed in the next part of this article.

Looking through the Lens of Care

The focus on dialogue in the *WPID* is consistent with an ethic of care approach which advocates conversations and negotiations of needs between caregivers and care receivers. However, an exclusive focus on dialogue without reference to power issues can serve to occlude the material conditions that marginalized groups of people are surviving under. The *WPID* recognizes that some groups are vulnerable but, unlike the ethic of care, it does not account for the way society deals with caring responsibilities. As we have pointed out earlier, the political ethic of care, as developed by Tronto (1993) and Sevenhuijsen (1998), views care as a social practice. As elaborated by Fisher & Tronto, caring is

> a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our
> 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our
> selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining
> web. (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40)

Caring is also seen by Tronto (1993) to be a social process which consists of four phases or dimensions, each of which has a corresponding moral value: (1) caring about (the recognition of a need for care) or *attentiveness*; (2) taking care of or *responsibility* that needs are met; (3) caregiving (the actual hands-on work which requires resources) *competence*; and (4) care receiving (the interaction between the caregiver and recipient) or *responsiveness*. These four values – attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness – form the core moral values of the ethic of care and emphasize that the caring responsibilities of society do not end with dialogue alone.

In the practice of care, it is important to examine the power relations between those giving and receiving care, a process which the American political scientist Iris Young (1997) has described as 'asymmetrical reciprocity', in that the caregiver and care receiver are differently positioned. Asymmetrical reciprocity assumes that we can never fully understand or put ourselves in the place of another because of our different positioning; we can only be willing to be open to another's embodied subjectivity (Young, 1997). In the *WPID*, attention to this nuanced understanding of differential positioning and power relations remains largely absent. In other words, although there is recognition that there are marginalized groups in Europe, there is no examination of the power relations involved and no theorization of the caring needs these groups might have.

Furthermore, the normative framework in which the *WPID* is located is that of human rights and an ethic of justice. The forward of the *WPID*, for example, places the document squarely in a human rights framework – mentioning rights in two places in the introductory paragraph and twice again in the next paragraph. When viewed from the lens of a political ethic of care, this framework has a number of limitations. In a human rights framework, individual rights take precedence over relationships. Individuals are also conceived in this framework as an association of equals and as equally situated (Kittay, 2001). The importance of impartiality and reason is stressed in the human rights framework when considering what one ought to do. The ethic of care instead recognizes the importance of emotions in moral deliberation. From a care perspective, responsiveness and attentiveness are important as guides for how best to meet particular needs, rather than generalized principles which are applicable to all (Tronto, 1993; Held, 2004). The ethic of care places value on concrete circumstances and on the incorporation of emotions, such as compassion, into moral deliberations (Staeheli & Brown, 2003). Autonomy is foregrounded in the human rights perspective (Porter, 1999). An ethic of care, on the other hand, emphasizes interdependence and relationality. In the care ethic, people are defined by their care for others and others' care for them, thus exposing the myth of an atomized, autonomous self-made man (Tronto, 1993; Staeheli & Brown, 2003; Diedrich et al, 2006). From a human rights perspective, one would have to be free from bodily contingencies and dependencies in order to deliberate on moral issues, rather than as situated and occurring between embodied beings (Sevenhuijsen, 1998). A human rights approach also views human beings thinly, as part of common humanity or as a generalized

Other, whereas an ethic of care would require a rich and thick description of people's circumstances, focusing on the particularities of concrete situations in specific historic moments.

In the *WPID*, there is not a great deal of analysis of the historical and contemporary contexts which give rise to situations of inequality. The result is a rather 'sanitized' view of the diverse groups which are referred to in the document, with little reference to the historical and current conditions in which marginalized groups find themselves in twenty-first-century Europe. There is also not much mention made of the differential access to resources between differently positioned groups of people. Not much attention in the document is placed on realities of privileges and superiority certain groups of people enjoy and the marginalization of other groups as a result of these privileges. For example, in the *WPID*, the intention of *preventing* different forms of divisions between groups is expressed merely in terms of dialogue: 'Intercultural dialogue … allows us to *prevent* ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides' (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 4; emphasis added). In its specific focus on prevention, it is as if these divides are not already experienced and discrimination, poverty and exploitation are not everyday realities linked to some groups' privileges.

Admittedly, structural issues are acknowledged, yet they are not recognized as central to marginalization but simply as issues that 'often bear heavily on persons belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups' and as 'structural barriers to dialogue' (p. 21). These issues are also mentioned again later when it is acknowledged that they can 'bear particularly heavily on persons belonging to disadvantaged groups (access to employment, education, social protection, health and housing)' (p. 26), but they are again framed in terms of the socio-economic rights arising from the European Social Charter and the cultural rights identified in various charters and conventions, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). The role of structural issues in perpetuating discrimination, poverty and exploitation, however, is not seen as central to bear in mind regarding dialogue. Racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination are seen to 'refuse the very idea of dialogue and represent a standing affront to it' (p. 21). Yet again, this is presented as an exception rather than a condition of promoting dialogue. This obfuscates the endemic nature of racialization as part of everyday practices, not as an anomaly.

