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## **Expanding the Reach of Intergroup Dialogue: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Two Teaching Methods for Undergraduate Multicultural Courses**

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# Expanding the Reach of Intergroup Dialogue: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Two Teaching Methods for Undergraduate Multicultural Courses

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Colleges and universities are closely examining their practices for engaging campus constituents in multicultural education. One method that has received increased attention is the use of intergroup dialogue (IGD). Although there is mounting research evidence of the effectiveness of IGD in meeting the goals and objectives of multicultural education, there remains a need to demonstrate its ability to be integrated into an existing curriculum and what specifically it adds to typical methods for teaching about diversity. The current study compared undergraduate diversity-topic courses that were taught with and without an IGD component integrated into the existing curriculum. One hundred twelve undergraduate students enrolled in 1 of 5 courses completed survey measures at the beginning and end of the semester. Results from split-plot ANOVAs demonstrated that students enrolled in courses with IGD showed greater

meta-analysis of intergroup contact research suggests that the power of contact with outgroup members may not only relate to the “liking” of members of that outgroup but may extend to “greater liking” for members of still other outgroups (Pettigrew et al., 2011, p. 275). Accordingly, educational and societal benefits of increased opportunities for meaningful interaction across one social identity group on college campuses may extend beyond to relations with members of other social identity groups.

Many diversity education initiatives on college campuses emphasize cross-cultural education, which encourages students to learn about individuals who have different identities and backgrounds (Gudykunst, 1998). Critical multicultural education, however, advanced the notion that students needed more than appreciation of diversity—they also need knowledge of how systems of power and privilege perpetuate inequality (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007) and the required skills to challenge these systems. Freire (1985) theorized that multicultural education should take a liberation approach, whereby students develop

they may not have the resources necessary to develop a full-scale IGD program offering stand-alone courses. Thus, when considering how institutions might implement the methods of IGD into an existing curriculum, as well as some of the criticisms of the IGD model, additional research is necessary to examine alternative approaches.

One study that examined IGD methods implemented into an existing undergraduate course was Muller and Miles's (2017) investigation of the effects of IGD in a course on multicultural psychology. Their multicultural psychology course met twice weekly and used traditional lecture/discussion methodologies to cover diversity-related content during the first half of the semester. During the second half of the semester, the class met once per week in this same format and once in IGD groups. When examining potential changes in students taking this course, the authors found that students reported less color-blind racial attitudes (on individual and institutional levels; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000) and greater empathic perspective-taking from pre- to postdialogue. These findings were in line with the objectives of IGD to raise awareness of systems of power and oppression and enhance relations across identity differences. Additionally, this research presented a model for how to incorporate IGD into an existing course in psychology to enhance student engagement with course content. Muller and Miles did not, however, have a comparison group with which they could compare student outcomes. Therefore, a next logical step in this line of inquiry would be to compare such a course using IGD to a more traditional course that focuses on diversity-related content without the IGD component.

### Cultural Studies Pedagogy

Building on the research by Muller and Miles (2017) and Gurin et al. (2013), the current study sought to compare college courses that cover diversity-related content using traditional and IGD teaching methods. Although critical multicultural education theory (e.g., Adams et al., 2007) asserts the importance of learning about systems of oppression, including one's personal participation in, and experience with, such systems, and the benefit of dialogic pedagogy (Freire, 1985), many college courses on diversity rely on the unidirectional presentation of didactic content without requiring students to examine their own or others' personal engagement with the content. Additionally, traditionally taught courses on diversity-related topics generally do not meet the optimal conditions for best outcomes of intergroup contact, including equal status between groups, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authorities (Allport, 1954). As demonstrated by previous research (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Gurin et al., 2013; Muller & Miles, 2017), IGD presents an opportunity to extend learning beyond the passive receipt of information to a more active, engaged, and personal understanding of content related to diversity. Therefore, we set out to answer the question of whether IGD adds to students' understanding of multicultural content beyond participation in a traditional diversity-related didactic course. We hypothesized that existing courses that teach diversity-related content, when paired with IGD methods, would enhance students' critical consciousness, empathic perspective-taking, awareness of oppressive systems, and openness to learning about diversity-related content more than that of traditionally taught didactic courses covering similar content. These outcomes are consistent

with the critical-dialogic model of multicultural education that emphasizes developing one's critical consciousness and awareness of power imbalance in one's own and others' lives through engaged communication that encourages empathy and understanding (Gurin-Sands et al., 2012). Such an examination of teaching diversity in higher education is necessary as we navigate the challenges and capitalize on the growth of our diverse campuses.

