



# Working with emotion in educational intergroup dialogue

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## Abstract

As a form of multicultural education, intergroup dialogue is one method to improve intergroup relations. Furthermore, this form of experiential education inevitably elicits emotional responses to diversity and social justice issues. The theory and research, however, supporting its pedagogy lack a comprehensive framework for working with emotion. Recent empirical and theoretical work on emotion in intergroup interaction gives us some guidance in conceptualizing the centrality and complexity of emotional content and processes in intergroup contact. Additionally, ample evidence exists for the primacy of affect in the regulation of social relationships from the parent–child dyad to intergroup interactions. Most empirical work on affect in intergroup relations primarily focuses on assessing reactions to imagined or actual, one-time laboratory encounters and examines the reactions of only dominant group members. In contrast to experimental work, intergroup dialogue involves complex dynamics within the context of structured, sustained, face-to-face conversation among real people of dominant and subordinate social identity groups. Recommendations to improve intergroup contact include intervention at the level of emotion. Although it does not focus systematically on the affective layer, intergroup dialogues' philosophy and structure prime the ground to do so. This paper proposes a set of principles to work with emotion in intergroup dialogue that would provide ways (1) to foster overall positive intergroup contact, (2) to work effectively with negative affect and resistance as integral and not subversive to positive intergroup interactions, (3) to attend to the force that ambivalence exerts on

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intergroup interaction, and (4) to work with facilitators' affective processes. Implications for research are also discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

As a form of multicultural education, intergroup dialogue is one method to improve intergroup relations. Furthermore, this form of experiential education inevitably elicits emotional responses to diversity and social justice issues. The theory and research (Beale & Schoem, 2001; Gurin, Peng, Lopez, & Nagda, 1999; Nagda & Zuniga, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 2001; Zuniga & Chesler, 1993), however, supporting its pedagogy lack a comprehensive framework for working with emotion. Recent empirical and theoretical work on emotion in intergroup contact gives us some guidance in conceptualizing the centrality and complexity of emotional content and processes in intergroup contact (Mackie & Smith, 2002). Rather than being unidimensional, these reactions reveal ambivalence, reflecting positive and negative emotions and discernable patterns toward different outgroups (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2002). Along with social psychology, other disciplines such as neuroscience, developmental psychology, and clinical psychology have produced ample evidence for the primacy of affect in the regulation of social relationships from the parent–infant dyad to intergroup interactions (Beebe, 2004; Beebe & Lachmann, 2002; Bucci & Miller, 1993; Damasio, 1999; Dovidio, Esses, Beach, & Gaertner, 2002; Forgas, 2001; Leyens, Demoulin, Desert, Vaes, & Philippot, 2002; Stern, 1985).

With a few exceptions (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), experimental work on affect in intergroup relations primarily focuses on assessing reactions to imagined or actual, one-time laboratory encounters (Blair, Park, & Bachelor, 2003; Djiker, 1987; Dovidio et al., 2002; Wilder, 1993). Also with few exceptions (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Stephan & Stephan, 1989; Tropp, 2003), the literature examines the reactions of only dominant group members, for example, white Americans to African Americans (Dovidio et al., 2002) heterosexual people to gay men and lesbians (Blair et al., 2003), or Europeans to Africans (Leyens et al., 2002) or to Arabs on European soil (Yabar, 2000 in Leyens et al., 2002). In contrast to experimental work, intergroup dialogue involves complex dynamics within the context of structured, sustained, face-to-face conversation among real people of dominant and subordinate social identity groups.

Recommendations to improve intergroup contact include intervention at the “level of emotion” (Mackie & Smith, 2002, p. 297). Stephan and Stephan (2001) offer a number of prejudice reduction processes several of which focus on affective dimensions: reducing threat, modifying associations between cognitions and affect, and creating empathy. Other specific recommendations aimed at the emotional level include helping people become aware of their negative emotions and to believe they

might succeed in these interactions. People also need enough cognitive resources not to be overwhelmed by situational demands (Leyens et al., 2002). Although it does not focus systematically on the affective layer, intergroup dialogues' philosophy and structure prime the ground to do so.

