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"From One Human to Another": A Phenomenological Study of Intergroup Dialogue

Joel Timothy Muller
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, jmuller3@vols.utk.edu

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<div align="right">Joseph R. Miles, Major Professor</div>

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Brent S. Mallinckrodt, Gina P. Owens, Tricia M. Redeker-Hepner

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<div align="right">Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School</div>

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"From One Human to Another": A Phenomenological Study of Intergroup Dialogue

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Joel Timothy Muller

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Mary and Timothy Muller, and siblings, Caleb, Micah, and Zebedee Muller for their continual support over the years.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of six students in an intergroup dialogue (IGD) course focused on nationality, using a phenomenological approach by Thomas and Pollio (2002) derived from the philosophy of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (1962). Intergroup dialogue is a form of pedagogy that brings together people from different social identity groups with a history of conflict between them, in order to build relationships across groups, develop critical awareness of social issues, and work towards social justice. Three participants identified as foreign-born, and three as U.S.-born. Participants were interviewed using a phenomenological approach and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Participants also kept weekly reflection journals as part of their course requirement. Data was analyzed in the following order: 1) identifying meaning units, (2) putting meaning units into the four main grounds of body, time, others, and world, (3) clustering meaning units into themes, and (4) creating a thematic structure. *National Identity and Family Background* was an important contextual ground. Four themes emerged: *Comfort Zone/Out of the Comfort Zone, Just a Human Being, Learning with Us,* and *Taking It Outside.* Themes are discussed in relation to IGD theory. Implications for research and practice of IGD are discussed.

Keywords: intergroup dialogue, international students, foreign-born students, nationality, U.S.-born students

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Within the current global context marked by tension and fear surrounding immigration and refugee issues, the number of international students in the United States (U.S.) continues to increase. According to the Institute of International Education (2015), there were almost one million (974,926) international students enrolled in colleges and universities in the U.S. in the 2014-2015 academic year. A growing body of research suggests that these students face a variety of stressors and challenges. For example, in a study of 24 international graduate and undergraduate students at a large public university in the Southwestern U.S., participants reported being ignored, and experiencing discomfort, inhospitality, discrimination, and direct confrontation (Lee & Rice, 2007). Lee and Rice noted that these negative experiences were related to the climate of the host institution, and recommended "that institutions consider ways to counter problems undermining the international experience" (p. 406). Other research has found that many international students in the U.S. report having no close U.S.-born friends (Gareis, 2012). This suggests that U.S.-born students are also missing out on gaining exposure to different cultures by developing intercultural relationships.

As the number of international students in the U.S. grows, educators, administrators, and student affairs professionals have an obligation to promote foreign-born students' well-being on campus and to provide them with opportunities to succeed.[1] In part, this means addressing

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[1] I will be using the terms *foreign-born students* and *international students* in this manuscript. In this context, foreign-born means a person who was not born in the U.S., while international students are a subset of foreign-born students that come to the U.S. to study formalized education (OECD, 2013). In the literature review that follows, these terms are used as appropriate to describe participants in individual studies. There is limited research on "foreign-born students" as a category and therefore, the literature review draws from research focused on "international students." As a general term, I use the term foreign-born students in other parts of the manuscript, as it encompasses all people who have a different nationality than the U.S. nationality, including international students.

foreign-born students' experiences of marginalization and discrimination on campus, and helping foster relationships between foreign-born students and U.S.-born students. One way to achieve these goals may be through *intergroup dialogue* (IGD) that brings together foreign-born and U.S.-born students for sustained, face-to-face communication. A growing number of colleges and universities in the U.S. have IGD programs that provide students the opportunity to engage in dialogue across social identity groups. For example, IGD programs often bring together people of color and white people to dialogue about race and racism, women and men to dialogue about gender and sexism, or sexual minorities and heterosexual people to talk about sexual orientation and heterosexism. The goals of these programs typically involve building relationships across groups, developing critical awareness of social issues, and creating capacities to promote social justice (Gurin, Nagda, & Zúñiga, 2013). Given these aims, IGD may be an effective means to build relationships between foreign-born and U.S.-born students, to increase awareness of social issues related to immigration and nationality (e.g., discrimination toward international students, U.S.-born privilege), and build coalitions and capacities to promote social justice for foreign-born students and other immigrants and refugees.

There is growing evidence that participation in IGD is related to a wide variety of positive outcomes (e.g., Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Gurin et al., 2013). Existing research examines outcomes of IGD bringing together individuals to dialogue on race (Gurin et al., 2013), gender (Gurin et al., 2013), and sexual orientation (Dessel, 2010; Dessel, Woodford, & Warren, 2011). I could locate no research, however, on IGD that brings together foreign-born students and U.S.-born students, even though these dialogues are facilitated at several universities across the country. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the experiences of students who participated in

an IGD between foreign-born and U.S.-born students at a large, public university in the Southeastern U.S.

Much of the research regarding foreign-born and U.S.-born student relations has emphasized the importance of social interactions on campus (e.g., Glass, Gómez, & Urzua, 2014). This research indicates common themes of marginalization, discrimination, a lack of intercultural friendships and acculturative stress. Therefore, I will begin with a review of the literature on foreign-born and U.S.-born student intergroup relations with a focus on marginalization, discrimination, intercultural friendships and acculturative stress. I will then propose IGD as one potential intervention for improving intergroup relations between foreign-born and U.S.-born students, before describing a qualitative study on the experiences of six students who participated in such an IGD.

International and U.S.-born Student Intergroup Relations

Marginalization. *Group marginalization* is "the intentional rejection of a group by multiple out-group others" (Betts, 2013, p.4). Marginalization is associated with several poor health outcomes, including increased aggression among low educated adolescents (Issmer & Wagner, 2014), and low self-esteem and riskier health behaviors among romantically involved individuals who perceive their romantic relationships as marginalized (Lehmiller, 2012). Additionally, group marginalization threatens psychological needs like self-esteem (Bandura, 1997), control (Seligman, 1975), and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Williams' (2001, 2009) Need Threat Model of social ostracism maintains that persistent exposure to ostracism depletes the required resources to motivate the individual to fortify these needs, eventually leading to alienation, helplessness, resignation, and depression.

Research suggests that intergroup relations between international and U.S.-born students are characterized by the marginalization of international students (Guo & Chase, 2011; Kuwahara, 2010; Seggie & Sanford, 2010). For example, in their study examining perceptions of religious climate, Seggie and Sanford found that Muslim international students experienced marginalization. Additionally, Kuwahara (2010) studied the well-being and quality of life for Japanese graduate students and found that those who experienced greater psychological distress in the U.S. reported marginalization as a major issue they faced. Similarly, feeling misunderstood or devalued and experiencing marginalization were central themes identified in a study of international graduate students' experiences in family studies and family therapy programs (McDowell, Fang, Kosutic, & Griggs, 2012).

