



INDIANAPOLIS

Fieldwork to Framework: Exploring Intergroup Dialogue Interculturally

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Abstract

This research project explores the benefits of intergroup dialogue (IGD) for intercultural communication with students from the University of Wroclaw and IUI. Through facilitated discussions, I (LH) observed how participants interact with one another in exploring their own identities, beliefs, and biases in contrast to learning about other peers' experiences and points of view. Students from both institutions had the opportunity to have open dialogue in groups. I explored how the respectful conversation approach of IGD can build intercultural bridges, foster empathy, and reduce prejudices. Overall, the study used IGD to address challenges shaping how we work together interculturally now and in the future.

Materials and Methods

Three focus groups were conducted using IGD methods; one with U.S. students, one with international students from the University of Wroclaw, and one combined group. Focus groups were conducted and transcribed via Zoom. Then, LH conducted thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to identify themes and patterns. Those steps were: 1) Familiarization of data; 2) Generation of codes; 3) Combining codes into themes; 4) Reviewing themes; 5) Determining significance of themes; and 6) Reporting of findings. KL served as a member checker for steps 3-6.



Conclusions

- American students seemed more open to expressing their experiences and systems of thought with their peers, but were less vocal about their experiences during the combined session. This could be due to U.S. students not having more global experiences outside of the U.S. and during their two-week stay, did not develop the confidence to engage interculturally on a vulnerable level with international students.
- International students have more intercultural experiences and seemed to engage with other cultures more fluently.
- Both U.S. and international students are willing to learn about other cultures and their perspectives.
- U.S. students seem to experience cultural disassociation and xenocentrism more than international students and are pressured to assimilate to others to be accepted.
- IGD is important for communication, especially for U.S. students. With more intercultural experiences with other groups, they will be able to develop confidence in their own cultural identity and to interact in more depth with other cultural groups.

References

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Introduction

Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) was founded in the 1980s at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, during a time where racial differences were at its height in the United States (Zúñiga, 2007). It was originally defined as a distinct approach to dialogue across differences in higher education (Zúñiga, 2007). IGD is usually composed of a face-to-face facilitated learning experience that brings together students from different social identity groups over a sustained period to understand their commonalities and differences, examine the nature and impact of societal inequalities, and explore ways of working together toward equality and justice. Intergroup dialogue encompasses four stages.

I (LH) have had the pleasure to experience IGD during my studies here at Indiana University Indianapolis. Unfortunately, I was only able to experience one class before the program ended, but this is the very same reason I feel that IGD should continue in higher education. We all have experienced an -ism no matter what culture or color we are. What I learned is that there are things White people experience that are a burden to them. Before participating in IGD sessions, I would have never considered. IGD was a space where respect was given, vulnerability was opened, and listening to understand beyond criticism was established and from that, connections were structured.

Zuniga (2007) mentions that intergroup dialogue has critical-dialogic approach when pertains to finding commonalities and individuality in and throughout social identify groups, how it relies on sustainability in action-based communication to bridge differences, and position participants to in depth meaningful conversations, and staying focused on the goal of the intergroup dialogue. It is by deep examination through conversations with diverse social groups that constructive criticism is given to impact and improve power relations and social inequalities relationally through intergroup dialogue (Zúñiga, 2007). Nagda (2006) explains there can be estrangement in encounters when it comes to this method of learning. Nagda further elaborates that Yeakley (1998), an IGD trainer and facilitator, showed that intergroup encounters can instigate both negative and positive encounters

This study explored three, interconnected research questions:

How do peers, who share experiences through intergroup dialogue sessions,

- 1) create connections, despite differences?
- 2) develop skills that will help create personal and collective change?
- 3) create an environment that will allow students to learn from one another?

