INTRODUCTION

Intergroup Dialogue and the Multi-University Intergroup Dialogue Research Project

I came to this class hoping to better understand racial relationships and to be able to talk honestly about race. I came to this class having gone through many stages in the past about race, thinking that if I could just explain the true history of my people, other people would understand. Failing that, I often became enraged, then not caring what other people think. The stage I was at when I came to this class was being slightly bitter, slightly sarcastic, and completely disillusioned. What I hoped for was a small community where I could speak about racial issues without feeling like people would point to me as the "angry, black woman." In fact, I did get a place to speak comfortably about issues of race. I know for a fact that we have talked honestly and truthfully.

I wanted to find a place in this university to openly communicate while learning and discussing issues that are universally relevant. I saw this as an opportunity to converse honestly while gaining knowledge about the broader dynamics of gender relationships and the social system in which I exist. I have been stimulated intellectually and emotionally by the content and the relationships in my dialogue. I have learned more in this class than I ever dreamed possible because it was both academic and personal.

Before this class, I was nervous about talking about gender or race. I was apprehensive about speaking about these topics because I didn't want to offend anyone. I didn't want to appear ignorant. Talking about a subject as sensitive as gender is hard enough with friends and family, but to open up in a class—to trust people enough to do that—that was hard. But I was surrounded by people who were just as nervous as I. Everyone was eager to listen to and learn from each other. And we did. My fears were put to rest because of the constructive facilitation of the course, the course readings, the participation of the rest of the members of the class, and my willingness to be open-minded.

I can have very strong opinions and I wasn't sure how I would react with people who might have opposite thoughts from mine. It is always hard to share thoughts in depth with anyone. In my experience on this campus that does not happen very often. Some of it comes from being uneasy about expressing conflicting views. But, after a few sessions of my dialogue class, the walls of apprehension were gone. We were very open and we actually began to see that you don't learn anything unless there is conflict.

These statements are extracted from narratives students wrote about their experiences learning about race-ethnicity and gender in intergroup dialogue (IGD). Intergroup dialogue is a facilitated educational effort that brings an equal number of students from two social identity groups—white students and students of color, men and women—together in quarter- or semester-long, credit-earning courses. Since their inception in the late 1980s, intergroup dialogues have sought to educate students proactively to understand and work with intergroup conflicts that are not only historical and structural but persistent and present in their daily college lives. IGD aims for students to gain knowledge of intergroup issues, especially group-based social identities and inequalities; to improve and deepen intergroup communication and relationships; and to develop skills in and commitment to intergroup collaboration (Nagda and Gurin 2007; Schoem et al. 2001; Zúñiga et al. 2007; Zúñiga, Nagda, and Sevig 2002). Today intergroup dialogue is in place at many colleges and universities in the United States, usually offered as credit-earning courses led by trained facilitators (Dessel, Rogge, and Garlington 2006). Since 2003, collaborators in the research project discussed in this book, as well as staff at the University of Michigan's Program on Intergroup Relations (IGR), have consulted with 110 higher education institutions via

summer institutes, usually lasting three to four days, and campus trainings, usually lasting two to three days, for faculty and staff interested in developing intergroup dialogue courses or programs.

Intergroup dialogue involves diverse groups of students in learning about social justice. By social justice, we mean learning that involves understanding social identities and group-based inequalities, encourages building of cross-group relationships, and cultivates social responsibility. Thus, intergroup dialogue fosters engagement that is intellectual and affective, self-reflective and in dialogic relation with others, personal and structural, and that connects dialogue to action (Zúñiga et al. 2007). The IGD courses conducted across the nine participating institutions followed a standardized curriculum developed by collaborators from these institutions. Within the context of small and diverse groups led by trained facilitators, the IGD curriculum included in-class structured activities and opportunities for critical reflection, and out-of-class reading, writing, and group assignments. Because intergroup dialogue fosters learning through interaction, it builds specific skills of dialogic communication among students that encourage listening and learning from others, reflecting and sharing experiences and perspectives, and asking questions to discern similarities and differences in experiences. Additionally, because the groups in dialogue are usually defined by strained and conflictual relationships, current or historical, IGD draws on specific content about social identities and inequalities. The dialogic communication processes are coupled with critical communication processes whereby students critically analyze how larger social structures create or perpetuate power inequalities, affect intergroup relations and personal lives, and how they can be involved in individual and collective efforts aimed at greater social justice (Nagda 2006). Throughout the dialogue, facilitators pay special attention to equalizing participation by fully involving students from both identity groups.