One common aspect of marginalization for international students is perceived isolation. For example, Erichsen and Bolliger (2011) found that international students' experience isolation both academically (e.g., believing that they were alone with very little or no help in their online classes) and socially (e.g., a lack of social support). Some international students feel isolated from their U.S. peers because they perceive themselves to be different (Tummala-Narra, & Claudius, 2013). Given that IGD seeks to build relationships across groups, it might be one way to reduce isolation and feelings of marginalization experienced by international students.

Discrimination. There is a large body of evidence that international students in the U.S. commonly experience prejudice and *discrimination* (Cho, 2009; Hirschel, 2012; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013), or negative behaviors directed toward them based on their group membership (Mio, Barker, & Tumambing, 2012). For example, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) compared experiences of perceived racial and ethnic discrimination between 198 international students and 241 U.S.-born students and found that international students experienced higher levels of

discrimination than U.S. students. They also found that being a white, European international

student was associated with lower levels of perceived discrimination than being an international

student from another region of the world. Furthermore, physical appearance, country of origin,

connectedness to mainstream culture, and English proficiency were all important variables

impacting discrimination.

Research has examined specific types of discrimination experienced by international

students. For example, Tummala-Narra and Claudius (2013) studied Muslim international

students' acculturation using semi-structured interviews. They found that most students

experienced overt and aversive discrimination, and that some of the students felt the need to

educate others due to misconceptions they may have about their culture or religion. In another

qualitative study, Cho (2009) found that a common form of discrimination was U.S. students

making fun of international students' dress, customs, and accents, and that American students

would not associate themselves with international students. Additionally, Charles-Toussaint and

Crowson (2010) found that perceptions of international students as symbolic and realistic threats,

right-wing authoritarianism, and social dominance orientation were each positively correlated

with prejudice. The literature on discrimination has also identified several factors that lead to

decreased perceived discrimination, such as social connectedness (Wei, Wang, Heppner, & Du,

2012) and greater interpersonal satisfaction levels (Ye, 2006).

As has been demonstrated, international students on U.S. campuses encounter

discrimination (e.g., Cho, 2009; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013).

Given that it provides opportunities for intergroup contact, IGD may help reduce the prejudice

that leads to the discrimination faced by international students (Allport, 1954). Allport's contact

hypothesis suggests that intergroup contact can lead to decreased prejudice under certain

conditions: (1) there is equal group status in the contact situation, (2) there are common goals among the individuals, (3) there is interdependence among the individuals in order to meet the goals, and (4) there is support from some authority (Zúñiga et al., 2007). Additionally, Pettigrew (1998) added a fifth condition to Allport's four necessary conditions for optimal intergroup contact: friendship potential. Intergroup dialogue fulfills this condition as one of the goals of IGD is to build interpersonal relationships across difference and conflict (e.g., Zúñiga, Nagda, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). Additionally, Pettigrew (1998) found that intergroup contact was associated with decreased prejudice for white students. Consequently, friendships between foreign-born and U.S.-born students may be developed through IGD. Furthermore, prejudice that leads to discrimination may be reduced for U.S-born students towards foreign-born students.

Intercultural friendships. Intergroup relations between foreign-born students and U.S.-born students are not all characterized by marginalization and discrimination. The benefits of these relations are intercultural friendships, which have received some attention in the literature. For example, Gareis (2012) studied the impact of home and host region of 454 international students in the development of friendships with U.S.-born students. Gareis found that students from English-speaking countries and from Northern and Eastern Europe had the most positive experiences, while students from East Asia had the least positive experiences. Additionally, international students rated their friendship quality with U.S.-born students as better in non-metropolitan areas than metropolitan areas, and better in the South than the Northeast. Gareis explains that the unique cultural traits in the South (e.g., emphasis on amiability and good manners, and adhering to politeness norms) promote interaction and therefore, increased friendship quality. In another study, Glass et al. (2014) found that international students who had less participation in recreational activities had fewer friendships with U.S.-born students,

indicating that participation in recreational activities is an important aspect of intercultural friendship formation.

Given that there is little research about intercultural friendships in the U.S. between international students and U.S.-born students, it is worth considering research on intercultural friendships in other countries. For example, Shahijan, Rezaei, and Amin (2015) investigated the impact of intercultural friendships on international students' course satisfaction and course continuance intention in Malaysia and found that intercultural friendships had a positive relationship with course continuance intention, but no relationship with course satisfaction. Tawagi and Mak (2015) studied perceptions of cultural inclusiveness and intercultural friendship and found a small to moderate relationship between perceived cultural inclusiveness and intercultural contact. According to Tawagi and Mak international students' experiences will be enhanced through building intercultural friendships with locals. Intergroup dialogue, which offers the opportunity to build relationships across groups (Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002), could be an important intervention in helping to improve the relationship between international/U.S.-born student groups. No research to date, however, has examined if and how IGD can be used to develop intercultural relationships.

Acculturative Stress. *Acculturation* is the individual adjustment process when two cultures come into contact (Sayegh & Lasry 1993), and *acculturative stress* is the psychological impact of adapting to a new culture (Berry & Anis, 1974). Research indicates that acculturative stress is commonly associated with international student experiences on U.S. campuses (e.g., Bai, 2014; Bigler, 2008; Guo, Li, & Ito, 2014; Hirschel, 2012), and that acculturative stress is correlated with various negative mental health outcomes (e.g., Chien, 2013; Constantine, Okazaki, & Utsey, 2004; Sullivan, 2011). Several factors contribute to acculturative stress for

international students, including language barriers (Chen, 1999; Lee, 2013; Sockalingam, Al-Battran, Abbey, & Zaretsky, 2012; Stoynoff, 1997; Zhang & Brunton, 2007), discrimination (Chavajay & Skowronek, 2008; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994), and perceived hate and culture shock (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). In turn, acculturative stress among international students relates to several negative psychological outcomes, such as depression (Chien, 2013; Constantine et al., 2004; Han, Kim, Lee, Pistulka, & Kim, 2007; Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991; Sam & Eide, 1991; Wei et al., 2007); anxiety (Sullivan, 2011); alcohol use (Kanaparthi, 2010; Sa, 2011); and isolation, sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, and feelings of anger and disappointment (Mori, 2000). Given that there are several negative psychological outcomes of acculturative stress among international students, there is a critical need to find interventions to help reduce this acculturative stress.

Several factors have been shown to decrease acculturative stress for international students (Chien, 2013). For example, Yakunina, Weigold, Weigold, Hercegovac, and Elsayed (2013) found that greater levels of personal strengths (hardiness, a conscious striving to improve oneself, and the ability to appreciate cultural similarities and differences) decreased acculturative issues. Additionally, international students with high levels of social support reported lower levels of acculturative stress (Eustace, 2008; Ye, 2006). Sullivan (2011) studied predictors of acculturative stress for international students and found that both social support and positive cultural identification with the home and host culture were associated with lower levels of acculturative stress.

Social support has also been found to be an important moderator of the relationship between acculturative stress and psychological distress (Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sullivan, 2011). Chien (2013) studied the relationship between perceived English fluency, perceived

social support satisfaction, and acculturative stress in international students from 70 different countries. They found that social support mediated the relationship between English fluency and acculturative stress, and the relationship between perceived English fluency and depressive symptoms.

