

Taking a “Hands On” Approach to Diversity in Higher Education: A Critical-Dialogic Model for Effective Intergroup Interaction

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This article reviews divergent empirical evidence on interracial contact. While research on diversity in higher education provides ample evidence for the educational benefits of engaging with diversity in informal interactions or courses, experimental and naturalistic studies in social psychology on interracial interactions reveal a complicated picture, showing what appear to be both positive and negative effects. Rather than addressing the question of whether or not to promote interracial interactions on campus, we present a critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue that centers on communication processes as an avenue toward intergroup relationships, understanding, and collaboration. Prior research and preliminary results from a nine-university research collaboration provide strong empirical support for the proposed model. We conclude with program and policy considerations for higher education institutions interested in promoting meaningful intergroup interaction.

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The value of diversity in higher education is widely accepted among educators (Flores Neimann & Maruyama, 2005) and was affirmed by the Supreme Court in the 2003 cases surrounding the University of Michigan's use of affirmative action in their admission policies. On behalf of the majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (539 U.S. 306, 2003), Justice O'Connor wrote:

The [University of Michigan] Law School's claim is further bolstered by numerous expert studies and reports showing that such diversity promotes learning outcomes and prepares students better for an increasingly diverse workforce, for society, and for the legal profession. Major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today's increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints.

More than 75 amicus briefs were submitted on behalf of the University of Michigan to affirm the educational value of diversity, representing hundreds of colleges and universities, more than 50 higher education associations, 68 *Fortune* 500 corporations, 29 former high-ranking military leaders, and numerous social science organizations (Gurin, Dey, Gurin, & Hurtado, 2004). The challenge facing educators, particularly in higher education, is how to create educational experiences that optimally foster the development of skills necessary to participate in an increasingly diverse and global society.

To address this challenge, in this article we first briefly highlight the evidence presented to the Supreme Court and conducted since, showing that interactions between diverse peers are important for diversity to have educational benefits. We turn then to recent social psychological research on interracial interaction and cross-racial roommate experiences, which challenges the notion that interracial (and perhaps other kinds of intergroup) contact will necessarily produce positive outcomes for students. Because the experimental research on interracial interaction does not assess sustained interactions, and the roommate research does not assess facilitated interactions, we argue that sustained and facilitated intergroup dialogue (IGD) holds promise for effectively leveraging diversity for positive outcomes. We present a critical-dialogic theoretical model of IGD and briefly summarize evidence for this model, focusing on emerging results (to be covered in detail in a forthcoming book) from a national experimental study across nine colleges and universities. We end with policy implications for higher education, institutions, and IGD programs.

The Benefits of Diversity in Higher Education

For most students, higher education is uniquely situated within late adolescence and early adulthood, when individuals shift from an unwavering endorsement of the worldviews of their parents, guardians, and teachers and begin to explore where they see themselves fitting into society and the political discourse.

Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) argue that new experiences with diversity, particularly diverse points of view, ought to foster more active thinking and decision making that is informed by a more complex and multifaceted worldview rather than passive commitments based on prior experiences. They further argue that higher education will be most influential when students encounter an educational environment that diverges from students' prior experiences and when its diversity and complexity encourages active thinking and an intellectual interest in exploring new and different educational experiences. Using a different cohort (first-year students in 1994) from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) than was used by Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002), Jayakumar (2008) provides support for the suggestion that racial/ethnic diversity will be especially influential for white students who grew up in racially segregated environments and for whom diversity brings maximal discontinuity. She shows that cross-racial interaction during college has a direct effect on making integrated lifestyle choices post-college for students who grew up in racially segregated neighborhoods but no effect for students who grew up in integrated neighborhoods.

Is having a diverse student body sufficient to produce educational benefits? Institutions with greater demographic diversity in their student bodies do have two important qualities: (1) the likelihood that students who are from different backgrounds will interact with each other increases and (2) the opinions and viewpoints of students (intellectual diversity) are more variable in such institutions (see Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005 for a review). Structural diversity by itself may therefore be influential in student learning, although research conducted in communities and in education suggests that the benefits of diversity require interaction across difference. At the community level, Robert Putnam (2007) conducted a massive study of people living in more and less diverse communities and found that those living in more diverse places actually trust each other less and participate less in community activities. However, this work did not assess the impact of actually *interacting* with diverse others in both types of communities. Putnam's research raises questions that mirror concerns in higher education as well. Indeed, the evidence presented to the Supreme Court on behalf of the University of Michigan in *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, as well as research conducted since (Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2005; Milem et al., 2005), consistently argues that structural diversity needs to be leveraged in an intentional way to have maximal benefit. Much like any educational resource—be it a great library, a talented faculty, or cutting-edge technology—diversity needs to be utilized by students, and institutions need to create opportunities to assure that students do interact and learn from each other. Thus, while the presence of a diverse student body is important, it is up to educators and administrators to do something with it.

One way students can learn about diversity is by exploring and learning about diverse people through readings, lectures, and discussion (Gurin et al., 2002).

Educators can provide students with course material that informs them about the belief systems, traditions, and worldviews of social groups, as well as the history of experiences that have shaped those cultural worldviews. Although the impact of curricular initiatives has only rarely been studied, and even more rarely with designs that control for the likelihood that students who select such courses are different from other students, there is some limited evidence for the value of diversity courses. Hurtado (2005), in a longitudinal study of students in 10 public institutions, shows a wide range of cognitive, socio-cognitive, and democratic sentiments associated with enrollment in diversity courses. Of the 25 measures collected in that study, 19 are positively related to course participation. Since the analysis controls for student scores upon entering those universities, the curricular experience that occurred between first and second years of college can be construed as producing change on the outcome measures. Using data from this same study, Nelson Laird, Engberg, and Hurtado (2005) specifically assessed the effect of enrolling in two diversity courses compared to a management course, and found a positive impact on social action engagement, measured by importance attached to creating social awareness, volunteering for a cause, and working to eliminate poverty. In a design that compared students finishing such courses with those just entering them, Chang (2002) tied enrollment in a required diversity course to more positive attitudes toward African Americans as measured by the Modern Racism Scale. Gurin et al. (2002) also report evidence from a national, longitudinal CIRP dataset (first-year students in 1985) showing that taking ethnic studies and women's studies courses is associated with increased intellectual engagement and self-assessed academic skills, as well as supportive evidence from a longitudinal study of a single university that classroom diversity was related to increased intellectual engagement and active thinking. In a rare experimental study, Antonio (2004) demonstrates that complex thinking is increased in group discussions where minority students introduce novel perspectives.

Another way students can benefit from diversity involves the interactions that take place between diverse peers outside of class in residence halls, and social or campus events (Gurin et al., 2002). A large body of research now supports the impact of cross-racial interaction, both from experimental studies on intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and from higher education field studies, which report associations between interaction and a host of measures of cognitive, socio-cognitive, diversity attitudes, democratic sentiments, and voting behavior (Gottfredson et al., 2008; Gurin et al., 2002; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, 2005; Milem et al., 2005). A recent multi-year study of students at UCLA also finds considerable evidence of positive benefits of intergroup contact (Sidanius, Levin, vanLaar, & Sears, 2008). Summarizing a wide range of analyses, Sidanius et al. (2008) conclude that they find "all things considered—reasonable evidence that interethnic contact 'works.' . . . more substantial contact effects were found

when we examined interethnic friendships, dating relationships, and roommate situations. In these cases, by and large, ethnically heterogeneous pairings had the effect of reducing an array of ethnic prejudices and increasing egalitarian values” (pp. 318–319). Especially impressive is the connection demonstrated by Jayakumar (2008) for white students between cross-racial interaction during college and pluralistic orientation (ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective and negotiate controversial issues, openness to having views challenged) measured 6 years after college, as well as with continued socialization across race and ethnicity in the post-college years. Together these findings support the contention of the *amici* in supporting the University of Michigan’s defense of its admissions policies that interacting and learning from diverse peers would foster cross-cultural competencies needed in the global world.

