

**THE ROAD TO EMPATHY: DIALOGIC PATHWAYS FOR ENGAGING  
DIVERSITY AND IMPROVING INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

To the multi-university intergroup dialogue research team, whose passionate commitment to a diverse and socially just democracy will forever inspire me.

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## INTRODUCTION

*“Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they cannot communicate; they cannot communicate because they are separated.”*

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

These words from Dr. King's (1958) *Stride toward freedom: The Montgomery story* powerfully capture the importance of bringing people of diverse backgrounds and experiences together to communicate in ways that build understanding and relationships across difference. Of course, to do so requires knowing *how* to communicate effectively in the context of not just diversity but also inequality. This dissertation addresses this objective in three separate papers. The first paper reviews evidence of positive and negative consequences of interracial contact, and then presents a theoretical process model of intergroup dialogue focused on promoting the positive and avoiding negative outcomes outlined in the review. The second paper describes an experimental test of the effect of the intergroup dialogue model (developed in the first paper) on intergroup empathy. Three core findings are presented. First, participation in intergroup dialogue courses results in immediate (pre-post) and long-term effects (one year later). Second, intervention effects are stable across advantaged and disadvantaged group membership. Third, intervention effects are greater than effects found in a course comparison

(exposure to race/ethnicity content). While this second paper shows that effects are found, the third paper examines the process by which the intervention influenced outcomes, utilizing structural equation modeling. Across the three papers, this dissertation offers a theoretical model of intergroup communication to bridge diverging findings on interracial contact and demonstrates experimental effects of the proposed model, as well as the process by which it produces those effects.

### *Chapter I*

The first paper, now published in *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* (Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin & Maxwell, 2009), reviews divergent empirical evidence on interracial contact. While research on diversity in higher education provides ample evidence for the educational benefits of engaging with diversity in informal interactions or courses (Gottfredson et al., 2008; Gurin et al., 2002; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, 2005; Jayakumar, 2008; Milem et al., 2005; Sidanius, Levin, vanLaar, & Sears, 2008), experimental and naturalistic studies in social psychology on interracial interactions reveal a complicated picture, showing what appear to be both positive and negative effects. While intergroup contact does typically produce positive effects, particularly on prejudice reduction (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Sidanius, Levin, vanLaar, & Sears, 2008), these interactions can be characterized by anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), concerns about appearing prejudiced or being the target of prejudice (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007), and even provoke cardiac responses associated with threat (see Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). Additionally, recent research on roommates documents that interracial roommates report fewer positive emotions, less felt intimacy, fewer intimacy enhancing behaviors (smiling, talking, appearing engaged and interested, friendliness), less desire to

live with the roommate again and these relationships are more likely to dissolve than same race roommates (Trail, Shelton, & West, 2009; Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006; Shook & Fazio, 2008).

We argue that contact must be both structured and guided in ways that actively prevent negative outcomes while promoting positive outcomes. To that end, we present a critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue arguing that its unique pedagogical features (content, structured interaction, facilitative leadership) foster critical-dialogic communication processes (Nagda, 2006) which in turn increase psychological processes focused on positivity in interactions across difference and openness to exploring the impact of society and identity in shaping one's experiences and perspectives on the world. Together these processes are hypothesized to produce improved intergroup relationships, understanding and collaborative action focused on redressing inequality. Finally, we conclude this paper by reviewing empirical evidence supporting the proposed model and present policy considerations for higher education institutions interested in promoting meaningful intergroup interaction.

## *Chapter II*

The second paper tests the efficacy of the proposed model of intergroup dialogue, focusing specifically on intergroup empathy as an intergroup relationship outcome. A growing body of research in social psychology has focused on empathy as one important mediator of the effects of intergroup contact on prejudice reduction (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008 for a meta-analysis) and cross-group reconciliation/forgiveness (Cehajic, Brown, & Castano, 2008; Tam et al, 2008), although we know very little about what kinds of face-to-face communication fosters empathy across difference.

To test the effectiveness of this model, 26 standardized interracial dialogue experiments were conducted where more than 700 applicants were randomized to enroll in interracial dialogue or to a waitlist-control group. All participants were evaluated at the beginning of the academic term (pre-test), the end of the term (post-test) and one year later. Additionally, data were collected from 13 social science courses that focused on content about race/ethnicity but did not make explicit use of a critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue. While these social science course comparisons were not randomized, they allow for the examination of whether effects of intergroup dialogue can be attributed merely to exposure to content. Results show both short- (pre-post) and long-term (one year later) positive experimental effects of intergroup dialogue on emotional intergroup empathy relative to waitlist controls. They also demonstrate that both white participants and participants of color were affected similarly. Additionally, effects are demonstrated for participants in the dialogue courses above and beyond participants in social science courses, who show no change over time in empathy. Finally, we highlight the role of communication processes in intergroup dialogue as a partial mediator of the differences between participation in race dialogue courses and exposure to content in social science courses on race that employ a traditional lecture/discussion format.

### *Chapter III*

The third paper builds on what was learned in the second paper by examining *how* intergroup dialogue increases intergroup empathy. Specifically, this paper empirically tests the theoretical process model for intergroup dialogue proposed in the first paper. Theoretically, this paper also addresses two limitations in the literature on intergroup

empathy by 1) offering a conceptualization of emotional intergroup empathy that more accurately captures the experience of empathy in dynamic intergroup communication and 2) providing a comprehensive empirical examination of the structural features of intergroup interactions as well as the communication and psychological processes that together foster increased empathy over the course of the academic term and one year later. Methodologically, this paper focuses on change processes only for participants in intergroup dialogue (as part of the larger experimental study in the second paper) but also incorporates data from 26 intergroup dialogues focused on gender in order to test whether the hypothesized process model is robust to topic, applying to both race and gender dialogues. Using structural equation modeling, we demonstrate strong empirical support for the hypothesized process model, with no differences found between dialogues focused on race or gender. We also highlight the pedagogical features and communication processes in intergroup dialogues as ‘active ingredients’ in fostering both short- and long-term increases in intergroup empathy.

These three papers together advance a model for structured and guided intergroup communication that bridges diverging findings in education and social psychology showing both positive and negative effects of intergroup interaction. In addition to advancing theory on intergroup interaction and communication, this dissertation examines both outcome and processes to document not only that intergroup dialogue is effective, but also *why it is effective*, building on recent efforts to understand processes in intergroup interventions (Dovidio et al., 2004; Stephan, 2008).

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## CHAPTER I

### **TAKING A ‘HANDS ON’ APPROACH TO DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CRITICAL-DIALOGIC MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE INTERGROUP INTERACTION**

*Co-authored with Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, Patricia Gurin and Kelly Maxwell*

The value of diversity in higher education is widely accepted among educators (Flores Neimann & Maruyama, 2005) and was affirmed by the Supreme Court in the 2003 cases surrounding the University of Michigan’s use of affirmative action in their admission policies. On behalf of the majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (539 U.S. 306, 2003), Justice O’Connor wrote:

The [University of Michigan] Law School’s claim is further bolstered by numerous expert studies and reports showing that such diversity promotes learning outcomes and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce, for society, and for the legal profession. Major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today’s increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas and viewpoints.

More than seventy-five amicus briefs were submitted on behalf of the University of Michigan to affirm the educational value of diversity representing hundreds of colleges

and universities, more than fifty higher education associations, sixty-eight Fortune 500 corporations, twenty-nine former high ranking military leaders and numerous social science organizations (Gurin, Dey, Gurin & Hurtado, 2004). The challenge facing educators, particularly in higher education, is how to create educational experiences that optimally foster the development of skills necessary to participate in an increasingly diverse and global society.

To address this challenge, in this article we first briefly highlight the evidence presented to the Supreme Court and conducted since, showing that interactions between diverse peers are important for diversity to have educational benefits. We turn then to recent social psychological research on interracial interaction and cross-racial roommate experiences, which challenge the notion that interracial (and perhaps other kinds of intergroup) contact will necessarily produce positive outcomes for students. Because the experimental research on interracial interaction does not assess sustained interactions, and the roommate research does not assess facilitated interactions, we argue that sustained and facilitated intergroup dialogue holds promise for effectively leveraging diversity for positive outcomes. We present a critical-dialogic theoretical model of intergroup dialogue and briefly summarize evidence for this model, focusing on emerging results (to be covered in detail in a forthcoming book) from a national experimental study across nine colleges and universities. We end with policy implications for higher education, institutions, and intergroup dialogue programs.

### The Benefits of Diversity in Higher Education

For most students higher education is uniquely situated within late adolescence and early adulthood, when individuals shift from an unwavering endorsement of the

worldviews of their parents, guardians and teachers and begin to explore where they see themselves fitting into society and the political discourse. Gurin and colleagues (2002) argue that new experiences with diversity, particularly diverse points of view, ought to foster more active thinking and decision making that is informed by a more complex and multi-faceted worldview rather than passive commitments based on prior experiences. They further argue that higher education will be most influential when students encounter an educational environment that diverges from students' prior experiences and when its diversity and complexity encourages active thinking and an intellectual interest in exploring new and different educational experiences. Using a different cohort (first-year students in 1994) from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) than was used by Gurin and colleagues (2004), Jayakumar (2008) provides support for the suggestion that racial/ethnic diversity will be especially influential for students who grew up in racially segregated environments and for whom diversity brings maximal discontinuity. She shows that attending a diverse college or university has direct benefits for students who grow up in racially segregated environments on post-college cross-cultural workforce competencies including leadership skills (leadership ability, public speaking skills, social self-confidence) and pluralistic orientation (ability to see the world from someone else's perspective and negotiate controversial issues, openness to having views challenged), but only indirect or no effects for students who grew up in diverse neighborhoods. However, for both groups of students, the post-college impact of having attended a diverse university depended on the quality of an institution's racial climate.

Is having a diverse student body sufficient to produce educational benefits?

Institutions with greater demographic diversity in their student bodies do have two

important qualities: 1) the likelihood that students who are from different backgrounds will interact with each other increases and 2) the opinions and viewpoints of students (intellectual diversity) are more variable in such institutions (see Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005 for a review). Structural diversity by itself may therefore be influential in student learning, although research conducted in communities and in education suggests that the benefits of diversity require interaction across difference. At the community level, Robert Putnam (2007) conducted a massive study of people living in more and less diverse communities and found that those living in more diverse places actually trust each other less and participate less in community activities. However, this work did not assess the impact of actually *interacting* with diverse others in both types of communities. Putnam's research raises questions that mirror concerns in higher education as well. Indeed, the evidence presented to the Supreme Court on behalf of the University of Michigan in *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, as well as research conducted since (Gurin, et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2005; Milem et al., 2005), consistently argues that structural diversity needs to be leveraged in an intentional way to have maximal benefit. Much like any educational resource – be it a great library, a talented faculty or cutting-edge technology – diversity needs to be utilized by students, and institutions need to create opportunities to assure that students do interact and learn from each other. Thus, while the presence of a diverse student body is important, it is up to educators and administrators to do something with it.

One way students can learn about diversity is by exploring and learning about diverse people through readings, lectures and discussion (Gurin et al., 2002). Educators can provide students with course material that informs them about the belief systems,

traditions and worldviews of social groups as well as the history of experiences that have shaped those cultural worldviews. Although the impact of curricular initiatives has only rarely been studied, and even more rarely with designs that control for the likelihood that students who select such courses are different from other students, there is some limited evidence for the value of diversity courses. Hurtado (2005), in a longitudinal study of students in ten public institutions, shows a wide range of cognitive, socio-cognitive, and democratic sentiments associated with enrollment in diversity courses. Of the twenty-five measures collected in this study, nineteen are positively related to course participation. Since the analysis controls for student scores upon entering these universities, the curricular experience that occurred between first and second years of college can be construed as producing change on these outcome measures. Using data from this same study, Nelson Laird, Engberg and Hurtado (2005) specifically assessed the effect of enrolling in two diversity courses compared to a management course, and found a positive impact on social action engagement, measured by importance attached to creating social awareness, volunteering for a cause, and working to eliminate poverty. In a design that compared students finishing such courses with those just entering them, Chang (2002) tied enrollment in a required diversity course to more positive attitudes toward African Americans as measured by the Modern Racism Scale. Gurin and colleagues (2002) also report evidence from a national, longitudinal CIRP dataset (first-year students in 1985) showing that taking ethnic studies and women's studies courses is associated with increased intellectual engagement and self-assessed academic skills, as well as supportive evidence from a longitudinal study of a single university that classroom diversity was related to increased intellectual engagement and active thinking.

In a rare experimental study, Antonio (2004) demonstrates that complex thinking is increased in group discussions where minority students introduce novel perspectives.

Another way students can benefit from diversity involves the interactions that take place between diverse peers outside of class in residence halls, and social or campus events (Gurin, et al., 2002). A large body of research now supports the impact of cross-racial interaction, both from experimental studies on intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and from higher education field studies, which report associations between interaction and a host of measures of cognitive, socio-cognitive, diversity attitudes, democratic sentiments, and voting behavior (Gottfredson et al., 2008; Gurin et al, 2002; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Hurtado, 2005; Milem et al., 2005). A recent multi-year study of students at UCLA also finds considerable evidence of positive benefits of intergroup contact (Sidanius, Levin, vanLaar, & Sears, 2008). Summarizing a wide range of analyses, Sidanius and colleagues (2008) conclude that they find “all things considered – reasonable evidence that interethnic contact ‘works.’ . . . more substantial contact effects were found when we examined interethnic friendships, dating relationships, and roommate situations. In these cases, by and large, ethnically heterogeneous pairings had the effect of reducing an array of ethnic prejudices and increasing egalitarian values.” (pp. 318-319). Especially impressive is the connection demonstrated by Jayakumar (2008) for white students between cross-racial interaction during college and pluralistic orientation measured six years after college, as well as with continued socialization across race and ethnicity in the post-college years. Together these findings support the contention of the *amici* in supporting the University of Michigan’s defense of its

admissions policies that interacting and learning from diverse peers would foster cross-cultural competencies needed in the global world.

### The Challenge of Negotiating Diverse Interactions

While the evidence from research in higher education and within social psychology supports positive outcomes of intergroup contact and learning in an interracial/ethnic context, new research in social psychology raises questions about how to help students develop the skills needed to cope with challenges involved in interracial interactions. Interracial interactions, when enacted without effective communication and guidance, are not golden pathways toward building relationships between diverse peers. We briefly review the evidence below; the articles cited in this summary provide more comprehensive descriptions and references for this prior work.

Intergroup interactions invoke anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) for both majority and minority group members and increase self-regulation because of the uncertainty associated with negotiating novel and unfamiliar interactions with outgroup members relative to ingroup members (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Richeson & Trawalter, 2005). They may be stressful and cause anxiety to manifest in nervous behavior. Whites fidget, blink excessively, avert eye-gaze and increase personal distance more in cross-race relative to same-race interactions. African Americans who expect white interaction partners to be prejudiced against them fidget more often than African Americans not provided such an expectation for prejudice (see Richeson & Trawalter, 2005, for more detail).

Interracial interactions can even go as far as to induce threat for majority group members (see Richeson & Trawalter, 2005). In an interracial interaction with an African



American confederate, white individuals exhibit cardiac responses associated with threat, while interactions with a white confederate reveal physiological responses indicative of feeling challenged rather than threatened. While anxiety may be an inherent component of cross-race interaction for both majority and minority group members, what cues anxiety may differ between groups. Indeed, recent work finds interracial contact to be more stressful for whites than African Americans (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). Specifically, whites show more anxiety than African Americans in interracial interactions and their anxiety is elevated regardless of whether the topic of conversation is race-related or race-neutral. In contrast, African Americans show less anxiety when talking about race relative to non-race related issues with whites.

Why are interracial interactions so challenging? Vorauer (2006) argues that both majority and minority group members are concerned with how their interaction partners are evaluating them. Ethnic minorities can be plagued with expectations of being the target of prejudice and worry that they will be stereotyped by a white interaction partner causing minorities to evoke compensatory strategies (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007 for a review). Ethnic minorities may embellish a sense of engagement with white interaction partners at the cost of increased negative emotions, dislike of white interaction partners and feeling less authentic in a cross-race interaction. In contrast, whites worry about appearing prejudiced when interacting with minority group members and compensate for this concern by regulating their expression of prejudice in interracial interactions (Richeson & Shelton, 2007).

A series of studies by Richeson, Shelton and colleagues have documented the deleterious effect of regulating the possibility of appearing prejudiced in interracial

interactions on executive functioning (for a review, see Richeson & Shelton, 2007), arguing that interracial encounters deplete cognitive resources because of self-regulation. These studies document increased impairment on cognitive tasks requiring self-regulation following cross-race relative to same-race interactions, revealing pronounced effects for individuals with the most implicit racial bias. For example, the extent to which white individuals appear to be controlling their behavior during an interracial interaction – coded on videotapes of cross-race interactions and when manipulated experimentally by reducing the need to regulate concerns about prejudice (see Richeson & Trawalter, 2005) – predicts subsequent impairment on a cognitive task requiring self-regulation. Even more provocative, white participants who show the greatest impairment on a cognitive self-regulatory task after a cross-race interaction also show, in response to images of African American faces, the most elevated neural activity in brain regions believed to be responsible for executive control (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Similarly, white participants who are high in external motivation to respond without prejudice relative to those low in external motivation show increased anxious arousal when presented images of African American faces relative to white faces (Richeson & Trawalter, 2008).

How individuals in interactions regulate racial bias may not be straightforward. Research contrasting verbal and non-verbal behavior shows different effects. Verbal ‘friendliness’ behavior is predicted by whites’ self-reported (explicit) racial attitudes. In contrast, whites’ non-verbal friendliness behavior – reported by both African American interaction partners and observers of the interaction – is predicted by their automatically activated (implicit) racial attitudes (Dovidio, Kawakami & Gaertner, 2002). Thus, how and under what conditions efforts to regulate concerns about prejudice play out in

intergroup interactions is not clear cut, manifesting through less-controlled, non-verbal communication that is clearly observable to interaction partners.

While interracial interactions invoke different sets of evaluative concerns (Vorauer, 2006) for advantaged and disadvantaged groups, these groups also bring with them different goals for intergroup interactions. Using both a minimal group paradigm where participants are randomly assigned to arbitrary groups with power differences (overestimators vs. underestimators; Study 1) and real ethnic groups (Mizrahim vs. Ashkenazim Israeli Jews, Study 2), Saguy and colleagues (2008) show that disadvantaged groups want to talk about power differences and change in the power structure more than members of advantaged groups who prefer to talk primarily about commonalities between the groups. Thus, intergroup interactions can feel like two ships passing in the night as members of different groups enter with different goals and objectives (build relationships vs. change power structure), which may explain the finding that having a (ostensibly) common goal during intergroup contact (one of four conditions outlined for positive intergroup contact; Allport, 1954) does not predict positive outcomes in intergroup interaction for members of disadvantaged racial groups (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

Together, this large and growing body of evidence paints a bleak picture of interracial interactions for minority and especially for majority group members who appear to end up feeling cognitively and emotionally exhausted in interracial interactions. Still, other research makes clear that overcoming these evaluative concerns and discrepant goals is possible. For instance, shifting expectations for interracial interactions can reduce cognitive depletion effects for white participants. Applying regulatory focus

theory (Higgins, 1997), Trawalter and Richeson (2006) randomized participants to a prevention-focus, a promotion-focus or a no-prime control condition. Specifically, prevention-focused participants were told “It is important to the study that you avoid appearing prejudiced in any way during the interaction,” whereas promotion-focused participants were told, “It is important to the study that you approach the interaction as an opportunity to have an enjoyable intercultural dialogue.” Their results show that prevention-focused participants look much like controls suggesting that under less structured circumstances, whites utilize a prevention orientation toward interracial interactions, going to great lengths to avoid appearing prejudiced. In contrast, invoking a promotion-orientation with the expectation of a positive intercultural dialogue cut cognitive depletion effects by more than half.