Research has also shown that a lack of emotional support is associated with acculturative stress (Maeda, 2009). Furthermore, Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, and Al-Timimi (2004) studied social support and acculturative stress in a sample of 141 international students and found that students who primarily socialized with non-Americans had higher acculturative stress. Sullivan and Kashubeck-West (2015) investigated the relationship between acculturation modes, social support, and acculturative stress for international students and found that higher levels of contact from host nationals was associated with lower levels of acculturative stress for international students.

Consequently, socializing with U.S.-born students may be important in decreasing acculturative stress. The previous literature indicates that acculturative stress is a problem for international students (e.g., Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Stoynoff, 1997) and that social support is an important factor associated with decreased acculturative stress (e.g., Sullivan, 2011). Furthermore, as social support is an expected benefit of IGD (Rodenborg & Huynh, 2006) and moderator in the relationship between acculturative stress and psychological distress (e.g., Lee et al., 2004), acculturative stress for international students could decrease as foreign-born and U.S.-born students build relationships across sessions. Given the previous literature highlighting the negative impact of marginalization, discrimination, and acculturative stress, intergroup dialogue is one possible intervention for addressing these issues.

Critical-Dialogic Intergroup Dialogue in Higher Education

In order to help foreign-born students feel less isolated and different from their U.S. peers (Tummala-Narra & Claudis, 2013), and to help decrease acculturative stress through increased social support (Sullivan, 2011) IGD could be an excellent intervention, with its focus on communication across diverse groups and development of cross-cultural relationships (Zúñiga et al., 2007). A large body of evidence has demonstrated the effectiveness of intergroup contact in improving intergroup relations (e.g., Bornman, 2011; Bornman, & Mynhardt, 1991; Caspi, 1984; Ellison, Shin, & Leal, 2011; Herek, & Capitanio, 1996). *Intergroup dialogue* is a small group intervention that creates opportunities for intergroup contact across groups with differing levels of societal privilege and power, and histories of conflict between them (e.g., women and men, people of color and white people). The main goals of IGD are to: (a) build interpersonal relationships across differences and conflict, (b) foster critical consciousness about social issues, and (c) strengthen individual and collective capacities to work toward social justice (Zúñiga et al., 2007). Intergroup dialogue is founded, in part, on Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, which suggests that intergroup contact can lead to decreased prejudice under certain conditions (i.e., equal status in the contact situation, common goals, interdependence, and support from authorities). Pettigrew (1998) added a fifth condition for intergroup contact - friendship potential. The structure of the groups and goals of IGD help satisfy each of these conditions

Intergroup dialogue groups are composed of approximately equal numbers of participants who identify as members of oppressed and privileged identity groups (e.g., in an IGD group focused on race, the group composition would contain approximately half self-identified people of color and half self-identified white people). Additionally, each IGD group is co-facilitated by one facilitator who identifies as a member of the oppressed social identity group, and one who

identifies as a member of the privileged social identity group, allowing for a more balanced dialogue (Zúñiga et al., 2007). It is important to recognize that while a person may identify as a member of a privileged or oppressed social identity group they also have many other identities that can impact their experiences. For example, a white male student in the U.S. who is from South Africa may be considered to have an oppressed national identity as "South African," but also have privileged identities as "white" and as "male."

Intergroup dialogue is increasingly utilized on college campuses as a method to address intergroup tensions and promote social justice (Zúñiga et al., 2007). One commonly used IGD model is the four-stage, *critical-dialogic* model created by the Program on Intergroup Relations at the University of Michigan (Thompson, Brett, & Behling, 2001; Zúñiga et al., 2007). As Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, and Maxwell (2009) indicate "critical" in this case involves "a conscientious effort to examine how individual and group life are meaningfully connected to group identity, and how those identities exist in structures of stratification that afford members of different groups privileges and disadvantages, resulting in continued group-based inequalities" (p. 14). Consequently, in IGD, members learn how their social identities are connected to larger systems of privilege and oppression. Additionally, "dialogic" in this case means that the objective is to develop understanding of the other from her or his perspective, rather than "win" or convince others that their opinion is the "right" one, as in debate (Flick, 1998).

This model typically unfolds over multiple weeks (often across one half or a full semester) where participants meet in the same group every week and includes the following stages: (1) group beginnings/forming and building relationships, (2) exploring differences and commonalities of experience, (3) exploring and dialoging about hot topics, and (4) action planning and alliance building (Zúñiga et al., 2007). The first stage involves creating a

psychologically safe environment to build relationships, grounded in effective guidelines for dialogue. During the second stage members discuss differences and commonalities based on social identity group membership. Systems of privilege and oppression (and group member's positions in them) are explored in this stage. In the third stage members dialogue about "hot topics," or issues that involve conflict between groups. For example, the hot topic for the current dialogue (focused on nationality) was the refugee crisis. The fourth stage involves the development of capacities to promote social justice individually or collectively. This four-stage process allows for the development of a safe group climate and the level of risk increases over time as members feel more comfortable sharing ideas that may be conflicting to others (Zúñiga et al., 2007).

Previous research on IGD has found that dialogue participation is associated with many positive outcomes, including commitment to change through action (Sorensen et al., 2009), challenging and breaking of stereotypes (Griffin, Brown, & Warren, 2012), critical self-reflection (Dessel, 2010), the development of critical consciousness (Griffin et al., 2012), increased understanding of structural inequalities (Sorensen et al., 2009), the expansion of friendships (Griffin et al., 2012; Rodenborg & Huynh, 2006), improved communication skills (Griffin et al., 2012), and enhanced perspective taking skills (Dessel, 2010; Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, 2005; Muller & Miles, 2016).

Intergroup dialogue and nationality. There is little research on IGD and nationality, however, the research that does exist suggests that IGD can be an effective intervention when focused on the topic of nationality. For example, Maoz (2003) studied the attitudinal changes of Palestinians and Jewish-Israeli youth in Jerusalem who participated in an IGD to see if intergroup contact would improve relations between these groups. The results indicated that

Palestinians' attitudes did not change, whereas Jewish-Israeli youths' attitudes towards Palestinians became more favorable in comparison with pre-dialogue levels of prejudice. Maoz concluded that Jewish-Israeli youth have a higher level of prejudice before beginning dialogue and therefore, a greater potential for change during dialogue than their Palestinian counterparts.

Although there is little research on IGD focused on nationality, from an online search I found foreign-born student/U.S.-born student dialogues on several campuses in the U.S., including the University of Maryland, College Park; the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and American University. I could not find any published research from these or other dialogue programs in this domain, however. Additionally, previous literature does not directly consider the experiences of foreign and U.S.-born students. This is a significant gap in the literature, as research exploring this specific IGD topic will help us understand the unique experience of these students (especially as international students are a growing population on college campuses; Institute of International Education, 2015), and provide rich descriptions that help illuminate people's underlying motivations and actions.