The Challenge of Negotiating Diverse Interactions

While the evidence from research in higher education and within social psychology supports positive outcomes of intergroup contact and learning in an interracial/ethnic context, new research in social psychology raises questions about how to help students develop the skills needed to cope with challenges involved in interracial interactions. Interracial interactions, when enacted without effective communication and guidance, are not golden pathways toward building relationships between diverse peers. We briefly review the evidence below; the articles cited in this summary provide more comprehensive descriptions and references for this prior work.

Intergroup interactions invoke anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) for both majority and minority group members and increase self-regulation because of the uncertainty associated with negotiating novel and unfamiliar interactions with outgroup members relative to ingroup members (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Richeson & Trawalter, 2005). They may be stressful and cause anxiety to manifest in nervous behavior. Whites fidget, blink excessively, avert eye-gaze, and increase personal distance more in cross-race relative to same-race interactions. African Americans who expect white interaction partners to be prejudiced against them fidget more often than African Americans not provided such an expectation for prejudice (see Trawalter & Richeson, 2008, for more detail).

Interracial interactions can even go as far as to induce threat for majority group members (see Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). In an interracial interaction with an African American confederate, white individuals exhibit cardiac responses associated with threat, while interactions with a white confederate reveal physiological responses indicative of feeling challenged rather than threatened. While anxiety may be an inherent component of cross-race interaction for both majority and minority group members, what cues anxiety may differ between groups. Indeed,

recent work finds interracial contact to be more stressful for whites than African Americans (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). Specifically, whites show more anxiety than African Americans in interracial interactions and their anxiety is elevated regardless of whether the topic of conversation is race-related or race-neutral. In contrast, African Americans show less anxiety when talking about race relative to non-race related issues with whites.

Why are interracial interactions so challenging? Vorauer (2006) argues that both majority and minority group members are concerned with how their interaction partners are evaluating them. Ethnic minorities can be plagued with expectations of being the target of prejudice and worry that they will be stereotyped by a white interaction partner, causing minorities to evoke compensatory strategies (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007 for a review). Ethnic minorities may embellish a sense of engagement with white interaction partners at the cost of increased negative emotions, dislike of white interaction partners, and feeling less authentic in a cross-race interaction. In contrast, whites worry about appearing prejudiced when interacting with minority group members and compensate for this concern by regulating their expression of prejudice in interracial interactions (Richeson & Shelton, 2007).

A series of studies by Richeson, Shelton, and colleagues have documented the deleterious effect of regulating the possibility of appearing prejudiced in interracial interactions on executive functioning (for a review, see Richeson & Shelton, 2007), arguing that interracial encounters deplete cognitive resources because of self-regulation. These studies document increased impairment on cognitive tasks requiring self-regulation following cross-race relative to same-race interactions, revealing pronounced effects for individuals with the most implicit racial bias. For example, the extent to which white individuals appear to be controlling their behavior during an interracial interaction—coded on videotapes of cross-race interactions and when manipulated experimentally by reducing the need to regulate concerns about prejudice (see Richeson & Trawalter, 2005)—predicts subsequent impairment on a cognitive task requiring self-regulation. Even more provocative, white participants who show the greatest impairment on a cognitive self-regulatory task after a cross-race interaction also show, in response to images of African American faces, the most elevated neural activity in brain regions believed to be responsible for executive control (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Similarly, white participants who are high in external motivation to respond without prejudice relative to those low in external motivation show increased anxious arousal when presented images of African American faces relative to white faces (Richeson & Trawalter, 2008).

How white individuals in interactions regulate racial bias may not be straightforward. Research contrasting verbal and nonverbal behavior shows different effects. Verbal “friendliness” behavior is predicted by whites’ self-reported (explicit) racial attitudes. In contrast, whites’ nonverbal friendliness behavior—reported by

both African American interaction partners and observers of the interaction—is predicted by their automatically-activated (implicit) racial attitudes (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002). Thus, how and under what conditions efforts to regulate concerns about prejudice play out in intergroup interactions is not clear-cut, manifesting through less controlled, nonverbal communication that is clearly observable to interaction partners.

While interracial interactions invoke different sets of evaluative concerns (Vorauer, 2006) for advantaged and disadvantaged groups, these groups also bring with them different goals for intergroup interactions. Using both a minimal group paradigm where participants are randomly assigned to arbitrary groups with power differences (overestimators vs. underestimators; Study 1) and real ethnic groups (Mizrahim vs. Ashkenazim Israeli Jews, Study 2), Saguy, Dovidio, and Pratto (2008) show that disadvantaged groups want to talk about power differences and change in the power structure more than members of advantaged groups who prefer to talk primarily about commonalities between the groups. Thus, intergroup interactions can feel like two ships passing in the night, as members of different groups enter with different goals and objectives (build relationships vs. change power structure), which may explain the finding that having a (ostensibly) common goal during intergroup contact (one of four conditions outlined for positive intergroup contact, Allport, 1954) does not predict positive outcomes in intergroup interaction for members of disadvantaged racial groups (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

Together, this large and growing body of evidence paints a bleak picture of interracial interactions for minority and especially for majority group members who appear to end up feeling cognitively and emotionally exhausted in interracial interactions. Still, other research makes clear that overcoming these evaluative concerns and discrepant goals is possible. For instance, shifting expectations for interracial interactions can reduce cognitive depletion effects for white participants. Applying regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997), Trawalter and Richeson (2006) randomized participants to a prevention-focus, a promotion-focus, or a no-prime control condition. Specifically, prevention-focused participants were told, “It is important to the study that you avoid appearing prejudiced in any way during the interaction,” whereas promotion-focused participants were told, “It is important to the study that you approach the interaction as an opportunity to have an enjoyable intercultural dialogue.” Their results show that prevention-focused participants look much like controls, suggesting that under less structured circumstances, whites utilize a prevention orientation toward interracial interactions, going to great lengths to avoid appearing prejudiced. In contrast, invoking a promotion-orientation with the expectation of a positive intercultural dialogue cut cognitive depletion effects by more than half.

With regard to differential goals between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in interracial interactions, Saguy et al. (2008) show that while advantaged group members are less motivated by social change and addressing power

issues, when they are led to perceive their advantaged status as relatively illegitimate, they are more willing to engage in communication about group-based power differences. Thus, coming to terms with illegitimate inequality, particularly structural inequality, may be a crucial avenue for creating more effective intergroup interaction. If both groups can be led to apply a critical lens to societal power structures, more positive outcomes may result.

Sustained Interactions: Interracial Roommates

One possible critique of research on interracial interactions is that the findings are based on interracial/ethnic interactions that take place within the lab (low in ecological validity), and thus are unnatural and not sustained over time. However, a growing body of research has begun to investigate the effects of relationships between interracial college roommates, capitalizing on the random assignment that housing offices employ for entering first-year students. Comparing cross-race versus same-race roommate dyads on college campuses offers the opportunity for a randomized field experiment with both high ecological validity and sustained contact for one semester or longer (Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair, & Sidanius, 2005; Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006; Boisjoly, Duncan, Kremer, Levy, & Eccles, 2006). These studies are especially relevant to higher education because they investigate the kind of interactions that diverse peers encounter with one another on a daily basis. Additionally, while interactions between roommates are unstructured and not guided, they do meet the minimal requirements of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954). Roommates have equal status, share the cooperative interdependent goal of creating a positive living environment, have the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with one another, and the contact is sanctioned by authorities given the institution's assignment of the interracial dyad to live together. Together this research on roommates suggests both positive and negative effects for both roommates in interracial dyads, although it is noteworthy that most research to date has focused on effects for whites.