Results

Theme: Globalization	
Integration between different cultures happen especially with students who are studying abroad. Intercultural interactions result in cross cultural exchanges which contributes to globalization.	<p>"The genie is out of the bottle because of the internet and all global networks. We are in interaction and here I feel what matters is this experience. Like educational experiences and so on." - AZ</p> <p>"If I were home and never traveled, I would have behaved just like my mom, right? But I saw that differently. And so, interacting with different people in different culture, and living with different people from with different perspectives actually shapes the way not only that we communicate, but also how we approach communication in itself." -AB</p>
Theme: Cultural Disassociation	
Becoming extremely discriminative against one's own culture, self-critical, and pressure to assimilate with other cultures while denouncing their own	<p>"I damn, that's actually how I look? You know, and it hit me a lot early on where I compared. I fuckin hate Americans. Yeah, like literally word for word." - IS</p> <p>"I think it has kind of made me a bit more individualistic than being communal. Back home before I came here, there are some things I might want to do and I have to probably explain to my pastor, carry him along and all. When I got here, I felt it's weird. Why do I have to explain everything? Every key important thing I want to do in my life to him. So lately, we were trying to organize my mom's 60th birthday and we just informed him a week ago and he was he was like 'you didn't carry me along all this while.' He was expecting the normal way. In my mind I'm like it's a family thing. I don't have to carry you along, so it felt like probably have changed because I travelled abroad and so I think it just made me more individualistic and to see things from a different perspective." -CO</p>
Theme: Xenocentrism	
Questioning of one's own culture happened quite frequently in some conversations on why we do this and not that when it comes cultural comparisons.	<p>"Instead of hating on the fact that we only know English. Why? Why is it that we only know English? Like what is it about our educational system or about our government, or about just the culture in the U.S. that has created this environment. Like a lot of us aren't maybe better global citizens." -AN</p> <p>"I think for me, I'm already so critical of the United States, so I don't know that it has changed anything. When I am critical of the U.S. I'm like Americans are like this and I don't want to be like that. I think it made me feel more self-reflective in that way instead of more critical of Americans like more critical of myself as a U.S. citizen and like okay, I'm not so different from everybody else as much as I'd like to think that I might be." -JE</p>
Theme: Intersectionality	
Students experienced how multiple marginalized identities interact with each other to create unique experiences and outcomes	<p>"It is not only about ethnic culture but also social capital and cultural capital, one has and I try to understand it. Because now we are living in in quite a good, globalized world, even it is proving differently in in today's context. But. Still, we are." -AZ</p> <p>"For like maybe the first week I became just a little more comfortable to interact with people of different cultures because like they said I didn't want to be like the one that stood out or you know, house in the room or just like be that American, I guess. But as like a black American. I'm thankful my trip wasn't ruined because of the stuff like that. How I got over that, I just had to think and talk to myself and really convince myself to have a good time and not be so afraid and not worrying so much about what people perceived of me. Even if they had some pretty bad misconceptions about me because of my skin color. I'm glad that they didn't make that known, so I just had to make myself more comfortable in the space as I was in." -AM</p>
Theme: Cosmopolitan Communication (Pearce, 1989)	
Study abroad experiences can bridge different people's cultural differences and beliefs to better coordinate with one other for the bigger picture without disregarding one's own traditions and values.	<p>"My culture has been influenced the way I view myself and the way I view what is. I relate to them in the sense that in my culture there is something from the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria we call omoluabi, meaning you treat people with a sense of honor and respect. So, it has influenced me in the sense that I, for one, I see myself as somebody who is valuable. I see myself as somebody who is honorable, so I also give such to others. I treat people with honor with respect and no matter what happens, I see myself. I don't look down myself. I see myself as yes, I'm of great." -CO</p> <p>"I think that, for example, before going abroad and having this opportunity, this idea of cosmopolitanism was just was more an idea that I was thinking that would be valuable to interact with different people from different countries and different cultures. Arriving here and actually interacting with people from several countries, this idea, first of all, was not so easy to develop because you find what you said, things that sometimes you disagree completely but you start to understanding it better. But and at the same time it starts I think it brought me more sensitivity to understand this kind of conflicts that happen." -AR</p>