Intergroup dialogue focused on nationality could be useful for addressing intergroup relations between foreign-born and U.S.-born students, and be connected to the goals of IGD mentioned previously: building relationships, consciousness-raising, and strengthening capacities to work towards social justice (Zúñiga et al., 2007). First, building relationships across differences and conflict would involve a two-way process of understanding the differences of others based on nationality, and working through conflict as it arises. For example, this may involve learning about differences in communication styles between people from different countries, and then identifying and responding to these differences with a focus on listening, understanding, and perspective-taking. Second, participants in IGD gain a *critical consciousness,*

which encompasses moving beyond mere appreciation for diversity by challenging social systems of oppression, and is a component of critical multicultural education (Freire, 1993). In terms of nationality, this would involve acquiring knowledge and awareness about nationalism as a system of power and oppression (privileging some people while disadvantaging others) and how one fits inside this system. For example, U.S.-born individuals may learn that the U.S. is often represented more in media coverage in other countries than other countries being represented in the U.S. Lastly, strengthening capacities to work towards social justice involves action (either individually or collectively) against dominant systems of nationalism. For example, individual action could involve responding differently to one's own prejudice towards a person of a different national background. Lastly, collective action could involve volunteering with grassroots organizations focused on supporting immigrants and refugees.

The Current Study

A growing body of literature demonstrates the prevalence of marginalization (Guo & Chase, 2011; McDowell et al.), discrimination (Hirschel, 2012; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013), issues with intercultural friendships (Gareis, 2012), and other issues related to acculturative stress (Bai, 2014; Bigler, 2008; Guo et al., 2014) for international students. This literature reflects problems in intergroup relationships between foreign-born students and U.S.-born students. Given the previous research, there is a need to develop and improve intergroup relations between foreign-born students and U.S.-born students. Intergroup dialogue may be one method for improving intergroup relations between foreign-born students and U.S.-born students, given that it has been an effective method for addressing intergroup relations issues among other populations (Dessel, 2010; Gurin et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005) and due to the expansion of friendships (Griffin et al., 2012). However, there is no research on exploring student's

experiences of a foreign/U.S.-born student dialogue. The current study uses a phenomenological approach to qualitative research, given that a phenomenological approach is an effective methodology for deeply understanding a phenomenon that has not been researched before, and one that focuses on lived experiences (e.g., Flinck & Paavilainen, 2010). Consequently, I was interested in addressing the following research question: What are the experiences of students who participate in an IGD on nationality?

CHAPTER II: METHODS

Participants

  IGD course. Participants in this study were students enrolled in a one-credit IGD course about nationality at a large, public university in the Southeastern U.S. There were seven students in the course. Students were informed about the course through announcements sent to psychology students via departmental listservs and course email lists (the email is provided in Appendix A). Additionally, similar announcements were sent to campus organizations that may serve foreign-born students to advertise this opportunity (e.g., the Asian American Association; See Appendix B for all student organizations that were contacted).

  Leaders of the organizations were asked to distribute the announcement to their members via their listserv or email. The email provided a description of the course, including the time commitment and course credit benefit. Additionally, given the aim was to have approximately 50 percent foreign-born students and 50 percent U.S.-born students in the dialogue group, the email included an explanation that the first seven foreign-born students and the first seven U.S.-born students who expressed interest would be allowed into the course. To register students into the course, I asked potential students who expressed interest to send me their email address (if I did not already have it), their student identification number, and whether they identified as a foreign-born student or U.S.-born student. The email address and student identification number were needed to get the students registered for the course.

  The course met for two hour sessions across seven consecutive weeks and was based on the four-stage, critical-dialogic model of IGD (Sorensen et al., 2009; Zúñiga et al., 2007). Consistent with this model, the goals of this IGD were to: (a) build relationships between foreign-born and U.S.-born students; (b) raise consciousness about nationality, nationalism as a

system of power or oppression, and other issues related to immigration and refugee status; and (c) strengthen capacities to work toward social justice for immigrants and refugees. While nationality was largely the focus of the IGD, it was discussed in relationship with other social identities such as race, gender, and religion. Thus, the group took an *intersectional* perspective (Crenshaw 1989/1993). Intersectionality draws attention to the ways in which systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism) intersect to uniquely shape the experiences of an individual. In this case, nationality cannot be understood fully by itself. For example, a White, Irish-born woman's experiences differ from those of a White, Irish-born man, or a Black, Irish-born woman. Further information about the course is provided in the course syllabus, which also includes an outline of each session (See Appendix C).

The IGD course was co-facilitated by two graduate students in psychology, who had previously taken an advanced course on multicultural and social justice issues in group interventions, in which they learned and used the four-stage, critical-dialogic model of IGD (Zúñiga et al., 2007). Both co-facilitators previously co-facilitated one other IGD (focused on race) together as a requirement for that course. I recruited co-facilitators by talking to students who had previously taken this advanced course on multicultural and social justice issues in group interventions to determine their interest in facilitating this dialogue. One facilitator, Aman identified as a Black Eritrean man and the other facilitator, Maria identified as a white Latina woman born in the U.S. (See Table 1 for more demographic information about the co-facilitators. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the confidentiality of the co-facilitators. See Appendix D for demographic questionnaire).

Group members. Intergroup dialogue group members were six undergraduate students and one graduate student. All group members signed informed consent documents after the last

session agreeing to participate in the research. However, when contacting students for interviews one group member did not respond and was therefore not interviewed as part of this study. The six group members who participated in the study were all women and included three foreign-born students (born in Albania, China, and Japan) and three U.S.-born students who ranged in age from 21 to 24 years. Two of the participants were undergraduate juniors, three were undergraduate seniors, and one student was a graduate student (See Table 1 for more demographic information about the participants. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants).

Procedure

The IGD group met once per week, for two hours per week across the first half (seven weeks) of the spring 2017 semester. The dialogue followed the four-stage, critical-dialogic model described above (Sorensen et al., 2009; Zúñiga et al., 2007). As a required component of the course, students completed weekly critical reflection journals (described below). Upon completion of the course, those who provided informed consent (See Appendix E) were also asked to complete an interview (described below) about their experiences in their IGD. Participant consent involved permission to use de-identified critical reflection journals as another source of data about their experiences in the IGD. Informed consent was collected in the last session, when I made a brief, in-class announcement about the research at the end of class, and participants could choose to either provide consent or decline to consent. The announcement of the research and the consent form explained that participation in this research was not a course requirement, that participation or a lack of participation would not impact their grade in the course, and that the facilitators would not be made aware of who did or did not participate in the

research. I then contacted the participants who gave consent via the email address they provided when they were added to the course to schedule the interview.