To address this absence, I propose a set of guidelines to work with emotion in intergroup dialogue that would provide ways (1) to foster overall positive intergroup contact, (2) to work effectively with negative affect and resistance as integral and not subversive to positive intergroup interactions, (3) to attend to the force that ambivalence exerts on intergroup interaction, and (4) to work with facilitators' affective reactions in the service of the intergroup dialogue. This paper focuses on principles of working with affect and less so on specific techniques, although principles and techniques, of course, inform each other and can only be artificially separated. The latter is deserving of and has received more detailed elaboration (see Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Zuniga & Chesler, 1993). A brief overview of the contexts that shaped these principles is followed by a description of intergroup dialogue, a discussion of emotion, and then the guidelines. Lastly, I will address research implications.

## **2. Contexts for development of principles**

The case for developing these guidelines in working with emotion rests upon several factors: claims made in the literature on intergroup dialogue that working with feelings is a core component of this type of education; my own years of experience as a facilitator of intergroup dialogue; the research literature addressing the central role of affect in intergroup contact; and my training and work as a psychotherapist. Although these principles are embedded within a particular pedagogy, they may be useful in other contexts focusing upon intergroup exploration (see Stephan & Stephan, 2001, for a complete review of models to improve intergroup relations).

Additionally, these principles are in response to an absence in the literature regarding working with affect in improving intergroup relations. Upon hearing a previous version of this paper, a colleague in the field of intergroup relations commented that he found this material on working with affect complex and generally followed his intuition when it came to dealing with emotions in the classroom. Although many educators are indeed gifted facilitators and naturally capable of working with a range of affective expressions and processes, one's own intuition does not give one all the skills and conceptual foundations to work with complex affective processes. Several barriers, however, prevent a more thorough approach to developing competencies in working with affect in educational settings. At the institutional level, emotion (as lived experience informing scholarship, not just a subject of study) is not emphasized in academic training. Additionally, a lack of a conceptual framework may leave educators at a loss as to how best to approach what may feel too personal or non-intellectual. On a psychological level, it may perhaps be the case that people in general do not like to be told that they require more specific

training in understanding and expressing emotion because of the assertion that emotion is common experience and therefore common knowledge. In contrast, facilitators who consider themselves unique in their intuitive and/or emotional abilities may not want to subject them to inquiry and elaboration because it demystifies those abilities and may threaten a sense of specialness. Finally, working with emotions requires emotional self-scrutiny and awareness. Given the interpersonal nature of this work such exploration occurs most often with the help of others. This process of interpersonal self-reflection may make one feel uncomfortable, vulnerable, or ordinary.

These guidelines draw from the several disciplines mentioned above but also from contemporary theories of psychodynamic psychotherapy. This may come as a surprise, but no other discipline has as robust theories of *practice* as it pertains to working with emotion in sustained, face-to-face contact. A caveat is in order that many may anticipate: psychotherapy mainly offers theories of intrapsychic and interpersonal processes. Yet, intrapsychic, interpersonal, and intergroup levels can be seen as parts of a system that penetrate and influence each other. These guidelines, therefore, are meant to serve in a holistic way, that is, to facilitate working with affect in here-and-now intergroup contact while leaving room for differentiating the sources of affective responses.

### 3. Intergroup dialogue

Intergroup dialogue is a form of intentional, small group engagement (Schoem, Hurtado, Sevig, Chesler, & Sumida, 2001) based on the democratic principle of shared and equal participation in civic processes (Marger, 1999). In the United States, it is an increasingly popular, structured, face-to-face forum for broadly addressing cultural identity, intergroup conflict, and structural inequality or for addressing specific problems which particular groups or communities may face (Schoem et al., 2001). Successful interactions rest, in part, on the general principles of the intergroup contact hypothesis: equal status between groups; sustained and intimate contact among participants; opportunities for authentic relationships; support from relevant authority figures; and common, overarching goals (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 2001; Zuniga & Chesler, 1993).

The model in higher education explicitly emphasizes the following goals: (1) exploring intergroup similarities and differences; (2) exploring historical and contemporary conflicts; (3) linking individual experiences to social group experiences within the context of structural inequality, and (4) examining ways to move from dialogue to empowerment and action (Chesler, 2001; Gurin et al., 1999; Thompson, Brett, & Behling, 2001; Zuniga & Nagda, 1993). It differs from traditional and even from other forms of multicultural education because it acknowledges the positive role of affective expression and conflict (Nagda & Zuniga, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 2001; Thompson et al., 2001). Although scholarly and popular readings provide conceptual frameworks and current, controversial topics (Zuniga & Cyton-Walker, 2003), participants learn primarily through facilitated, phase-specific, personal

sharing. Two people, one from each social group, co-facilitate, and participant numbers are balanced with an ideal total of 16 (Nagda, Zuniga, & Sevig, 1995). For example, an African American and Jews dialogue would have one African American and one Jewish facilitator with equal numbers of participants from each group. Courses last anywhere from 12 to 25 contact hours.

