Intergroup Dialogue: A Model for Facilitating Difficult Conversations

Daniel B. Griffith
Alice Jones
IUPUI Office for Intergroup Dialogue and Civil Community
October 6, 2015
Intergroup Dialogue - General Definition

- *Facilitated*, face-to-face meetings between individuals from two or more social identity groups
- A communicative process emphasizing issues related to social justice, social identity, and positionality (privilege and oppression) of groups
- Co-facilitated by two persons, one from each social group represented, who have been trained in dialogue techniques
- Typically 14-16 participants with rough parity in representation of the two social groups
- Sustained: 10-14 meetings as part of course (Current staff/faculty prof. development model: 4 full-day sessions)
4 Stage IGD Model:

**Stage 1:**
Group Beginnings: Creating shared meaning of dialogue

**Stage 2:**
Identity, Social Relations & Conflict

**Stage 3:**
Issues of Equity, Fairness and Inclusion: “Hot Topics”

**Stage 4:**
Alliances & Empowerment
## Defining Dialogue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Debate:</th>
<th>Discussion:</th>
<th>Dialogue:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Win!</td>
<td>Present ideas</td>
<td>Broaden our perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress disagreement</td>
<td>Provide answers</td>
<td>Find places of agreement among many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Right’ v. ‘Wrong’</td>
<td>Share information</td>
<td>See connections between parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justify assumptions</td>
<td>Defend assumptions</td>
<td>Inquiring into assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for flaws in logic</td>
<td>Give answers, gain agreement</td>
<td>Discover collective meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuading</td>
<td>Telling &amp; selling</td>
<td>Learning through inquiry &amp; disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either/or</td>
<td>Either/or</td>
<td>Both/and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behaviors that Support Dialogue:

- Listen to understand
- Share your story
- Be aware of assumptions and stereotypes
- Be open to differing opinions and experiences
- Acknowledge places of disagreement

Adapted from: Five College Intergroup Dialogue Program; Faculty, Staff and Student Dialogue
Defining Social Identities...

- Based on physical, social and mental characteristics of individuals
- Sometimes obvious and clear (Example: Race), sometimes unknown to others (Example: Sexual orientation)
- Others can be claimed but unknown outwardly (Example: Religion)
Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Disability/Ability</th>
<th>Religion/Spirituality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Body size/Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class/status (Position, Title)</td>
<td>Educational background</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Other?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Identities you think about most often

2. Identities you think about least often

3. Your own identities you would like to learn more about.

4. Identities that have the strongest effect on how you see yourself as a person

5. Identities that give me power and privilege in society
Power and Privilege:

- Target groups: Social identity groups that are discriminated against, stigmatized or otherwise disadvantaged in society

- Agent groups: Social identity groups that are privileged, preferred or otherwise advantaged in society
Learning through Listening:

- Pair up
- One speaks first, one listens:
  - Speaker:
    - Which social identity (or identities) have the strongest effect on how you see yourself?
    - AND/OR
    - Which social identities give you power and privilege in society?
  - Listener:
    - Use active listening, relate to dialogue as opposed to debate/discussion, make it about the other person, not you
    - As clarifying questions
    - Use empathetic responses (“You feel that…,” “You think…”)
- Each person will take a turn with each role
Discuss...

- Did you feel heard?
- What did your colleague do to demonstrate true listening?
- As the listener, what was challenging?
- How can you apply this simple exercise back at work?
Behaviors that Challenge Dialogue:

- Microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue, Capodilup, et al, 2007).
You're really pretty...
For a dark skin girl

"So, like, what are you?"

"Courtney I never see you as a black girl"
#OPEN YOUR EYES!
WHY DON'T YOU EVER WEAR DRESSES?

"You don't act like a normal black person, ya' know?"

"No, where are you really FROM?"
Watch for Triggers

- **Trigger**: Statement or action by others that make us feel diminished, offended, threatened, stereotyped, discounted, or attacked. Triggers often leave us feeling psychologically threatened.

- Triggers can cause an emotional response. The emotions can include: anger, fear, hurt, confusion, embarrassment, etc.
Responses to Triggers

**Leave**: We physically remove ourselves from the triggering event.

**Avoid**: We withdraw emotionally from people or situations that trigger us.

**Silence**: We do not respond to the triggering situation, though we are upset about it. We endure without saying or doing anything.