Data analysis

      Participant journals. The participants' weekly critical reflection journals were guided by an adapted version of the Critical Incidence Questionnaire (CIQ; Keefer, 2009). Critical incidents are used to understand group members' perceptions of change processes (Kivlighan & Arseneau, 2009). The CIQ provided more data to be coded simultaneously with the participant interviews to help understand more fully the group members' experiences of their IGD (See Appendix G for the adapted version of the CIQ). Co-facilitators graded students' journals on a weekly basis as "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory," with the final course grades being either "satisfactory" or "no credit." Additionally, co-facilitators provided weekly comments in response to students' journals. Students were told that these journals are a way to think more deeply in reflection of their experiences in the dialogue sessions, with respect to cognition, affect, and behavior.

      Participant interviews. After the last session, participants who provided consent were asked to participate in a face-to-face interview with me about their experiences in the IGD. Interview procedures are an important tool to find out about participants' diverse experiences (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). The interviews were structured, and the data analyzed, using a phenomenological approach, derived from the philosophy of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (1962) as interpreted by Thomas and Pollio. Incorporating Husserl's ideas about phenomenology Merleau-Ponty (1962) maintained that phenomenology "tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian, or the sociologist may provide" (p. vii). Thus, the researcher

using Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology describes their direct experience of the world (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

Thomas and Pollio (2002) utilized the philosophy of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (1962) for the purposes of creating a phenomenological approach that sought to view the phenomenon freshly, on its own terms, instead of using theoretical principles. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty believed that perception is primary to describing the experience of human life (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). According to the phenomenological approach by Thomas and Pollio, the researcher must seek to discover what aspects of the world are figural (standing out) as contextualized by background features (that are less conscious). For example, even if one focuses their attention on the sun (figural), the sky is still there in the background (ground). Merleau-Ponty (1945) determined four existential grounds that make up the background: body, time, world, and others. In this case, *existential* means human embodiment as it interacts with the world. All four of these grounds are categories of human experience. The *body* is the main category of human existence as the world exists only through the body, and the body is the location of the individual. *Time* is experienced by humans in various ways, such as the experience of change and the experience of staying the same. Merleau-Ponty asserted that the human experience of time is determined by moments that burst forth, where time is revealed to a person. *The world* refers to the non-human physical world, with an emphasis on place as a center of meaning and significance to a person, and physical objects. Finally, *others* refers to relationships and the impact of early life relationships on oneself (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

The phenomenological interview allows the participant to describe their experience with minimal interference from the interviewer. The interview gets to the "what" of the experience. The interview begins with a broad question and then further questions are used to help provide

understanding or clarity but not with the purpose of fulfilling a preformed agenda. The intention behind this technique is to allow the participant to have freedom, and the interviewer to encourage flow (Davis et al., 2004).

Individual interviews were scheduled after the last IGD session (the end of the course). They were conducted in a small research lab in the Department of Psychology and were audio recorded. My aim was to use an open-ended question that would allow a wide range of descriptive responses from each participant (Thomas & Pollio, 2002) and would help explore the true phenomenological experience of each participant. Therefore, the initial question at the beginning of each interview was: "When you think about your experience as an intergroup dialogue participant, what stands out to you?" (See Appendix F for interview protocol). Follow up questions were guided by what the participant talked about in the interview. For example, when a participant talked about how other students were willing to share, I asked her "How did that impact you, when you noticed they were willing to share?"

Trustworthiness. Morrow (2005) discussed two principles related to the *trustworthiness* of qualitative data: (1) *transferability*, or the generalizability of the findings; and (2) *dependability,* or the consistency of the study in terms of researchers and analysis techniques. In terms of transferability, I kept field notes providing a descriptive account of my experience from each interview, including observations about the interview process, the interviewees, and other things that may have happened during the interview not accounted for in the audio transcription. These field notes were intended to help provide richer information about the interview and context for the research, and to help research team members determine if and how the findings may transfer. For example, field notes included the date and time of the interview, a description of the setting, the major social identities of the participant, and other descriptions from my

experience including emotional reactions, and behavioral observations. In terms of dependability, I maintained a detailed chronology of the research process, and included a brief message describing each process that happened in order of time including recruitment into research, participant interviews, and coding team meetings.

Phenomenological coding team. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim (including paralinguistic features such as silence, pauses, and laughter), and coded by a transdisciplinary phenomenological coding team. The team was made up of the main researcher, a professor in nursing with expertise in phenomenological research, and eight graduate students or professors trained in the phenomenological approach. The demographic information of research team members involved with coding (the principle investigator, the professor in nursing, and the eight graduate students/professors) are provided in Table 2. Members of the research team signed a confidentiality agreement before working with the interview transcripts (See Appendix H for the confidentiality agreement). Names of people and places were changed during transcription to preserve confidentiality.

Interviews were transcribed by an undergraduate student transcriptionist, and a confidential transcriptionist service called Rev.com. The one undergraduate transcriptionist received credit for her participation in the research through an independent research course that they were enrolled in at the same time. As well as signing the confidentiality statement before being involved in the research, I trained her in the transcription process and continued to supervise her throughout the transcription process. The training involved meeting the transcriptionist, talking about how to transcribe, and providing many concrete examples of what this looks like. Additionally, a doctoral student member of the research team with expertise in phenomenological interviewing conducted a bracketing interview with me to understand

preconceived notions I have about the research findings. I transcribed the bracketing interview and brought it to a meeting with the research team with the purpose of analyzing my biases and assumptions as they relate to the current study. I have provided a statement of reflexivity in the next paragraph highlighting some of these assumptions and biases that came up in the bracketing interview.

      Statement of reflexivity. I am a student who has lived in multiple countries (I was born in New Zealand, grew up in Australia, and now have dual citizenship with Australia and the U.S.). I bring many perspectives and have diverse opinions about some of the benefits and challenges of living in the U.S. I also see that my national identity is larger than one specific country but influenced by values, and customs from all countries I have lived in. My experience of IGD as a co-facilitator has been one of growth and vulnerability, where I have felt validated by sharing my own experiences being a white Australian heterosexual man living in the U.S. I also experience IGD to be one largely of connection, where I have grown in understanding people with different social identities than mine and where I fit into larger systems of privilege and oppression (e.g., I have privilege as a white heterosexual man). Before interviewing group members in the current study, there are a few factors which I needed to bracket to increase objectivity. First, I have a bias towards assuming that foreign-born students living in the U.S would feel oppressed. Second, I have an assumption that group members will have a fundamentally positive experience with IGD. Lastly, I have a bias towards believing that social justice is one of the most important goals we should strive for. As members of the phenomenological coding team were present to code and discuss my bracketing interview, I asked them to help me increase my objectivity by being mindful of my assumptions and biases during the coding process.

Data collection and coding process. Participant journals and interviews were coded simultaneously in four stages: (1) identifying meaning units, (2) putting meaning units into the four main grounds of body, time, others, and world, (3) clustering meaning units into themes, and (4) creating a thematic structure. In the first stage, meaning units or the smallest units of meaning were identified. *Meaning units* may include phrases, or sentences that emerge as critical in understanding the phenomenon. For example, "inside a bubble," "common humanity," and "learning through listening" are all meaning units in the current study.