There are, however, less explicit goals in intergroup dialogue. Participants do not engage in dialogue only to gain knowledge or advocate for social change. Although these are key goals, I posit that they move into and through dialogue also for emotional reasons: to engage in an endeavor where the fundamental feelings underlying community—“concern, trust, respect, appreciation, affection, and hope” (Burbules, 1993, p. 41)—may be experienced. In a very broad way, these three goals—knowledge, action, and community—form the matrix for democratic engagement (Burbules, 1993; Nussbaum, 2001). Community here is not meant to imply a utopian sameness (Young, 1990 in Burbules, 1993) but to encompass varying levels of concern for others across and within our differences.

To achieve these goals, intergroup dialogue requires collaborative self-reflection on aspects of self, others, and world. Those who seek intergroup dialogue often overtly wish *to learn* or share—with an emphasis on cognitive understanding—what makes themselves or others tick and *to learn* how to make things different. We are beginning more fully to understand, nonetheless, how necessary it is to pay attention to the affective realm. Participants are motivated to engage in community and to experience those feelings, as noted above, associated with community. This process, however, of learning about self and others activates distressing affect as it challenges deeply held and unexamined views.

Several guidelines support effective management of this process: the need to build trust; a particular facilitative attitude, including empathy; a developmental, phase-specific framework; facilitators’ emotional self-regulation; and the idea that intellectual understanding is not enough for optimal learning and change. In addition to these five principles, intergroup dialogue practice must account for the tensions inherent in work that creates spaces for participants to challenge and potentially change their fundamental worldviews. Before moving on to addressing the ethical and psychological tensions in intergroup dialogue and guidelines for working with emotion, I would like to take a short detour to establish why emotion is so fundamental to human interaction.

#### 4. Emotion

Drawing on an incredible range of research, the philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, notes that “emotion helps us sort out the relationship between ourselves and the world” (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 118). It involves not only cognitive-evaluative, conscious processes but also non-verbal biological (Damasio, 1999) and non-verbal symbolic processes (Bucci & Miller, 1993). The neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio argues, “There is... no evidence that we are conscious of all our feelings, and much to suggest that we are not” (p. 36). Neither a feeling state nor an emotion may have

been “in consciousness, and yet they have been unfolding as biological processes” (p. 36). At its most basic, emotion is central to survival on the level of bodily integrity: emotional responses alert the organism to flee, fight, or approach in play, sex, or nurturance (Damasio, 1999). In addition to the neurological level, non-verbal symbolic processes (Bucci & Miller, 1993) occur as “mental patterns in any sensory modality,” not just visual (Damasio, 1999, p. 9). These three processes, the biological, or the subsymbolic, the non-verbal symbolic, and the verbal, link up to varying degrees in human beings to create patterns of emotional experience, communication, and action.

Emotion has a dynamic quality since it helps us determine what is relevant to our own flourishing from moment to moment and over the span of our lives. However, this dynamic aspect is not arbitrary: rather, emotional patterns are partly hardwired and partly rooted in our experiences of infancy and childhood as members of particular cultural groups (Damasio, 1999; Nussbaum, 2001). Emotion also has a discriminating quality because it helps us determine who or what is important to our own flourishing in the context of different types of relationship, from the intimate to the abstract (Nussbaum, 2001). Research on people with damage to particular areas of the brain reveals intact cognitive functioning but an absence of emotional engagement. As a result, it is as if they became detached observers unable to prioritize who or what matters and were subsequently unable to take action (Damasio, 1999).

This model suggests that intervening at the level of emotion must occur not only at the verbal-cognitive level. It must consider how to set up conditions that are conducive to helping participants to access and communicate their private feeling experiences, whether interpersonal or intergroup, and of which they may or may not be aware. Contrary to what it may sound like, this effort would neither add to the already complex array of facilitator tasks nor subtract from the goals of intergroup dialogue. Rather, if one thinks of the curriculum with its readings, activities, and other tasks as in the foreground, one can think of preparing for and working with the affective layer as in the background. Additionally, two primary tensions regarding change, one psychological, the other ethical, prompt the need for a well-articulated model of working with affect.