Students conveyed that learning in intergroup dialogue was not easy. It often involved disagreements and discomfort. It required them to risk going beyond their comfort zones. It challenged them to form relationships, not just coexist, across differences. The students said that the typical cross-racial and gender-based interactions on their college campuses rarely involved exploring what difference means—differences in life experiences, differences in what students call their realities, that is, differences in cultural expectations and visions, and especially differences embedded in social, economic, and political inequalities. In the IGD courses students learned to talk, think, feel,

and work across racial-ethnic and gender differences as they also simultaneously discovered commonalities as well.

This volume presents the educational practices and the theoretical rationale for intergroup dialogue. It further discusses how those practices share elements of other intergroup relations programs and also differ from other programs. Primarily, it presents the results from a multi-university field experiment on intergroup dialogue that was carried out by nine universities over three years—the Multi-University Intergroup Dialogue Research (MIGR) Project.

The project had two goals: to determine whether intergroup dialogues have the predicted effects of increasing students' intergroup understanding, intergroup relationships, and intergroup action, and to examine how the dialogues produce effects—the processes that take place within dialogue courses that account for their effects on these three sets of outcomes. The nine participating institutions were Arizona State University, Occidental College, Syracuse University, University of California (San Diego), University of Maryland, University of Massachusetts Amherst, University of Michigan, University of Texas, and University of Washington. These institutions were selected to be part of the research project because they already offered intergroup dialogue courses. Race-ethnicity and gender intergroup dialogues were selected as the focus of the research for two reasons. First, all of the nine participating institutions were already conducting courses on race-ethnicity and gender. Although some institutions also offered dialogue courses focused on other social identities (class, religion, sexuality), there was too little consistency across the nine institutions to include these other identities. Second, although race-ethnicity and gender are important identities among college students, talk about them is often avoided except at the most superficial levels.

Fifty-two parallel pairings of dialogue courses and control groups were conducted across the nine participating institutions. Twenty-six pairings tested the effects of race-ethnicity dialogues; another twenty-six tested the effects of gender dialogues. In each, approximately an equal number of white women, white men, women of color, and men of color, not exceeding a total of sixteen, were randomly assigned to the dialogue courses or to control groups from the pool of students who applied to take these courses. Altogether, 1,437 students participated in the experiment. The importance of the study's experimental design cannot be overstated. To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first random assignment experiment on the effects of intergroup dialogue.

The research also tested whether effects could be attributed to the dialogue method or simply to learning about race-ethnicity or gender by also studying a comparison group of students enrolled in fourteen traditional social science classes on race-ethnicity and thirteen social science classes on gender. If students in the dialogue courses changed significantly on more measures of the outcomes than the students in the social science classes did, the results would suggest that IGD had effects that extended beyond the content on race-ethnicity and gender that both types of courses had in common. Students in each of the social science classes were randomly chosen from volunteers to be part of the study. A total of 438 of these students made up a comparison group that matched the demographic composition of the dialogue and control groups. All three groups completed a survey at the beginning and the end of the semester in which the dialogue and comparison courses were held. Dialogue participants and students in the control groups also completed a longitudinal survey a year later so that we could test the longer-term as well as the immediate effects of intergroup dialogue.

We show in this book that intergroup dialogue increased the students' intergroup understanding, positive intergroup relationships, and intergroup action. Of the twenty-four multi-item measures on which we assessed positive change from the beginning to the end of the semester, students randomly assigned to the dialogue courses showed significantly greater change than those randomly assigned to the control groups on all but four measures. We also show that the IGD courses had significantly greater impact than social science courses on two-thirds of these measures. Most impressive, we show that the differences between the intergroup dialogue and control group students were still present a year later on all but three of the twenty-four measures. We also relate how students, through their final papers and interviews, appraised their experiences in intergroup dialogue.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1 positions intergroup dialogue within the long tradition of research on intergroup relations. It places the research project within continuing controversies about the educational value of diversity that were brought to national attention by the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action in Grutter v. Bollinger in 2003 and by Fisher v. University of Texas in 2012. It discusses why talking across race and gender in more than superficial ways has proven difficult, and how intergroup dialogue addresses those difficulties.