It is important that the participants' actual wording is prioritized in the creation of meaning units as well as the overarching themes. Two research team members read out from the transcript: one as the interviewer and one as the participant. Then, when a research team member determined it was a good place to stop to talk about the meaning and interpretation, the readers would momentarily stop. Research team members discussed the meaning units and reached a point of consensus before continuing to read further to find another meaningful unit. The process was cyclical with previously determined meaning units influencing the current creation of new meaning units. In the second stage, meaning units were put into the four lists of body, time, others and world that make up the ground or context of the student's dialogic experiences (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Sometimes I changed my mind and I moved them at a later time (e.g., I decided to move the meaning unit "facilitators created safe space" from the "others" list to the "world" list as I thought the meaning fit best within the context of the broader geographical space, rather than just directly the interaction with others). These decisions were either made in conjunction with the phenomenological coding team, or independently but then checked by the nursing professor with expertise in phenomenology.

The third stage involved finding the themes that are standing out from the grounds. These themes changed and developed over time. For example, I first established a theme of "dialogue in action," but then I changed it to a specific quote used by participants called "taking it outside" as I wanted the themes to be more reflective of participants' experiences. The four themes, and one subtheme were all titled using participant quotes (I will discuss these themes in the next section). In the final stage a thematic structure was created, which will be a story of the IGD experience for foreign-born students and U.S.-born students (Thomas & Pollio, 2005). The thematic structure was presented to the nursing professor with expertise in phenomenology (leader of the transdisciplinary phenomenology research group) to see if the data fits the thematic structure. Changes were then made to the thematic structure and the meaning units to more adequately reflect students' experience of IGD. For example, one change to the thematic structure was adding the subtheme *On the Same Plane* to the second theme of *Just a Human Being* as the addition of this subtheme provided a richer description of students' experiences.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

Overview of Findings

One-hundred and twelve meaning units emerged into the grounds of body, time, others, and world (See Appendix A). To understand the context of the students' experiences more fully, I will discuss each ground in this order. As discussed previously describing the existential grounds is important as it provides the context of how the dialogue participants interacted with their world (e.g., Thomas & Pollio, 2005).

In order to contextualize the findings, it is important to describe aspects of the "body" not specifically discussed in participants' journals or interviews. For example, relating to the human experience of interacting with the physical space, the first dialogue session was set up with a circle of chairs where both co-facilitators sat across from each other in a small room in a psychology department building. Due to an opening in room availability the dialogue moved to a larger rectangular room with wooden walls, tables in the center of the room surrounded by chairs, and large fluorescent lights on the ceiling. The dialogue chairs were set up at the end of the room away from the tables and in front of a projector screen and in between a white board and black board. Nine chairs were set up close to each other in a circle (two for the co-facilitators sitting on opposites sides of the circle and seven for the participants).

Ariana commented on the room: "I'm so glad we actually moved at the beginning of the semester, because…it was so small so hot and…it was just uncomfortable (laughs) really really uncomfortable." Participants also talked about the space being close together allowing for a higher level of openness, vulnerability, and intimacy. Words such as "proximity" and "eye contact" were used to describe the setup of the space, where there were no barriers in the way between participants, such as desks, or tables. In the first session of dialogue, group norms were

established by group members and co-facilitators to help create a "safe place" where students could share about their experiences without fear of judgment or attack from others. Specific established norms that participants discussed as being helpful in creating this environment were "one person talks at a time," "there is no stupid question," and the "LARA method."[2]

The ground of "time" was rarely discussed by participants, and was not a figural part of their experience. Therefore, there are no themes created directly related to time. However, in regard to the length of the dialogue sessions, Jennifer said "two hours is ok, it just…gets right on the line of too long." However, Michelle said: "…being two hours it was like we had that first hour to build up and the last hour to really close everything off…I think two hours is perfect." Also, while no other participant talked directly about the length of the dialogue sessions, Saya asserted: "people can easy [sic] to give up to know the person or understand each other. But it takes… of course it takes time to open their mind and understand each other." In this case, Saya is talking about time being needed for dialogue. Finally, in terms of the amount of sessions, Michelle suggested that there could have been more sessions (either eight or 10 total sessions instead of seven sessions) as there was more to talk about.

In terms of "others," this was clearly the largest ground (e.g., over half of the meaning units were about others) and significantly connected to two of the four themes discussed below. Participants were very focused on the experiences of others, especially with finding commonalities and differences of experience, and developing shared understanding. In terms of "the world," participants were focused on how their experiences related to the larger context, especially related to refugee and immigration issues. Additionally, participants talked about

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[2] The "LARA method" is a method for engaging with dialogue by listening, affirming, responding and adding information.

commitment to action and using dialogue skills outside the classroom with friends, family members and even strangers.

In further understanding the background of students' experiences, the contextual ground of *Nationality and Family Background* will be discussed as participants had different experiences depending on their national identities and family backgrounds. Meaning units were clustered into the four themes of: 1) *Comfort Zone/Out of the Comfort Zone*, 2) *Just a Human Being,* 3) *Learning with Us*, and 4) *Taking It Outside* (See Appendix B). I will discuss the contextual ground and each theme in more detail with verbatim quotations from participants.

Ground: National Identity and Family Background

Nationality identities were central to the context of participants' experiences of IGD. In the background of all the themes was nationality and family background experiences. Many of the participants during the interview immediately jumped in to talking about their national identities, sometimes as they intersected with other social identities, with words such as "I'm just basic white chick from America," or "I am from Japan." Nationality as a social identity was understood as both a reality and, at times, a limitation. Saya (a Japanese international student) said, "I'm stuck with my nationality" and talked about how, since coming to the U.S., she is regularly asked where she is from. In contrast to outside of dialogue, Saya discussed that in the IGD class "I'm a person as the others." These quotes exemplify the importance that social identity factors are often placed inside the context of the U.S., and the ways that they can be limiting as an obstacle to understanding a person's full humanity.

One difference between the foreign-born students and the U.S.-born students was how nationality was emphasized. The three foreign born students, Saya (Japanese born), Ariana (Albanian born), and Chen (Chinese born) talked regularly about nationality related issues

throughout their interviews, especially in comparing their respective countries with the U.S. For example, Saya talked about the conversation of privilege inside the dialogue being framed from a Western perspective, and that the understanding of privilege in Japan is different. Also, Chen discussed the importance of Chinese people having the right to speak Chinese, and that while there is a history of conflict between China and Japan, in reference to Saya she said "we are not enemies." Saya and Chen brought up their nationalities without any prompts within the first minute of their interviews, whereas there was less emphasis about nationality from the three U.S.-born students. In contrast to various participants reporting having a strong national identity, Laura said: "I can't think of any mainstream culture that I feel that I belong to. There's no such thing as white culture or straight culture or even really American culture, or if those do exist, I certainly don't identify with them."