Positive effects for white students randomly assigned to live with a roommate from a different racial background versus the same racial background include more positive attitudes toward various ethnic groups, less symbolic racism, and more heterogeneous friendship groups (Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair & Sidanius, 2005); reduction in intergroup anxiety, less decline in positive evaluations of the roommate, reduction in automatically-activated (implicit) prejudice (Shook & Fazio, 2008a); and more positive attitudes toward affirmative action and greater comfort with minorities several years later (Boisjoly et al., 2006). Despite recent cautions about the impact of interracial roommate relationships on academic performance (Trail, Shelton, & West, 2009), whites' academic success is unaffected by living with a roommate of a different race, and African Americans living with white roommates actually show higher GPAs after the first academic quarter than their counterparts not living with whites (Shook & Fazio, 2008b).

However, some negative effects also occur for white students in mixed-race versus same-race roommate situations. In the randomly assigned mixed-race roommate situation, white students spend less time with the roommate, are less satisfied, have less involvement in shared activities, show less cross-network interaction (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006), and less overall compatibility (Phelps, Altschul, Wisenbaker, Day, Cooper, & Potter, 1998) than when they are randomly assigned to live with a white roommate. Importantly, interracial roommate relationships are less likely to remain intact after one semester and 1 year later than same-race white (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006) or ethnic minority roommate relationships (Shook & Fazio, 2008b).

More recent work involving a daily report of emotions experienced in the roommate relationship shows fewer positive emotions, less felt intimacy, fewer intimacy enhancing behaviors (smiling, talking, appearing engaged and interested, friendliness, warmth, easiness in conversation, and pleasantness), and less desire to live with the roommate again for both whites and ethnic minorities in interracial relative to same-race dyads (Trail et al., 2009). A few studies using these methods also shed light on the experiences of minorities in interracial living situations. Ethnic minorities with greater concerns about being the target of prejudice experience more negative emotions, are more likely to utilize compensatory strategies during interethnic interactions (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005, Study 1), and their attitudes toward whites influence their perceived closeness and emotional experiences with roommates (Shelton & Richeson, 2006, Study 2). In other words, attitudes matter for the quality of interracial roommate interactions.

Taken together, laboratory and roommate research on interracial interactions suggests that both positive and negative outcomes are possible and that these interactions must be negotiated. Communicating across differences can make people anxious and concerned about how others perceive them, deplete cognitive and emotional resources, and can present difficult challenges for students not equipped to navigate these social interactions. Thus, efforts to promote effective interactions must address these challenges by helping students find ways to overcome their fears and anxiety about interracial interactions and refocus the goal of these encounters from preventing bad outcomes to promoting good ones—intergroup understanding, relationships, and effective communication. As already summarized, research on naturally occurring interaction and intergroup contact documents that somehow intergroup interaction often does have positive benefits. What is important is how to foster positive outcomes in light of the challenges such interaction often presents.

Promoting Effective Intergroup Interaction

Many efforts to improve relationships between diverse peers on college campuses fail to provide students guidance and training for how to engage with one another across group boundaries. Too often diversity initiatives, including

randomly assigning cross-race/same-race roommates, seem to assume that mere contact, without helping students deal with the issues now evident from recent social psychological research, will somehow produce positive benefits. And to be fair, as already noted, a large number of intergroup contact studies reviewed by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) find that even unguided interracial and intercultural interaction produces positive outcomes. Still, more learning from such interactions can result when programs

- use guided facilitation to help students learn to communicate effectively,
- help them deal with the psychological effects that anticipated expressions of prejudice produce for both majority and minority group members,
- provide exposure to content about power, illegitimacy of the status quo, and need for social change that takes account of the motivation of majority group members to explore commonalities and of the motivation of minority group members to discuss power and privilege.

We know from prior research that taking a “hands off” approach to learning how to communicate across difference will likely not be optimally effective in the same way that teaching students a language and providing them a paper and pencil will not teach them how to write. Rather, to create writers, educators must provide students a framework for how to communicate ideas effectively on paper, guiding them through the process of writing by helping them recognize when their efforts do and do not result in a desirable product and why. This same principle also applies to communicating with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Intergroup interactions are complicated and messy, and most students, particularly whites, enter higher education with little exposure to people different from them (Orfield & Kurlaender, 2001).

Intergroup Dialogue: Structured, Guided, Content-Based

IGD courses, developed in the late 1980s, are one way to help educate students how to work through intergroup conflicts, build effective communication across differences to forge relationships between diverse peers, and confront the historical and structural inequalities that members of minority groups face in their everyday lives. IGDs are now implemented at numerous colleges and universities in the United States, as academic credit-bearing courses, led by trained facilitators (Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007).

These courses bring together members of two different social identity groups (people of color/white people, women and men, high and low socio-economic status, Christians and Jews, heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals), utilizing a guided and structured model to engage members of different groups in face-to-face interactions with the goals to improve and deepen intergroup communication and

relationships, foster intergroup understanding of identity and inequality, and help students develop the skills and commitment to engage in intergroup collaboration (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Zúñiga et al., 2007). One challenge is that students bring multiple identities to dialogue courses. Even though IGDs focus primarily on a single identity (race, gender, etc.), they nevertheless provide students a basic framework for exploring other identities, as well as how these identities intersect with one another to influence one's life experiences and perspectives on the world. For the identity being examined, IGD courses include equal numbers of students (6–8) from each social identity group (12–16 in total). They usually meet weekly, for one 2 to 3 hour session, across a 10 to 12 week period. Two trained facilitators, one from each identity group, guide the dialogues. Students typically apply to take the course through an online application system, which assists program coordinators in placing students in IGD sections based on their identities.

Although students are often eager to jump into the controversial hot topics, anticipating provocative discussions, IGD is not merely a space to talk about issues, opinions, and perspectives. It is an educational program that provides students with opportunities to learn *how* to communicate effectively across different perspectives in order to prevent the fatal pitfalls that can characterize intergroup interactions while promoting positive relationships, understanding, and collaboration. Consequently, IGD progresses through a series of stages, each building on prior learning and experiences.

Facilitators involve students in the beginning of the dialogue to discuss their hopes and fears and to co-create a shared understanding of their needs and expectations for the dialogue, formulating ground rules or guidelines for engagement (respect each other's perspectives, challenge ideas—not the person—listen carefully, be present and not disengaged, etc.). In early sessions, students begin to explore different modes of communication through readings and role-playing exercises, particularly the distinctions between dialogue, discussion, and debate (Ellinor & Gerard, 1998; Nagda & Gurin, 2007). Indeed, most intergroup encounters can naturally take the form of debate, with participants staking their claim to a perspective and defending their positions through argumentation. Alternatively, students can take a discussion approach where individuals serially go around and explain their perspective in a monologic format, with little inquiry or understanding of others' perspectives, just mere exposure to these perspectives. In contrast, dialogue promotes an interactive communication style, where ideas and perspectives are presented but students are encouraged to use active listening and to ask questions of their peers to promote increased understanding for how and why identity and socialization have shaped students' perspectives on the world.

As students develop a shared understanding for *how* to communicate, they begin to explore both commonalities with one another *and* differences, using identity as a lens. They examine similarities in their goals, desires, human needs, and cultural practices as well as how their identities and those of other students shape

and create different life experiences and perspectives. Through this exploration, students begin to recognize how identities are embedded in systems of power and privilege in society. Together, using both identity and structural inequality as a framework for understanding diverse perspectives, students explore controversial “hot topics” (e.g., affirmative action in race dialogues, media and body image concerns in gender dialogues), reconsidering their own assumptions and perspectives in light of listening to their peers and the emergent differences and similarities. Finally, students explore opportunities for collaborative action, examining what an effective collaboration would look like from each group’s perspectives, and how identity, power, and privilege might manifest within collaborations. They use this experience as a stepping stone to forge lasting commitments to intergroup collaboration in the future (see Zúñiga et al., 2007, for a detailed description of the IGD curriculum).