With regard to differential goals between advantaged and disadvantaged groups in interracial interactions, Saguy and colleagues (2008) show that while advantaged group members are less motivated by social change and addressing power issues, when they are led to perceive their advantaged status as relatively illegitimate, they are more willing to engage in communication about group-based power differences. Thus, coming to terms with illegitimate inequality, particularly structural inequality, may be a crucial avenue for creating more effective intergroup interaction. If both groups can be led to apply a critical lens to societal power structures, more positive outcomes may result.

#### *Sustained Interactions: Interracial Roommates*

One possible critique of research on interracial interactions is that the findings are based on interracial/ethnic interactions that take place within the lab (low in ecological validity), and thus are unnatural and not sustained over time. However, a growing body

of research has begun to investigate the effects of relationships between interracial college roommates, capitalizing on the random assignment that housing offices employ for entering first-year students. Comparing cross-race v. same-race roommate dyads on college campuses offers the opportunity for a randomized field experiment with both high ecological validity and sustained contact for one semester or longer (Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair & Sidanius, 2005; Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006; Boisjoly, Duncan, Kremer, Levy & Eccles, 2006). These studies are especially relevant to higher education because they investigate the kind of interactions that diverse peers encounter with one another on a daily basis. Additionally, while interactions between roommates are unstructured and not guided, they do meet the minimal requirements of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954). Roommates have equal status, share the cooperative interdependent goal of creating a positive living environment, have the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with one another, and the contact is sanctioned by authorities given the institution's assignment of the interracial dyad to live with one another. Together this research on roommates suggests both positive and negative effects for both roommates in interracial dyads, although it is noteworthy that most research to date has focused on effects for whites.

Positive effects for white students randomly assigned to live with a roommate from a different racial v. same racial background include more positive attitudes toward various ethnic groups, less symbolic racism, and more heterogeneous friendship groups (Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair & Sidanius, 2005); reduction in intergroup anxiety, less decline in positive evaluations of the roommate, reduction in automatically activated (implicit) prejudice (Shook & Fazio, 2008a); and more positive attitudes toward

affirmative action and greater comfort with minorities several years later (Boisjoly, et al, 2006). Despite recent cautions about the impact of interracial roommate relationships on academic performance (Trail, Shelton & West, 2009), whites' academic success is unaffected by living with a roommate of a different race and African Americans living with white roommates actually show higher GPA's after the first academic quarter than their counterparts not living with whites (Shook & Fazio, 2008b).

However, some negative effects also occur for white students in mixed race v. same race roommate situations. In the randomly assigned mixed race roommate situation, white students spend less time with the roommate, are less satisfied, have less involvement in shared activities, show less cross-network interaction (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006) and less overall compatibility (Phelps, Altschul, Wisenbaker, Day, Cooper & Potter, 1998) than when they are randomly assigned to live with a white roommate. Importantly, interracial roommate relationships are less likely to remain intact after one semester and one year later than same-race white (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006) or ethnic minority roommate relationships (Shook & Fazio, 2008b).

More recent work involving a daily report of emotions experienced in the roommate relationship shows fewer positive emotions, less felt intimacy, fewer intimacy enhancing behaviors (smiling, talking, appearing engaged and interested, friendliness, warmth, easiness in conversation, and pleasantness), and less desire to live with the roommate again for both whites and ethnic minorities in interracial relative to same-race dyads (Trail et al., 2009). A few studies using these methods also shed light on the experiences of minorities in interracial living situations. Ethnic minorities with greater concerns about being the target of prejudice experience more negative emotions, are

more likely to utilize compensatory strategies during interethnic interactions (Shelton, Richeson & Salvatore, 2005, Study 1), and their attitudes towards whites influence their perceived closeness and emotional experiences with roommates (Shelton & Richeson, 2006, Study 2). In other words, attitudes matter for the quality of interracial roommate interactions.

Taken together, laboratory and roommate research on interracial interactions suggests that both positive and negative outcomes are possible and that these interactions must be negotiated. Communicating across differences can make people anxious and concerned about how others perceive them, deplete cognitive and emotional resources and can present difficult challenges for students not equipped to navigate these social interactions. Thus, efforts to promote effective interactions must address these challenges by helping students find ways to overcome their fears and anxiety about interracial interactions and refocus the goal of these encounters from preventing bad outcomes to promoting good ones – intergroup understanding, relationships and effective communication. As already summarized, research on naturally occurring interaction and intergroup contact documents that somehow intergroup interaction often does have positive benefits. What is important is how to foster positive outcomes in light of this research illustrating the challenges such interaction often presents.

#### Promoting Effective Intergroup Interaction

Many efforts to improve relationships between diverse peers on college campuses fail to provide students guidance and training for how to engage with one another across group boundaries. Too often diversity initiatives, including randomly assigning cross-race/same-race roommates, seem to assume that mere contact, without

helping students deal with the issues now evident from recent social psychological research, will somehow produce positive benefits. And to be fair, as already noted, there are a huge number of intergroup contact studies reviewed by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) finding that even unguided interracial and intercultural interaction produces positive outcomes. Still, more learning from such interactions can result when programs

- use guided facilitation to help students learn to communicate effectively,
- help them deal with the psychological effects that anticipated expressions of prejudice produce for both majority and minority group members,
- provide exposure to content about power, illegitimacy of the status quo, and need for social change that takes account of the motivation of majority group members to explore commonalities and of the motivation of minority group members to discuss power and privilege.

We know from prior research that taking a ‘hands off’ approach to learning how to communicate across difference will likely not be optimally effective in the same way that teaching students a language and providing them a paper and pencil will not teach them how to write. Rather, to create writers educators must provide students a framework for how to communicate ideas effectively on paper, guiding them through the process of writing by helping them recognize when their efforts do and do not result in a desirable product and why. This same principle also applies to communicating with people of different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Intergroup interactions are complicated and messy, and most students, particularly whites, enter higher education with little exposure to people different from them (Orfield & Kurlaender, 2001).

*Intergroup Dialogue: Structured, Guided, Content-Based*



Intergroup dialogue courses, developed in the late 1980s, are one way to help educate students how to work through intergroup conflicts, build effective communication across differences to forge relationships between diverse peers *and* confront the historical and structural inequalities that members of minority groups face in their everyday lives. Intergroup dialogues (IGDs) are now implemented at numerous colleges and universities in the United States, as academic credit-bearing courses, led by trained facilitators (Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007).

These courses bring together members of two different social identity groups (people of color/white people, women and men, high and low socio-economic status, Christians and Jews, heterosexual and non-heterosexuals), utilizing a guided and structured model to engage members of different groups in face-to-face interactions with the goals to improve and deepen intergroup communication and relationships, foster intergroup understanding of identity and inequality, and help students develop the skills and commitment to engage in intergroup collaboration (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Zúñiga et al., 2007). One challenge is that students bring multiple identities to dialogue courses. Even though intergroup dialogues focus primarily on a single identity (race, gender etc.), they nevertheless provide students a basic framework for exploring other identities, as well as how these identities intersect with one another to influence one's life experiences and perspectives on the world. For the identity being examined, intergroup dialogue courses include equal numbers of students, 12-16 in total, from each social identity group. They usually meet weekly, for one 2-3 hour session, across a 10-12 week period. Two trained facilitators, one from each identity group, guide the dialogues. Students typically apply to take the course through an online application system, which assists

program coordinators in placing students in intergroup dialogue sections based on their identities.

Although students are often eager to jump into the controversial hot topics, anticipating provocative discussions, intergroup dialogue is not merely a space to talk about issues, opinions and perspectives. It is an educational program that provides students opportunities to learn *how* to communicate effectively across different perspectives in order to prevent the fatal pitfalls that can characterize intergroup interactions while promoting positive relationships, understanding and collaboration. Consequently, intergroup dialogue progresses through a series of stages, each building on prior learning and experiences.

Facilitators involve students in the beginning of the dialogue to discuss their hopes and fears and co-create a shared understanding of their needs and expectations for the dialogue, formulating ground rules or guidelines for engagement (respect each other's perspectives, challenge ideas – not the person, listen carefully, be present and not disengaged etc.). In early sessions, students begin to explore different modes of communication through readings and role-playing exercises, particularly the distinctions between dialogue, discussion, and debate (Ellinor & Gerard, 1998; Nagda & Gurin, 2007). Indeed, most intergroup encounters can naturally take the form of debate, with participants staking their claim to a perspective and defending their positions through argumentation. Alternatively, students can take a discussion approach where individuals serially go around and explain their perspective in a monologic format, with little inquiry or understanding of others' perspectives, just mere exposure to these perspectives. In contrast, dialogue promotes an interactive communication style where ideas and

perspectives are presented but students are encouraged to use active listening, and to ask questions of their peers to promote increased understanding for how and why identity and socialization have shaped students' perspectives on the world.

As students develop a shared understanding for *how* to communicate, they begin to explore both commonalities with one another *and* differences, using identity as a lens. They examine similarities in their goals, desires, human needs and cultural practices as well as how their identities and those of other students shape and create different life experiences and perspectives. Through this exploration, students begin to recognize how identities are embedded in systems of power and privilege in society. Together, using both identity and structural inequality as a framework for understanding diverse perspectives, students explore controversial 'hot topics' (e.g. affirmative action in race dialogues, media and body image concerns in gender dialogues), reconsidering their own assumptions and perspectives in light of listening to their peers and the emergent differences and similarities. Finally, students explore opportunities for collaborative action, examining what an effective collaboration would look like from each group's perspectives, and how identity, power and privilege might manifest within collaborations. They use this experience as a stepping stone to forge lasting commitments to intergroup collaboration in the future (see Zúñiga et al., 2007, for detailed description of the intergroup dialogue curriculum).

### The Critical-Dialogic Theoretical Framework

Nagda (2006) articulated a critical-dialogic process theory for intergroup dialogue that focuses on contextualizing intergroup interactions in systems of power and

privilege, and on building relationships across these differences. We elaborate below on the *critical* and *dialogic* components of the theoretical framework.

### *The Critical Component*

*Critical* means a conscientious effort to examine how individual and group life are meaningfully connected to group identity, how those identities exist in structures of stratification that afford members of different groups privileges and disadvantages, resulting in continued group-based inequalities. We do *not* use the term *critical* to depict an intergroup exchange where individuals are critical of one another, but rather an exchange where participants use a critical analysis to better understand the intersection of identity with systems of inequality and its impact on themselves and other students. Students are asked to analyze how their own experiences are connected to socialization by parents, teachers, peers and communities and how they reflect their group identities and positions within systems of power and inequality. Based on critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), the critical aspect of the critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue uses readings, in-class exercises, and group projects to help students grasp how inequalities are created and perpetuated but also how they can be altered through social change.

An important component of the critical aspect of this model of intergroup dialogue is its explicit emphasis on identity. Making identity salient and asking students to consider how their own perspectives, and the perspectives of other students, reflect group identity contradicts some social psychological theories for improving intergroup relations, which emphasize decreasing the salience of group boundaries by viewing each other only as individuals, termed decategorization, or by creating a new superordinate

identity such as a team, termed recategorization (or common-ingroup identity model; see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, for a review of distinctions). Evolving out of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1979) and social categorization theory (Turner, 1987), these models are premised on the notion that deemphasizing the boundaries that sometimes cause group conflict will promote intergroup harmony. However, other research documents that increasing the salience of group boundaries does not necessarily increase intergroup bias (Deffenbacher, Park, Judd, & Correll, 2009) and that making identities salient is crucial for effects of intergroup contact to generalize beyond individuals within the contact situation to members of their groups (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Indeed, proponents of these prior models have since revised their model to allow for identity salience (personalization model, see Ensari & Miller, 2006; dual-identity model, Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

By making identity salient, intergroup dialogue takes a multicultural approach rather than a color-blind approach which assumes that only minimal (if any) racial disparities still exist, the few that do exist are caused by cultural deficiencies in certain racial groups, not by structural inequality, that patterns of segregation reflect a natural tendency for people to prefer to associate with similar others, and that meritocracy assures equality if individuals take advantage of opportunities and work hard (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). A multicultural perspective does not reject the ideal of colorblindness, but argues that we do not live in a color-blind society, that inequalities still exist, and that efforts to improve racial/ethnic relations should recognize inequality as a powerful influence on social life experiences (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Hitchcock, 2001).

A growing body of research in social psychology has shown that color-blindness is less productive than a multicultural perspective. Color-blindness is associated with a greater level of prejudice both unconscious/implicit (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004) and conscious/explicit (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Neville et al., 2000), and is also used as a justification for inequality (Knowles et. al, 2009). In both a laboratory and face-to-face study, whites and non-whites (Canadian Aboriginals) give more positive comments and write lengthier descriptions about their outgroup partners when they are given a multicultural message (e.g. “different cultural groups bring different perspectives to life”) than when they are randomly assigned to a no-message control group (Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009). A color-blind message increases efforts to control how they are perceived by an outgroup conversation partner, which we have already pointed out produces significant psychological costs for individuals. Together, these results make clear that ignoring identity and inequality limits the possible positive impact of intergroup interaction.

### *The Dialogic Component*

By *dialogic* we mean a focus on interactions and communications that take place between members of different groups within intergroup dialogue. The dialogic component is what Baxter (2004) calls a relation “between self and other, a simultaneity of sameness and difference out of which knowing becomes possible” (p. 109). Influenced by theorizing about dialogue in communication studies that draws particularly from Bakhtin (1981), the dialogic part of the critical-dialogic model stresses how students from two groups co-create or constitute themselves and their relationships through communications emphasizing active listening to others, asking questions, learning from

others, active participation and personal sharing.

Because intergroup interactions are sometimes marked by cognitive and emotional exhaustion (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007), evaluation concerns (Vorauer, 2006), and anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), intergroup dialogues focus on creating a space for a different kind of communication. The goal of dialogic communication is not to present one's opinions and hear others (discussion) or to defend one's positions in order to reach resolution about which perspective is right or wrong (debate) but to strive for understanding through exploration of others' experiences, identifying one's own and others' assumptions and reappraising one's perspectives in light of these dialogic exchanges. In dialogue, students build dialogic skills engaging themselves in reflection and through active listening, personal sharing and asking questions of each other. These basic communication skills serve as a foundation for learning of their own and other people's experiences and perspectives. Dialogue offers a way for students to understand the complexities of their identities and self-other relationships. Shifting both the goal and the mode of communication in turn creates expectations for learning, growth and positive dialogue – a promotional-focus (Higgins, 1997; Trawalter & Richeson, 2006), undermining the need to regulate evaluation concerns, which deplete cognitive resources and increase anxiety.

Of course, intergroup dialogue also incorporates the basic tenets of Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory to foster effective dialogic communication, employing equal status among participants by balancing the composition of identities within intergroup dialogues, co-creating common goals for understanding and engagement through mutually agreed upon guidelines for respectful communication, creating

opportunities not only for acquaintanceship but the opportunity to forge meaningful friendships as well (Pettigrew, 1998). Moreover, IGDs are supported by authorities as credit-bearing academic courses, promoted by educators and administrators in higher education. Similarly, intergroup dialogue incorporates components of the personalization model (Ensari & Miller, 2006) by asking participants to participate in self-disclosure by presenting their biography to the group (with a focus on how their identity has shaped their socialization). They communicate potentially sensitive personal experiences, which promote trust, a sense of familiarity, interpersonal liking, and friendship between members of different groups, as well as decreased intergroup anxiety. IGDs also develop a dual identity (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000); students maintain separate identities through their memberships in different groups while also developing a superordinate identity – not as students at the same institution or on the same team but as students making a commitment to working together to bridge differences. In this vein, IGDs overcome barriers to intergroup interactions by leveraging a ‘strength and safety in numbers’ motivation (Park & Hinsz, 2006) to approach dialogic communication as an opportunity for reward rather than threat.

Still, while these conditions outline positive features of intergroup dialogue, they provide little guidance for how to communicate within intergroup dialogue. The dialogic component of a critical-dialogic model makes communication explicit, offering students the basic tools they need to work through complex, and sometimes uncomfortable, intergroup interactions. Students address their anxieties head-on in the first couple sessions, discussing their hopes and fears about intergroup dialogue with one another – ultimately normalizing these concerns for group members to help them recognize that



they are not alone. Creating guidelines for remaining engaged and respectful throughout the course of the dialogue teaches students the conditions necessary, and provides a shared understanding for what to expect for communication to work effectively. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own participation to consider how their usage of ‘air time’ relates to their identities, and the privileges afforded by those identities; they explore different seating arrangements (integrated vs. segregated) and how that influences both individual and group-level communication processes.

### *Integrating Critical and Dialogic Processes*

A critical-dialogic model aims to integrate a critical analysis of structural inequality with communication processes that foster meaningful connections across difference for diverse peers. While understanding inequality and building intergroup relationships are valuable ends themselves, these outcomes also pave the way for the possibility for intergroup collaboration, particularly collaboration that promotes action to redress systemic inequality and improve relations between groups at both the interpersonal and societal level. Indeed, members of disadvantaged groups are unlikely to be satisfied with merely establishing a positive relationship or hearing that advantaged group members now understand structural inequality; rather, members from disadvantaged groups are motivated to see change in the power structure (Saguy et al., 2008), such that members from the advantaged group want to take action. Thus, intergroup communication must serve as a mechanism for developing relationships between groups and building collaborations to address structural inequality.

## A Critical-Dialogic Process Model

Figure 1.1 displays the critical-dialogic model that guided a national research project of nine universities conducting intergroup dialogues. Pedagogical components of intergroup dialogue (exposure to content, structured interaction and guided facilitation) foster both critical (critical self-reflection, alliance building) and dialogic (engaging self, learning from others) communication processes (Nagda, 2006). These critical-dialogic communication processes in turn are hypothesized to facilitate openness (active thinking and commitment to considering multiple perspectives), identity engagement, and positive interactions across difference (comfort in intergroup communication, positive interactions with other groups, positive emotions when interacting with other groups). These psychological processes are hypothesized to lead to relational processes (intergroup empathy or motivation to bridge differences), which in turn foster intergroup understanding, collaboration and action (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen & Zuñiga, 2009).

### *Pedagogical Features*

A critical-dialogic model highlights three distinct pedagogical processes embedded within the design of intergroup dialogue – content learning, structured interaction and facilitative leadership. *Content learning* refers to the course materials and content that students are exposed to through readings which offer a wide range of theoretical, conceptual, empirical and narrative approaches to presenting information about identity, socialization, experiences with racism, sexism, classism etc. Together, these readings present multiple perspectives from authors representing a diverse spectrum of identities. For example, students read about a cycle of socialization, a conceptual model demonstrating how perspectives on the world are shaped through external

influences (peers, teachers, parents, the media) while developing into an adult (Harro, 2000). Facilitators and students bring readings into the classroom for participants to examine critically, integrating their own personal experiences to reflect on points of intersection and disjuncture between course concepts and personal life experiences.

*Structured interaction* refers to the intentional creation of structured interaction across group differences. Students are intentionally placed into small groups of 12-16 students with diverse identities. Allport's (1954) requirement for equal status among group members is a central component of group structure, balancing the numerical representation of members of different groups (e.g. for racial dialogues, equal numbers of white students and students of color) relevant to the focus of the intergroup dialogue. Balancing identities helps prevent students from reproducing inequality within the dialogue by providing members of some groups more 'air time' and a greater presence within the room. The nature of a small-group learning environment also creates the conditions for maximal dialogic interactions between students, providing students the opportunity to get to know one another more deeply to build relationships within and across group boundaries. Structured interaction also involves the use of structured exercises and activities that provide students active learning experiences, which bring to life course content presented in the readings.

*Facilitative leadership* plays a critical role in maximizing the potential of content-based learning and structured interactions. As the research presented earlier makes clear, interactions between members of different racial/ethnic groups can produce a host of negative outcomes and can replicate dynamics of inequality. Guided interaction by facilitators helps students navigate the rocky road of intergroup interactions. Trained

facilitators strive to create an inclusive space for all participants, modeling effective dialogic communication between themselves as a team and in the classroom with participants. Facilitators foster dialogic communication among participants with guiding questions, asking for clarification, probing as necessary, and occasionally summarizing the dialogue. Facilitators also focus their attention on group dynamics – who is talking or not and why, how both what is being said and how it is being communicated relate to identity and inequality. Facilitators highlight individual and group level emotional reactions and experiences in the group, normalizing feelings of discomfort or anxiety, reframing experiences of difficulty as learning opportunities.