Nationality was also discussed in relationship to other identities. For example, Saya talked about nationality and religion: "I always say that I do not have specific religion but it is easy to follow and engage Buddhism and Shintoism because those connects the Japanese culture and tradition strongly. I had not think [*sic*] about it deeply when I was in Japan." Ariana discussed her nationality and race:

> I was born in Albania but I was raised here and I'm also Muslim…I don't consider myself…American-type white with a lot of privilege where we talked a lot about that during the class...So it's been hard to figure out where I fit in and I usually just end up sticking with anybody who's foreign or people who are from different nationalities…"

Participants also discussed nationality related to socio-economic status. For example, Ariana said, "There's a girl in there [the IGD group] who from Tennessee, grew up in Tennessee, has

been in Tennessee all her life, and she was white, and you'd expect for her to be privileged, but she's not. She's lower on the… socioeconomic side of things…"

Family background was largely part of the context in the dialogue, where participants often talked about their families and what it was like for them growing up. A couple of participants talked about learning from other students' family experiences. This was often a point of comparison, where a student compared themselves to other students and learned something about themselves in the process: "My family wasn't as strict as hers, but the situation is similar at some point…could be applied for my parents" (Saya). Family background specifically impacted the dialogue and what the participants wanted to take with them in the future. While Laura used her father as a "proxy" to develop her dialogue skills, Saya talked about her father being strict, but that she planned to dialogue with him in the future. Additionally, Jennifer wanted to use the dialogue experience to talk with her family and described some family members as "terrible people." There was a large focus on family background for Jennifer, especially in describing herself as more liberal than some of her family members. Jennifer asserted that, "it's nice to have other perspectives…with the situations I'm describing because normally I just describe hypotheticals and they're [the participant's family name] like oh that would never happen but now I can be like ha ha haha ha." While nationality and family background was on a spectrum of salience for participants, clearly all participants were largely impacted by their nationality and family backgrounds.

Theme 1: Comfort Zone/Out of the Comfort Zone

A tension existed between the dialogue class being a "safe place" and the dialogue class pushing students outside of their comfort zone. The "comfort zone" represented the safe place where participants were at ease to be themselves inside the dialogue. While many participants

talked about this space being created as part of the larger group context, some participants also talked about their own personal comfort zone. In response to this comfort zone, participants could either come out of their comfort zone or stay in it. Participants used words to describe the space, such as "cushion," "constructed space," "welcoming," and "our own little bubble." The following quotation from Laura highlights the safe space: "Walking into it, you already knew you were going to be okay and you already knew that everyone was on the same page and no one was going to judge you …you felt like you were in a safe space."

Also, Jennifer talked about the dialogue class as "somewhere you can go where you can openly talk about difficult things." Participants had various reasons for why they thought the space was a "safe space," due in part to the norms that were established at the beginning of the dialogue, the co-facilitators' sharing of power, the lack of judgment from other participants, the diversity of participants, and participants' voluntary status in this course. For example, Laura said, "It was pretty easy to feel open and safe and to…dig deep and start nuancing your ideas because you didn't feel threatened or judged to do so." Contrasts were also drawn from the comfort of the dialogue space to outside of the dialogue class. Participants talked about negative experiences outside of dialogue including being told by others that they are wrong, being judged by others, or being afraid to talk genuinely for fear of what will happen.

On the other hand, participants also talked about the dialogue as a place where they could come out of their personal comfort zone. For example, Ariana said, "usually, when I'm in a class I…don't try to make contact with anybody. I just try to stay as invisible as possible. With this, you're forced not to be, you're forced out of your comfort zone." Participants used words such as "nervous," "intense," and "vulnerable" to describe their feelings at times in dialogue. The tension between the dialogue as a safe place, but also as a place outside of a personal

comfort zone, is described in the following quotation: "You had your safe zone, absolutely, and if you didn't want to say something, you didn't want to share, that was up to you. But in being that proximity, that closeness, you have more of an incentive to talk and you're forced to talk and be open" (Ariana). In this case, Ariana saw little choice about staying in the comfort zone. Others talked about more actively choosing to be out of the comfort zone:

> At the beginning of intergroup dialogue, I didn't talk a lot because I was so scared of that…it was such a safe space that I started to open up more, they started to open up more. So yeah, definitely a shift…I was like…you just say what's on your mind. They wanna hear you just as much as you want to hear them. (Michelle)

Participants' responded very differently to the vulnerability and discomfort they experienced outside of their personal comfort zones. Ariana said, "It got tense as we progressed into the course, that we started to talk about heavier, heavier subjects, a little bit more emotion…okay I got to get out of that." Jennifer was often a spectator and kept herself from engaging and being a part of the dialogue, as interpreted by coding team members. Jennifer's reflective journals were often about her being interested in what was happening for others, but not sharing about her own personal experiences. For example, "I have always had a deep interest in people and their stories. I love hearing where people come from and who they have grown to be" (Jennifer). Jennifer described having discomfort, going in and out of the dialogue class, and being easily distracted. For example, Jennifer stated "The only thing I wish was different about our discussions is…we all seem quite tense when we're talking amongst ourselves. I know this is a serious topic, but we're still allowed to smile occasionally." This quote reflects Jennifer's discomfort with being outside of her personal comfort zone. Due to her discomfort, Jennifer talked about being easily distracted: "I'm very easily made stir crazy…By the end of it I was just sitting there and I was

like ok, well, I have to get home. I have to let my dog out. I have to do all my chores and my homework…"

Laura often stayed in her head space, and analyzed the experience intellectually, dwelling inside her own personal comfort zone. For example, Laura often used abstract concepts to describe her experience, including "active learning spaces," and "organic conversational space." Staying in her head and analyzing the experience is best illustrated by the following quotation: "you might have your answer in your head. But as you start to learn, you start to hear what other people have to say. You realize that maybe…I can nuance my, my idea even more…I like to think of them as this living organism kind of conversation space" (Laura).

Theme 2: Just a Human Being

Just a Human Being describes the concept of authentic human connection and relationship building, with the assumption that there is an "essential" part of every human being. All participants talked about the importance of human connection in some form or another. The word "connection" was used by four of the participants to describe their experiences of IGD, and other participants used different words to talk about the same concept, such as "openness," "listening not to judge," and "treating me with respect." Included in the title of this manuscript is the quote from Ariana: "from one human to another." This quote exemplifies her experience of IGD being between the humanness of one person to the humanness of another. Furthermore, quotes that describe this common humanity experienced by participants were frequently used, such as "humanizing," "just a human being," "just me," "We all bleed red. We want the same things," and "I'm a person as the others." The following quote highlights the focus on the relationship and the human connection between dialogue students:

We could just come in and be in that circle and look each other in the eyes right across

from each other and make the eye contact. That you don't normally really get in a

regular normal classroom made everything more vulnerable…You didn't have barriers.