The Critical-Dialogic Theoretical Framework

Nagda (2006) articulated a critical-dialogic process theory for IGD that focuses on contextualizing intergroup interactions in systems of power and privilege, and on building relationships across these differences. We elaborate below on the *critical* and *dialogic* components of the theoretical framework.

The Critical Component

Critical means a conscientious effort to examine how individual and group life are meaningfully connected to group identity, and how those identities exist in structures of stratification that afford members of different groups privileges and disadvantages, resulting in continued group-based inequalities (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Gurin-Sands, & Osuna, 2009). We do *not* use the term critical to depict an intergroup exchange where individuals are critical of one another, but rather an exchange where participants use a critical analysis to better understand the intersection of identity with systems of inequality and its impact on themselves and other students. Students are asked to analyze how their own experiences are connected to socialization by parents, teachers, peers, and communities and how they understand their group identities and positions within systems of power and inequality. Based on critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), the critical aspect of the critical-dialogic model of IGD uses readings, in-class exercises, and group projects to help students grasp how inequalities are created and perpetuated but also how they can be altered through social change.

An important component of the critical aspect of this model of IGD is its explicit emphasis on identity. Making identity salient and asking students to consider how their own perspectives, and the perspectives of other students, reflect group identity contradicts some social psychological theories for improving

intergroup relations, which emphasize decreasing the salience of group boundaries by viewing each other only as individuals, termed deategorization, or by creating a new superordinate identity such as a team, termed recategorization (or common-ingroup identity model; see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, for a review of distinctions). Evolving out of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1979) and social categorization theory (Turner, 1987), these models are premised on the notion that deemphasizing the boundaries that sometimes cause group conflict will promote intergroup harmony. However, other research documents that increasing the salience of group boundaries does not necessarily increase intergroup bias (Deffenbacher, Park, Judd, & Correll, 2009) and that making identities salient is crucial for effects of intergroup contact to generalize beyond individuals within the contact situation to members of their groups (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Indeed, proponents of these prior models have since revised their model to allow for identity salience (personalization model, see Ensari & Miller, 2006; dual-identity model, see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

By making identity salient, IGD takes a multicultural approach rather than a color-blind approach which assumes that only minimal (if any) racial disparities still exist, the few that do exist are caused by cultural deficiencies in certain racial groups, not by structural inequality, that patterns of segregation reflect a natural tendency for people to prefer to associate with similar others, and that meritocracy assures equality if individuals take advantage of opportunities and work hard (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). A multicultural perspective does not reject the ideal of color blindness, but argues that we do not live in a color-blind society, that inequalities still exist, and that efforts to improve racial/ethnic relations should recognize inequality as a powerful influence on social life experiences (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Hitchcock, 2001).

A growing body of research in social psychology has shown that colorblindness is less productive than a multicultural perspective. Colorblindness is associated with a greater level of prejudice both unconscious/implicit (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004) and conscious/explicit (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000), and is also used as a justification for inequality (Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009). In both a laboratory and face-to-face study, whites and non-whites (Canadian Aboriginals) give more positive comments and write lengthier descriptions about their outgroup partners when they are given a multicultural message (e.g., “different cultural groups bring different perspectives to life”) than when they are randomly assigned to a no-message control group (Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009). A color-blind message increases efforts to control how they are perceived by an outgroup conversation partner, which we have already pointed out produces significant psychological costs for individuals. Together, these results make clear that ignoring identity and inequality limits the possible positive impact of intergroup interaction.

The Dialogic Component

By *dialogic* we mean a focus on interactions and communications that take place between members of different groups within IGD (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Gurin-Sands, & Osuna, 2009). The dialogic component is what Baxter (2004) calls a relation “between self and other, a simultaneity of sameness and difference out of which knowing becomes possible” (p. 109). Influenced by theorizing about dialogue in communication studies that draws particularly from Bakhtin (1981), the dialogic part of the critical-dialogic model stresses how students from two groups co-create or constitute themselves and their relationships through communications emphasizing active listening to others, asking questions, learning from others, active participation, and personal sharing.

Because intergroup interactions are sometimes marked by cognitive and emotional exhaustion (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007), evaluation concerns (Vorauer, 2006), and anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), IGDs focus on creating a space for a different kind of communication. The goal of dialogic communication is not to present one’s opinions and simply hear others (discussion) or to defend one’s positions in order to reach resolution about which perspective is right or wrong (debate). Instead the goal is to strive for understanding through exploration of others’ experiences, identifying one’s own and others’ assumptions, and reappraising one’s perspectives in light of these dialogic exchanges. In dialogue, students build dialogic skills engaging themselves in reflection and through active listening, personal sharing, and asking questions of each other. These basic communication skills serve as a foundation for learning of their own and other people’s experiences and perspectives. Dialogue offers a way for students to understand the complexities of their identities and self-other relationships. Shifting both the goal and the mode of communication in turn creates expectations for learning, growth and positive dialogue—a promotional-focus (Higgins, 1997; Trawalter & Richeson, 2006), undermining the need to regulate evaluation concerns, which deplete cognitive resources and increase anxiety.

Of course, IGD also incorporates the basic tenets of Allport’s (1954) inter-group contact theory to foster effective dialogic communication, employing equal status among participants by balancing the composition of identities within IGDs, co-creating common goals for understanding and engagement through mutually agreed upon guidelines for respectful communication, and by creating opportunities not only for acquaintanceship but the opportunity to forge meaningful relationships, perhaps friendships as well (Pettigrew, 1998). Moreover, IGDs are supported by authorities as credit-bearing academic courses, promoted by educators and administrators in higher education. Similarly, IGD incorporates components of the personalization model (Ensari & Miller, 2006) by asking participants to participate in self-disclosure by presenting their biography to the group (with a focus on how their identity has shaped their socialization). They communicate potentially sensitive personal experiences, which promote trust, a sense of familiarity,

interpersonal liking, and friendship between members of different groups, as well as decreased intergroup anxiety. IGDs also develop a dual identity (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000); students maintain separate identities through their memberships in different groups while also developing a superordinate identity—not as students at the same institution or on the same team but as students making a commitment to work together to bridge differences. In this vein, IGDs overcome barriers to intergroup interactions by leveraging a “strength and safety in numbers” motivation (Park & Hinsz, 2006) to approach dialogic communication as an opportunity for reward rather than threat.

Still, while these conditions outline positive features of IGD, they provide little guidance for how to communicate within IGD. The dialogic component of a critical-dialogic model makes communication explicit, offering students the basic tools they need to work through complex, and sometimes uncomfortable, intergroup interactions. Students address their anxieties head-on in the first couple sessions, discussing their hopes and fears about IGD with one another—ultimately normalizing these concerns for group members to help them recognize that they are not alone. Creating guidelines for remaining engaged and respectful throughout the course of the dialogue teaches students the necessary conditions and provides a shared understanding for what to expect for communication to work effectively. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own participation to consider how their usage of “air time” relates to their identities and the privileges afforded by those identities; they explore different seating arrangements (integrated vs. segregated) and how that influences both individual and group-level communication processes.

Integrating Critical and Dialogic Processes

A critical-dialogic model aims to integrate a critical analysis of structural inequality with communication processes that foster meaningful connections across difference for diverse peers. While understanding inequality and building intergroup relationships are valuable ends themselves, these outcomes also pave the way for the possibility for intergroup collaboration, particularly collaboration that promotes action to redress systemic inequality and improve relations between groups at both the interpersonal and societal level. Indeed, members of disadvantaged groups are unlikely to be satisfied with merely establishing a positive relationship or hearing that advantaged group members now understand structural inequality; rather, members from disadvantaged groups are motivated to see change in the power structure (Saguy et al., 2008), such that members from the advantaged group want to take action. Thus, intergroup communication must serve as a mechanism for developing relationships between groups and building collaborations to address structural inequality.