#### *Communication Processes*

Nagda (2006) identified four communication processes explaining students' increased motivation to bridge group differences over the course of an intergroup dialogue, which together enact a critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue. *Dialogic processes* focus on a dynamic exchange of self- and other-oriented communication. The communication process of *engaging self* involves each student's own active participation in intergroup dialogue through personal sharing of one's perspectives and life experiences and addressing difficult issues. *Learning from others* – listening to others, asking questions and exploring different life experiences and perspectives is a second aspect of the dialogic process. Together, these dialogic communication processes provide students a dynamic interaction of sharing and listening to better understand one another, helping them to identify both commonalities and differences that foster improved intergroup interactions and relationships (Nagda, 2006).

Of course, even though engaging self and learning from others may cultivate better relationships between members of different groups, these forms of communication alone do not focus on a sociopolitical analysis of systems of power and inequality. Consistent with recent experimental research documenting that intergroup contact must focus on both relationship building and power to meet the goals and objectives of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Saguy et al., 2008), we argue that communication across difference must include a critical component. Students need to find ways to communicate effectively across the very issues that divide them – systems of power and privilege that sustain structural inequality.

*Critical reflection* refers to communication where students examine their own perspectives, experiences and assumptions, as well as those of other students in the dialogue through a critical analysis of power, privilege and inequality. These critical reflections help students understand how power and inequality influence one's own and others' perspectives, providing a foundation from which to use their relationships with one another to explore challenging and often divisive issues. A second critical process is *alliance building*, which refers to communication processes that focus on working through disagreements and talking about ways to collaborate to work against structural inequality. Alliance building leverages the relationships formed through dialogic communication, conjoined with a critical analysis to build collaborations across difference (Nagda, 2006).

Together, these communication processes are hypothesized to foster change in psychological processes (the way people think and feel) in intergroup dialogue by shaping the interactions into productive encounters which address the interests and

concerns of both advantaged and disadvantaged group members. Dialogic communication builds relationships not by ignoring group differences for the sake of short-lived intergroup harmony but by exploring both commonality and difference. Effective communication does not sweep difficult and divisive issues ‘under the rug’; rather critical communication processes provide students a vehicle to navigate the rough terrain of power and inequality that otherwise might disintegrate the ties forged through dialogic communication.

### *Psychological Processes*

Critical and dialogic communication processes in intergroup interaction are hypothesized to foster increased *openness* (active thinking about one’s self and society; consideration of multiple perspectives). Similarly, effective communication within intergroup interactions ought to foster more positive feelings towards interacting with students of different cultural backgrounds. The critical-dialogic communication processes are expected to promote *positive interactions across difference* (greater comfort in communicating with people of other groups or framed negatively – less anxiety, more frequent positive interactions with diverse peers – having meaningful discussions about race while sharing personal feelings and problems, and finally, more positive emotions during these interactions – feeling trusting, excited, open and engaged). We also hypothesize that critical-dialogic communication processes will foster greater *identity engagement* because much of the learning is centered on understanding the influence of social identities on one’s own and other people’s perspectives and worldviews.

While many of these psychological processes could be conceptualized as outcomes themselves, we highlight their roles as processes in that they are believed to

play a critical role in influencing (mediating) other outcomes. These processes together are hypothesized to foster relational outcomes, especially intergroup empathy and motivation to bridge differences, which in turn cultivate intergroup understanding and collaboration. Thus, we conceptualize relationship building as an intergroup outcome itself as well as a process that facilitates understanding and action.

### *Outcomes*

*Intergroup relationship* outcomes (and processes) include intergroup empathy and motivation to bridge differences. Empathy can involve a critical component emphasizing reactions to structural inequality and/or a dialogic component emphasizing parallel emotional experiences with others pertaining to their personal life experiences. Defined in this way, intergroup empathy is also bidirectional across relationships of privilege and power, with advantaged groups empathizing with the experiences of disadvantaged groups and disadvantaged groups empathizing with the socialization that takes place in advantaged groups, influencing their perspective on the world. Additionally, effective critical-dialogic communication ought to promote increased motivation to bridge differences – recognizing the importance of learning about different groups and educating others about one’s own group memberships through sharing perspectives and life experiences.

*Intergroup understanding* refers to increased awareness and structural understanding of racial, gender and socio-economic inequality – recognizing that what individuals can achieve is still limited by their membership in advantaged or disadvantaged social identity groups and institutional politics and practices that intentionally or unintentionally promote the welfare of some groups more than others.

Moreover, not only are students hypothesized to increase their structural understanding of inequality but also to critique examples of inequality (e.g. believing that racial/ethnic profiling is a serious problem, that there should be stronger legislation against perpetrators of hate crimes and so forth).

*Intergroup collaborative action* outcomes include increased confidence and frequency in taking action that is self-directed (recognizing one's own biases, avoiding using negative language that reinforces stereotypes and making efforts to get to know people of diverse backgrounds), other-directed (challenging others on derogatory comments while reinforcing others for behaviors that support cultural diversity) and collaborative in nature (working with others to challenge discrimination, participating in a coalition of different groups to address social issues). Intergroup dialogue is expected to provide students a sense of efficacy for taking action while also increasing the frequency with which they engage in that action. Moreover, participation in intergroup dialogue is also expected to promote increased commitment to action post-college intended to redress inequality – influencing the political structure through voting and educational campaigns as well as efforts to correct social-economic inequality and promote interracial understanding.

#### Evidence for a Critical-Dialogic Model

Prior research on intergroup dialogue in general has shown a number of effects (for a review, see Dessel & Rogge, 2008) although we focus here only on research evaluating a critical-dialogic model. A longitudinal comparison (pre-test and post-test) combined with a participant/matched comparison group found that the course significantly increased students' structural explanations for inequality and endorsement



of actions to correct inequalities in intergroup conflict situations (Lopez, et al, 1998), and students' active thinking, perspective taking, and interest in political issues (Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004). Other pre-test/post-test studies have found that dialogue participants increase their motivation to learn from others, educate each other, and bridge differences between racial/ethnic groups, and also their confidence in taking actions to reduce self-prejudice and to promote diversity among others (Nagda, Kim & Truelove, 2004).

The few studies that have examined how the outcomes of intergroup dialogues occur suggest two kinds of processes. Content (as reflected in readings, lectures, and papers) particularly fosters cognitive learning, for example understanding causes of racial, gender, and income inequalities. Active learning processes (as reflected in classroom exercises and simulations, journal writing, discussion, and sharing of personal stories) particularly influence thinking about inequality and actions (Lopez et al., 1998). Nagda and colleagues (2004) also showed that the motivation to bridge differences served as a psychological process that mediated the impact of intergroup dialogue on student's confidence to take actions toward self-prejudice reduction and promoting diversity among others. In a follow-up study, Nagda (2006) identified two sets of communication processes— dialogic (appreciating difference-learning from others, engaging self) and critical (critical reflection and alliance building)—that mediated the impact of intergroup dialogue pedagogy on motivation to bridge differences.

The prior research on intergroup dialogue is limited in a number of ways. One, by not using random assignment it is not possible to know if effects from pre-post assessments could have happened even without enrollment in intergroup dialogue courses. Two, the studies are generally located in a single institution, which limits

generalizability. Three, by being limited to assessing effects only over the course of one semester, it is unclear if effects persist beyond the immediacy of course participation. Finally, there is a lack of an overarching theoretical framework that guides both practice and research, including measurements that should be taken of both outcomes and processes occurring within the dialogues.

#### *A Multi-University Randomized Evaluation*

The multi-university intergroup dialogue research study addressed these limitations by 1) involving nine colleges and universities, including seven public (Arizona State University, University of California-San Diego, University of Maryland-College Park, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Texas-Austin, University of Washington) and two private institutions (Occidental College, Syracuse University) and 2) by conducting a randomized experiment using a standardized intergroup dialogue curriculum. Approximately 1,500 students (nearly equal numbers of women of color, men of color, white women and white men) who completed an on-line application form to take intergroup dialogue were randomly assigned to a dialogue group or a waitlist control group. Importantly, while randomizing students who apply to take a dialogue controls for change that might have taken place for *interested* students who did *not* take an intergroup dialogue, it does not address issues of self-selection, leaving open the possibility that observed effects do not generalize to students who do not express interest in intergroup dialogue. In addition to the randomized evaluation, a non-randomized matched (on race and gender) group of students (also equal numbers of women of color, men of color, white women and white men) enrolled in social science courses that focus on race and gender content was also

used as a comparison to the intergroup dialogue students. All participants in the study completed a pre-test survey (beginning of semester/quarter), a post-test survey (at the end of the semester/quarter – near 100% response rate) and a delayed post-test (1 year later – 82% response rate). The research and practice were guided by the critical-dialogic theoretical framework presented earlier in this paper.

Results show consistently positive treatment effects. Students in both race and gender intergroup dialogues demonstrate greater increases in outcomes compared to students in the randomized control group; effects were found for members of all four demographic groups sampled for the study (women of color, men of color, white women, white men). Specifically, students in the dialogues showed greater increases than their counterparts in a control group in intergroup understanding – in their awareness and structural understanding of racial and gender inequality. Moreover, these effects generalize beyond race and gender dialogues to poverty through increased structural attributions for income inequality. Similar patterns were also found for intergroup relationships---empathy and motivation to bridge differences—and intergroup collaboration—confidence and frequency in taking action, and post-college commitment to redressing inequality. This same pattern of results is also evident when comparing students in intergroup dialogue to a matched comparison group of students taking race and gender social science courses with one exception. Students in intergroup dialogue and social science classes increased similarly in their structural attributions for income inequality. Thus, at the level of outcomes, we conclude that intergroup dialogue works and that it works better than traditional lecture-discussion social science classes that

cover content similar to intergroup dialogue but do not make explicit use of a critical-dialogic model (see Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen & Zúñiga, 2009).

With regard to process, the critical-dialogic theoretical model emphasizes the central role of communication and pedagogical processes in intergroup dialogue. Two articles empirically examine the role of process using data from the multi-university study. The first article, examining how intergroup dialogue affects students' understanding of inequality and motivations to act to address inequalities, showed that students in intergroup dialogue compared to their counterparts in the social science courses 1) increased more in critique of inequality and commitment to post-college commitment to redress inequalities over the academic term (semester or quarter), 2) rated the four communication processes—learning from others, engaging self, critical reflection and alliance building—as occurring more frequently in intergroup dialogue than in social science courses, and 3) that these communication processes mediated the impact of dialogue (relative to social science courses) on students' critique of inequality and post-college commitment to action (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Gurin-Sands & Osuna, 2009). In other words, the difference in critique of inequality and post-college commitment to action between the two kinds of educational approaches is explained by the presence of more critical-dialogic communication in intergroup dialogues.

A second forthcoming article extends the theoretical and empirical understanding of the communication processes by asking what kind of pedagogical features foster these specific communication processes. In essence, we empirically tested the theoretical linkage between the defined pedagogical features—content learning, structured interaction and facilitative guidance—and the four communication processes—learning

from others, engaging self, critical reflection and alliance building. These were all measured at the end of the academic term because they were ratings of what happened in their respective courses during that term. There were no significant differences in the content-based learning between the intergroup dialogue students and the social science students. However, intergroup dialogue students indicated that structured interaction and facilitative leadership were significantly more important to their learning than did students in the social science classes. Furthermore, these distinctive features foster the communication processes (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Coombes, 2009).

While these findings together strongly support the effectiveness of a critical-dialogic model, one possible critique is that immediate effects of dialogue merely reflect demand characteristics of students reporting what they think facilitators in dialogue courses want them to say. However, to a remarkable degree, effects of dialogue remain significant one year later. While the means for most outcomes were lower one year later than at post-test, demonstrating declines over time, they are still significantly higher than the means for the control group. Thus, the amount of change that takes place between pre-test and the one year follow-up (15-16 months later) was significantly larger for students in dialogue than their counterparts in the control group for 24 out of 27 of the measures used to assess focal outcomes and processes of intergroup dialogue at all three time points.

To summarize results from the multi-university study, we show strong support for a critical dialogic model of intergroup dialogue: (1) intergroup dialogue is effective in generating positive educational outcomes that cover the range of understanding, relationship building, and action related to inequality and undoing inequality, showing

both immediate and long-term effects<sup>1</sup>; (2) the critical-dialogic communication processes that occur among students in intergroup dialogue play an important mediational role in connecting intergroup dialogue method to the desired outcomes; and (3) the intergroup dialogue pedagogical features help foster the communication processes.<sup>2</sup> It is also noteworthy that the outcomes assessed in this research do not focus specifically on members of the dialogue group (which would raise questions about whether effects generalize beyond individuals in the dialogue toward their groups) but reflect general orientations towards thinking about inequality, relationships building across difference and collaborative action. Experiences *within* dialogue influence *general* orientations toward intergroup concerns in society (even one year later). While these findings highlight the strongest empirical evidence for intergroup dialogue to date, this research is not without its limitations. This randomized trial demonstrates experimental effects for students who apply to take an intergroup dialogue, yet these effects may not generalize to students who have not expressed any interest in participating in dialogue. At this point, we can only assert the effectiveness of a critical-dialogic model for individuals with some expressed openness to this experience. Future research is needed to determine the extent to which effects are generalizable to all students.

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<sup>1</sup> All reported effects have been verified using multi-level modeling analytic approaches that account for statistical interdependence in nested data structures (time points within persons, persons within dialogue groups).

<sup>2</sup> While pedagogical and communication processes measured at the individual level mediate change in outcomes, our research to date has not yet examined how group level variability affects individual change. Future papers will explore these questions in detail.

## Implications for Policy & Implementation

The issues highlighted in this paper and in the research on intergroup dialogue suggest policy implications at three levels: higher education policy; institutional policy; and programmatic policy.

### *Higher Education Policy*

Higher education policy centers on the continued controversies about the value of diversity and the means to achieve diversity. Since the Supreme Court decision in 2003 where both diversity as a compelling state interest and affirmative action were affirmed by the majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, scholars and journalists have continued to debate the merits of that decision and reasoning by the majority of the Court. At the heart of this controversy is the question of the extent to which the Constitution and the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits *the use of race in all circumstances*. In addition, three specific policy questions continue to be raised: 1) Can the educational benefits of diversity be achieved in institutions that do not have a socially, demographically, racially diverse student body? 2) What is the role of student body diversity in achieving the outcomes that so many of the *amici* for the University of Michigan stressed, specifically cultural competence to provide leadership in a diverse and global world? and 3) What can/should higher education institutions do beyond recruiting and retaining a diverse student body to assure that students have the opportunity to benefit educationally from multiple types of diversity?

With respect to the first question, research does show that some intellectual and social benefits of diversity can be achieved in racially homogeneous institutions that offer other dimensions of diversity to their students (Kuh & Umbach, 2005). With respect to

the second question, we reviewed research earlier in this paper showing that students in the most racially diverse higher education institutions: 1) interact across race/ethnicity most frequently, 2) collectively represent the most variable opinions and viewpoints, and 3) are most likely to express cross-cultural work competencies post-college, particularly if they lived in racially segregated environments before college.

Our work has the most relevance to the third question. Higher education institutions must continue to be committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, a goal that has become more difficult rather than easier as state ballot initiatives around the country following the 2003 Supreme Court decision increasingly limit the use of race/ethnicity in admissions policies. In addition, higher education also needs to make use of whatever level of structural diversity that exists on a campus (including all identities – race/ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation etc.) to assure that students *will benefit from diversity*. As educators know well, the mere presence of institutional resources – libraries, faculty, technology and diversity – will not influence learning unless steps are taken to assure that students make use of these resources. Thus, for educational benefits to accrue, student body diversity must be leveraged rather than assuming it will automatically produce learning about and from diverse peers.

### *Institutional Policy*

Administrators of higher education need to consider *how* to foster learning from meaningful rather than superficial interactions across many dimensions of diversity. Implementing intergroup dialogue is one way, although obviously not the only way, to do that. Efforts to build and institutionalize intergroup dialogue programs must address



several issues and questions that have arisen across twenty years of experience with intergroup dialogue at the universities and colleges involved in the multi-university research evaluation of intergroup dialogue. First, there is the question of what is the best “home” for a dialogue program and how best to sustain it within the academy. There is no “one right way” or “one right place.” What we do know is that effectiveness depends on having interest and commitment from various constituencies on campus. Student interest and excitement, strong administrative support, and faculty involvement are all important. As much as possible, a partnership between academic affairs and student affairs is ideal to house the program because intergroup dialogue courses ask students to consider and integrate what they are learning academically with their broader experiences with diversity on campus. Unfortunately, these two divisions are often divided in practice on many campuses and joint sponsorship may not be possible. In such cases, a strong home in one or the other can help promote and sustain intergroup dialogues. Leadership endorsement and support, for example from the president, a dean, a department chair, or the head of student affairs, are crucial to assure that intergroup dialogue will be perceived within the educational mission of the university.

In addition to high-level support for the educational value of intergroup dialogues, material resources are necessary in order to offer a program with trained facilitators in classes with no more than twenty students. In some institutions it has proven effective to use staff from the division of student affairs and undergraduate students, along with faculty, so that the cost of teaching these courses is greatly reduced. Even so, financial support for building staff and faculty capacity is essential, just as it is for other educational innovations.

Whether or not intergroup dialogues should only be implemented within credit bearing courses is another question for institutions. While the multi-university research project evaluated only credit-bearing intergroup dialogue courses, typically conferring two to three academic credits, many intergroup dialogue programs across the country (and those included in our nine-university study) did not start out that way. Intergroup dialogues have emerged as both curricular and co-curricular programs, although there is little evidence to date about the effectiveness of the co-curricular programs. Offering credit is one way, but doubtless not the only way, that institutions can convey what Allport (1954) called sanctioning by authorities. He argued that for intergroup contact to produce positive outcomes, contact must be actively supported by relevant authorities. That is an important issue for institutions to address.

Should intergroup dialogue be required for students? Evidence accumulating from the field experiments conducted in the multi-university project sometimes leads people to suggest that all students should be required to take intergroup dialogue courses. However, as noted earlier, we cannot be sure that the effects found in this research project would hold for students who do not want to be in an intergroup dialogue course. We suspect that the dynamics in a required dialogue course could subvert whatever possible benefits these courses might have for students. That said, we do know from experience across the nine participating institutions that there are many more students who want to enroll in dialogue courses than currently can be accommodated. We recommend that the priority should be on meeting this interest rather than pressing for required participation. Too often educators tend to think that a program or course that has proven effective with a particular group of students – those majoring in a particular

discipline or those expressing particular interests – ought to be required, rather than be made more widely available.

Intergroup dialogue practice in *how* to communicate across many kinds of differences also applies beyond courses. It is especially applicable for training residence hall staff, who in most institutions include undergraduate peer advisors who have the most direct contact with other undergraduates living in university residence halls. The complexities of the experiences of cross-racial roommates that we noted earlier, for example, could be more effectively handled if residence hall advisors were trained to facilitate dialogic communication when roommates experience conflicts or disengage from each other. Oftentimes, students of different racial/ethnic (or religious or nationality) backgrounds are put together as roommates with the hope that somehow their living situation will become a promotional environment (Higgins, 1997) for learning, growth, and positive dialogue. That may happen in some instances, but the research on cross-racial roommates shows that it often does not. Thus, facilitating how to communicate across differences may be crucial for roommate pairs with little or no previous cross-cultural experience. The same may also be important for roommate pairs from similar backgrounds but who nonetheless lack communication skills for negotiating disagreements. Because the first year in college is the only time in many institutions that students *do* live in diverse settings, institutions should do everything possible to effectively utilize diversity in the residence hall to encourage the development of the cross-cultural competencies that students will need in their future careers and lives. Intergroup dialogue theory and practice offer an effective model for training residence hall staff to help accomplish this goal.