It situates IGD within three important challenges facing the United States and particularly higher education. These challenges also provide the framework for discussing the implications for higher education of the research project in the book's concluding chapter.

Chapter 2 presents the practice model of intergroup dialogue and discusses how intergroup dialogue differs from other approaches to intergroup relations. It specifically describes the pedagogy that characterizes IGD and how that pedagogy is implemented over four stages over the course of a semester. Excerpts from the students' final papers in the dialogue courses are used to illustrate the pedagogy in these four stages of dialogue.

Chapter 3 lays out the theoretical framework that guided the project. It highlights the crucial role of communication processes in intergroup dialogue that foster psychological processes within participants (both cognitive and affective) that lead to the primary outcomes of interest in the study: intergroup understanding, intergroup relationships, and intergroup action. Excerpts from the students' final papers are used again to illustrate how the students understood the communication processes, their connection to psychological processes, and the connection of both sets of processes to the three sets of outcomes. This theoretical approach frames the rest of the book.

Chapter 4 describes the design and methods, and shows how they address limitations in prior research on intergroup relations and intergroup dialogue. It details both the quantitative and qualitative approaches that combine to make this project a mixed-methods investigation. It also presents the methodological issues that this project was not able to resolve.

Chapter 5 presents the effects of dialogue through the experiments conducted across the nine participating institutions. These effects show differential changes from the beginning to end of a term, and a year later, by students who had been randomly assigned to the dialogues relative to those randomly assigned to the control groups. This chapter also provides evidence supporting the generalizability of the effects of dialogue across both race-ethnicity and gender dialogues and across students from groups with more or less societal privilege. Evidence is also presented showing that the effects of dialogue are generally larger than the effects of more traditional race-ethnicity and gender social science courses, and thus that the impact of the dialogue courses involves their method and not merely the race-ethnicity and gender content that the dialogue courses shared with the social science courses. Results presented in chapter 5 further indicate that the effects present immediately after

the dialogue courses ended were still evident a year later, although they were somewhat smaller. Chapter 5 also presents a test of the theoretical framework delineated in chapter 3, using structural equation modeling to focus on how pedagogy, communication processes, and psychological processes together increased intergroup empathy, structural understanding of inequality, and action.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 present mixed-method analyses, emphasizing the qualitative data collected as part of an intensive substudy of ten gender and ten race-ethnicity dialogues (described in chapter 4). These analyses illustrate how students experienced dialogue. Using both student interviews and final papers, chapter 6 examines how intergroup empathy was expressed in intergroup dialogues and reveals a distinction not evident in the survey measures and analysis. As the students talked and wrote about their experiences, we discerned two kinds of intergroup empathy. One, *relational empathy*, was toward a specific individual, usually another student. The second, *critical empathy*, included an understanding of that individual's position in a system of power and privilege. Using the interviews, chapter 7 focuses on engagement in the dialogues and distinguishes listening, speaking, and active thinking engagement, and details features of intergroup pedagogy that seem to foster each of these types of engagement. Chapter 8 then uses material coded from videotapes of the dialogues that were part of the intensive substudy to show how students participated in the dialogues, how facilitators participated, and how facilitator behaviors were related to student behaviors. At the end of chapter 8, we summarize what these three mixed-method chapters demonstrate about the practice model of intergroup dialogue.

Chapter 9 draws together the conclusions from the analyses of the surveys and qualitative materials, showing how they generally support the critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue. It also presents practice implications of the findings, and discusses criticisms of intergroup dialogue and why the results generally do not support those criticisms.

Chapter 10 returns to the three challenges—demographic, democratic, and dispersion—that frame the book, and emphasizes the implications of those challenges specifically for higher education and how intergroup dialogue is an effective educational approach for addressing them.

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