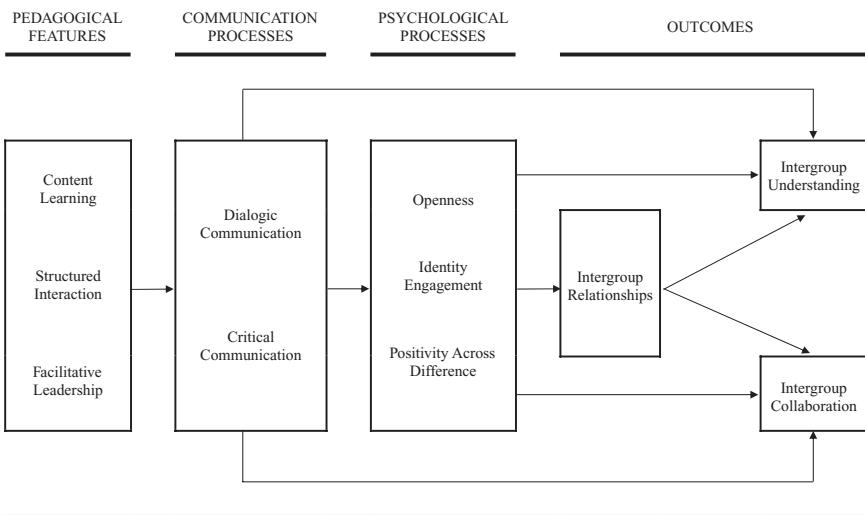


Fig. 1. A critical-dialogic theoretical model of intergroup dialogue.

A Critical-Dialogic Process Model

Figure 1 displays the critical-dialogic model that guided a national research project of nine universities conducting IGDs. Pedagogical components of IGD (exposure to content, structured interaction, and guided facilitation) foster both critical (critical self-reflection, alliance building) and dialogic (engaging self, learning from others) communication processes (Nagda, 2006). These critical-dialogic communication processes in turn are hypothesized to facilitate openness (active thinking and commitment to considering multiple perspectives), identity engagement, and positive interactions across difference (comfort in intergroup communication, positive interactions with other groups, positive emotions when interacting with other groups). These psychological processes are hypothesized to lead to relational processes (intergroup empathy or motivation to bridge differences), which in turn foster intergroup understanding, collaboration, and action (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zuñiga, 2009).

Pedagogical Features

A critical-dialogic model highlights three distinct pedagogical processes embedded within the design of IGD—content learning, structured interaction, and facilitative leadership. *Content learning* refers to the course materials and content that students are exposed to through readings which offer a wide range of

theoretical, conceptual, empirical, and narrative approaches to presenting information about identity, socialization, and experiences with racism, sexism, classism, etc. Together, these readings present multiple perspectives from authors representing a diverse spectrum of identities. For example, students read about a cycle of socialization, a conceptual model demonstrating how perspectives on the world are shaped through external influences (peers, teachers, parents, the media) while developing into an adult (Harro, 2000). Facilitators and students bring readings into the classroom for participants to examine critically, integrating their own personal experiences to reflect on points of intersection and disjuncture between course concepts and personal life experiences.

Structured interaction refers to the intentional creation of structured interaction across group differences. Students are intentionally placed into small groups of 12-16 students with diverse identities. Allport's (1954) requirement for equal status among group members is a central component of group structure, balancing the numerical representation of members of different groups (e.g., for racial dialogues, equal numbers of white students and students of color) relevant to the focus of the IGD. Balancing identities helps prevent students from reproducing inequality within the dialogue by providing members of some groups more "air time" and a greater presence within the room. The nature of a small-group learning environment also creates the conditions for maximal dialogic interactions between students, providing students the opportunity to get to know one another more deeply to build relationships within and across group boundaries. Structured interaction also involves the use of structured exercises and activities that provide students with active learning experiences, which bring to life course content presented in the readings.

Facilitative leadership plays a critical role in maximizing the potential of content-based learning and structured interactions. As the research presented earlier makes clear, interactions between members of different racial/ethnic groups can produce a host of negative outcomes and can replicate dynamics of inequality. Guided interaction by facilitators helps students navigate the rocky road of intergroup interactions. Trained facilitators strive to create an inclusive space for all participants, modeling effective dialogic communication between themselves as a team and in the classroom with participants. Facilitators foster dialogic communication among participants with guiding questions, asking for clarification, probing as necessary, and occasionally summarizing the dialogue. Facilitators also focus their attention on group dynamics—who is talking or not and why, how both what is being said and how it is being communicated relate to identity and inequality. Facilitators highlight individual and group-level emotional reactions and experiences in the group, normalizing feelings of discomfort or anxiety, and reframing experiences of difficulty as learning opportunities.

Communication Processes

Nagda (2006) identified four communication processes explaining students' increased motivation to bridge group differences over the course of an IGD, which together enact a critical-dialogic model of IGD. *Dialogic processes* focus on a dynamic exchange of self- and other-oriented communication. The communication process of *engaging self* involves each student's own active participation in IGD through personal sharing of one's perspectives and life experiences and addressing difficult issues. *Learning from others*—listening to others, asking questions, and exploring different life experiences and perspectives is a second aspect of the dialogic process. Together, these dialogic communication processes provide students with a dynamic interaction of sharing and listening to better understand one another, helping them to identify both commonalities and differences that foster improved intergroup interactions and relationships (Nagda, 2006).

Of course, even though engaging self and learning from others may cultivate better relationships between members of different groups, these forms of communication alone do not focus on a sociopolitical analysis of systems of power and inequality. Consistent with recent experimental research documenting that intergroup contact must focus on both relationship building and power to meet the goals and objectives of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Saguy et al., 2008), we argue that communication across difference must include a critical component. Students need to find ways to communicate effectively across the very issues that divide them—systems of power and privilege that sustain structural inequality.

Critical reflection refers to communication where students examine their own perspectives, experiences, and assumptions, as well as those of other students in the dialogue through a critical analysis of power, privilege, and inequality. These critical reflections help students understand how power and inequality influence one's own and others' perspectives, providing a foundation from which to use their relationships with one another to explore challenging and often divisive issues. A second critical process is *alliance building*, which refers to communication processes that focus on working through disagreements and talking about ways to collaborate to work against structural inequality. Alliance building leverages the relationships formed through dialogic communication with a critical analysis to build collaborations across difference (Nagda, 2006).

Together, these communication processes are hypothesized to foster change in psychological processes (the way people think and feel) in IGD by shaping the interactions into productive encounters which address the interests and concerns of both advantaged and disadvantaged group members. Dialogic communication builds relationships, not by ignoring group differences for the sake of short-lived intergroup harmony, but by exploring both commonality and difference. Effective communication does not sweep difficult and divisive issues “under the rug”; rather, critical communication processes provide students with a vehicle to navigate the

rough terrain of power and inequality that otherwise might disintegrate the ties forged through dialogic communication.

Psychological Processes

Critical and dialogic communication processes in intergroup interaction are hypothesized to foster increased *openness* (active thinking about one's self and society; consideration of multiple perspectives). Similarly, effective communication within intergroup interactions ought to foster more-positive feelings toward interacting with students of different cultural backgrounds. The critical-dialogic communication processes are expected to promote *positive interactions across difference* (greater comfort in communicating with people of other groups or framed negatively—less anxiety, more frequent positive interactions with diverse peers—having meaningful discussions about race while sharing personal feelings and problems, and finally, more positive emotions during these interactions—feeling trusting, excited, open, and engaged). We also hypothesize that critical-dialogic communication processes will foster greater *identity engagement* because much of the learning is centered on understanding the influence of social identities on one's own and other people's perspectives and worldviews.