### *Programmatic Policy*

Implications for implementing a program of intergroup dialogue are also evident in our experience in the multi-university research project. One concerns the importance of assuring race and gender diversity (and other kinds of diversity as well) in the dialogue courses. Students do not automatically register for intergroup dialogues. Instead, they apply online, indicating preferences for particular dialogue topics, making it possible to assure diversity of participants and, ideally, equal numbers of students from the identity groups that define a particular dialogue. Before we implemented the multi-university research project which required equal numbers of white men, white women, men of color, and women of color in both race and gender dialogues, institutions sometimes conducted race dialogues that were disproportionately female and gender dialogues that were disproportionately comprised of white students. That happened because more women tended to be interested in race dialogues and more white students tended to be interested in gender dialogues. To meet the requirements of the research project, it was necessary to mount outreach and recruitment to attract more men to the race dialogues and more students of color to the gender dialogues. Having an equal number of these four groups of students made it possible to keep race and gender in the forefront in both types of dialogues and to press students to continually consider their multiple race and gender identities. When other topics (sexuality, social class, religion) define dialogues to be offered, institutions need to keep the issue of diversity within dialogues in mind so that multiple identities can be surfaced, and that equal numbers of the defining identity groups assure the equality in status that Allport (1954) considered an important condition for positive intergroup relations.

Some will ask why we did not disaggregate the students of color so as to assess effects for various racial/ethnic groups within that category. Most institutions, including those in this research project, will simply not have enough students interested in intergroup dialogue courses to conduct them by pairing whites with students from each of the other non-white groups, or pairing students from those groups with each other. We see this as a limitation of our research but it will also likely be a limitation for most institutions that attempt to implement an intergroup dialogue program.

The selection and training of facilitators must also be considered in implementing intergroup dialogue programs. At some institutions, non-credit dialogues (not part of the multi-university project described in this article) are run entirely by student organizations with few criteria for selecting facilitators and little to no training for how to deal with group dynamics that arise for example when students talk *about* race (or gender or sexual orientation or social class) *across* race (or gender or sexual orientation or social class). We do not recommend mounting dialogue programs that do not provide training and supervision about how to process the disagreements and emotions that intergroup dialogues inevitably surface. Training and supervision for effective facilitation should be a top commitment.

The question often arises whether or not to utilize peer v. professional staff (or faculty) facilitators in intergroup dialogue. While there is no research yet that demonstrates the effectiveness of one group of facilitators over another, we do know that some institutions and some programs have strong opinions about this issue. Some, reflecting democratic education, value using peer facilitators so that there is greater equality between participants and facilitators. They argue that participants will respond

more easily to peers and that peer facilitators are more familiar than are professional staff with the campus and societal issues that interest other students. On the other hand, some institutions value the experience and breadth of training that professional/faculty and staff bring to facilitation beyond gains that might result from peer connections with other peers. Some institutions also do not allow peer facilitation in credit bearing courses, even under close faculty supervision and observation. While it is difficult to prescribe one model of facilitation over another, we do know that facilitators—students, professional staff, and faculty—benefit enormously by having *intensive training* specific to intergroup dialogue facilitation. They also need a support system that can provide consultation and a space for reflection while facilitating dialogues. A mixed model involving both the divisions of academic and student affairs in which students, staff, and faculty are all involved holds particular promise because it advances collaborations across a campus in recognizing the educational value of diversity.

#### *Final Thoughts and Future Directions*

So what should institutions of higher education do – take a ‘hands off’ or a ‘hands-on’ approach to diversity? Should we assume that simply having a diverse student body on campus, in classrooms and in residence halls will prepare graduates to enter and navigate a diverse society, or do we actively help students develop both knowledge about their own and others’ cultures and perspectives as well as communicative ability to engage with people across difference? It is our strong view that the latter strategy is required as higher education prepares students for involvement in a global world and workforce that will demand these communication and perspective-taking skills.

Social psychological research on intergroup interactions makes clear that a ‘hands off’ approach is not likely to produce optimal learning experiences for students. Educators cannot rely on mere exposure to diverse students and perspectives as a mechanism to prepare students for a globalized world. They must provide them the experience, understanding and communicative tools to engage and collaborate with others who are different from them. Moreover, these efforts must move beyond simply finding pathways to intergroup harmony, to creating structured and guided interaction for addressing the difficult issues such as privilege, power and inequality that continue to create a sharp division between groups.

We have presented one educational model for accomplishing this goal. Intergroup dialogue integrates structured communication processes, both dialogic – focusing on relationship building, and critical – focusing on systems of power and inequality, with guided facilitation to help all students overcome the fears and anxiety that they bring to intergroup interactions. This model utilizes these difficult interactions as learning opportunities for students to work together to build the kind of structured communication that promotes desirable outcomes for both disadvantaged and advantaged group members. In this way, intergroup dialogue addresses the important challenges associated with unsustained and unguided intergroup interaction in social psychological research. We do not intend to suggest that this is the only model for approaching this endeavor, but offer a critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue as a theoretically grounded and empirically tested approach to intergroup communication.

Although numerous programs and courses offered on college campuses make use of diversity as an educational resource, they rarely, if ever (to our knowledge), are

evaluated using random assignment of interested students to either participate in the program or to a waitlist-control group. Indeed, random assignment is exceedingly difficult to achieve in higher education because educators (and Internal Review Boards) hate to withhold a course or opportunity thought to be beneficial to students for ethical reasons, even when there are more students applying to or interested in a course than can be accommodated. As a result, it is unclear if courses or programs truly have an impact on students. For this reason, we believe it is crucial to use random assignment when assessing the impact of diversity programs (or any other educational programs). Given a dearth of experimental evidence for the effectiveness of other programs, it is difficult to determine whether intergroup dialogue is more or less effective than other approaches. Future research is needed to address these questions.

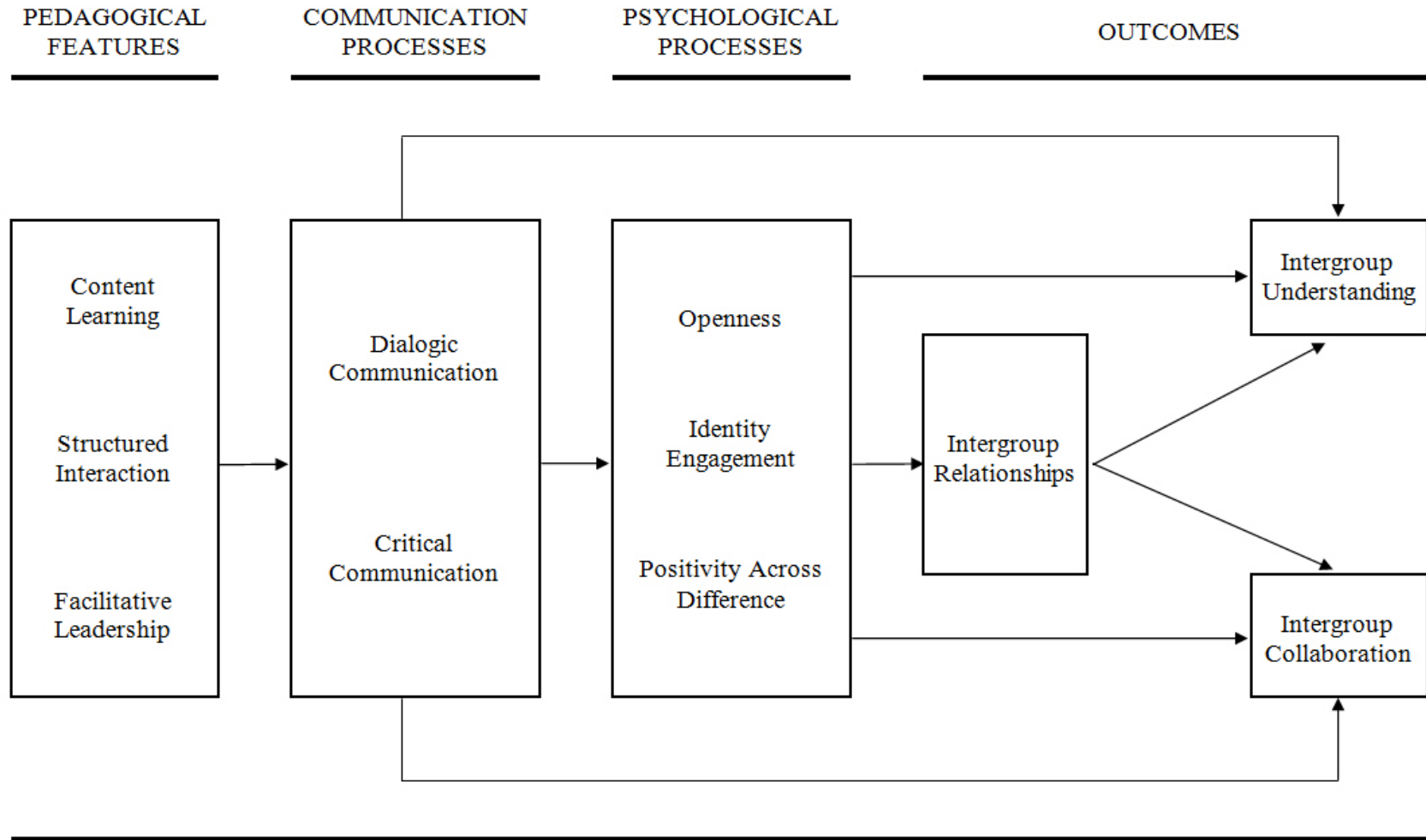
Although research conducted by our collaborative team provides experimental evidence for the effectiveness of a critical-dialogic model, future research is also needed to isolate the core ‘active ingredients’ or components of the program. Research to date cannot address whether the entire program is necessary to produce the observed effects or whether the intergroup dialogue model can be structured differently (e.g. fewer contact hours, more focus on some issues relative to others). Indeed, these pose important questions for program implementation, and future efforts must address these questions in order to maximize the utility of this intervention model.

In documenting an effective intervention for cultivating intergroup relationships, understanding and collaboration, this model also highlights important implications for theory and research in intergroup relations. Research in social psychology has focused too long on prejudice reduction as the golden pathway to overcoming group divisions.



Yet reducing prejudice may do little for building cross-group understanding, relationships, effective communication and collaboration across difference. Intergroup relations must go beyond getting along, or focusing on how individuals from advantaged groups can decrease prejudice and increase positive evaluations of people who are different from them. Research is needed to continue to document how this model (and others) of intergroup contact can promote meaningful relationships and commitment to participation in a diverse democracy – the world in which students live.

Figure 1.1 *A critical-dialogic theoretical model of intergroup dialogue*



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## CHAPTER II

### **IT'S NOT JUST WHAT WE SAY BUT HOW WE COMMUNICATE THAT MATTERS: A CRITICAL-DIALOGIC MODEL FOR FOSTERING EMPATHY IN INTERRACIAL COMMUNICATION**

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A recent meta-analytic review of more than 500 studies documents that intergroup contact usually reduces prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and that empathy with outgroup members is one important mediator of these effects (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Yet, it is unclear what kinds of interactions take place among members of different racial and ethnic groups to foster intergroup empathy. In this paper, we present and document the efficacy of a dialogue-based model of interracial communication for promoting empathy *across* race/ethnicity through sustained and structured dialogue *about* race/ethnicity.

Although prior research has explored the role of empathy in improving attitudes toward outgroup members (Batson, et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Vescio, Sechrist & Paolucci, 2003) and cross-group forgiveness (e.g. Cehajic, Brown, & Castano, 2008; Tam et al, 2008), only a few studies have examined psychological and communication processes that foster empathy within an intergroup context. Three trends in the research are evident. First, these few studies have focused

primarily on empathic perspective-taking manipulations relative to objective control conditions (e.g. Batson et al., 1997) or the role of self-disclosure across race (see Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007). Second, these studies typically assess empathic reactions to controlled stimuli such as videotapes or use cross-sectional surveys at a single time point to examine relationships between communication processes (e.g. self-disclosure) and intergroup empathy. To our knowledge, research to date has not examined how communication processes *within* face-to-face interracial interactions foster empathy across race. Third, prior research on intergroup empathy has mostly focused on one directional path of empathy – experienced by members of advantaged groups for members of disadvantaged groups – yet there is no reason to assume that empathic communication is non-reciprocal. Indeed, members of disadvantaged groups could empathize with members of advantaged groups who acknowledge their privileges and/or express frustration about stereotypes.

This previous work has also typically measured empathy as sympathetic compassion, potentially failing to fully capture the range of empathic experiences that participants might encounter in an intergroup context. For example, participants could experience frustration that others express about stereotypes applied to their group or feel angry when others fail to acknowledge the privileges they are afforded in society. These emotional experiences of frustration and anger directed across group boundaries express empathy for the well being of others and the groups to which they belong. For this reason, we define intergroup empathy as the capacity to respond to the experiences of members of other social groups with emotions that reflect an understanding of and appreciation for those experiences.

Finally, while interracial contact may reduce prejudice via empathy, contact does not necessarily ensure meaningful empathic conversations between members of different groups about the issues that lay at the root of division and hostility. For effective communication across race/ethnicity and about race/ethnicity, we examine the utility of a dialogue-based model of interracial interaction to promote empathy across group boundaries (Nagda, 2006; Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin & Maxwell, 2009).

#### *What is Intergroup Dialogue?*

Intergroup dialogues bring together members of two different social identity groups (e.g. people of color and white people) in face-to-face communication. They typically include equal numbers of participants from each social identity group (usually 12-16 in total), two trained facilitators (one from each identity group), and meet weekly for 2-3 hours over the course of an academic term (see Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). Before addressing potential ‘hot topics,’ intergroup dialogues utilize guided communication with facilitative leadership to provide participants opportunities to learn how to communicate effectively across group boundaries in ways that foster empathy. Participants first explore the difference between dialogue, discussion and debate (Ellinor & Gerard, 1998; Nagda & Gurin, 2007), explicitly address their hopes and fears, and co-create ground rules and guidelines for engagement that address the needs and expectations of dialogue participants (listen carefully, respect different perspectives, challenge ideas – not participants). In subsequent sessions, participants explore the role of identity and socialization in shaping their perspectives on the world, identifying both commonalities and differences and how differences connect to systems of inequality. Participants then use their understanding of identity and structural

inequality to address hot topics (e.g. affirmative action) and are encouraged to reconsider their own assumptions. Finally, dialogue participants examine how they can work together through collaborative action in order to redress inequalities (for details, see Zúñiga et al., 2007).

### *Intergroup Communication Processes*

Of primary interest to this study is the role of communication processes in fostering increased empathy within interracial interaction. Nagda (2006) articulated a critical-dialogic model for intergroup dialogue which outlined communication processes that take place in intergroup dialogue. Dialogic communication processes focus on self and other-oriented exchanges and include *engaging self* (sharing one's perspectives and life experiences, addressing difficult issues) and *learning from others* (actively listening to others, asking questions, exploring different life experiences and perspectives; Nagda, 2006). In dialogic exchanges, the goal is not just to present one's own experiences or to simply hear others (discussion) nor is it to defend one's own beliefs about what is right or wrong (debate) but rather the goal is to better understand one's own and others' experiences. Dialogic exchanges are hypothesized to foster intergroup empathy by helping participants recognize how their social experiences in racial/ethnic identity groups differently shape the ways they relate to the world. Thus, a shared understanding of the role of socialization practices in society provides participants a bridge to connect across difference and empathize with others' life experiences.

A critical-dialogic model integrates these dialogic processes with critical communication processes focused on *critical reflection* (examining how one's own and others' perspectives, experiences and assumptions are influenced by systems of power

and inequality) and *alliance building* (working through disagreements together and talking about ways to collaborate across difference to work against structural inequality; Nagda, 2006). We do not use the term ‘critical’ to depict communication where participants are critical of one another; rather it refers to participants applying a critical analysis to better understand how their worldviews are influenced by the advantage and disadvantage associated with their racial/ethnic identities. Indeed, members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups often enter intergroup communication with different goals – advantaged groups are interested in interpersonal relationships and discovering commonalities while disadvantaged groups want to address inequality and systems of power (Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008). Intergroup communication that includes a critical component addresses these differing goals and provides a guide for navigating the roots of group hostility and mistrust. Critical exchanges are hypothesized to foster empathy for others as they see and feel how societal advantages and disadvantages afforded to members of different groups affect their lived experiences and maintain or undermine structural inequality.

#### THE CURRENT STUDY

We address the limitations of prior work in three ways. First, to our knowledge, we provide the first empirical test of the role of critical-dialogic communication processes in fostering empathy in a face-to-face intergroup context.

Second, we move beyond examining empathy as a non-reciprocal process and argue that empathy, particularly within the context of dialogic communication, can be a two-way street. In interracial dialogue, both white participants and participants of color can empathize with each other as they share stories about their personal experiences as

members of different racial/ethnic groups or about the injustices and privileges they have encountered because of the racial/ethnic identity.

Third, we move beyond defining empathy as sympathetic compassion to encompass a broader range of empathic emotions involving frustration, pride, regret, anger, hope and despair. Prior research argues that empathy can involve parallel emotional responses that are similar to those being expressed by others or reactive emotional responses to others' experiences (Davis, 1983; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). In this vein, our conceptualization of intergroup empathy includes both empathic experiences that parallel the emotions expressed by other participants through dialogic communication as well as emotional reactions to others' experiences such as their struggles with power and inequality that often surface through critical communication.

Using randomized field experiments in addition to non-randomized comparisons to social science courses (that focus on content about race but do not make explicit use of a critical-dialogic model), we investigate effects of interracial dialogue on participants' intergroup empathy. We hypothesize a) that participation in dialogue will increase in intergroup empathy relative to control and social science comparison groups, and b) that the effect of dialogue participation will be found for participants of both advantaged and disadvantaged racial/ethnic groups. Finally, we hypothesize that the effect of participation in dialogue on intergroup empathy will be due to (mediated by) a higher frequency of critical-dialogic communication processes in intergroup dialogue (compared to social science classes).



## METHOD

### *Sample*

Participants were undergraduate students ( $n=737$ ;  $n=396$  female,  $n=341$  male;  $n=365$  white students,  $n=372$  students of color:  $n=160$  African-American,  $n=117$  Asian/Asian-American,  $n=77$  Latino/a,  $n=4$  Native-American,  $n=3$  Arab/Arab-American,  $n=11$  other-identified) from nine colleges and universities<sup>3</sup> who applied to take an interracial dialogue course as well as students ( $n=236$ ;  $n=129$  female,  $n=107$  male;  $n=115$  white students,  $n=121$  students of color:  $n=41$  African American,  $n=46$  Asian/Asian-American,  $n=30$  Latino/a,  $n=1$  Native American,  $n=3$  other-identified) sampled from traditional social science courses that focused on race content but did not make explicit use of a critical-dialogic model. Dialogue participants were provided course credit for participation while control and social science participants were compensated \$15 for pre-test and \$20 for post-test. All participants were compensated \$25 for the one-year follow-up.

### *Procedure*

Each institution offered standardized intergroup dialogue courses. Undergraduates who sought to enroll in these courses were randomly assigned to a dialogue course ( $n=371$ ) or a wait-list control group ( $n=366$ ). Across an academic term, students met for 30 hours in weekly sessions. A total of 26 dialogue-control group pairs were tested. For half of the experiments, non-randomized social science course comparisons were conducted (13 comparisons,  $n=236$ ). Dialogue, control and social science comparison

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<sup>3</sup> Arizona State University, Occidental College, Syracuse University, University of California-San Diego, University of Michigan, University of Maryland, University of Massachusetts, University of Texas-Austin, University of Washington

groups were comprised of 12-16 students with approximately equal numbers of white women, white men, women of color and men of color. Data were collected at the beginning and end of the course and at one-year follow-up, while pre- and post-tests were administered in-class; follow-up was administered in person or online by research assistants, not dialogue facilitators. Careful tracking led to high retention at post-test (95%) and for the one-year follow-up (82%), which did not vary by condition,  $\chi^2(2) = .43, p = .81$ .