## **5. Tensions regarding change**

Intergroup dialogue operates within two tensions, one ethical and the other psychological. Its ethical tension stems from philosophical underpinnings: intergroup dialogue holds education as a practice of liberation, requires questioning the given, and in questioning the given, supports conscious consideration of how one lives in relation to self, others, and the world (Freire, 2002/1970; Zuniga & Nagda, 1993). At the same time, this practice is biased toward particular theories as to what leads to and what constitutes a freer and more just society (see Schoem et al., 2001). In essence, we as educators must justify our work as it relates to engaging others in processes of change when we know that they entail distress and challenge the status quo.

The second tension is psychological and concerns ambivalence. On the one hand, participants are drawn toward wanting to learn about and relate more authentically to self and others. On the other, participants are pulled to feel secure in what is already thought to be known and predictable, that is, *true*, even if it is limiting. In the context of intergroup relations, some of these limitations will differ depending on whether one is a member of the dominant or subordinate group.

As framed by the educational philosopher and activist, Freire (2002/1970), members of both dominant and subordinate groups will be challenged to see the other as human and needed, rather than as inhuman and rejected, in the project of becoming fully, consciously human. For example, many white people in the United States, who have, as a whole, been trained to see themselves as superior, will experience a kind of dissonance explained in the social psychology literature as a conflict between holding ideals of fairness and having attitudes of prejudice (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Members of subordinate groups will also experience dissonance as they are asked to consider the dominant group as human like themselves. This conflicts with the kind of disdain that members of oppressed groups often have toward those in oppressive groups and which rests on an odd kind of intimate knowledge of those groups with greater power.

Minding the first ethical tension would help educators conscientiously attend to the suffering and hope of both dominant and subordinate group members and to the challenge of altering one's worldview. Remembering the second psychological tension would help us not blindly invest in one side of the affective equation or the other. We would neither be naively invested in a love-conquers-all mentality nor caught up in the despair of intractable conflict and its dynamics of threat, hatred, delegitimization, disdain, distancing, and dehumanization. With recognition of this balancing act, we can now move onto examining some guidelines for working with emotion.

## 6. Five guidelines

The five following guidelines are not exhaustive but constitute the beginning of a framework for working with affect. Ostensibly others could be developed. They also presuppose facilitators' active, behavioral engagement such as initiating and carrying through on tasks, facilitating activities in appropriate and timely ways, sensitivity to facilitator role, and mindfulness of quality and purpose of verbal interventions.

### 6.1. Trust

Before participants in intergroup dialogue are willing to open up and allow themselves to confront their worldviews, they must have some sense that the facilitators (and peers) are trust-worthy, that is, will not be demeaning, indifferent, or retaliatory but will be accepting, understanding, and authentic. Many social justice educators (Adams et al., 1997; Nagda & Zuniga, 2003; Zuniga & Chesler, 1993) address how to establish a "safe" atmosphere. However, this aspect of the

course tends to receive attention only at the beginning. Facilitators, particularly inexperienced ones, may expect participants to jump into high-risk conversations. Additionally, facilitators may ask participants to jump in as a way to expose what they, the participants, do not know. Either move can be motivated by a facilitator striving for power based on a teacher/student hierarchy, lack of experience, or by a lack of appreciation for the role that threat plays in such situations (Stephan & Renfro, 2002). One example is of having subordinate group members talk about their experiences of discrimination or prejudice. Another example is of having dominant group members talk about the privileges of being in the dominant group. When the timing is right, both types of conversation are often empowering for subordinate group members and profoundly eye-opening for dominant group members. When the timing is wrong, participants may feel exposed or used. Focusing too early on what participants are reticent to share, are avoiding, or are unaware of without the base of a trusting relationship cannot only be taken as criticism but can also be confusing and can communicate that the facilitators are the arbiters of reality (Newman, 1999). Without a trusting relationship these types of discussion can lead to unsupported, negative affective experiences and a breakdown in engagement through withdrawal or attack.

The issue of trust and safety must always be in the foreground and reconsidered in light of how the dialogue progresses. Saying something is safe does not make it so (Hooks, 1994). Mistrust and anxiety about the process often leads to what facilitators perceive as “resistance” from students. Rather, reconceptualizing this so-called resistance from the participants’ perspective does not lead us to back off from difficult questions, but to hold their trepidation and ambivalence in mind as we move into new terrain. In other words, the main function of resistance is not to frustrate us educators. Rather, it is self-preserving and helps to regulate affective equilibrium.