While many of these psychological processes could be conceptualized as outcomes themselves, we highlight their roles as processes in that they are believed to play a critical role in influencing (mediating) other outcomes. These processes together are hypothesized to foster relational outcomes, especially intergroup empathy and motivation to bridge differences, which in turn cultivate intergroup understanding and collaboration. Thus, we conceptualize relationship building as an intergroup outcome itself as well as a process that facilitates understanding and action.

Outcomes

Intergroup relationship outcomes (and processes) include intergroup empathy and motivation to bridge differences. Empathy can involve a critical component emphasizing reactions to structural inequality and/or a dialogic component emphasizing parallel emotional experiences with others pertaining to their personal life experiences. Defined in this way, intergroup empathy is also bidirectional across relationships of privilege and power, with advantaged groups empathizing with the experiences of disadvantaged groups and disadvantaged groups empathizing with the socialization that takes place in advantaged groups, influencing their perspective on the world. Additionally, effective critical-dialogic communication ought to promote increased motivation to bridge differences—recognizing the importance of learning about different groups and educating others about one's own group memberships through sharing perspectives and life experiences.

Intergroup understanding refers to increased awareness and structural understanding of racial, gender and socio-economic inequality—recognizing that what individuals can achieve is still limited by their membership in advantaged or disadvantaged social identity groups and institutional politics and practices that intentionally or unintentionally promote the welfare of some groups more than others. Moreover, not only are students hypothesized to increase their structural understanding of inequality but also to critique examples of inequality (e.g., believing that racial/ethnic profiling is a serious problem, that there should be stronger legislation against perpetrators of hate crimes, and so forth).

Intergroup collaborative action outcomes include increased confidence and frequency in taking action that is self-directed (recognizing one's own biases, avoiding using negative language that reinforces stereotypes, and making efforts to get to know people of diverse backgrounds), other-directed (challenging others on derogatory comments while reinforcing others for behaviors that support cultural diversity), and collaborative in nature (working with others to challenge discrimination, participating in a coalition of different groups to address social issues). IGD is expected to provide students with a sense of efficacy for taking action, while also increasing the frequency with which they engage in that action. Moreover, participation in IGD is also expected to promote increased commitment to action post-college intended to redress inequality—influencing the political structure through voting and educational campaigns as well as efforts to correct social-economic inequality and promote interracial understanding.

Evidence for a Critical-Dialogic Model

Prior research on IGD in general has shown a number of effects (for a review, see Dessel & Rogge, 2008), although we focus here only on research evaluating a critical-dialogic model. A longitudinal comparison (pretest and posttest) combined with a participant/matched comparison group found that the course significantly increased students' structural explanations for inequality and endorsement of actions to correct inequalities in intergroup conflict situations (Lopez, Gurin, & Nagda, 1998), and students' active thinking, perspective taking, and interest in political issues (Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004). Other pretest/posttest studies have found that dialogue participants increase their motivation to learn from others, educate each other, and bridge differences between racial/ethnic groups, and also their confidence in taking actions to reduce self-prejudice and to promote diversity among others (Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004).

The few studies that have examined how the outcomes of IGDs occur suggest two kinds of processes. Content (as reflected in readings, lectures, and papers) particularly fosters cognitive learning, for example understanding causes of racial, gender, and income inequalities. Active learning processes (as reflected in classroom exercises and simulations, journal writing, discussion, and sharing

of personal stories) particularly influence thinking about inequality and actions (Lopez et al., 1998). Nagda et al. (2004) also showed that the motivation to bridge differences served as a psychological process that mediated the impact of IGD on student's confidence to take actions toward self-prejudice reduction and promoting diversity among others. In a follow-up study, Nagda (2006) identified two sets of communication processes—dialogic (appreciating difference-learning from others, engaging self) and critical (critical reflection and alliance building)—that mediated the impact of IGD pedagogy on motivation to bridge differences.

The prior research on IGD is limited in a number of ways. One, by not using random assignment, it is not possible to know if effects from pre-post assessments could have happened even without enrollment in IGD courses. Two, the studies are generally located in a single institution, which limits generalizability. Three, by being limited to assessing effects only over the course of one semester, it is unclear if effects persist beyond the immediacy of course participation. Finally, there is a lack of an overarching theoretical framework that guides both practice and research, including measurements that should be taken of both outcomes and processes occurring within the dialogues.

A Multi-University Randomized Evaluation

The multi-university IGD research study addressed these limitations by (1) involving nine colleges and universities, including seven public (Arizona State University, University of California-San Diego, University of Maryland-College Park, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Texas-Austin, University of Washington) and two private institutions (Occidental College, Syracuse University) and (2) by conducting a randomized experiment using a standardized IGD curriculum. Approximately, 1,500 students (nearly equal numbers of women of color, men of color, white women, and white men) who completed an online application form to take IGD were randomly assigned to a dialogue group or a waitlist control group. Importantly, while randomizing students who apply to take a dialogue controls for change that might have taken place for *interested* students who did *not* take an IGD, it does not address issues of self-selection, leaving open the possibility that observed effects do not generalize to students who do not express interest in IGD. In addition to the randomized evaluation, a nonrandomized matched (on race and gender) group of students (also equal numbers of women of color, men of color, white women, and white men) enrolled in social science courses that focus on race and gender content was also used as a comparison to the IGD students. All participants in the study completed a pretest survey (beginning of semester/quarter), a posttest survey (at the end of the semester/quarter—near 100% response rate), and a delayed posttest (1 year later—82% response rate). The research and practice were guided by the critical-dialogic theoretical framework presented earlier in this article.

Results show consistently positive treatment effects. Students in both race and gender IGDs demonstrate greater increases in outcomes compared to students in the randomized control group; effects were found for members of all four demographic groups sampled for the study (women of color, men of color, white women, white men). Specifically, students in the dialogues showed greater increases than their counterparts in a control group in intergroup understanding—in their awareness and structural understanding of racial and gender inequality. Moreover, these effects generalize beyond race and gender dialogues to poverty through increased structural attributions for income inequality. Similar patterns were also found for intergroup relationships—empathy and motivation to bridge differences—and intergroup collaboration—confidence and frequency in taking action, and post-college commitment to redressing inequality. This same pattern of results is also evident when comparing students in IGD to a matched comparison group of students taking race and gender social science courses with one exception. Students in IGD and social science classes increased similarly in their structural attributions for poverty. Thus, at the level of outcomes, we conclude that IGD works and that it works better than traditional lecture-discussion social science classes that cover content similar to IGD but do not make explicit use of a critical-dialogic model (see Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga, 2009).

With regard to process, the critical-dialogic theoretical model emphasizes the central role of communication and pedagogical processes in IGD. Two articles empirically examine the role of process using data from the multi-university study. The first article, examining how IGD affects students' understanding of inequality and motivations to act to address inequalities, showed that students in IGD compared to their counterparts in the social science courses (1) increased more in critique of inequality and commitment to post-college commitment to redress inequalities over the academic term (semester or quarter), (2) rated the four communication processes—learning from others, engaging self, critical reflection, and alliance building—as occurring more frequently in IGD than in social science courses, and (3) that these communication processes mediated the impact of dialogue (relative to social science courses) on students' critique of inequality and post-college commitment to action (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Gurin-Sands, & Osuna, 2009). In other words, the difference in critique of inequality and post-college commitment to action between the two kinds of educational approaches is explained by the presence of more critical-dialogic communication in IGDs.