### *Measures*

*Intergroup Empathy.* Intergroup empathy was assessed on an 8-item, 7-point response scale (1=not at all like me; 7 = very much like me) at pre-test ( $\alpha = .85$ ), post-test ( $\alpha = .87$ ), and one-year follow-up ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Following the stem, “To what extent does each statement describe your feelings in conversations with people from different racial/ethnic groups”, the items were “When people feel frustrated about racial/ethnic stereotypes applied to their group, I feel some of their frustration too,” “When people feel proud of the accomplishments of someone of their racial/ethnic group, I feel some of their pride as well,” “When people express regret about the racial/ethnic biases they were taught, I can empathize with their feelings,” “When I learn about the injustices that people of different races/ethnicities have experienced, I tend to feel some of the anger that they do,” “When I hear others use their positions of privilege to promote greater racial/ethnic equality, I feel hopeful,” “I feel despair when I hear about the impact of racial/ethnic inequalities on others in our society,” “I feel hopeful hearing how others have overcome disadvantages because of their race/ethnicity,” and “I feel angry when people don’t acknowledge the privileges they have in society because of their

race/ethnicity.” Factor analyses within each condition and for advantaged (white participants) and disadvantaged (participants of color) group members supported a one-factor solution.

*Communication Processes.* Communication processes (20-items, 7-point response scale from 1= not at all, to 7 = very much,  $\alpha = .95$ ) were assessed at the end of the term (post-test only) for students enrolled in either intergroup dialogue or social science comparison classes. The scale (Nagda, 2006) included items reflecting each of the four hypothesized processes: sample items for *Engaging self* (5 items,  $\alpha = .83$ ) were “sharing my views and experiences” and “speaking openly without feeling judged.” Sample items for *Learning from others* (4 items,  $\alpha = .86$ ) were “hearing different points of view” and “learning from each other.” Sample items for *Critical reflection* (4 items,  $\alpha = .78$ ) were “understanding how privilege and oppression affect our lives” and “examining the sources of my biases and assumptions.” Sample items for *Alliance building* (7 items,  $\alpha = .91$ ) were “sharing ways to collaborate with other groups to take action” and “working through disagreements and conflicts.”

## RESULTS

### *Effect of Dialogue on Intergroup Empathy*

We hypothesized that participation in dialogue would increase in intergroup empathy compared to control and social science comparison conditions and that effects would be found for both advantaged (white participants) and disadvantaged groups (participants of color). Changes in intergroup empathy were tested at post-test and then at one year follow-up. For ease of interpretation, we report repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) which account for interdependence in data collected at separate time

points for the same participants; we entered time (pre-test vs. post-test or pre-test vs. 1-year follow-up<sup>4</sup>; within subjects) and condition (dialogue vs. control or dialogue vs. social science; between subjects) as independent variables. However, all reported analyses were verified using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002)<sup>5</sup>. As detailed next, the predicted significant effect of intergroup dialogue on empathy was found at both time points relative to control and social science comparison groups.

Dialogue participants showed significantly larger increases in intergroup empathy than participants in the randomized control groups at post-test (time x condition interaction,  $F(1,689) = 48.21, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ ) and one year later (time x condition interaction,  $F(1,585) = 14.02, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ , see Table 2.1 for means and standard deviations). Effects did not differ for advantaged vs. disadvantaged participants at either time point (time x condition x status, post-test  $F(1,687) = 1.05, p = .31, \eta_p^2 = .002$ , one-year follow-up  $F(1,583) = 1.01, p = .32, \eta_p^2 = .002$ ). Planned contrasts revealed that dialogue participants increased significantly in empathy between pre-test and post-test ( $p < .001$ ) and dropped somewhat between post-test and one-year follow up ( $p < .01$ ), while control participants did not change pre-post ( $p = .29$ ) or during the following year ( $p = .92$ ). As expected, while dialogue and control group participants did not differ when the semester began (pre-test  $p = .18$ ), dialogue participants were higher in empathy than

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<sup>4</sup> Analyses of linear effects at 1-year follow control for a quadratic main effect and quadratic x condition interaction. Thus, significant linear effects of dialogue one-year later are found when accounting for the sharp increase among dialogue students at post-test and the fading of intergroup empathy during the following year (see Figure 2.1).

<sup>5</sup> Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) accounts for an additional level of nesting of students within dialogue/control groups and makes maximal use of all available data rather than employing listwise deletion for participants who did not complete the post-test or 1-year follow-up survey.

controls at the end of the term (post-test  $p = .001$ ) and one year later ( $p = .06$ ; see Figure 2.1 A).

Dialogue participants also showed significantly larger increases in intergroup empathy than participants in the social science comparison courses at post-test (time x condition interaction,  $F(1,448) = 23.40, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$ ; Table 2.1 for means and standard deviations). Although the linear interaction at one-year follow-up did not reach statistical significance when controlling for the quadratic x condition interaction using ANOVA (time x condition interaction,  $F(1, 378) = 2.42, p = .12, \eta_p^2 = .006$ ) (potentially due to the reduced sample size resulting from listwise deletion of missing data) the same analysis conducted with HLM (which makes maximal use of available data) was statistically significant (time x condition interaction,  $\gamma = -.10, SE = .05, t = -2.12, p = .03$ ). Thus, dialogue participants showed larger increases in intergroup empathy than social science comparisons participants at one-year follow-up as well. With regard to status, effects did not differ for advantaged vs. disadvantaged participants at either time point (time x condition x status, post-test  $F(1,446) = .01, p = .91, \eta_p^2 < .001$ , one-year follow-up  $F(1,376) = .002, p = .97, \eta_p^2 < .001$ ). Similarly, planned contrasts revealed that dialogue participants increased significantly in empathy between pre-test and post-test ( $p < .001$ ) and dropped between post-test and one-year follow up ( $p < .001$ ) while social science comparison participants did not change pre-post ( $p = .99$ ) or during the following year ( $p = .76$ ). As expected, while dialogue and social science comparison participants did not differ when the semester began (pre-test  $p = .22$ ), dialogue participants were higher in empathy than social science comparisons at the end of the term (post-test  $p < .001$ ) and one year later ( $p = .01$ ; see Figure 2.1 B).

Together these findings document that students who participate in intergroup dialogue show increased intergroup empathy relative to a randomized control group and social science courses that focus on content about race but do not utilize a critical-dialogic model for interracial communication.

### *Mediation*

We hypothesized that greater frequency of communication processes in dialogue would mediate larger effects of dialogue on intergroup empathy during the academic term relative to social science comparison courses. As expected, students in dialogue reported more communication focused on engaging self ( $t(433) = -6.30, p < .001$ ; *dialogue*  $M=5.61, SD=.94$ ; *SS comparison*  $M=4.94, SD=1.25$ ), learning from others ( $t(433) = -6.64, p < .001$ ; *dialogue*  $M=6.26, SD=.75$ ; *SS comparison*  $M=5.69, SD=1.05$ ), critical reflection ( $t(432) = -4.88, p < .001$ ; *dialogue*  $M=5.70, SD=.92$ ; *SS comparison*  $M=5.23, SD=1.10$ ), and alliance building ( $t(433) = -8.24, p < .001$ ; *dialogue*  $M=5.39, SD=1.07$ ; *SS comparison*  $M=4.49, SD=1.23$ ) than students in social science courses (overall effect of dialogue vs. social science comparison on composite of communication processes<sup>6</sup>,  $\beta = .65 (.35), SE = .08, t = 7.76, p < .001$ ). Additionally, communication processes positively predict students' change in intergroup empathy (assessed by controlling students' post-test scores for their pre-test scores),  $\beta = .26 (.25), SE = .04, t = 7.07, p < .001$  and partially mediate differences between dialogue and social science courses. Indeed, the effect of condition (social science vs. dialogue,  $\beta = .38 (.19), SE = .07, t = 5.47, p < .001$ , was significantly attenuated when communication processes were entered as a predictor

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<sup>6</sup> Regression analyses testing mediation control for the effect of advantaged vs. disadvantaged status, which was non-significant in all tests.

of students' change in intergroup empathy, Sobel  $z = 5.08, p < .001, \beta = .24 (.12), SE = .07, t = 3.34, p = .001$ .

## DISCUSSION

The results of this national study document the efficacy of a critical-dialogic model of interracial communication in fostering empathy in an intergroup context. Participants in dialogue groups show increased intergroup empathy in interactions with people of different races/ethnicities relative to participants in a randomized control group at the end of an interracial dialogue and one year later. The effect sizes were comparable to those reported in other intergroup contact studies (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). These findings make clear that similar effects of dialogue are found for members of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups, demonstrating that interracial dialogue does not only benefit white students. Additionally, comparisons between students in intergroup dialogue and social science courses (which focus on content about race but do not make explicit use of a dialogic model of communication) demonstrate that exposure to content alone does not increase intergroup empathy while intergroup dialogue does. Finally, we demonstrate the mediational role of critical-dialogic communication processes in influencing students' change in intergroup empathy.

Although it is possible that the immediate effects of dialogue at post-test could be attributed in part to demand characteristics at the end of an academic term (students in dialogue know what their facilitators want them to report), this argument is less tenable in explaining the observed effects one year after the dialogue ended. Moreover, showing long-term effects on empathy implies that effects are not specific to interactions with the

dialogue participants but apply more generally to interactions across race/ethnicity one year later. Still, this study is not without its limitations. With regard to selectivity, students who participated in interracial dialogues and those in the randomized control groups all applied to take the course, demonstrating some a priori interest in interracial dialogue; effects may not generalize to individuals without some openness to this experience. In addition, this study could not experimentally isolate the effects of each communication process given their interconnected role in a critical-dialogic model; future research is needed to link *specific* communication processes to outcomes.

Demonstrating the efficacy of critical-dialogic communication processes that address the challenges in interracial communication is important given a growing body of evidence suggesting that these interactions are not guaranteed pathways toward better relationships between members of different racial/ethnic groups. Interracial interactions can foster negative cognitive and emotional consequences for both advantaged and disadvantaged group members by elevating concerns about how interaction partners are evaluating them (Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001; Vorauer, 2006). Indeed, these evaluation concerns undermine empathic perspective-taking efforts for majority group members by focusing too much on others' perception of one's self (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2009). Whites also experience anxiety in intergroup interactions (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) and increase efforts to regulate their expression of prejudice during interracial interaction with African-Americans, depleting executive functioning (Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Interactions across race evoke cardiovascular reactivity for whites and increase nervous behaviors such as fidgeting, excessive blinking, averting eye-gaze, and interpersonal distancing (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Dovidio,



Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson & Howard, 1997; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; McConnell & Liebold, 2001; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974). Similarly, members of racial/ethnic minority groups worry about being the target of prejudice and invoke compensatory strategies – fidgeting more and embellishing a sense of engagement – with white interaction partners, perhaps at the cost of increased negative emotions, less regard for their interaction partner and feeling inauthentic in cross-race interactions (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005).

Not only are there short term negative effects of intergroup interactions; in some contexts there are also long term negative effects. Recent research on randomly assigned interracial college roommates makes clear that while positive effects for whites do occur – improved attitudes towards various ethnic groups, less symbolic racism, reduced intergroup anxiety, reduction in automatically activated (implicit) prejudice and greater comfort with minorities (Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair & Sidanius, 2005; Shook & Fazio, 2008a; Boisjoly, Duncan, Kremer, Levy & Eccles, 2006) – negative effects also occur. White students in mixed vs. same race roommate situations report spending less time with their roommate, less satisfaction, less involvement in shared activities, less cross-network interaction, and less overall compatibility (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006; Phelps, Altschul, Wisenbaker, Day, Cooper & Potter, 1998). Both whites and ethnic minorities in interracial roommate relationships report fewer positive emotions, less felt intimacy, fewer intimacy enhancing behaviors (smiling, talking, appearing engaged and interested, friendliness), less desire to live with the roommate again and these relationships are less likely to remain intact than those with same race roommates (Trail, Shelton, & West, 2009; Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006; Shook & Fazio, 2008b).

Cross-racial interactions when left unguided and unstructured typically, but not always, produce positive outcomes. A critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue offers one promising avenue for improving the outcomes of intergroup interactions through guided and facilitated communication processes (Nagda, 2006; Sorensen et al., 2009). This study provides the first experimental test of intergroup dialogue for increasing empathy, documenting both immediate and long-term effects. It also demonstrates the important role of communication processes in producing benefits of effective interracial communication. Additionally, other published or forthcoming reports from this study document that effects are not limited to empathy; similar effects of dialogue are found for students' awareness of and structural understanding of inequality (Lopez & Sorensen, 2009), identity engagement (Rodriguez & Gurin, 2009), critique of inequality and post-college commitment to action to redress inequality (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Gurin-Sands & Osuna, 2009).

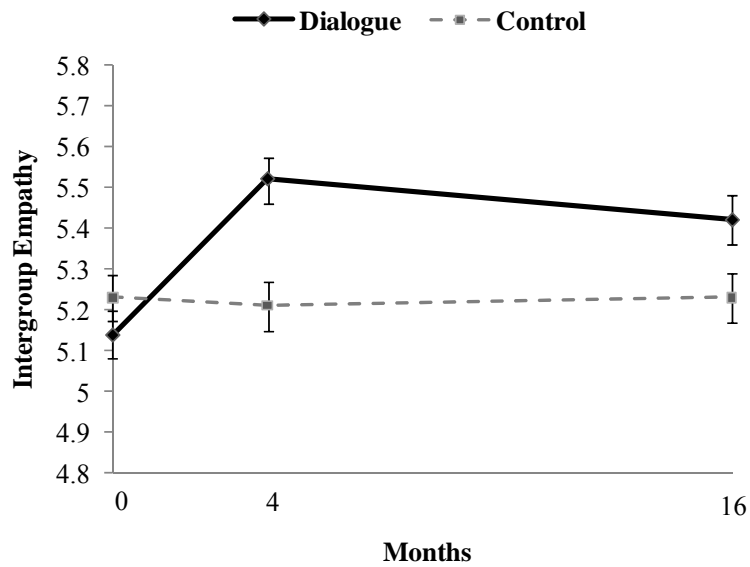
While the challenges associated with interracial interactions are becoming increasingly clear, research that turns our understanding of these problems into solutions is still sorely needed. The evidence presented here offers an effective model for fostering communication in ways that promote greater understanding and empathy across race through dialogue about the difficult issues that maintain division and mistrust.

Table 2.1. *Participants' intergroup empathy scores across time by condition*

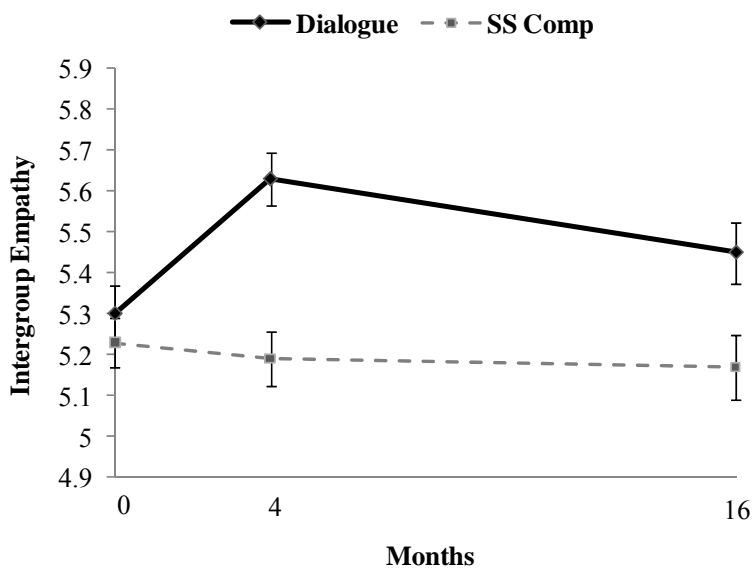
		Pre-test		Post-test		1-Year Follow-Up	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Experimental Comparison</i>	Dialogue	5.15	1.10	5.53	1.01	5.42	1.11
	Control	5.28	1.06	5.22	1.11	5.23	1.03
<i>Social Science Comparison</i>	Dialogue	5.30	1.04	5.63	0.96	5.45	1.07
	SS Comp	5.22	0.94	5.19	0.98	5.17	1.09

Figure 2.1. *Effects of participation in dialogue on intergroup empathy*

A.



B.



Note: Figure A presents the experimental effect of dialogue on intergroup empathy over the course of an academic term and one year later relative to a randomized control group; Figure B presents the effect on intergroup empathy for dialogue participants relative to non-randomized comparisons of participants in social science courses.

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## CHAPTER III

### **THE ROAD TO EMPATHY: AN EMPIRICAL TEST OF A CRITICAL-DIALOGIC PROCESS MODEL OF INTERGROUP COMMUNICATION**

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A substantial body of research has documented the important role of intergroup contact in improving attitudes towards outgroup members (for a meta-analytic review, see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Building on this work, more recent efforts examine *how* contact improves intergroup outcomes (Dovidio et al., 2004; Stephan, 2008), with a focus on empathy as one critical mediator of the effects of intergroup contact on prejudice reduction (Batson et al., 1997; Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Stephan & Finlay, 1999).

Numerous explanations for the role of empathy in prejudice reduction have been offered (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). One explanation is that empathy reduces perceptions of dissimilarity and feelings of threat by helping individuals realize that they share a common humanity and destiny with one another (e.g. Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). That is, efforts to understand and experience the world as others do blurs distinctions between ‘in-’ and ‘out-’ group boundaries, promoting a cognitive self-other overlap and decreased stereotype activation, consequently improving intergroup attitudes (Galinsky &

Moskowitz, 2000; Wright et al., 1997). Finlay and Stephan (2000) have suggested that empathy can lead to attitude change by arousing feelings of injustice, particularly when attitudes toward outgroups members are predicated on beliefs in a just world (Lerner, 1980). They also argued that empathizing with outgroup members may also produce cognitive dissonance as individuals encounter a discrepancy between previously held negative attitudes and current empathic emotions, forcing individuals to revise prejudicial attitudes to resolve incongruent attitudes and emotions (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Batson and colleagues (1997) proposed a three-stage process model suggesting that 1) adopting the perspective of a member of a stigmatized group fosters increased empathic emotions for that individual, 2) these empathic emotions lead to an increased valuing of the individual's welfare and 3) if group membership is salient in their experiences, increased concern for the person's welfare generalizes to the group as a whole. Finally, more recent work (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007) has suggested that empathy decreases prejudice for outgroups by undermining a social dominance orientation (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), an attitudinal orientation favoring a hierarchical society where strong groups dominate weaker groups. Together these arguments suggest several mechanisms through which empathy can improve intergroup attitudes. A recent meta-analysis provides empirical support for empathy as an important mediator of intergroup contact effects on prejudice reduction (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

While this prior research has contributed to our understanding of the role of empathy in intergroup relations, it remains limited in two ways. First, there remains little clarity in the social psychological literature about what defines an empathic experience in an intergroup context. Secondly, while empathy may be an important gateway (mediator)

to improving intergroup relations, little to no research has examined *how* intergroup contact fosters increased empathy. Getting members from different groups with a history of antagonism to empathize with one another may not be straightforward. Thus, intergroup empathy could be considered an outcome in its own right. For this reason, it is necessary to better understand the communicative interactions that take place between members of different groups that promote empathy in the context of inequality. In this paper, we address these gaps in prior research by 1) offering a definition and measure of emotional intergroup empathy that better captures the empathic emotions that arise within an intergroup context and 2) by examining the structural features of intergroup interaction, as well as the communication and psychological processes that transpire within these interactions that foster empathy across group divides. Specifically, Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin and Maxwell (2009) proposed a process model for intergroup dialogue (IGD) in which the pedagogical features (content learning, structured interaction, facilitative leadership) of this intervention foster communication processes (Nagda, 2006) which together promote increased intergroup empathy through psychological processes focused on positivity in interactions across difference and openness to exploring the impact of society and identity on life experiences and perspectives on the world. In this paper, using structural equation modeling we provide the first empirical test of this process model, demonstrating *how* IGD produces short- (pre-post) and long-term (one year later) increases in emotional intergroup empathy.