Two scenarios respectively illustrate unsuccessful and successful trust-building. In a people of color and white people dialogue, my co-facilitator and I allowed the students to dive into discussing conflictual issues too early in the process. We did not promote and follow through with activities meant to build trust through low-risk exploration of self and others. As a result, the students, initially eager to “get into it,” backed off from engaging with each other for another couple of weeks and seemed not to develop a level of trust in which they could share of themselves and tolerate a more thorough and active exploration of difference and conflict.

Similarly, in an Arabs and Jews dialogue, which included non-Arabs and non-Jews, students were eager to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Khuri, 2004), but my co-facilitator and I held off such a discussion until the third phase of the course. Our focus on building trust in the beginning allowed the students to stay engaged when conflicts in their worldviews and feelings of anger and frustration emerged right there in the classroom. We established and maintained trust in several ways. One was by providing a predictable structure, clear expectations, and specific content material. The second method included many activities allowing students to express their concerns and viewpoints and to really learn about who was in the room with them in a non-judgmental environment. These activities were also designed to move from low-risk to high-risk revelation. Third, we established the atmosphere of



non-judgment not simply by declaring it so, but by acting on our genuine stance of curiosity and acceptance, which required empathy and our ability to manage our own emotions. This respectful, facilitative stance supported both the continuation of a trusting relationship and working with what is often called resistance.

## 6.2. *Facilitator attitude and empathy*

Broadly, a facilitator's attitude of genuine understanding, respectful curiosity, willingness to engage on the affective level, and the encouragement of honesty, saying what comes to mind, and suspension of judgment all work in concert to support the difficult task of exploration (Burbules, 1993; Kohut, 1984; Newman, 1999; Rogers, 1989; Sands, 2000; Ellinor & Gerard, 1998). This facilitative stance links with empathy. For in order to effectively facilitate students' explorations, we need to hone in on the issues from their perspective, to know the workings of their schemas, their logic, their experiences.

In psychotherapy, empathy is a tool, a process, and is potentially curative (Wispe, 1987). As a process or tool, it is a mode of *feeling into* another's subjective experience, fine-tuning the articulation of that other's experience in collaboration with the other, and *at the same time* recognizing that one is a separate being from the other whose subjective life one is trying accurately to apperceive (Nussbaum, 2001; Rogers, 1975 in Wispe, 1987; Wispe, 1987). Regarding the curative element, being accurately understood provides a "powerful emotional bond between people" (Kohut, 1984, as cited in Wispe, 1987) and, as such, is one element of authentic relationship (Reid, personal communication, January 26, 2004). Empathy is not a feeling one has toward another person. Nor does empathy guarantee accurate understanding. Rather, it is a relational stance in which one reconstructs imaginatively another person's experience without evaluation and without regard to whether the experience is joyful or sad (Nussbaum, 2001; Rogers as cited in Wispe, 1987).

Empathy as defined in the intergroup relations field more closely tracks with the idea of feeling compassion for another and/or being moved to prosocial behavior based on taking that other person's perspective (Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 2001). Empathic processes, nonetheless, underlie these abilities although empathy does not guarantee either: a torturer can feel his way into his victim's subjective states only to enjoy the latter's suffering. (Kohut, 1981, as cited in Nussbaum, 2001).

Two other facets of empathy are crucial to its use in intergroup dialogue. First, empathy must be considered within a cross-cultural framework. Although I do not know of any empirical research addressing this, the question arises as to how difficult is it to empathize with another the further away one is from the other's customs and experiences (Kohut, 1959, 1971 in Wispe, 1987). Moreover, are different social groups more given to exercising empathy than are others? Although the intergroup dialogue literature has not framed the problem this way, the practice of having facilitators of the different cultural groups in the dialogue potentially increases the facilitative function, or the participants' perception of empathy, within the dialogue's

short time frame. The second facet entails considering how facilitators use empathy versus how we encourage students to use empathy. Social psychologists suggest a number of empathy building techniques as a way to improve intergroup relations (Stephan & Finley, 1997). The facilitators' use of empathy may more closely parallel a therapist's use in that he or she must be more consistently attuned to complex psychological phenomena throughout the whole process. Participants' use of empathy must be considered within a developmental framework. We cannot realistically expect them to have empathy for each other without considering also their general developmental positions, what stage they may occupy in terms of their cultural identity development (Helms, 1993), the extent of their social group identification, and/or their particular group's status vis-à-vis the outgroup (Fiske et al., 2002).