A second forthcoming article (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Coombes, 2009) extends the theoretical and empirical understanding of the communication processes by asking what kind of pedagogical features foster these specific communication processes. In essence, we empirically tested the theoretical linkage between the defined pedagogical features—content learning, structured interaction, and facilitative guidance—and the four communication processes—learning from others, engaging self, critical reflection, and alliance building. These were all measured

at the end of the academic term because they were ratings of what happened in their respective courses during that term. There were no significant differences in the content-based learning between the IGD students and the social science students. However, IGD students indicated that structured interaction and facilitative leadership were significantly more important to their learning than did students in the social science classes. Furthermore, these distinctive features foster the communication processes.

While these findings together strongly support the effectiveness of a critical-dialogic model, one possible critique is that immediate effects of dialogue merely reflect demand characteristics of students reporting what they think facilitators in dialogue courses want them to say. However, to a remarkable degree, effects of dialogue remain significant 1 year later. While the means for most outcomes were lower 1 year later than at posttest, demonstrating declines over time, they are still significantly higher than the means for the control group. Thus, the amount of change that takes place between pretest and the 1 year follow-up (15-16 months later) was significantly larger for students in dialogue than for their counterparts in the control group for 24 out of 27 of the measures used to assess focal outcomes and processes of IGD at all three time points.

To summarize results from the multi-university study, we show strong support for a critical-dialogic model of IGD: (1) IGD is effective in generating positive educational outcomes that cover the range of understanding, relationship building, and action related to inequality and undoing inequality, showing both immediate and long-term effects¹; (2) the critical-dialogic communication processes that occur among students in IGD play an important mediational role in connecting IGD method to the desired outcomes; and (3) the IGD pedagogical features help foster the communication processes.² It is also noteworthy that the outcomes assessed in this research do not focus specifically on members of the dialogue group (which would raise questions about whether effects generalize beyond individuals in the dialogue toward their groups) but reflect general orientations toward thinking about inequality, relationships building across difference, and collaborative action. Experiences *within* dialogue influence *general* orientations toward intergroup concerns in society (even 1 year later). While these findings highlight the strongest empirical evidence for IGD to date, this research is not without its limitations. This randomized trial demonstrates experimental effects for students who apply to take an IGD, yet these effects may not generalize to students who have not expressed any interest in participating in dialogue. At

¹All reported effects have been verified using multi-level modeling analytic approaches that account for statistical interdependence in nested data structures (time points within persons, persons within dialogue groups).

²While pedagogical and communication processes measured at the individual level mediate change in outcomes, our research to date has not yet examined how group level variability affects individual change. Future papers will explore these questions in detail.

this point, we can only assert the effectiveness of a critical-dialogic model for individuals with some expressed openness to this experience. Future research is needed to determine the extent to which effects are generalizable to all students.

Implications for Policy and Implementation

The issues highlighted in this article and in the research on IGD suggest policy implications at three levels: higher education policy, institutional policy, and programmatic policy.

Higher Education Policy

Higher education policy centers on the continued controversies about the value of diversity and the means to achieve diversity. Since the Supreme Court decision in 2003 when both diversity as a compelling state interest and affirmative action were affirmed by the majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, scholars and journalists have continued to debate the merits of that decision and reasoning by the majority of the Court. At the heart of this controversy is the question of the extent to which the Constitution and the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits *the use of race in all circumstances*. In addition, three specific policy questions continue to be raised: (1) Can the educational benefits of diversity be achieved in institutions that do not have a socially, demographically, racially diverse student body? (2) What is the role of student body diversity in achieving the outcomes that so many of the *amici* for the University of Michigan stressed, specifically cultural competence to provide leadership in a diverse and global world? and (3) What can/should higher education institutions do beyond recruiting and retaining a diverse student body to assure that students have the opportunity to benefit educationally from multiple types of diversity?

With respect to the first question, research does show that some intellectual and social benefits of diversity can be achieved in racially homogeneous institutions that offer other dimensions of diversity to their students (Kuh & Umbach, 2005). With respect to the second question, we reviewed research earlier in this article showing that students in the most racially diverse higher education institutions: (1) interact across race/ethnicity most frequently, (2) collectively represent the most variable opinions and viewpoints, and (3) are most likely to express cross-cultural work competencies post-college.

Our work has the most relevance to the third question. Higher-education institutions must continue to be committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, a goal that has become more difficult rather than easier as state ballot initiatives around the country following the 2003 Supreme Court decision increasingly limit the use of race/ethnicity in admissions policies. In addition, higher education

also needs to make use of whatever level of structural diversity that exists on a campus (including all identities—race/ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc.) to assure that students *will benefit from diversity*. As educators know well, the mere presence of institutional resources—libraries, faculty, technology, and diversity—will not influence learning unless steps are taken to assure that students make use of these resources. Thus, for educational benefits to accrue, student body diversity must be leveraged rather than assuming it will automatically produce learning about and from diverse peers.

Institutional Policy

Administrators of higher education need to consider *how* to foster learning from meaningful rather than superficial interactions across many dimensions of diversity. Implementing intergroup dialogue is one way, although obviously not the only way, to do that. Efforts to build and institutionalize IGD programs must address several issues and questions that have arisen across 20 years of experience with them at the universities and colleges involved in the multi-university research project. First, there is the question of what is the best “home” for a dialogue program and how best to sustain it within the academy. There is no “one right way” or “one right place.” What we do know is that effectiveness depends on having interest and commitment from various constituencies on campus. Student interest and excitement, strong administrative support, and faculty involvement are all important. As much as possible, a partnership between academic affairs and student affairs is ideal to house the program because IGD courses ask students to consider and integrate what they are learning academically with their broader experiences with diversity on campus. Unfortunately, these two divisions are often divided in practice on many campuses and joint sponsorship may not be possible. In such cases, a strong home in one or the other can help promote and sustain IGDs. Leadership endorsement and support, for example from the president, a dean, a department chair, or the head of student affairs, are crucial to assure that IGD will be perceived within the educational mission of the university.

In addition to high-level support for the educational value of IGDs, material resources are necessary in order to offer a program with trained facilitators in classes with no more than 20 students. In some institutions, it has proven effective to use staff from the division of student affairs and undergraduate students, along with faculty, so that the cost of teaching these courses is greatly reduced. Even so, financial support for building staff and faculty capacity is essential, just as it is for other educational innovations.

Whether or not IGDs should only be implemented within credit bearing courses is another question for institutions. While the multi-university research project evaluated only credit-bearing IGD courses, typically conferring two to three academic credits, many dialogue programs across the country (and those

included in our nine-university study) did not start out that way. IGDs have emerged as both curricular and co-curricular programs, although there is little evidence to date about the effectiveness of the co-curricular programs. Offering credit is one way, but doubtless not the only way, that institutions can convey what Allport (1954) called sanctioning by authorities. He argued that for intergroup contact to produce positive outcomes, contact must be actively supported by relevant authorities. That is an important issue for institutions to address.

Should IGD be required for students? Evidence accumulating from the field experiments conducted in the multi-university project sometimes leads people to suggest that all students should be required to take IGD courses. However, as noted earlier, we cannot be sure that the effects found in this research project would hold for students who do not want to be in an IGD course. We suspect that the dynamics in a required dialogue course could subvert whatever possible benefits these courses might have for students. That said, we do know from experience across the nine participating institutions that there are many more students who want to enroll in dialogue courses than currently can be accommodated. We recommend that the priority should be on meeting this interest rather than pressing for required participation. Too often educators tend to think that a program or course that has proven effective with a particular group of students—those majoring in a particular discipline or those expressing particular interests—ought to be required, rather than be made more widely available.