### Methods

#### Participants

The current study took place at a mid-Atlantic university near Baltimore, Maryland, where the student body is 60% female and the racial composition is 57.3% White, 19.7% African American or Black, 7.1% Latino or Hispanic, and 5.6% Asian American, with smaller representation among other racial groups. In response to a student protest that came on the heels of the death of Freddie Grey in police custody, along with incidences of bias and hate that were occurring on the campus, administrators at the university agreed to enhance efforts to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion on campus. What followed was a partnering between academic and student affairs to train faculty and staff in IGD facilitation, develop courses in which IGD could be a component of the curriculum, and facilitate dialogues on conflict-laden topics among

throughout the entire semester (i.e., lecture/discussion; = 57). All courses had a primary objective of educating students on topics related to human diversity and students self-selected into the courses. The IGD courses were taught by four different instructors across two semesters (one White female tenured faculty, one Black female tenure-track faculty, one White female adjunct faculty, and one Black male adjunct faculty) and the Cross-Cultural Psychology course was taught by the same instructor across two semesters (biracial female tenure-track faculty). Further, the IGD courses included two faculty or staff facilitators for every IGD group in the course. These facilitators were separate from the course instructors

M  
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Table 2

Scale		Pre		Post		t	p	
		M	SD	M	SD			
Openness to Diversity								
	Total score							
	IGD	52	4.19	.67	4.50	.73	3.63***	51
	Cross-cultural	53	4.25	.68	4.15	.84	.93	52
Awareness of Privilege and Oppression								
	Total score							
	IGD	49	180.3	24.45	192.00	25.81	3.87***	48
	Cross-cultural	50	172	24.63	177.4	25.88	2.48*	49
Heterosexism								
	IGD	52	45.04	8.30	48.69	8.09	3.41***	51
	Cross-cultural	54	42.54	9.50	45.11	9.54	2.64-1.125TD(Cross-cultural)-2i6.8(53nTm(49lin	

Our hypothesis that courses with an IGD component would demonstrate greater increases than a traditionally taught diversity course in critical consciousness, empathic perspective-taking, awareness of oppressive systems, and openness to learning about diversity-related content was partially supported. Specifically, students in the course with IGD showed greater increases in racial oppression awareness, openness to diversity, and empathic feeling and acting as an ally. These findings extend the reach of previous studies (e.g., Gurin et al., 2004; Krings et al., 2015; Muller & Miles, 2017) by demonstrating the effectiveness of IGD within an established curricular course compared with traditional didactic teaching methods. Further, a criticism of the literature on IGD has been that the implementation of such programs varies considerably, making replication and comparison difficult (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). With the current study, we extended the IGD methods described by Muller and Miles (2017) to

demonstrate that courses using an IGD component were more effective at increasing students' openness to diversity, awareness of racial privilege and oppression, and empathic feelings toward people with oppressed identities than multicultural education courses without the IGD component. Additionally, IGD was implemented in different courses with similar, but not the same, content, boosting the external validity of the findings. Finally, all IGD faculty and staff facilitators in this study participated in a 2-day training and followed the same procedures during their dialogue (i.e., weekly consultation meetings with IGD coordinator, weekly cofacilitator meetings) to ensure the appropriate application of the critical-dialogic model. Such training and consultation reduced the threat of inconsistent facilitation approaches across groups and provided a mechanism to prepare faculty and staff to engage students in this empirically supported approach to multicultural education.

Table 3

Scale			$\eta^2$	
ODCS				
Total score				
Time	2.56	1,103	.02	.11
IGD	1.38		.01	.24
Time $\times$ IGD	9.18		.08	<.01
APAOS				
Total score				
Time	21.18	1,97	.18	<.001
IGD	5.92		.06	<.05
Time $\times$ IGD	2.76		.03	.10
Heterosexism				
Time	18.75	1,104	.15	<.001
IGD	3.75		.04	.06
Time $\times$ IGD	.56		.01	.45
Sexism				
Time	.09	1,107	.001	.76
IGD	.01		.00	.93
Time $\times$ IGD	.03		.00	.86
Classism				
Time	46.38	1,105	.31	<.001
IGD	1.52		.01	.22
Time $\times$ IGD	.25		.002	.62
Racism				
Time	10.77	1,107	.09	<.01
IGD	4.79		.04	<.05
Time $\times$ IGD	8.33		.07	<.01
ECCS				
Cultural openness and desire to learn				
Time	1.32	1,100	.01	.25
IGD	1.68		.02	.20
Time $\times$ IGD	.06		.001	.80
Resentment and cultural dominance				
Time	.01	1,98	.00	.91
IGD	.98		.01	.32
Time $\times$ IGD	.98		.01	.33
Anxiety and lack of multicultural self-efficacy				
Time	4.28	1,99	.04	<.05
IGD	.52		.01	.47
Time $\times$ IGD	.01		.000	.92
Empathic perspective taking				
Time	.01	1,102	.001	.75
IGD	.82		.01	.37
Time $\times$ IGD	.38		.004	.54
Awareness of contemporary racism and privilege				
Time	4.21	1,101	.04	<.05
IGD	4.22		.04	<.05
Time $\times$ IGD	1.27		.01	.26
Empathic feeling and acting as an ally				
Time	1.32	1,101	.01	.25
IGD	1.22		.01	.27
Time $\times$ IGD	4.07		.04	<.05

df = degrees of freedom; ODCS = Openness to Diversity and Challenges Scale; IGD = intergroup dialogue; APAOS = Awareness of Privilege and Oppression Scale; ECCS = Everyday Cultural Competency Scale.

