



Intergroup Relations (IGR) Dialogue

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What is it?

Intergroup Relations (IGR) dialogue is a process of sustained, facilitated interaction fostering collective exploration of social identities in the context of social and structural inequalities. IGR promotes participants' cognitive and affective change, collaborative action, and social transformation through critical and dialogic communication. IGR dialogues include content learning about systems of privilege and oppression, with a focus on skills of dialogic listening and questioning in garnering engagement of self and other. Openness and respect are created within the group by establishing explicit ground rules, and sustained for a specified number of meetings. IGR dialogues progress through stages of appreciating the dynamics of difference and dominance at the personal and political levels, engagement of self, critical self-reflection, and alliance building.

Typically, each IGR dialogue will focus on a particular topic, most often race or gender, but also including ability, socioeconomic status, or religion. The facilitators and the participants are explicitly chosen to represent the differing identities under exploration. A gender dialogue, for example, would be jointly facilitated by a woman and a man, with participants chosen so as to include both men and women.

Who uses the concept?

Colleges and universities typically employ IGR dialogue programs. Depending on local history, these may be housed in departments of Social Psychology, Social Work, Education, Communication, or Student Life. High schools and

community organizations have begun to use IGR dialogue techniques to develop skills and strategies among students and constituents.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

In the sense that intercultural dialogue confronts differences in opinions and assumptions, IGR dialogue offers one model providing a formal structure, allowing for deeper understanding, correction of misunderstanding, interruption of injustice and transformation of feeling into action. IGR dialogue requires a commitment on the part of all participants to group process and talking about difference.

What work remains?

The constitutive nature of communication, and communication itself as action, need to be further explored. Many people tend to see dialogue as a "cause" of change, rather than understanding the communicative process itself as powerful action influencing interpersonal relationships. Finding one's voice to talk *through* difference, interrupt oppression, and speak up as an ally are all processes that deserve further exploration.

Resources

- DeTurk, S. (2006). The power of dialogue: Consequences of intergroup dialogue and their implications for agency and alliance building. *Communication Quarterly*, 54, 33-51.
- Gurin, P., Nagda, B.R., & Zúñiga, X. (2013). *Dialogue across difference: Practice, theory, and research on intergroup dialogue*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.