#### WHAT IS INTERGROUP EMPATHY?

While more than ten years have passed since Stephan and Finlay (1999, p. 730) addressed the “definitional morass” that surrounds the concept of empathy, researchers

have failed to converge on a common conceptualization of empathy, particularly emotional empathy in an intergroup context. Most researchers continue to make a clear distinction between cognitive and emotional empathy and the literature has achieved more agreement on conceptualizations of cognitive empathy, generally defined as taking the perspective of another person or making effort to develop some cognitive understanding of their life experiences. Cognitive empathy, often termed perspective-taking, is typically measured with some variation of the perspective-taking subscale of Davis' (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) where items assess a dispositional orientation (rather than situational reaction) towards being open to thinking about multiple perspectives (e.g. "I sometimes try to understand people better by imagining how things look from their perspective.").

In contrast, while researchers generally agree that emotional empathy involves one's emotional experience during or in response to learning about someone else's experiences, it is not clear from prior work what kinds of emotional experiences can be classified as emotional empathy in an intergroup context. Efforts to measure emotional empathy vary considerably across studies. Batson and colleagues' (1997) assessment of intergroup empathy for a woman living with AIDS (Study 1) and a homeless man (Study 2) asked participants to report the extent to which they experienced feeling "sympathetic," "compassionate," "soft-hearted," "warm," "tender" and "moved" (see also Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). Similarly, Davis' (1983) IRI included a subscale for empathic concern, designed to measure individuals' dispositional tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and compassion for unfortunate others (e.g. "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me."). Other studies (e.g. Lalljee, Tam,

Hewstone, Laham & Lee, 2009; Tam et al., 2008) have adapted Davis' (1983) measure to include items that convey sorrow or pity with items such as "I often feel very sorry for people from the other community when they are having problems," "When I see someone from the other community being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them" (reverse-coded) or "I feel sorry for the victims of this attack" (Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008). Finally, other measures have included items that convey pain (e.g. "I really feel the pain of the victims of this attack"; Brown et al., 2008) or personal distress (e.g. "If I hear about the misfortunes of Asian people, it usually disturbs me a great deal"; Turner, Voci, & Hewstone, 2007).

With regard to face validity, these measures tap very different kinds of experiences that arise in an intergroup context, resulting in both theoretical and practical confusion around what constitutes intergroup empathy. Thus, a clear definition of what kinds of emotional experiences characterize emotional intergroup empathy is critical if we are to fully understand its role in intergroup relations. We define emotional intergroup empathy as the capacity to respond to the experiences of members of other social groups with emotions that reflect an understanding and appreciation of those experiences.

Using this definition as a guide, the measures highlighted above are limited in that they 1) potentially confound pity and empathy, when pity may actually be unproductive in improving intergroup relations, 2) too narrowly emphasize sympathetic compassion, perhaps failing to capture the full range of empathic emotions that individuals encounter in an intergroup context and 3) generally assume that intergroup empathy flows in one direction, from members of advantaged groups toward members of relatively disadvantaged groups.

With regard to the first point, feeling pity for an outgroup member's disadvantage is likely to have different consequences than feeling and expressing concern for his/her well-being. Because intergroup interaction is often characterized not just by difference but inequality as well, an advantaged group member's expression of pity for a disadvantaged group member's life experiences may be received by disadvantaged group members as condescending and patronizing, perhaps serving as a point of disjuncture rather than connection in the relationship. While feeling pity or sorry for outgroup members may indeed be a component of the emotional experience in intergroup communication, we are hesitant to include it as an indicator of intergroup empathy alongside other emotions that genuinely convey an appreciation and concern for others' life experiences.

Secondly, while emotional empathy may encompass feelings of sympathetic compassion, an overemphasis on measuring compassionate emotions such as feeling "soft-hearted" or "warm" does not, from our perspective, fully illuminate the experience of emotional empathy between members of different groups. Learning about others' experiences with inequality can provoke a range of emotions including frustration, anger, despair and even hope, all of which can convey empathy for others and the groups to which they belong. For example, experiencing frustration about the stereotypes applied to members of other groups, anger about the injustices that other groups experience, and feeling hopeful hearing how others have overcome disadvantage, all convey to members of other groups some degree of understanding and appreciation for their life experiences and the adversities that they face. These emotionally empathic experiences cannot be adequately captured by asking participants the extent to which they feel "soft-hearted,"

“warm” or even “sympathy.” While feeling sympathetic compassion may be an appropriate response to viewing a video stimulus in an experiment that tugs at one’s ‘heartstrings,’ these measures fail to tap the spectrum or intensity of emotions that arise in direct communication with outgroup members. Rather these emotional transactions between members of different groups often extend beyond mere compassionate concern to a deeper and more genuine sense of appreciation for others’ life experiences, potentially conveying recognition of the structural dynamics that afford privileges to some groups and disadvantages to others.

Importantly, these emotionally empathic experiences are also highly contextualized and cannot be accurately captured by asking participants to indicate the extent to which they experience specific emotions, devoid of context. For example, one might encounter anger after hearing about an outgroup member’s experiences with inequality though this anger may result from very different ways of making sense of his/her story. Anger could be a reaction to what feels like an accusation if one feels that an outgroup member is trying to blame the ingroup for their misfortune. In contrast, if one’s anger is directed towards society for the injustices others have encountered in their lives, this anger conveys an empathic appreciation for others and the groups to which they belong. Thus, the communicative context for emotional experiences is important for determining whether they constitute emotional intergroup empathy. Again, from our perspective, what is important for emotional empathy is that the expression of emotions in intergroup settings conveys an understanding and appreciation for others’ experiences.

Context is also important in considering the focus (self or other) of one’s emotional empathy. Stephan and Finlay (1999) highlight distinctions between parallel



and reactive emotional empathy where parallel empathy refers to experiencing emotions similar to an outgroup member and reactive empathy refers to one's own emotional reaction to the emotional expression of an outgroup member. For example, while hearing an outgroup member express anger about inequality, one might feel anger as well (parallel empathy) or they could feel despair in response to hearing about that person's expression of anger (reactive empathy). In the context of intergroup communication, both forms of emotional empathy reflect an appreciation for others' experiences and should be captured in measurements of emotional intergroup empathy.

Finally, with the exception of research conducted by Cehajic, Brown and Castano (2008), prior research has generally conceptualized intergroup empathy as a one-way street – experienced by members of advantaged groups for members of disadvantaged groups – yet in the context of intergroup communication, intergroup empathy can be reciprocal. Disadvantaged group members can empathize with members of advantaged groups who acknowledge their privileges and/or express frustration about stereotypes. Moreover, disadvantaged group members might express a sense of hope when hearing how advantaged group members have used their position of privilege to address inequality. Such expression of hope conveys a shared understanding and appreciation for the experience of inequality and can serve as a foundation for forging relationships across difference. Indeed, Sorensen and colleagues (2010) demonstrate that intergroup dialogue can foster increased intergroup empathy for both advantaged and disadvantaged group members.

Of course definitions and assessments of intergroup empathy, particularly emotional empathy, should be calibrated to the contexts and methodologies in which they

are situated. In laboratory experiments where participants react emotionally to controlled stimuli, there may be limits on the range and depth of empathic emotions that arise for participants. Effects of intergroup empathy on other intergroup outcomes may also differ depending on the type of emotional experience, particularly in studies where these emotions can be isolated experimentally (e.g. Finlay & Stephan, 2000). We are not suggesting that all investigations of intergroup empathy should use one definition or scale. Rather, our goal in the present paper is to advance a definition of the kind of intergroup empathy that manifests in real, dynamic communication *between* members of different groups about the issues that lay at the root of intergroup interaction. This conceptualization 1) removes ‘pity’ and ‘sorrow’ for outgroup members from its definition, given the potential for such emotional expressions to exacerbate relations between groups, 2) expands the repertoire of emotions in the context of intergroup communication that indicate expressions of empathy for members of other groups, and 3) that allows intergroup empathy to be examined as a two-way street between members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

#### PATHWAYS TO INTERGROUP EMPATHY

While we know that cognitive and/or emotional empathy is an important mediator of the effect of intergroup contact on prejudice reduction (e.g. Batson et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Vescio, Sechrist & Paolucci, 2003), intergroup forgiveness (Brown, Wohl & Exline, 2008; Cehajic, Brown & Castano, 2008; Tam et al., 2008) and helping behavior (Shih, Wang, Bucher & Stotzer, 2009), we know very little about what kinds of communication and psychological processes transpire within intergroup communication that effectively foster

intergroup empathy. From both a practical and theoretical point of view, understanding *how* intergroup contact can promote empathy in the context of difference and inequality is important.

To our knowledge, only a few studies have empirically examined psychological and communication processes that foster empathy within an intergroup context. With regard to communication processes, prior work has argued for the important role of self-disclosure across race/ethnicity in promoting intergroup empathy (Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007; see Ensari & Miller, 2006 for a theoretical application of personalization model). Other research examining psychological antecedents to emotional empathy have focused on the effect of perspective-taking manipulations relative to objective control conditions (e.g. Batson et al., 1997). As a result, this prior work is limited in scope conceptually but also methodologically, conducting mediational analyses on cross-sectional survey data (leaving the direction of causality unclear--does self-disclosing promote empathy or are people high in empathy also more likely to disclose personal information with members of other groups?) or by investigating emotional empathy as a reaction to a highly controlled, not interactive stimuli (videotape). If we are to understand how real, dynamic face-to-face intergroup communication can foster intergroup empathy, a more comprehensive framework examining the structural features of intergroup interactions, as well as the communication and psychological processes that transpire within them is sorely needed.

#### A Critical-Dialogic Process Model for Intergroup Dialogue

In this paper, we address this challenge by providing the first empirical test of a theoretical processes model for intergroup dialogue (Sorensen et al., 2009),

demonstrating how this intergroup communication intervention produces short- (pre-post) and long-term (1-year later) increases in intergroup empathy. Intergroup dialogue has emerged as an effective educational program that brings together members of two different social identity groups (e.g. people of color and white people) in face-to-face communication. Dialogues include equal numbers of participants from each social identity group (usually 12-16 in total), two trained facilitators (one from each identity group), and meet weekly for 2-3 hours over the course of an academic term. Intergroup dialogues are not merely a place for people of different identities to talk with each other but rather highly structured interventions that help members of different groups to learn how to effectively communicate to build understanding and forge relationships across difference and inequality (for a thorough description of this program, see Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007).

Sorensen and colleagues (2009) outlined a theoretical process model for how intergroup dialogue promotes positive intergroup outcomes, including intergroup empathy (see Figure 1.1). This theoretical model posits that the pedagogical features of intergroup dialogue (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen & Coombes, 2010) together foster critical-dialogic communication processes (Nagda, 2006) which in turn increase cognitive/affective psychological processes. Together, these pedagogical features, and communication and psychological processes were hypothesized to promote increased intergroup empathy. While each of these components of the process model may exert independent direct effects on intergroup empathy, the model is indirect by nature arguing that the primary active ingredients of intergroup dialogue (its unique pedagogical features and communication processes) exert their effects through psychological processes that

promote empathy including increased cognitive openness and positivity in interactions across difference. While more thorough descriptions of the pedagogical features and communication processes can be obtained elsewhere (as referenced above) we briefly outline each of these components of the process model and their pathways below.

### *Pedagogical Features of Intergroup Dialogue*

The hypothesized process model highlights three pedagogical features of IGD including *content learning*, *structured interaction* and *facilitative leadership*. Content learning refers to the course materials that students are exposed to over the course of the academic term including assigned readings and journals/reflection papers. Readings present a wide range of conceptual, empirical and narrative approaches to examining identity, inequality and people's life experiences. For example, students read Harro's (2000) cycle of socialization, which helps students examine the role that teachers, parents, the media and peers play in shaping children's development into adulthood. Students also write weekly journal reflections on how their personal experiences connect or diverge both from what they are reading about and what others share in the dialogue.

While exposure to content about identity or inequality is not unique to intergroup dialogue, what distinguishes IGD pedagogically from other approaches to learning is structured interaction and facilitative leadership. *Structured interaction* refers to structural features of IGD including having a small group of students with diverse identities, collaborative learning projects, ground rules for discussion and activities and exercises designed to provoke engaging dialogue about identity and inequality. Balancing the distribution of identities and integrating collaborative projects incorporates two of Allport's (1954) conditions for positive intergroup contact – equal status among

participants and interdependent goals<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, early in the semester students share their ‘hopes and fears’ in order to address the anxiety and concerns about being/appearing prejudiced that they often bring into the dialogue (for a review, see Sorensen et al., 2009) and use what they learn from one another to co-create ground rules for discussion. Activities and exercises are crucially important because they provide structure for students to explore challenging issues constructively. In the third session, for example, students are asked to use Harro’s (2000) cycle of socialization to write and share a ‘testimonial’ with the group about their life experiences, using identity as a lens. Students often self-disclose deeply personal experiences where they were the victim or even the perpetrator of prejudice or discrimination, providing opportunities for students to experience emotional empathy across group boundaries by feeling the impact of identity and inequality on each others’ lives.

Finally, facilitative leadership is the ‘glue’ that integrates content into structured activities and exercises while also framing the goals and shaping communication processes in the dialogue. Co-facilitators are trained to implement a critical-dialogic model of IGD by modeling and guiding effective communication in ways that promote learning. They create and maintain an inclusive climate, help to clarify misunderstandings and use conflict as a foundation for learning and reflection. They also monitor group dynamics by ensuring active participation from all students, intervening when individuals dominate the discussion or encouraging participants to keep pushing forward when discussion becomes uncomfortable or challenging.

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<sup>7</sup> Allport’s (1954) two other conditions, acquaintance potential and support of authorities, are achieved by allowing students get to know one another and share their personal experiences while receiving course credit, supported by their educational institutions.

Together, these pedagogical features of IGD stage a context for interaction across difference and inequality that engenders specific kinds of communication described below. In short, content learning provides the material, structured interaction brings it to life under conditions designed to ensure productive communication, while facilitative leadership serves as a monitoring system to guide effective communication and situate the focus of students' attention in ways that challenge their learning while maintaining a necessary degree of support.

### *Communication Processes*

The pedagogical features of IGD described above are hypothesized to foster critical-dialogic communication processes (Nagda, 2006). Dialogic communication processes are relational by nature because they intersect self- and other-oriented exchanges including *engaging self* where students actively participate by sharing their own perspectives, life experiences, and speak openly without feeling judged as well as *learning from others* where students hear others' personal stories and perspectives while also asking questions of one another. Situated in the context of the dialogue setting, sharing one's own personal experiences in intergroup communication is closely aligned with the role of self-disclosure, highlighted by other researchers as important for intergroup empathy (Ensari & Miller, 2006; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007) and improving intergroup relations more generally (Ensari & Miller, 2002; Yeakley, 1998). Together, these self- and other-oriented exchanges create opportunities for intergroup empathy to emerge as students reciprocally share and hear each other's personal stories.

A critical-dialogic model of IGD integrates these dialogic communication processes with critical communication processes including *critical reflection* where

students examine how their own and others' life experiences and perspectives on social issues are rooted in systems of power, as well as *alliance building* where students work through disagreements together and talk about ways to collaborate across difference to address structural inequality (Nagda, 2006). The term 'critical' draws on research on critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) where dialogue participants apply a critical analysis to better understand how their life experiences are shaped by the advantages and disadvantages afforded to their identities. Integrating both dialogic and critical communication also bridges the differing goals that members of advantaged groups (build relationships and talk about diversity) and disadvantaged groups (talk about power and inequality) bring into these interactions (Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008).

While critical communication processes are more directly important in increasing students' structural understanding of inequality and commitment to action, they are inextricably embedded into dialogic communication processes in IGD as participants share their personal life experiences. Facilitators explicitly encourage participants to connect their experiences to the content they are learning by asking probing questions that focus participants' attention to identity and inequality (e.g. how might your identity have played a role in that situation?). As participants share their personal life experiences through a 'critical' lens, they build a shared understanding of the impact of systems of inequality on each other, also providing opportunities for empathy to emerge across group boundaries. In the context of a race dialogue for example, white students may come to better recognize how the media shapes their perceptions of African Americans in stereotypical ways and how those stereotypes affect individuals who identify with that



group. Students of color may also come to empathize with white students who feel frustration about growing up in segregated communities where the media served as the only source of information about different identities. Thus, a structural lens serves as a bridge for connecting the experiences of members of different groups and their roles within systems of inequality.

### *Psychological Processes*

When these critical-dialogic communication processes are situated within the pedagogical structure of IGD, we hypothesize that students will increase in their *openness* to thinking about the impact of society and identity in shaping multiple perspectives (cognition) and in their *positivity* in interactions across difference (affect). In other words, when communication about challenging issues like identity and inequality takes place within a safe, non-judgmental and engaging setting, supported by co-facilitators, participants experience more honest and meaningful interactions with members of other groups while also being more open to considering different perspectives and worldviews that might otherwise have prompted unproductive conflict and debate.

In the hypothesized process model, *openness* refers to four cognitive psychological processes focused on the complexity of participants' thinking (also termed *need for cognition*, Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), their openness to consider the role of society in influencing people's behavior, interest in learning more about one's own and others' identities and openness to considering multiple perspectives (or cognitive empathy as described above). In prior work (Sorensen et al., 2009), we conceptually distinguished identity engagement from openness because of the theoretical controversy

surrounding the salience of identity. We include identity engagement as an indicator of openness here in order to make a distinction between cognitively and affectively driven psychological processes in our empirical measurement given that our measures of identity engagement are largely cognitive in nature. *Positivity across difference* refers to experiencing meaningful, honest and deeply personal discussions with members of other groups while feeling open, trusting, engaged and even excited. Thus, positivity across difference is characterized not by general positive emotions (e.g. feeling happy) but rather as an engaged and genuine connection to members of other groups, highlighting the positivity that group members associate with each other's self-disclosure of personal experiences and the trust they develop with one another – important for improving intergroup relations (Cehajic, Brown & Castano, 2008; Cohen & Insko, 2008; Nadler & Liviatan, 2006; Norman, 2002).

Finally, we hypothesize that these psychological processes together foster increased emotional empathy in an intergroup context by using a foundation of positivity with openness to exploring the impact of identity and society on each other's life experiences and cultural worldviews. This model does not make specific hypotheses about the role of each pedagogical feature, or each communication and psychological process in fostering intergroup empathy, but suggests how the pedagogy and processes within intergroup dialogue together promote empathy across difference.

#### THE PRESENT RESEARCH

In prior research (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen & Zúñiga, 2009; Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, Stephan & Gonzalez, 2010) we document the effect of participation in intergroup dialogue on intergroup empathy relative to a randomized control group as well as social

science courses which focus on race or gender content but do not make explicit use of a critical-dialogic model. Specifically, this work demonstrates both short- (pre-post) and long-term (1-year later) effects on empathy for members of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups that cannot be attributed to exposure to content alone. In the current study we use data from this nine-university randomized trial but focus solely on participants who participated in intergroup dialogue to test our theoretical process model for *how* IGD fosters emotional intergroup empathy. An analysis of only those who participated in intergroup dialogue will provide information on the associations between key variables and processes of change over time (e.g. is a higher frequency of communication processes positively related to larger increases in empathy over time?). While Sorensen et al. (2010) utilized data from intergroup dialogues focused on race, in the present study we also include intergroup dialogues focused on gender to examine whether the hypothesized process model is robust to topic, applying to both race and gender dialogues, while also increasing statistical power. Specifically, we use structural equation modeling (SEM) and hypothesize that the pedagogical features of IGD will positively predict the critical-dialogic communication processes outlined above, which together indirectly promote increased intergroup empathy at post-test and one year after the dialogue ended via increases in psychological processes focused on cognitive openness and affective positivity across difference.