The results of the current study align with the theories of critical multicultural education and intergroup contact. The IGD approach teaches strategies for listening and dialoguing to create greater empathy and understanding of different perspectives, consistent with the goals of critical multicultural education theory (Freire, 1985). The results of the current study demonstrate that diversity-related courses, with and without IGD, were effective in increasing awareness of systems of oppression and privilege, particularly

when it pertains to race, sexual orientation, and class. Further, over the course of the semester, students in all courses demonstrated increased scores on measures related to awareness of racism and privilege and the anxiety that often comes from such awareness. Thus, the component of multicultural education that pertains to raising awareness of systems of oppression appears to be effectively addressed using both traditional methods of teaching and IGD. However, the courses that included the IGD component also



increased students' empathic engagement across identity differences and the desire to act as an ally. IGD provides the necessary conditions for optimal intergroup contact by requiring balanced status between identity groups that are the focus of the dialogue, the common goal of greater intergroup understanding, teaching strategies for intergroup cooperation, and creating an institutional context that supports such dialogue. Thus, courses that fall under the umbrella of multicultural education and incorporate IGD may be more likely to fully realize the goals of this approach as outlined by Freire (1985), as IGD helps provide the optimal conditions for intergroup contact (Allport, 1954).

Although IGD has been a model for student engagement with diversity for decades and is gaining popularity at institutions of higher education, most programs described in the literature represent cocurricular activities in which students engage outside the classroom. Muller and Miles (2017) presented a model for incorporating IGD into a typical college course that covered content related to human diversity. By replicating their study method for incorporating IGD into a diversity topic course, we were able to replicate their findings of enhancing awareness of racial oppression and privilege and empathic perspective-taking and extend them to demonstrate the enhanced effect of IGD over a traditional college course covering diversity content. The current study also uncovered a main effect of course type on student awareness of racism and racial privilege. Specifically, students who enrolled in the courses with the IGD component demonstrated higher scores throughout the semester on this construct than students who enrolled in the traditionally taught course. Muller and Miles speculated that students who selected their course may have had greater awareness of racial oppression than other students who did not choose such a course, and the findings of the current study confirmed that suspicion. Students in the current sample who were higher on awareness of the systems of oppression and privilege may have been more apt to take a course that involved the IGD component when registering for classes.

The finding that students in the current study who took both types of courses increased in both awareness of privilege and oppression, anxiety and lack of multicultural self-efficacy is notable. The anxiety, fear, guilt, and shame that often comes from discussions of race-related content in the college classroom has been described in the literature for some time (e.g., Tatum, 1992; Tummala-Narra, 2009) and may also be true for content that addresses other identity differences (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, religion). Paralleling this literature, others have demonstrated that multicultural programming that encourages intergroup contact and connection has a small but positive effect on intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and acceptance of diversity (Simmons, Wittig, & Grant, 2010). Thus, these parallel processes of anxiety coupled with growth are evident in the results of the current study. As the campus context for this study represents a diverse student population, and the students in both classes mirrored one another in terms of racial and social class composition, both types of classes set the tone for intergroup contact while digesting diversity-relevant content. Although students in both types of courses benefitted from participation in multicultural education, the students with the IGD component appeared to have additional benefits that may have stemmed from the closer intergroup contact and the focus on persisting in cross-group discussion even when it provoked anxiety, tension, or guilt.