IGD practice in *how* to communicate across many kinds of differences also applies beyond courses. It is especially applicable for training residence hall staff, who in most institutions include undergraduate peer advisors who have the most direct contact with other undergraduates living in university residence halls. The complexities of the experiences of cross-racial roommates that we noted earlier, for example, could be more effectively handled if residence hall advisors were trained to facilitate dialogic communication when roommates experience conflicts or disengage from each other. Oftentimes, students of different racial/ethnic (or religious or nationality) backgrounds are put together as roommates with the hope that somehow their living situation will become a promotional environment (Higgins, 1997) for learning, growth, and positive dialogue. That may happen in some instances, but the research on cross-racial roommates shows that it often does not. Thus, facilitating how to communicate across differences may be crucial for roommate pairs with little or no previous cross-cultural experience. The same may also be important for roommate pairs from similar backgrounds but who nonetheless lack communication skills for negotiating disagreements. Because the first year in college is the only time in many institutions that students *do* live in diverse settings, institutions should do everything possible to effectively utilize diversity in the residence hall to encourage the development of the cross-cultural competencies that students will need in their future careers and lives. IGD theory and practice offer an effective model for training residence hall staff to help accomplish this goal.

Programmatic Policy

Implications for implementing a program of IGD are also evident in our experience in the multi-university research project. One concerns the importance of assuring race and gender diversity (and other kinds of diversity as well) in the dialogue courses. Students do not automatically register for IGDs. Instead, they apply online, indicating preferences for particular dialogue topics, making it possible to assure diversity of participants and, ideally, equal numbers of students from the identity groups that define a particular dialogue. Before we implemented the multi-university research project which required equal numbers of white men, white women, men of color, and women of color in both race and gender dialogues, institutions sometimes conducted race dialogues that were disproportionately female and gender dialogues that were disproportionately comprised of white students. That happened because more women tended to be interested in race dialogues and more white students tended to be interested in gender dialogues. To meet the requirements of the research project, it was necessary to mount outreach and recruitment to attract more men to the race dialogues and more students of color to the gender dialogues. Having an equal number of these four groups of students made it possible to keep race and gender in the forefront in both types of dialogues and to press students to continually consider their multiple race and gender identities. When other topics (sexuality, social class, religion) define dialogues to be offered, institutions need to keep the issue of diversity within dialogues in mind so that multiple identities can be surfaced, and that equal numbers of the defining identity groups assure the equality in status that Allport (1954) considered an important condition for positive intergroup relations.

Some will ask why we did not disaggregate the students of color so as to assess effects for various racial/ethnic groups within that category. Most institutions, including those in this research project, will simply not have enough students interested in IGD courses to conduct them by pairing whites with students from each of the other non-white groups, or pairing students from those groups with each other. We see this as a limitation of our research, but it will also likely be a limitation for most institutions that attempt to implement an IGD program.

The selection and training of facilitators must also be considered in implementing IGD programs. At some institutions, non-credit dialogues (not part of the multi-university project described in this article) are run entirely by student organizations with few criteria for selecting facilitators and little to no training for how to deal with group dynamics that arise, for example when students talk *about* race (or gender or sexual orientation or social class) *across* race (or gender or sexual orientation or social class). We do not recommend developing dialogue programs that do not provide training and supervision about how to process the disagreements and emotions that IGDs inevitably surface. Training and supervision for effective facilitation should be a top commitment.

The question often arises whether or not to utilize peer versus professional staff (or faculty) facilitators in IGD. While there is no research yet that demonstrates the effectiveness of one group of facilitators over another, we do know that some institutions and some programs have strong opinions about this issue. Some, reflecting democratic education, value using peer facilitators so that there is greater equality between participants and facilitators. They argue that participants will respond more easily to peers and that peer facilitators are more familiar than are professional staff with the campus and societal issues that interest other students. On the other hand, some institutions value the experience and breadth of training that professional/faculty and staff bring to facilitation beyond gains that might result from peer connections with other peers. Some institutions also do not allow peer facilitation in credit bearing courses, even under close faculty supervision and observation. While it is difficult to prescribe one model of facilitation over another, we do know that facilitators—students, professional staff, and faculty—benefit enormously by having *intensive training* specific to IGD facilitation. They also need a support system that can provide consultation and a space for reflection while facilitating dialogues. A mixed model involving both the divisions of academic and student affairs in which students, staff, and faculty are all involved holds particular promise because it advances collaborations across a campus in recognizing the educational value of diversity.

Final Thoughts and Future Directions

So what should institutions of higher education do—take a “hands off” or a “hands on” approach to diversity? Should we assume that simply having a diverse student body on campus, in classrooms, and in residence halls will prepare graduates to enter and navigate a diverse society, or do we actively help students develop both knowledge about their own and others’ cultures and perspectives as well as communicative ability to engage with people across difference? It is our strong view that the latter strategy is required as higher education prepares students for involvement in a global world and workforce that will demand these communication and perspective-taking skills.

Social psychological research on intergroup interactions makes clear that a “hands off” approach is not likely to produce optimal learning experiences for students. Educators cannot rely on mere exposure to diverse students and perspectives as a mechanism to prepare students for a globalized world. They must provide them with the experience, understanding, and communicative tools to engage and collaborate with others who are different from them. Moreover, these efforts must move beyond simply finding pathways to intergroup harmony, to creating structured and guided interaction for addressing the difficult issues such as privilege, power, and inequality that continue to create a sharp division between groups.

We have presented one educational model for accomplishing this goal. IGD integrates structured communication processes, both dialogic—focusing on relationship building, and critical—focusing on systems of power and inequality, with guided facilitation to help all students overcome the fears and anxiety that they bring to intergroup interactions. This model utilizes these difficult interactions as learning opportunities for students to work together to build the kind of structured communication that promotes desirable outcomes for both disadvantaged and advantaged group members. In this way, IGD addresses the important challenges associated with unsustained and unguided intergroup interaction in social psychological research. We do not intend to suggest that this is the only model for approaching this endeavor, but offer a critical-dialogic model of IGD as a theoretically grounded and empirically tested approach to intergroup communication.

Although numerous programs and courses offered on college campuses make use of diversity as an educational resource, they rarely, if ever (to our knowledge), are evaluated using random assignment of interested students to either participate in the program or to a waitlist-control group. Indeed, random assignment is exceedingly difficult to achieve in higher education because educators (and Internal Review Boards) hate to withhold a course or opportunity thought to be beneficial to students for ethical reasons, even when there are more students applying to or interested in a course than can be accommodated. As a result, it is unclear if courses or programs truly have an impact on students. For this reason, we believe it is crucial to use random assignment when assessing the impact of diversity programs (or any other educational programs). Given a dearth of experimental evidence for the effectiveness of other programs, it is difficult to determine whether IGD is more or less effective than other approaches. Future research is needed to address these questions.

Although research conducted by our collaborative team provides experimental evidence for the effectiveness of a critical-dialogic model, future research is also needed to isolate the core “active ingredients” or components of the program. Research to date cannot address whether the entire program is necessary to produce the observed effects or whether the IGD model can be structured differently (e.g., fewer contact hours, more focus on some issues relative to others). Indeed, these pose important questions for program implementation, and future efforts must address these questions in order to maximize the utility of this intervention model.

In documenting an effective intervention for cultivating intergroup relationships, understanding, and collaboration, this model also highlights important implications for theory and research in intergroup relations. Research in social psychology has focused too long on prejudice reduction as the golden pathway to overcoming group divisions. Yet reducing prejudice may do little for building cross-group understanding, relationships, effective communication, and collaboration. Intergroup relations must go beyond getting along, or focusing on how individuals from advantaged groups can decrease prejudice and increase positive

evaluations of people who are different from them. Research is needed to continue to document how this model (and others) of intergroup contact can promote meaningful relationships and commitment to participation in a diverse democracy—the world in which students live.

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