## METHOD

### Sample

Participants were undergraduate students ( $n=727$ ;  $n=379$  female,  $n=348$  male;  $n=363$  white students,  $n=364$  students of color:  $n=156$  African-American,  $n=109$

Asian/Asian-American,  $n=81$  Latino/a,  $n=5$  Native-American,  $n=13$  other-identified) from nine colleges and universities<sup>8</sup> who applied and were randomized to take an intergroup dialogue as part of a larger randomized controlled trial; students randomized to a waitlist control are not included in analyses presented here. Dialogue participants received course credit for their participation in dialogue and completion of the pre-test and post-test surveys; they were also compensated \$25 for completion of the one-year follow-up survey.

### Procedure

Each institution offered standardized intergroup dialogue courses. Across an academic term, students met for 30 hours in weekly sessions. A total of 52 intergroup dialogue groups were conducted, including 26 focusing on race/ethnicity and 26 on gender. Dialogue groups consisted of 12-16 students with approximately equal numbers of white women, white men, women of color and men of color in both race and gender dialogues. Data were collected at the beginning and end of the course and at one-year follow-up, while pre- and post-tests were administered in-class; follow-up was administered in person or online by research assistants, not dialogue facilitators. Careful tracking led to high retention at post-test (95%) and for the one-year follow-up (82%).

### Measures

#### *Pedagogical Features of Intergroup Dialogue (latent construct)*

*Content Learning.* Content learning was assessed on a 3-item, 7-point response scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much;  $\alpha = .82$ ) at the end of the term (post-test only).

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<sup>8</sup> Arizona State University, Occidental College, Syracuse University, University of California-San Diego, University of Michigan, University of Maryland, University of Massachusetts, University of Texas-Austin, University of Washington

Following the stem, “How much did each component contribute to your learning”, the items were “assigned readings,” “journals/reflection papers,” and “other written assignments.”

*Structured Interaction.* Structured interaction was assessed on a 5-item, 7-point response scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much;  $\alpha = .74$ ) at the end of the term (post-test only). Following the stem, “How much did each component contribute to your learning”, the items were “structured activities and exercises,” “groundrules for discussion,” “a small group setting,” “a diverse group of students” and “collaborative projects with other students.”

*Facilitative Leadership.* Facilitative leadership was assessed on an 11-item, 7-point response scale (1 = not at all effective; 7 = extremely effective;  $\alpha = .94$ ) at the end of the term (post-test only). Following the stem, “How effective were your facilitators in the following areas”, the items were “creating an inclusive climate,” “modeling good communication skills,” “actively involving me in learning experiences,” “intervening when some group/class members dominated discussion,” “encouraging group/class members to talk to each other, not just to the facilitators/instructors,” “intervening when some group/class members were quiet,” “handling conflict situations,” “helping to clarify misunderstandings,” “offering their own perspectives in a helpful way,” “bringing in a different perspective when everyone seemed to be agreeing,” and “encouraging us to continue discussion when it became uncomfortable.”

*Communication Processes in Intergroup Dialogue (latent variable)*

All communication processes were assessed on 7-point response (1= not at all, to 7 = very much) were assessed at the end of the term (post-test only). The scale (Nagda, 2006) included items reflecting each of the four hypothesized processes.

*Engaging Self.* Sample items for engaging self (5 items,  $\alpha = .81$ ) were “sharing my views and experiences” and “speaking openly without feeling judged.”

*Learning from Others.* Sample items for learning from others (4 items,  $\alpha = .88$ ) were “hearing different points of view” and “learning from each other.”

*Critical Reflection.* Sample items for critical reflection (4 items,  $\alpha = .78$ ) were “understanding how privilege and oppression affect our lives” and “examining the sources of my biases and assumptions.”

*Alliance building.* Sample items for alliance building (7 items,  $\alpha = .91$ ) were “sharing ways to collaborate with other groups to take action” and “working through disagreements and conflicts.”

*Positivity across Difference (latent construct)*

*Frequency of Positive Intergroup Interactions.* Frequency of positive intergroup interactions (Michigan Student Study, 1990) was assessed on a 3-item, 7-point response scale (1 = Not at all; 7 = very much) at pre-test ( $\alpha = .77$ ) and post-test ( $\alpha = .76$ ).

Following the stem, “In interactions with people from racial/ethnic groups (genders) different from your own, how frequently have you done or experienced the following since you have been at the university”, items were “had meaningful and honest discussions outside of class about race and ethnic (gender) relations,” “shared our personal feelings and problems,” “had close friendships.”

*Positive Emotions in Intergroup Interactions.* Positive emotions in intergroup interactions (adapted from Stephan & Stephan, 1985) were assessed on a 4-item, 10 point response scale (1 = Not at all; 10 = Extremely) at pre-test ( $\alpha = .73$ ) and post-test ( $\alpha = .74$ ). Following the stem, “How do you generally feel when interacting with people from racial/ethnic groups (genders) different from your own,” students rated the extent to which they feel “trusting,” “excited,” “open” and “engaged.”

*Openness (latent construct)*

*Complex Thinking.* Complexity of thinking (adapted from Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982) was assessed on a 5-item, 7-point response scale (1=not at all like me; 7=very much like me) at pre-test ( $\alpha = .75$ ) and post-test ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Students indicated how well each of the following statements described them: “The world is too complicated for me to spend time trying to figure out how it operates,” “I prefer simple rather than complex explanations for people’s behavior,” “I like tasks that require little thought once I’ve learned them,” “I don’t like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking” and “I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.” All items were reverse-coded such that higher scores indicate greater preference for complex thinking.

*Thinking about Society.* Thinking about society (adapted from Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986) was assessed on a 4-item, 7-point response scale (1=not at all like me; 7=very much like me) at pre-test ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and post-test ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Students indicated how well each of the following statements described them: “I think a lot about the influence that society has on my behaviors,” “I think a lot

about the influence that society has on other people,” “I really enjoy analyzing the reasons or causes for people’s behavior” and “I am fascinated by the complexity of the social institutions that affect people’s lives.”

*Identity Engagement.* Identity engagement was assessed on a 5-item, 7-point response scale (1=Disagree strongly; 7 = Agree strongly) at pre-test ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and post-test ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Following the stem, “Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your racial/ethnic (gender) identity group”, the items were “I have spent time trying to find out more about my racial/ethnic (gender) identity group,” “To learn more about my racial/ethnic (gender) group, I have often talked to other people about it,” “I participate in activities that express my racial/ethnic (gender) group,” “I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my race/ethnicity (gender),” and “I think a lot about how the group history and traditions of my racial/ethnic (gender) group have influenced me.” These statements are drawn from identity scales developed by Crocker and Luhtanen (1990), Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton & Smith (1997), and Gurin and Markus (1988) to represent centrality of identity and behavioral commitment.

*Openness to Multiple Perspectives.* Openness to multiple perspectives (adapted from Davis, 1983 – the standard measure in prior research) was assessed on a 5-item, 7-point response scale (1=not at all like me; 7=very much like me) at pre-test ( $\alpha = .75$ ) and post-test ( $\alpha = .74$ ). Students indicated how well each of the following statements described them: “I strive to see issues from many points of view,” “If I am sure about something, I don’t waste too much time listening to other people’s arguments (reverse-coded),” “I believe there are many sides to every issue and try to look at most of them,”



“I am willing to listen to the variety of views that can emerge in talking about social issues and problems” and “I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other person’s” point of view (reverse-coded).”

*Emotional Intergroup Empathy (latent construct)*

Emotional intergroup empathy was assessed on an 8-item, 7-point response scale (1=not at all like me; 7 = very much like me) at pre-test ( $\alpha = .87$ ), post-test ( $\alpha = .88$ ), and one-year follow-up ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Following the stem, “To what extent does each statement describe your feelings in conversations with people from different racial/ethnic groups”, the items were “When people feel frustrated about racial/ethnic stereotypes applied to their group, I feel some of their frustration too,” “When people feel proud of the accomplishments of someone of their racial/ethnic group, I feel some of their pride as well,” “When people express regret about the racial/ethnic biases they were taught, I can empathize with their feelings,” “When I learn about the injustices that people of different races/ethnicities have experienced, I tend to feel some of the anger that they do,” “When I hear others use their positions of privilege to promote greater racial/ethnic equality, I feel hopeful,” “I feel despair when I hear about the impact of racial/ethnic inequalities on others in our society,” “I feel hopeful hearing how others have overcome disadvantages because of their race/ethnicity,” and “I feel angry when people don’t acknowledge the privileges they have in society because of their race/ethnicity.” Individual items are used as separate indicators for the intergroup empathy latent construct.

## Analysis Plan

Structural equation modeling (SEM) with latent constructs was utilized to test the hypothesized process model for how intergroup dialogue fosters intergroup empathy using AMOS 17.0 software (Arbuckle, 2008).

*Measurement.* For each of the psychological constructs (positivity across difference, openness), indicators were residual scores of pre-post change in average composites of subscales. Pre-post change in the intergroup empathy latent construct was similarly measured with residual scores of pre-post change in individual scale items (8 indicators) while the intergroup empathy latent construct at one-year follow-up was measured with raw scores for each scale item (8 indicators). Because pedagogical features and communication processes in intergroup dialogue were assessed only at the end of the academic term, indicators for these latent constructs were average composite scores for each of their respective subscales. Latent constructs were each verified with reliability, factor and confirmatory factor analyses and do not include correlated error terms between indicators within a latent construct in order to increase the replicability of the structural parameters (i.e., minimize overfitting) while also providing a more conservative test of the hypothesized model.

*Structural Parameters.* To test the proposed theoretical model, we tested an “all ends” model where all latent constructs earlier (to the left) in the model are allowed to have direct pathways to every latent construct later in the model (to the right). Thus, indirect pathways presented below are not forced but rather emerge after controlling for possible direct pathways. Only significant pathways are reported. Following Bolger and

Shrout (2002), indirect pathways were tested using 2000 bootstrap samples; bootstrapped standard errors and bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals are reported.

*Group Comparisons.* In order to examine whether the model differed by topic of the dialogue (race or gender) or status of the participants (advantaged vs. disadvantaged), we examined chi-square comparisons of fit for a model where all parameters were constrained to be equal for subgroups to a model where structural parameters were allowed to vary (measurement parameters for latent constructs remained constrained).

*Estimation Procedure, Nesting and Model Fits.* Reported analyses use a maximum likelihood (ML) estimation procedure which employs listwise deletion for missing data. Consequently, reported effects reflect only participants who completed surveys at all three time points. However, analyses were verified using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) which makes full use of available data in parameter estimates. No substantive differences in the direction or significance of observed relationships from each estimation procedure were found. Given that participants were nested within dialogue groups, the findings presented below were also tested controlling for dialogue group means; no changes in the direction or significant of parameters were found, suggesting that the individual processes presented cannot be attributed to ‘dialogue group’ effects. Acceptable model fit was indicated by a Root Mean Squared Error (RMSEA) less than .06,  $\chi^2/df$  ratio less than 3.00 and .90 or higher for the Goodness of Fit (GFI), Tucker Lewis (TLI), and Comparative Fit (CFI) indexes.

## RESULTS

### *Empirical evidence for the hypothesized process model*

As outlined earlier, we hypothesized that the pedagogical features of intergroup dialogue foster critical-dialogic communication processes, which together indirectly promote intergroup empathy at post-test and one year after the dialogue ended via increases in psychological processes focused on cognitive openness and affective positivity across difference. Utilizing a conservative analytic approach, we find strong support for the hypothesized process model, (see Figure 3.1 for diagram and indices of model fit). Direct and indirect effects are presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 respectively (see also Table 3.3 for intercorrelations).

Specifically, as hypothesized, we find that the pedagogical features of IGD directly and positively predict the frequency with which critical-dialogic communication processes take place among dialogue participants. That is, content about race or gender, structured interaction and facilitative leadership together provide a context that promotes communication focused on engaging self, learning from others, critical reflection and alliance building. Secondly, as expected, these communication processes directly predict increases over the course of the academic term (pre-post) in the psychological processes, including affective positivity across difference and cognitive openness. We also find both direct and indirect effects of the IGD pedagogical features on increasing participants' positivity across difference and openness. Thus, the pedagogical features of intergroup dialogue as well as the critical-dialogic communication processes that transpire between participants promote engaging, honest and meaningful interactions

across difference, characterized by trust as well as increased openness to exploring the impact of society and identity on each other's different perspectives and life experiences.

With regard to intergroup empathy, as hypothesized we find direct effects of increased positivity across difference and openness on increased emotional empathy over the course of the academic term, though of course these increases occur during the same period of time (pre-post). Also as expected, we find significant indirect effects of communication processes on increased emotional intergroup empathy through increased positivity across difference and openness as well as indirect effects of the pedagogical features on empathy through both the communication and psychological processes. Overall, these findings demonstrate that the pedagogy and communication processes foster increased emotional intergroup empathy by staging a context for positive interactions across difference and openness to understanding different perspectives and their connections to different identities.

Finally, while we expected that increased emotional empathy over the course of the intergroup dialogue would directly predict participants' intergroup empathy at one-year follow-up, we also find direct effects of the critical-dialogical communication processes that took place during intergroup dialogue on participants' empathy one year later, highlighting the important role that these communication processes play as an active ingredient in the process model for IGD. In addition to these direct effects, emotional intergroup empathy at one year follow-up is indirectly affected by the IGD pedagogical features, communication processes, positivity across difference and marginally significantly by openness. Together, these findings document strong support for the hypothesized process model, demonstrating both the direct and indirect pathways

by which participation in intergroup dialogue fosters emotional intergroup empathy through its unique pedagogical structure, critical-dialogic communication and cognitive and affective psychological processes focused on positivity in interactions across difference as well as an openness to exploring how society and identity importantly shape one's life experiences and perspectives on the world.

#### *Group comparisons*

It is possible that the hypothesized process model operates differently in racial/ethnic and gender dialogues. For this reason, we tested whether the model presented in Figure 3.1 differed for the two types of dialogues, and did not find significant differences,  $\chi^2(14) = 17.94, p = .21$ , suggesting that this model is robust, applicable to both dialogue topics. We also tested whether the model differed for members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Given that the experience of being 'advantaged' or 'disadvantaged' likely differs in the context of race and gender dialogues, we examined whether the model significantly differed for four groups – advantaged (white) and disadvantaged (of color) participants in a race dialogue, as well as advantaged (men) and disadvantaged (women) group members in a gender dialogue. Overall, we found significant differences in the process model for these four groups,  $\chi^2(42) = 92.67, p < .001$ . An examination of how the model differed for each subsample proved to be uninformative because estimates became unreliable with larger standard errors. There is a suggestion in these exploratory analyses that positivity across difference may play a more prominent role for members of advantaged than disadvantaged groups in fostering empathy, although it is prudent not to draw conclusions from these admittedly somewhat unreliable estimates.

## DISCUSSION

As presented earlier, a growing body of research highlights the important role of empathy in improving intergroup relations yet this prior work has remained limited in two ways. First, prior research on emotional intergroup empathy has failed to converge on a common conceptualization of what constitutes an emotionally empathic experience in an intergroup context, resulting in both theoretical and practical ambiguity around this construct. Second, little to no research has examined the how interactions between members of different groups foster emotional intergroup empathy. We address these limitations in the present study by advancing a definition and measure of emotional intergroup empathy that more accurately captures the experience of empathy in real, face-to-face intergroup communication. Building on prior work (Sorensen et al., 2010; Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen & Zúñiga, 2009) demonstrating both short- and long-term experimental effects of participation in intergroup dialogue on emotional intergroup empathy, in this study we utilized data from students who participated in intergroup dialogue as part of a nine-university randomized controlled trial in order to examine *how* intergroup dialogue fosters emotional empathy across difference by testing the theoretical process model proposed by Sorensen et al. (2009).

Overall, we found strong empirical support for the hypothesized process model of intergroup dialogue, documenting specifically that the pedagogical features of intergroup dialogue (content, structured interaction, facilitative leadership) foster critical-dialogic communication processes (Nagda, 2006) focused on engaging the self, learning from others, critical reflection and alliance building. These pedagogical features and communication processes promote increased positivity (i.e. honest, meaningful, trusting

and engaging) in interactions across difference and openness to exploring the effects of society and identity on shaping people's life experiences and perspectives on the world. Situated in the context of the IGD pedagogy and communication processes, this increased positivity and openness together foster increased emotional intergroup empathy.

Conceptually, this study makes an important contribution to the intergroup literature, particularly on intergroup empathy. First, given that only a few studies have empirically examined potential antecedents (e.g. Batson et al., 1997; Turner et al., 2007; see also Vorauer, Martens & Sasaki, Study 4) to empathy in an intergroup context, we provide the most comprehensive picture to date for how intergroup interaction can foster increased emotional empathy across group boundaries. Secondly, we provide the first empirical test of a process model for intergroup dialogue, highlighting the important role of IGD's unique pedagogical features and communication processes as active ingredients for change. Not only did we observe indirect effects of the IGD pedagogy and communication processes on increased empathy over the course of an academic term and one year later, we also found a direct effect of the critical-dialogic communication processes that took place in intergroup dialogue on participants' emotional intergroup empathy one year after the dialogue ended.

Most social psychological researchers in intergroup relations rarely study the role of communication processes in their process models and implicitly assume that changes in psychological processes (the way people think and feel) in interactions across difference will change the way they communicate or behave with one another. In contrast, intergroup dialogue is premised on changing the way people communicate across difference through structured and guided facilitation in order to change the way



they think and feel about intergroup interaction. While the relationships between communication and psychological processes in dynamic intergroup interactions are likely reciprocal, the present study offers strong empirical support to suggest that communication processes are centrally important to fostering intergroup empathy while also highlighting their potential role as an antecedent to increased affective positivity and cognitive openness.

While conceptually we advance a process model for how critical-dialogic communication fosters emotional intergroup empathy, this model may not accurately depict the communication and psychological processes that transpire ‘naturally’ when members of different groups interact with one another given that intergroup dialogue is a highly structured intervention. That said, a large and growing body of evidence documents that unstructured and unguided contact between members of different groups can result in negative outcomes (see Sorensen et al., 2009, for a review). For example, research on roommate relationships demonstrates that interracial roommates experience fewer intimacy enhancing behaviors (smiling, talking, appearing engaged and interested, friendliness), less desire to live with the roommate again and these relationships are more likely to dissolve than same race roommates (Trail, Shelton, & West, 2009; Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006; Shook & Fazio, 2008b). Similarly, recent work on perspective-taking (or cognitive empathy) and emotional empathy has also made clear that simple perspective-taking manipulations do not always produce positive outcomes and can actually exacerbate intergroup interactions (Vorauer et al., 2009). Perspective-taking may have divergent effects depending on whether the goal is to understand vs. imagine how an outgroup member experiences the world. The ‘understanding’ strategy requires

using one's own perspective to actively listen and ask questions to outgroup members about what *they* think and feel and co-construct a shared understanding whereas the 'imagine' strategy may subvert efforts to ask questions of others by filling in details with one's own interpretation. Worse yet, these details are especially likely to be inaccurate in an intergroup context (Broome, 1991). Therefore, the context for intergroup interaction can importantly shape how participants engage in and make sense of their communication with members of other groups.

While understanding the processes that take place in everyday intergroup interactions may be theoretically important, evidence for these negative outcomes suggests that unstructured and unguided interactions across difference may not be optimal for improving intergroup relations. To that end, we have argued that it is important that intergroup interactions be structured in ways that 1) explicitly deal with the psychological challenges and concerns about prejudice that both majority and minority group members face in these interactions, 2) expose participants to content about power, inequality and the need for social change that addresses the diverging motivations of majority group members to explore commonalities and minority group members to talk about the power structure (Saguy et al., 2008), and 3) uses guided facilitation to help students learn *how* to communicate effectively in ways that promote positive outcomes while preventing negative ones (see Sorensen et al., 2009).