## DISCUSSION

Despite the strengths of this study, one must consider the findings in light of the limitations. The current study examined multiple courses over several semesters, each with different course instructors and related, but different, course content. Thus, we cannot rule out the possibility that the different course content or instructor characteristics contributed to the differences found between groups. Additionally, other course-related variables could have contributed to the results, including class size, the differences between upper- and lower-division courses, and/or the racial, age, and gender composition of the students in the courses, among other possibilities. Further, the IGD groups represented a range of topics of discussion, including race, sexual orientation, gender, and religion, and different facilitators led each dialogue group. These aspects of the study led to greater generalizability of the findings, though at the expense of certainty that participation in IGD was the cause of the effects discovered. Similarly, the student who chooses to enroll in a course with an IGD component may be different in important ways from a student who does not choose such a course. Students who chose the IGD course rated higher on measures of awareness of privilege and oppression at the outset of the semester. However, students in both types of courses increased over the course of the semester in both awareness of oppressive systems and feelings of anxiety as such awareness increases. Taking these findings together, one possibility is that students who chose to enroll in IGD courses are different on some other construct, such as courage, extraversion, or confidence in communication skills, which was unaccounted for in this study. Although we did not measure all of these possibilities, we noted that cisgender women were overrepresented in the courses that we included in the study, leading to a skewed sample in terms of gender. Given the characteristics of the sample, we may assert most specifically that participation in IGD furthers some goals of multicultural education for cisgender women who demonstrate some awareness of privilege and oppression. Further, the absence of a third group of students who were not participating in any type of course under the umbrella of multicultural education leaves open the possibility that there could be additional differences between students who pursue such courses and those who do not. Lastly, students in the current study participated at the beginning and end of the semester. We did not examine more lasting effects of participation in courses with IGD, which would be an important empirical endeavor.

Courses that use an IGD approach are resource-intensive. Each course that utilized IGD in the current study had one course instructor and two IGD facilitators for every 10 students enrolled in the course. Thus, administrative and faculty support for adding IGD components to courses under the umbrella of multicultural education may limit the reach of such courses. The sample size of the current study reflects this challenge. Given the small sample size of the current study, we were unable to examine potential within-group differences for students who participated in the IGD experience. Previous research has indicated that students with privileged and marginalized identities may have different experiences with and outcomes related to IGD (e.g., Miles & Kivlighan, 2012; Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004). This is an important area of future inquiry, as quality multicultural education should ensure that students of different identities are receiving benefits that are equivalent, if not the same. Dedicated resources are necessary to

support IGD efforts on college campuses, and coordinated efforts across institutions may help to uncover differential benefits of IGD for different students.

IGD programs have typically been developed as cocurricular efforts, often being offered through specific diversity or multicultural offices within the framework of student affairs. Meanwhile, academic curriculum in various disciplines attempts to address diversity-related content within college courses. The current line of research provides a framework for bringing these separate spaces for multicultural education into partnership. LePeau (2015) advocated for academic and student affairs divisions to partner around issues of diversity and inclusion in particular, as they represent difficult challenges that affect multiple aspects of campus climate. In a grounded theory analysis of such partnerships, LePeau found that universities characterized by blurred or nonexistent lines between student and academic affairs' professionals were able to address such challenges best when collaborating on an institutional commitment to inclusion and equity. She included one suggestion to develop coteaching opportunities between academic and student affairs professionals, which was a characteristic of one of the courses using IGD in the current study. Thus, as IGD and similar dialogue-based programs have been cropping up around the country in cocurricular programs led by student affairs professionals, the integration of such programs into the academic curriculum stands to benefit from partnership between academic and student affairs.

In addition to the potential benefits of IGD for students, the current study provided a mechanism to train faculty and staff in the critical-dialogic model. Previous research has demonstrated that faculty who devote core aspects of their jobs to multicultural issues, and faculty who have experienced discrimination and oppression themselves based on race, gender, or sexual orientation, report higher levels of multicultural competence (Pope & Mueller, 2005). However, all faculty will be required to navigate challenging conversations, political and societal events, and different perspectives on course content within their classrooms. In the IGD facilitator training, faculty and staff learned specific strategies and tools for engaging students and one another in the difficult conversations that we often avoid, to the detriment of all. Devoting university resources to training faculty in the critical-dialogic model of IGD has strong potential for advancing university goals of creating inclusive campuses.

Future research should examine the potential long-range implications of participation in IGD as part of an academic course. Longitudinal studies of individuals who participate in IGD, both as students and facilitators, can illuminate how IGD may transform an individual's attitudes and behaviors over time. IGD is a primary example of an activity that promotes interactional diversity, blending diversity-related course content with conversations across difference, which has been linked to positive developments in critical thinking skills over time (Pascarella et al., 2014). Intergroup attitudes are enhanced in cross-group friendships, as these relationships provide a context for positive contact, sharing of personal information, and increased trust, which extends to other outgroup members as demonstrated by a meta-analysis of the effects of cross-group friendships on intergroup attitudes (Davies, Tropp,

Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011). A future study might examine the effect of IGD on cross-group friendships outside of the classroom (i.e., in the residence halls, extracurricular involvement) as well as potential behavioral changes (e.g., democratic participation, involvement in social and political efforts to reduce inequity). Further, IGD programs that involve faculty are needed to determine potential benefits for the campus community if faculty are trained in a critical-dialogic model. Although the current study focused on student participants of IGD, the faculty and staff who facilitated the dialogues anecdotally reported seeing a difference in the ways they approached their own classrooms outside of the IGD experience. The possibility that faculty facilitating or participating in IGD has a "contagion effect" on other courses, scholarship, and service responsibilities is worthy of investigation.

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