In a men and women dialogue, a female facilitator reacted harshly to a male participant who espoused views she found personally offensive. She acknowledged wanting to use her knowledge to dominate him, yet, in doing so, ended up engaging in a power struggle with him that did not allow him the prospect to explore his views with his classmates. Her loss of an empathic stance, which does not entail agreement, curtailed the opportunity for the whole class to engage with this particular student's views in constructive ways. In another men and women dialogue, a male student made provocative statements about women's proper place as to suggest that he enjoyed the role of class clown. The facilitators did not dismiss his views but invited him to elaborate on them without the hidden agenda of exposing him. He did not radically alter his views but he did stop derailing the dialogue and allowed himself to engage as one participant with a valid voice among many. Maintaining this empathic stance requires facilitators to be able to regulate their own emotions.

### 6.3. *Facilitators' self-regulation*

On the whole, teachers' emotional experiences do not seem to be a major topic of education research (Beatty, 2002) although educators' emotional responses have been addressed in some social justice education literature (Adams et al., 1997). In contrast, contemporary psychoanalytic literature has quite extensively addressed therapists' general emotional processes including specific processes around the topics of race and sexual orientation (Altman, 1995; Greene, 1986, 1994; Leary, 1997; de Montefiores, 1994; Pinderhughes, 1989). A few empirical studies have shown that the therapist's emotional well-being has important implications for treatment (Butter, Flasher, & Strupp, 1993). On the whole, however, I suggest that intergroup dialogue has underestimated the effects of facilitators' emotional processes. It is not difficult to imagine that facilitators' emotional states and responses would influence the dialogue and that the dialogue would influence facilitators' emotional processes. As noted above, facilitators' willingness to engage on the affective level supports facilitating others' exploration. This engagement may look differently for facilitators with different types of personalities and cultural backgrounds and may or may not entail direct self-disclosure of emotional responses. The point is not to limit how facilitators engage but rather to support emotional presence.

Additionally, facilitators must be open to being affected, for example, feeling compassion, anger, or even confusion. This openness, however, requires a paradoxical stance. Facilitators have to be able to be emotionally present and engaged and, at the same time, be contained. Perhaps not to the degree required of therapists, facilitators have “to be there and not be there at the same time” (Russell, 1998 in Stechler, 2003, p. 711). What he or she does with these emotional experiences is crucial. For example, becoming frustrated, losing patience, blaming the group or individuals within the group for not “getting it” or “putting it out there” are typical facilitator responses to typical, difficult or not so difficult phases in intergroup dialogue. We all feel these at times. We may be triggered in such a way that leads us to seize upon one idea as if it would magically unlock the dialogue impasse. We may blame the participants. If only this student would stop denying that oppression exists. If only this student would stop talking or this other start talking. If only this social group would stop taking care of the other social group. Such wishing is understandable. In the face of such moments of frustration or helplessness, wishing seems like a feasible response when one feels as though one can do nothing. In those moments, a facilitator may lose the sense of what is actually feasible. He or she may become overwhelmed, give up, withdraw, get into power struggles, dominate, or “teach” instead of facilitate. As a result, participants may pick up on the facilitators’ emotional needs and ways of relating. They may fall in line with a more politically correct way of conceiving cultural identity, fear revealing their own subjectivities, or become disengage.

Becoming aware of and managing one’s own emotions during dialogue sessions is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks of a facilitator. Emotional patterns are so deeply rooted prior to adulthood, and often out of conscious awareness, that facilitators vary widely in what emotional skills they bring to their work. Nonetheless, facilitators can be supported in and outside of the classroom. Being able to self-regulate during the sessions requires support and work outside of facilitating dialogue. Personal self-reflection, for example in the form of journaling, and group discussion or supervision provides structured opportunities to examine reactions to the dialogue. In addition, permission, as it were, to have emotional responses, helps counteract the tendency to suppress such responses in the name of neutrality. Attention to one’s tone, direction of inquiry, too great or too little focus on a particular topic or student, and timing and purpose of self-disclosure, may all be used to alert facilitators to their emotional processes as they occur in the dialogue. From this self-awareness, facilitators may adjust any number of ways in which they are engaging with participants.

In an example from group supervision, a white, female student facilitator became upset about the views of several African American female participants regarding African American men dating white women. This facilitator had just broken up with her African American boyfriend. I suggested she address her feelings on both accounts, the personal loss and feeling attacked, and then suggested she also consider a broader social context in which some African American women may feel the way they do. At that point, the other supervisees empathically engaged in the conversation acknowledging both the facilitator’s feelings and the views of the

African American women in the dialogue. The opportunity to explore her own reactions outside the dialogue allowed the facilitator to regain a more empathic stance when she returned to the actual dialogue.