**Ignore**: We notice the trigger but choose to let it go. We do not respond.

**Deflect**: We change the subject, or respond in an unexpected way, such as through humor.

**Give in**: We concede, often with statements we don’t mean, such as “that’s okay,” “it doesn’t matter,” “I don’t mind,” etc.
Responses to Triggers

**Attack**: We respond with an intent to hurt whoever triggered us.

**Argue**: We argue over the other person’s points without wanting to acknowledge their potential validity.

**Debate**: Argument escalates as we seek to defeat the other person’s arguments and possibly attack his/her character.

**Shock and confusion**: We express surprise at the trigger, pronounce it offensive, and indicate we don’t know how to respond.

**Label**: We describe the other person’s behavior or statement, or the person, in less than flattering terms.
Positive Responses to Triggers:

- Recognize it.
- Pause, allow a break
- Separate yourself from the trigger
- Ground yourself
- “I’m noticing you’re speaking with a lot of energy and emotion.”
- “I’m wondering if you are feeling triggered right now”
- Think about your options
- Dr. Maura Cullen: B.A.R: Breathe, Acknowledge, Respond

Intergroup Dialogue - 4 Stage Model:

**Stage 1:**
Group Beginnings: Creating shared meaning of dialogue
- Begin to understand IGD Process
- Develop group norms and guidelines
- Build group trust
- Encourage enthusiasm for the dialogue

**Stage 2:**
Identity, Social Relations & Conflict
- Explore social group and multiple identities
- Learn and practice dialogue skills
- Explore group privilege & group differences
- Understand sources of potential conflict

**Stage 3:**
Issues of Equity, Fairness and Inclusion: “Hot Topics”
- Examine influence of social structures and institutions
- Probe for deeper level of thinking, feeling and responding
- Learn to stay in dialogue when there are conflicts or differences
- Examine personal commitment to justice

**Stage 4:**
Alliances & Empowerment
- Explore what it means to be empowered and to be an ally
- Find ways to continue personal growth
- Engage in personal and group action planning and identify “next steps.”
- End on a positive note

Adapted from: University of Michigan, Office of Intergroup Relations
Applications

• Numerous staff/faculty dialogues have been facilitated on campus, including:
  • Numerous dialogues on race
  • Gender dialogues, including one among executive leaders
  • Dialogue on sexual orientation
  • Dialogue on class, rank, status
  • Unit specific dialogues

• IGD/CC Office:
  • Partners with Student Affairs to engage students in dialogue processes
  • Leads initiative to support faculty in development of curriculum that incorporates IGD pedagogy and practices, including development of a cross-disciplinary certificate
  • Facilitates public forums that incorporate IGD principles
IGD and the IUPUI Strategic Plan (Faculty/Staff Development)

IGD can support faculty/staff development through the following Strategic Actions:

• **Promote and Inclusive Campus Culture**: Increase IUPUI’s commitment to cultural competence and social justice literacy by educating and learning from campus and community stakeholders; and by developing, implementing, and institutionalizing initiatives that support ongoing improvement of faculty and staff members’ cultural literacy. (Strategic Initiative: Promote an Inclusive Campus Culture, Strategic Action #2)

• **Develop Faculty and Staff**: Establish a tradition of communication among staff, administration, and faculty to encourage open dialogue among all members of the campus community; to educate members of the campus community about campus, division, and school policies, practices, and procedures; to foster staff and faculty advocacy and communication with campus administration; and to ensure a welcoming, safe, diverse, and inclusive environment across the campus. (Strategic Initiative: Develop Faculty and Staff, Strategic Action #10)

IUPUI Strategic Plan: [http://strategicplan.iupui.edu/](http://strategicplan.iupui.edu/)
IGD and the IUPUI Strategic Plan (Curriculum Development)

IGD can support curriculum development through the following Strategic Actions:

• **Promote an Inclusive Campus Culture**: Require all students to engage in high-impact curricular and co-curricular experiences designed to enhance cross-cultural knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills as well as awareness of social justice issues and civic responsibility. (Strategic Initiative: Promote an Inclusive Campus Culture, Strategic Action #3)

• **Strengthen Internationalization Efforts**: Continue to expand study abroad, international service learning, and international internship opportunities for IUPUI students . . . Make it possible for any IUPUI undergraduate or graduate student to have at least one meaningful international experience during his or her IUPUI career. . . (Strategic Initiative: Strengthen Internationalization Efforts, Strategic Action #2)

IUPUI Strategic Plan: [http://strategicplan.iupui.edu/](http://strategicplan.iupui.edu/)
Find and Follow us...

Intergroup Dialogue at IUPUI

Website: www.igd.iupui.edu

@JagDialogue