Finally, the *WPID* indicates the need to teach and learn cultural competences, thus locating the responsibility for dealing with difference within an interpersonal psychological discourse, rather than within social and political arrangements (Staeheli & Brown, 2003). The political ethic of care rejects the distinction between the public and private spheres. Neglecting the private sphere and locating politics only within the public sphere, human rights theorists concentrate on relationships between equals and their rights in these relationships (O'Brien, 2005). Care, on the other hand, alerts us to vulnerability and unequal relationships. The political ethics of the care perspective, on the other hand, alerts us to vulnerability and unequal relationships located in the public sphere. This means that societal responsibility for dealing with differences and inequalities which arise from institutionalised hierarchies of misrecognition or cultural devaluation become important considerations for societies (Staeheli & Brown, 2003; Fraser, 2008). The ethic of care furthermore assists us in viewing culture as a fluid and dynamic practice rather than as a static entity, or as an essential characteristic of particular groups as it is taken to be in a cultural competence discourse (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009).

Conclusion and Implications

The *WPID* is located in a human rights framework, even though the focus is on diversity. In our analysis of the *WPID* – an analysis that has been grounded in ideas about the contribution of the ethic of care – we hope to have shown that the incorporation of an ethic of care perspective to diversity, with its underscoring of vulnerability, difference, mutual dependence and power relations, provides a valuable conceptual space for rethinking the normative criteria used in the *WPID*.

Both Tronto (1993) and Sevenhuijsen (1998) acknowledge that one needs both care and justice, and that the one normative framework without the incorporation of the other is incomplete. Justice protects fairness and equality of treatment, whereas care sees that differently positioned individuals are given a voice. At the intergovernmental level of the Council of Europe, the ethic of

care does not ask for justice to be replaced by care, either in its institutions or its legal framework. The importance of law and its enforcement is certainly recognized within European states to protect individuals from violence and to bring about the implementation of their rights, such as rights to equality. However, as Held argues, the ethic of care

> asks that legal institutions be more caring than they are but can maintain that justice, as a value, ought to have priority over care in the limited domain of justice, though care may be primary in the comprehensive morality within which law should guide specific interactions. (Held, 2008, p. 2)

The ethic of care recognizes, therefore, the gross limitations of law and superiority of other moral approaches when it comes to issues such as exploitation and marginalization. The model of morality based on impartial justice and law is persuasive only for restricted legal and political contexts, not for the whole of morality, as implied by the *WPID*.

An enrichment of moral discourse on the ethic of justice with notions of an ethic of care encourages European states to take responsibility for protecting vulnerable populations, and for addressing the problems of those politically disenfranchised or exploited through specific practices and policies of care. Properly developed, these practices and policy measures should reduce structural inequalities. The deepest considerations in European states, one might argue, then, should be ones that ask what appropriate caring for all human beings requires (see Held, 2008). The ethic of care, therefore, should lead to the transformation of particular domains within society, such as education, to be more caring. How might education respond to calls for an ethic of care in relation to the focus of this special issue of *Policy Futures in Education*, that is, intercultural dialogue? We conclude this article with a brief discussion of how the notion of care as a citizenship issue has important educational implications in efforts to promote intercultural dialogue.

Sevenhuijsen (1998) suggests that care can be seen as providing a more universalistic set of ethical principles for public life. Thus, she argues for a 'caring citizenship' (see also Knijn & Kremer, 1997; Tronto, 2001), a concept that reconceptualizes care and politics in more inclusive ways so that they both call on the moral competences and caring capacities of citizens. The incorporation of an ethic of care as a component of a more inclusive citizenship offers social and political mechanisms in which care can be extended to those socially excluded individuals ascribed the status of lesser citizens or non-citizens. Caring as an important human and democratic practice offers a political programme that could balance 'rights' and 'responsibilities' (Sevenhuijsen, 2000). For instance, caring as an inclusive democratic practice forms the basis for an approach that rejects the discrimination of individuals (immigrants, asylum-seekers, refugees) by those in authority (policy makers, immigration officers, etc.) on grounds of their ethnicity. This approach creates openings for a public dialogue that recognizes the visible labour contributions that undocumented immigrants make to the prosperity of many European countries, as opposed to the lack of rights and recognition accorded to them by the state (Fortier, 2005). An active political discussion about the changing nature of citizenship opens up a number of possibilities within which to develop renewed institutional policies and practices concerning immigration.

Advocacy of inclusive citizenship and caring as a democratic practice provides a promising alternative to dominant discourses of citizenship in education – that is, liberal citizenship and civic republicanism (Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). To paraphrase Heilman (2006, p. 192), education for inclusive citizenship 'is fundamentally a moral, political and critical endeavour' rooted in a particular frame of citizenship that asserts caring as a democratic practice, especially in a globalized context in which there is a need for a discourse of inclusive citizenship (Zembylas, 2010 i). The idea of care as citizenship, then, is linked to educational policy making and pedagogies that truly care for *all* children (regardless of their ethnic or other origin) and create a supportive learning environment conducive to inclusion. The *WPID*, enriched with notions of an ethic of care, can provide a valuable point of departure for education policy makers and practitioners seeking to formulate more inclusive social and education practices in Europe.

Note

[1] Virtually all the major international institutions and organizations have become engaged in the promotion of intercultural dialogue. Some of these initiatives are the following: 1999-2000 –

> UNESCO adopts a 'Declaration on the Culture of Peace' and launches the International Year for the Culture of Peace; 2001 – United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations; 2003-05 – the 35 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership ('Barcelona process') create the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures; 2005-06 – the United Nations Secretary General launches the Alliance of Civilizations initiative; and 2008 – the European Union organizes the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

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