#### 6.4. *Developmental, phase-specific tasks*

Intergroup dialogue uses a four-stage model to guide students' learning (Nagda & Zuniga, 2003; Thompson et al., 2001; Zuniga & Nagda, 1993; Zuniga & Nagda, 2001). Although the literature does not directly link the sequencing of phases with the students' affective needs and capacities, the pedagogy inherently supports their unfolding. Training in intergroup dialogue facilitation, in fact, often turns to models in group psychotherapy to conceptualize group development and facilitators' tasks (Alamo, 2002). Yalom's (1995) model, for example, clearly conveys the affective tenor of the processes particular to group formation in his stages of orientation and dependency; conflict, dominance, and rebellion; and the development of cohesion.

The first stage of intergroup dialogue focuses on building trust and issues of group formation. Through discussion and structured activities students address such concerns as their hopes and fears about engaging in cross-group dialogue. The second stage in intergroup dialogue highlights group similarities and differences by inviting students to share their personal experiences of being a person of a particular background, especially as it relates to growing up. This stage often sees a quiet awe as students listen to each other relate experiences far from their own and links with empathy building so crucial to improving intergroup relations (Stephan & Stephan, 2001). The third stage engages students in exploring areas and topics around which the two groups are in conflict. For example, a dialogue between gay, lesbian, bisexual students and heterosexual students may address the issues of marriage, religious ordination, or adoption. Affect tends to be heightened during this third phase and students may begin to reveal feelings of ambivalence or hopelessness and helplessness in the face of social injustices. The fourth stage asks students to consider the implications of their learning on issues of social justice (Thompson et al., 2001) or to consider ways of "challenging injustices" (Nagda & Zuniga, 2003, p. 116) through identifying concrete actions taken individually or through coalition building. This fourth stage may see relief, a return to hope, a more measured stance toward social injustices and change as opposed to naïve hope or hopelessness, a persistence of anger, and even some sadness in the face of ending the group experience.

This developmental framework is, in my opinion, one of intergroup dialogue's greatest strengths. A more deliberate consideration of affective processes throughout all four stages, however, has the potential to help educators not be caught off guard by eruptions of heightened affect, the lack of affect, the variety of affective responses, or by different forms of resistance that may appear in later stages but have their roots in unresolved affective concerns from earlier stages or may simply reflect ambivalence. Additionally, the greater knowledge facilitators have of group development, the less they will be anxious or confused about the path each group may take (Yalom, 1995).

### 6.5. *Integration versus intellectualization*

Social psychology research has shown that prejudice may be more cognitively or affectively based with the affective, rather than the cognitive, more strongly linked to both intergroup attitudes and behaviors (Leyens et al., 2002). For example, people's awareness of inequality and espousal of democratic values may not free them from feeling or acting in aversive ways toward members of subordinate groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 2001). Intergroup dialogue encourages the working through of emotions and conflicts as they arise right there between members of the two groups and mirror the larger intergroup conflicts in society (Stephan & Stephan, 2001). This working through requires intellectual and affective integration.

Integration refers to building connections between non-verbal emotional processes and verbal concepts as mentioned above, that is, between the affective and the cognitive. Intellectualization, in contrast, suggests a breakdown in this ability and often occurs as a response to difficulty in acknowledging and identifying emotions (Bucci & Miller, 1993). This aspect of change, integration versus intellectualization, is incredibly difficult to measure in dynamic settings although researchers have successfully done so in psychotherapy settings (Bucci & Miller, 1993). As such, facilitators rely on experience, intuition, and personal judgment to determine where students may fall along the continuum. My point, nonetheless, in addressing this issue is to suggest that facilitators be aware of differences in students' potential capacity for integration by listening for the types and quality of narratives and engagement. We as educators may not have a great deal of impact on students' tendency to either intellectualize or integrate material since they come in with these tendencies to begin with. Nor can we provide participants with the psychological resources to manage the demands of dialogue. We can, however, set up an environment that supports movement toward integration rather than reinforces intellectualization. Additionally, because intergroup dialogue also has a didactic component, students' mastery of the concepts may mask their affective experiences. We may miss this phenomenon for two reasons. One, their intellectual mastery may resonate with our own ideological biases, and two, the pressure *to teach* within a limited timeframe may blind us to students' intellectualization.