Methodologically, we also advance research on antecedents to intergroup empathy using longitudinal survey data with measures of short- and long-term change, providing a stronger test of a multi-stage process model than prior work which has relied on cross-sectional surveys (e.g. Turner et al., 2007). Of course, the findings are still

correlational in nature; participants' reflections on the pedagogical features of IGD and the communication processes were used to predict pre-post change in the psychological process and emotional intergroup empathy which were in turn used to predict participants' empathy in intergroup interactions one year later. As a result, it is possible that participants' reflections on the IGD pedagogy and the communication processes (measured at post-test) may have been influenced by the extent to which they changed over the course of the term. Additionally, pre-post changes in the psychological processes and intergroup empathy occurred during the same time period; therefore, caution is warranted in drawing conclusions about the sequential order of these changes. That said, it is noteworthy that the data utilized in the present analyses was part of a larger experimental study documenting that increases in emotional intergroup empathy are experimental increases that cannot be attributed to maturation or history effects that might have occurred without participation in IGD. Indeed, Sorensen and colleagues (2010) found no increases in emotional intergroup empathy among control participants or students taking social science courses about race/ethnicity during the academic term or during the following year (similar effects are found for intergroup dialogues on gender as well, Nagda et al., 2009). Increases in empathy were only found for students who participated in a critical-dialogic model of intergroup dialogue. By integrating longitudinal and experimental methods we can exercise greater confidence in the validity of our findings.

With regard to external validity, participants in this study were all college students who self-selected to participate in an intergroup dialogue program. Findings may not generalize to populations who do not have some openness to participation. However,

research suggests that higher education may be ideally suited for the challenge of improving relations in a diverse context (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002). Most college students attend higher education during late adolescence and early adulthood where they begin to call into question the worldviews they adopted from parents, guardians and teachers and explore other points of view. When students' openness to exploring different perspectives and ideas about the world converge with exposure to diversity, these intergroup interactions can have maximal impact, particularly for students who grew up in segregated neighborhoods (Gurin et al., 2002; Jayakumar, 2008). Regardless, intergroup conflict is pervasive across societies and future research is needed in order to understand how the processes highlighted in the present study translate to other populations and cultural contexts.

#### Future Directions for Research

While we found that the proposed process model of intergroup dialogue was robust to topic, applying to both race and gender dialogues, we also found evidence suggesting that the model differs for members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Given limited sample sizes in each subsample, we were unable to discern how the model worked differently for members of different groups, though there was some evidence (albeit unreliable) to suggest that the role of positivity in interactions across difference may be more important for members of advantaged than disadvantaged groups. Although prior research highlights cognitive and affective challenges in intergroup interactions for both advantaged and disadvantaged group members (Sorensen et al., 2009), there is more evidence of negative effects for whites in interracial interactions than for racial/ethnic minorities (though that could reflect a bias in the literature rather than a

real difference between groups in interactions across difference). This is not surprising given that white college students may be less likely to have experience interacting with people of color than the reverse. Thus, it is possible that experiencing positivity in intergroup interactions may be more important for members of advantaged groups, particularly whites. In any case, future research is needed to explore the relative importance of different pathways to intergroup empathy between members of different groups. Understanding how communication and psychological processes differ for members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups will be both theoretically and practically important.

Future research is also needed to distill how the pedagogical features of intergroup dialogue as well as the communication and psychological processes causally influence one another. While experiments that offer greater control and isolation of active ingredients are likely to be an important tool in this effort, our research and practice in intergroup dialogue suggests that examining main effects or simple 2-way interactions may not adequately illuminate how these processes work in the dynamic context of intergroup communication. Given the potential for intergroup interactions to derail, careful attention must be paid to how interactions are structured and guided. Recent work has also highlighted the importance of sustained contact over time as a way to build trust and reciprocity across groups (Cohen & Insko, 2008). Consequently, in order to examine process, we recommend the use of experimental time series designs that will allow us to better understand change processes over time (by day, week or month) and that explore potential group differences in how these trajectories diverge. Recent longitudinal work on interracial roommates (e.g. Trail, Shelton & West, 2009; West,

Shelton, & Trail, 2009) has made great strides using these methods, though there is much more potential for such research designs to better inform our understanding of process.

We also recommend increased collaboration across disciplines. Although research on intergroup relations has been largely housed in the social psychological literature, this work rarely intersects with research conducted in communication studies, particularly intercultural communication. Yet, these fields would benefit from collaboration across these disciplinary boundaries in developing integrated theoretical frameworks of intergroup communication. For example, while psychological research on empathy emphasizes a focus on re-creating in the listener, the original meaning created by the speaker, communication scholars have argued for a relational view that emphasizes the creation of a ‘third culture’ where both parties communicatively co-construct an understanding that differs from each individual’s perspective (Arnett & Nakagawa, 1983; Broome 1991; Stewart, 1983; Stewart & Thomas, 1983). It is possible that a ‘third culture’ emerging in intergroup communication could form the foundation for a new identity (such as social justice advocates) that does not require groups to relinquish their separate identities in order to collaborate across difference. Interdisciplinary collaborations could more effectively explore intersections in psychological (within) and communication (between) processes.

A shift in focal outcomes is also warranted. Most intergroup relations research has focused on prejudice reduction as the primary outcome of interest (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006 for a meta-analysis). Similarly, research on the intergroup empathy has largely examined its meditational role in fostering better attitudes for outgroup members. Implicit in this work is the assumption that decreasing prejudice is the gateway to all

things good, though that may not be the case. While attitudes may play an important role, they do not ensure that members of different groups will be able to collaborate effectively across difference or build better relationships with one another. While recent work has begun to examine new outcomes such as intergroup reconciliation (e.g. Nadler & Liviatan, 2006), intergroup forgiveness (e.g. Cehajic et al., 2008) and collective action (e.g. Lalljee et al., 2009; Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009), these efforts are relatively rare. We believe it is important that future work considers a wider range of intergroup outcomes that better captures indicators of improved intergroup relationships, understanding and even collaborative action to redress inequality.

Finally, while prior work has documented the important role of empathy in intergroup relations both theoretically and empirically, even with the contribution of this study there remains a dearth of research examining how to effectively structure interactions between members of different groups in ways that promote empathy across difference. In this paper we have advanced one effective process model (though certainly not the only) for how structured and guided intergroup communication fosters emotional empathy. While this work is an important contribution to theory and practice, more research is needed to better understand the intersection of intra- and inter-individual/group processes that transpire in intergroup communication. As society grows increasingly diverse, a stronger interplay between theory and practice will be essential for us to leverage the theoretical contributions of social psychological research for intervention.

Table 3.1 *Direct effects*

		$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>
Pedagogical Features	→ Communication Processes	0.78 (.75)	0.06	12.55****
	→ Positivity Across Difference	0.18 (.30)	0.08	2.34**
	→ Openness	0.11 (.21)	0.05	2.16**
Communication Processes	→ Positivity Across Difference	0.18 (.33)	0.07	2.64***
	→ Openness	0.18 (.34)	0.05	3.65****
	→ Intergroup Empathy (1-year later)	0.28 (.23)	0.10	2.82***
Positivity across Difference	→ Intergroup Empathy (Pre-Post $\Delta$ )	0.49 (.35)	0.23	2.18**
Openness	→ Intergroup Empathy (Pre-Post $\Delta$ )	0.51 (.34)	0.17	2.98***
Intergroup Empathy	→ Intergroup Empathy (1-year later)	0.77 (.24)	0.13	6.04****

*Note:* Unstandardized estimates presented (standardized estimates in parentheses). \* $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



Table 3.2 *Indirect effects*

		$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
Pedagogical Features	→ Positivity Across Difference	0.14 (.25)	0.06	(.04, .26)***
	→ Openness	0.14 (.26)	0.04	(.07, .23)****
	→ Intergroup Empathy (Pre-Post $\Delta$ )	0.34 (.42)	0.10	(.20, .55)****
	→ Intergroup Empathy (1-year later)	0.45 (.33)	0.15	(.23, .69)***
Communication Processes	→ Intergroup Empathy (Pre-Post $\Delta$ )	0.18 (.23)	0.08	(.08, .36)***
	→ Intergroup Empathy (1-year later)	0.18 (.14)	0.09	(.04, .33)**
Positivity across Difference	→ Intergroup Empathy (1-year later)	0.38 (.17)	0.42	(.09, 1.31)**
Openness	→ Intergroup Empathy (1-year later)	0.39 (.15)	0.24	(-.03, .78)*

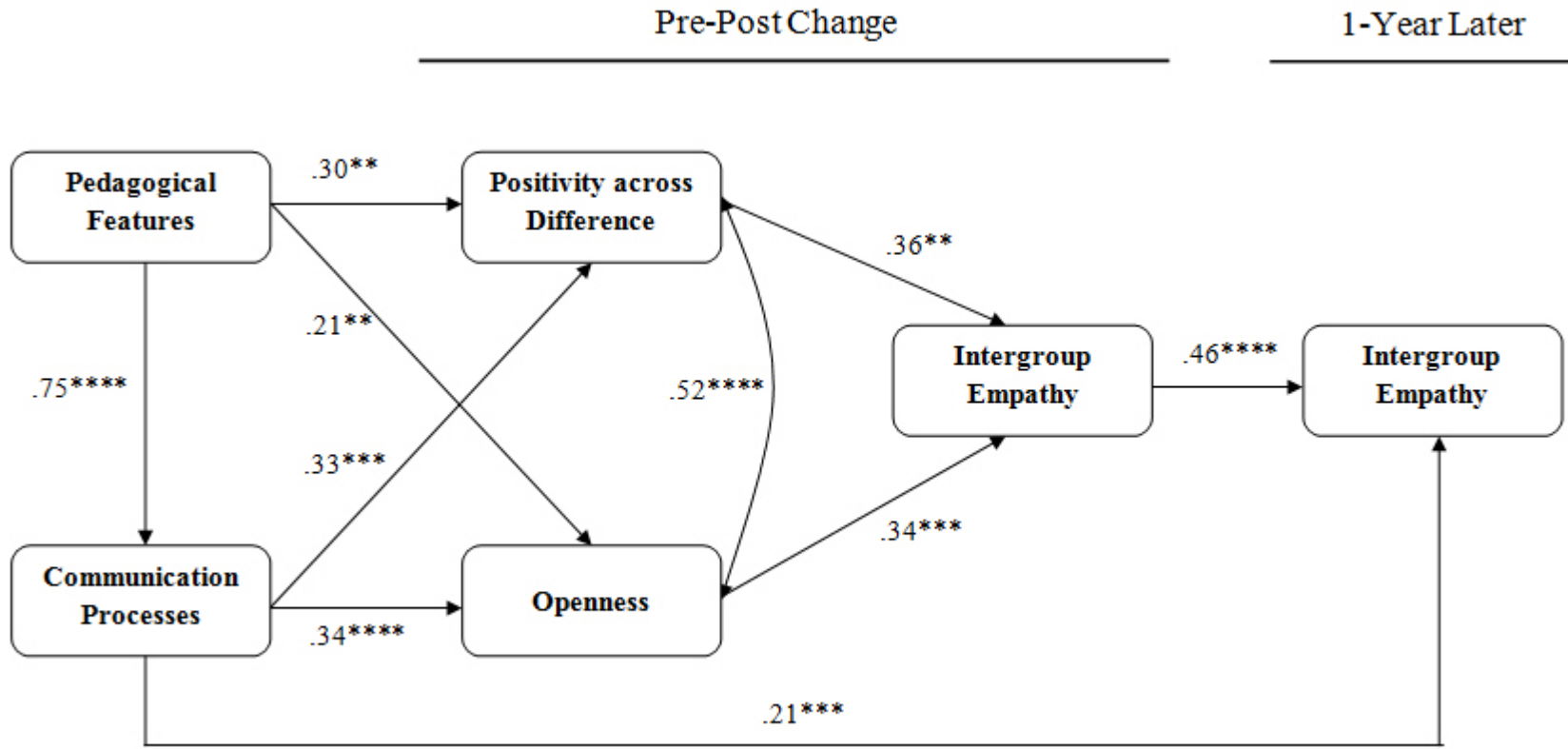
*Note:* Unstandardized estimates presented (standardized estimates in parentheses). 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals are reported. \* $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 3.3 *Intercorrelations of variables in SEM model*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Content														
2 Str. Interaction	.54													
3 Facilitation	.38	.53												
4 Engaging Self	.30	.48	.40											
5 Learning from Others	.29	.54	.43	.68										
6 Critical Reflection	.40	.53	.44	.65	.72									
7 Alliance Building	.41	.56	.44	.62	.63	.77								
8 $\Delta$ Positive Interaction	.15	.23	.16	.24	.21	.21	.22							
9 $\Delta$ Positive Emotions	.13	.23	.18	.25	.26	.23	.19	.23						
10 $\Delta$ Complex Thinking	.11	.16	.12	.16	.17	.17	.09	.13	.18					
11 $\Delta$ Thinking about Society	.15	.21	.21	.24	.26	.27	.21	.17	.16	.22				
12 $\Delta$ Identity Engagement	.23	.25	.24	.25	.22	.29	.28	.18	.18	.11	.24			
13 $\Delta$ Multiple Perspectives	.19	.21	.25	.24	.29	.29	.21	.17	.26	.40	.42	.21		
14 $\Delta$ Intergroup Empathy	.12	.23	.21	.18	.27	.27	.21	.23	.22	.16	.31	.22	.26	
15 Intergroup Empathy (1-Yr Later)	.28	.22	.26	.25	.31	.35	.32	.20	.18	.15	.22	.17	.20	.30

*Note:* All  $p$ 's < .05. For ease of presentation, separate (8) indicators of intergroup empathy were combined into composite scores.  $\Delta$  = pre-post change (residual scores).

Figure 3.1 SEM test of a process model for how intergroup dialogue fosters intergroup empathy



Note. RMSEA= .05, GFI=.90, TLI=.91, CFI=.92,  $\chi^2/df=2.63$ . Estimates standardized, \* $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

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## CONCLUSION

Research in social psychology has contributed much to our understanding of intergroup relations (Randsley de Moura, Leader, Pelletier & Abrams, 2008). For more than fifty years, Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis has played a prominent role in guiding research demonstrating that intergroup contact reduces prejudice between groups, particularly when interactions across group boundaries are characterized by equal status among group members, the opportunity to get to know one another, interdependent goals and the support of authorities (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006 for quantitative review). Building on this important work, more recent efforts have focused on understanding the psychological processes that transpire within intergroup interactions, demonstrating that interactions across difference and inequality are challenging for both advantaged and disadvantaged group members (see Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin & Maxwell, 2009 for a review). While this research has made great strides in furthering our understanding of individual psychological processes in an intergroup context, little to no research has examined the communication processes that transpire *between* members of different groups or how they affect important intergroup outcomes.

Across three papers, this dissertation addresses this important gap by advancing and testing a model for intergroup communication that addresses what we know about the challenges of interactions across difference. Underlying all of the research reviewed and presented in this dissertation is the conclusion that the context for communication across

difference is important in shaping intergroup outcomes. While Allport (1954) recognized this reality in developing his four conditions for intergroup contact, the picture today is arguably more complex. Together, these three papers assert that careful attention must be paid both to how we stage the context for intergroup interaction and to monitoring how individuals communicate and make sense of what they see, hear and feel when interacting with members of other groups.

Specifically, we argue first that contact must be structured in ways that addresses the fears and anxiety that students bring into intergroup communication, particularly majority group members' concerns about appearing prejudiced and minority group members' concerns about being the target of prejudice. Second, participants need to learn how to communicate effectively across difference before exploring the difficult issues that lay at the heart of intergroup conflict – power and inequality. Third, communication should be guided in ways that address the different goals that advantaged and disadvantaged group members bring into intergroup interactions – find commonality and build relationships vs. challenge the power structure and discuss inequality (Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, 2008).

The three papers presented here demonstrate that a critical-dialogic model for intergroup communication is indeed effective in improving intergroup empathy, the focus of the present investigation (though effects on other outcomes are reviewed in chapter I), and that the pedagogical features and communication processes in intergroup dialogue play an important role in producing these effects. Specifically, we offer experimental evidence that participation in interracial dialogue fosters increased intergroup empathy over the course of an academic term and one year later relative to a waitlist control where

no changes in empathy were found. We also demonstrate positive effects for empathy above and beyond those found in social science courses, ruling out the notion that effects of dialogue merely result from exposure to content. Importantly, we also find similar effects for members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups, suggesting that both white participants and participants of color increase in their empathy across group boundaries. Finally, we tested the proposed process model and demonstrate how dialogue fosters both short- and long-term increases in empathy through the pedagogical features of intergroup dialogue (content learning, structured interaction, facilitative leadership), critical-dialogic communication processes (Nagda, 2006), and psychological processes focused on having trusting and meaningful interactions across difference and openness to exploring how society and identity shape our experience of the world.

The research conducted here makes an important contribution to recent research on intergroup relations. As noted above, recent work has focused primarily on individual outcomes and intra-individual psychological processes, demonstrating a shift away from research on small groups (Abrams & Hogg, 1998, 2004; Randsley de Moura et al., 2008; Wittenbaum & Moreland, 2008). Building on the social cognition movement in social psychology, studies on intergroup relations topics typically measure participant's responses to highly controlled stimuli rather than exploring the dynamic exchange in face-to-face interactions between members of different groups. While exploring individual processes is important and methodologically easier to isolate experimentally, this work must be complemented with efforts to study groups in more natural settings as well if we are to fully advance a clear picture of *intergroup* relations. The research conducted in this dissertation addresses Randsley de Moura and colleagues' (2008) call

for more small-group research on intergroup relations and makes clear that communication processes play an important role in intergroup interactions. Research efforts that overlook these processes are unlikely to fully capture how and when interactions across difference produce positive or negative outcomes.

### *Future Research*

The evidence presented in this dissertation for the effectiveness of a structured and guided intergroup communication intervention suggests promising directions for future research in intergroup relations. First, this work marks a shift toward using practice and intervention to inform theory in intergroup relations research, something that will become increasingly necessary if we are to understand processes for *improving* intergroup relations. Institutionalizing intervention educational programs in universities can provide a great engine for research focused not just on assessment but also theoretical development that can be in turn used to inform practice. Collaborations between researchers and practitioners can only serve to improve the work of both parties.

Second, this dissertation research underscores the importance of sustained contact and communication across time. Providing opportunities for participants to interact regularly over a period of time is important for building trust and reciprocity between members of different groups (see Cohen & Insko, 2008) and offers researchers the opportunity to explore trajectories of change that can also illuminate the temporal ordering of changes in communication and psychological processes in ways that cannot be achieved in a single-session laboratory experiment. Combining experimental manipulations of communication processes with time series assessments of the developmental process will offer much needed insight into how different communication

and psychological processes interact over time to affect outcomes. Further, these methods also provide researchers the ability to isolate ‘active ingredients’ in the process model without restructuring a carefully crafted context for intergroup interaction.

Third, while we have argued for the importance of facilitative guidance in intergroup interactions, there is a dearth of empirical research about what makes a facilitator effective. In the third paper, we highlight positive relationships between a number of facilitator qualities and changes in other processes and outcomes though we know very little about how group facilitation moderates the impact of intergroup dialogue on student-level outcomes. A clear theoretical framework demonstrating how facilitators directly shape communication processes in ways that optimize outcomes is needed.

Finally, while this research demonstrates long-term effects (1-year later) of intergroup dialogue on empathy using a longitudinal design, a rarity in the intergroup literature, we know very little about how participants in intergroup dialogue (or any contact experience for that matter) integrate these learning experiences into their worldview and the way they live their lives. Our experience in the practice of intergroup dialogue suggests that many students who participate in intergroup dialogue go on to become facilitators and work in professions focused on redressing inequality and promoting social justice. Of course, these dedicated participants are likely the exception rather than the rule. We need to know how small changes on a quantitative scale for most participants translate into real differences in participants’ personal and professional lives, as well as their larger communities. These questions offer promising and provocative lines of inquiry for future research.



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