Discussions focused on readings and other forms of content presentation tend to promote access to cognitive processing, whereas activities specifically asking students to reflect on their personal experiences in or outside of the dialogue promote more affective consideration. Both are necessary in promoting the integration of cognitive and affective understanding and in building connections between the personal and the intergroup levels.

## 7. Conclusion

The affective layer of intergroup dialogue is not a by-product of engagement but both motivational and integral. Intergroup dialogue is a highly verbal enterprise, yet it is profoundly influenced by this affective layer, which is often out of students', and

at times, facilitators' awareness. Additionally, students vary in their capacity to link emotion and cognition, a factor that we cannot control. Students' ability, nonetheless, to engage in dialogue on typically taboo subjects does not turn on any one particular activity, interpretation, intervention, or piece of information. Facilitating intergroup dialogue is partly an art based on experience and on "creativity, spontaneity, [and] intuition" (Lichtenberg, Lachmann, & Fosshage, 1996, p. 88) but also requires us to have particular theoretical and empirical knowledge bases. Adding knowledge and skills in working with affective processes enhances the dialogue quality in subtle but important ways. Affective engagement, that is the process by which we come to understand who and what is important to our goals and projects (Nussbaum, 2001), whether on an individual or group level, is the relational matrix in which students create new levels of understanding, ways of relating, and ways of taking action in the world (Gurin, Nagda, & Zuniga, 2004).

For the most part, this paper has focused on principles of working with affect and less so on specific techniques, although the latter is deserving of more detailed elaboration. Principles and techniques, or course, inform each other and can only be artificially separated. Together, they enlarge our perspectives (Lichtenberg et al., 1996) as we make our way with our students through the complex interactions of intergroup dialogue. In particular, the focus on trust as an on-going process within a developmental context supports fostering an overall positive intergroup dialogue experience. Trust, as a primary condition for relationship, supports participants' ability to stay authentically engaged even when the dialogue gets tense, confusing, unpleasant, injurious, or hopeless. Through an empathic stance, we attend to students' potential distress, ambivalence, and hope which helps us reframe and work effectively with resistance, defensiveness, and negative affect as central and not subversive to positive intergroup interactions. Facilitators' ability to manage their own affective processes minimizes the effects of their affect, frees up more psychic energy, if you will, to devote to the dialogue. The developmental framework provides us with an understanding of how group processes unfold and allows us to gauge the quality of students sharing, inquiring, and responding in relation to the particular intellectual and affective tasks of each stage. Finally, the above guidelines support working toward cognitive and affective integration of the material necessary for optimal learning and change.

## **8. Research implications**

The complexity of emotional phenomena and of the task of researching in and about this dynamic context of intergroup dialogue presents important methodological concerns. How can we reasonably capture participants' emotional processes without focusing so narrowly that we ignore or miss important aspects of what is happening? On the other hand, how can we bring some clarity to the potential morass of data? We might start with the question, what aspect of emotion in educational intergroup contact do we want to measure? Do we want to attend to affective processes or content? What about the impact of facilitators' role and

emotions? In terms of process, do we want to analyze the full emotional picture, as it were, or do we want to focus only on moments of heightened affect? How do we determine these moments? Would it be better to examine the peaks in relation to the valleys?

In terms of content, do we want to try and differentiate types of emotional responses? Do we focus only on “negative” affect such as anger, anxiety, or sadness? What about joy, relief, or hope? What about ambivalence? Do we want to differentiate sources of emotion? Is it intergroup, interpersonal, or intrapsychically derived?

Although we may create conceptual clarity about what is emotion and what we want to study, a further complication of emotion entails the tacit nature of its communication, that is, it is highly dependent on relational contexts (Orange, 1995). Additionally, people vary in their ability to experience, identify, describe, and decode emotional responses in different contexts (Leyens et al., 2002). Students may not be willing or able to verbally reveal what they are experiencing right in the moment. As an example, during phase two of a dialogue, strong disagreement between white American and African American students emerged for the first time. The facilitators and a couple of participants noted the heightened tension, yet most of the participants shared the response “interesting” when asked to provide one word to describe how they felt about the class that day. “Interesting” is not an emotion but rather an evaluative description of something external to the participant, yet it may indirectly express particular affective experiences or it may express the participants’ relative closeness or distance from affective experiences. How and what are we to infer from that word in terms of emotional processes or content? Do different participants mean different things with that same word?

Researching affective phenomena in intergroup dialogue presents us with complex challenges that may, nonetheless, reward us with rich understanding of emotional processes in educational, intergroup contact and how these responses may fundamentally relate to learning outcomes and improving intergroup relations.

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