You didn't have a desk. You don't have paper pencils to write on. You just had what

you had there with you and a discussion. (Ariana)

The same participant further discusses her experience where connection is at the core of dialogue:

"But when you have that dialogue…when you really find out about who that person is, what

they've been through, I think that just makes everything else go away" (Ariana). Participants

talked about the idea that there is an essential part of each human that goes even beyond social

identities, such as:

There is a hopefulness and an actual safe place even though it is small. Identities on the

sheet could be people's privilege. However, these were decorations people wear luckily

or unluckily. When you dialogue with somebody, what you do first is taking off your

decorations. Now we set the situation and we are ready to grow our hope. (Saya)

As part of building genuine relationships participants also talked about finding commonalities

and differences of experience. For example, Laura stated: "I like looking for the commonality,

cause I think if you can find one…between you and another person, that at least is something for

you…to start the conversation on," and Chen articulated "As a [sic] international student here, I

want to find something that is common…to make a connection with others." Also, Michelle

talked about finding commonalities as the first point of connection:

If you go into something and you guys know you are totally different, I don't really see

where you're gonna build rapport with one another. I don't really see where you're gonna

build understanding with one another. I think if you found that similarity, you can grow

from that.

What allowed for this theme of human connection, which was deeply felt by the participants,

was due in part to the egalitarian structured environment as demonstrated in the following

subtheme.

Subtheme: Being on the same plane. One important foundation for human connection

in the IGD was the concept that everyone was on the same level without hierarchy, including

both participants and co-facilitators. Several participants talked about the co-facilitators sharing

power and being with the students. The following quote exemplifies this:

Our two leaders…were participating with us and they were sitting there with us, and

speaking with us on the same plane as us rather than this top-down teaching at us thing.

They were learning with us…they were willing to share with us. Which I think shows

respect for someone. That you're willing to share some of your personal story, and your

feelings and your background. (Laura)

Participants also used words to describe the co-facilitators that reflected being on a similar

hierarchical level plane, such as "mentors." Furthermore, one participant described the co-

facilitators as not even being leaders:

We didn't look at them as our leaders, we looked at them as just kind of like they were

part of our group too but they kept us grounded…not having that leader necessarily was

easier to feel like we were all equal…and all of our opinions mattered equal…it helped

with the safe environment for sure." (Michelle)

The building of genuine relationships between participants on the same plane with co-facilitators allowed significant learning to occur between people and the development of shared understanding.

Theme 3: Learning with Us

The "other" ground was very prominent for participants with a focus on learning with each other and building shared understanding. Often this learning helped participants gain new perspectives, especially about their privilege. Participants talked about the importance of understanding, as the basis for productive dialogue, such that "before any productive dialogue can happen, we have to understand ourselves as well as each other" (Laura). Furthermore, building understanding was also identified as being important in respecting one another:

> When you're working on such an issue…it's good to understand one another because it's gonna build more confrontation if you don't. You're gonna…sit there and always hit that way with one another. So it's good to break that wall down and understand and respect one another. (Michelle)

Participants also discussed the importance of listening first to understand another person, such as "listening not to judge, and…trying to get more of an understanding… stepping in their shoes a bit. You're wanting to see what it's like for them" (Chen). Laura focused on listening being an intentional act: "not just responding for the sake of response but listening." Participants talked about a relational space being required for there to be understanding: "now you have this space where you're relating, and also there's that mutual understanding" (Ariana), and "this space to build on each other rather than this space for you to insert your opinion and me to brush it aside and state my opinion and then you brush it aside" (Laura). One participant went further to discuss how this learning environment ("active learning space") is created: "As other people are

talking…you're simultaneously learning from them…and relating their experiences back to your experiences and learning more about yourself in that moment" (Laura). Additionally, the learning and understanding that was built was often directly related to the focus of the course (nationality) as well as other social identities. Participants also talked about various new concepts that they had learned from others, such as the term "pansexual" or the concept of "language privilege."

Furthermore, their learning resulted in gaining awareness of their own privilege. Michelle's quotation highlights self-awareness, especially in realizing her own privilege in comparison to other students: "By listening to their [other students] experiences and what some of them had to go through uh it, made me again realize my privilege. Realize that I respect them for that. I respect them for everything that they've gone through." Other students also expressed gaining insight into their privilege. For example, "I didn't control where I was born, I was just lucky enough to have been born in a country that has strong diplomatic ties virtually everywhere. The jellybean exercise[3] helped me see that as well" (Laura). Furthermore, "In my experience, I always take [understand] privilege [as] equal to power and wealth. Because it is common in China…I have never think about privilege in other point of view. But after the dialogue in this week, I begin to think in different ways about the privilege I have" (Chen).

There were also other ways participants demonstrated self-awareness through learning with others. For example, "No matter how minor and insignificant something may seem to me, someone else may be struggling with the opposite situation…a visual representation is always

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[3] The jelly bean exercise was used to help students explore the concept of privilege. Statements about privilege (e.g., "You're able to assume that most people know your national traditions and cultural norms") were read and each time a statement was personally accurate, that student would take a jelly bean to add to their own cup. As students obtained various amounts of jelly beans at the end of the activity, students reflected on their own privilege as it is related to the statements about privilege.

helpful in helping to show just how much I take for granted in my life" (Jennifer). Additionally, in comparing herself with others, Michelle realized that there was more she could be doing:

> The moment I felt most engaged was listening to other people's ideas on how they would aid in the social issue, [the refugee crisis] but when I filled out my list I used an example of something I had already done…it just made me realize how much more I could be doing to end social inequality and injustice.

As participants were learning with each other, they were also developing an understanding of how they wanted to apply these skills to life outside of the dialogue class.

Theme 4: Taking It Outside

Taking it outside is the concept of translating and utilizing IGD skills and knowledge about nationality outside of the dialogue class in the future. This could involve creating dialogue spaces or more explicit action planning, involving actions to promote diversity and social justice, and moving dialogue into action (e.g., Zúñiga et al., 2007). All participants talked about applying the IGD skills (e.g., patience, and listening) outside of the dialogue class in the future. Many participants came into the course wanting to help make changes in the world, but often not knowing how to do so. Participants talked about now knowing how to make changes in the world, and being more committed to following through with actions. Michelle stated: "I've said it so many times, I wanna do something. I wanna do something. This showed me that I will do it." Participants discussed specific skills they learned from the dialogue course that they want to use outside of the class such as "soft skills," involving patience and listening. There was also a large contrast made between dialogue, and other forms of communication, such as debate and discussion. For example, debate was talked about as a form of communication that aims to convince the other person of something, and discussion focuses on finding answers, whereas

dialogue was talked about as "open-ended," and focused on "understanding each other." A couple of participants talked about there being value in all methods of communication, but some participants were more specific in saying the dialogue was a "good" form of communication or even "the best" form of communication. Many of the participants discussed practicing dialogue skills with friends, peers, family members and strangers while being in the dialogue class. For example, Laura talked about using her father as a "proxy"- a person she could engage with who would still love her regardless of what happened, but one with whom she could further develop her dialogue skill.

Even though two participants said they had not used the dialogue skills yet outside of class, all participants talked about wanting to dialogue with people in some capacity in the future. Saya specifically talked about creating a safe space with others:

My next step is to make safe place and put tips which I took away from this course such as how to deepen the question and narrow down the problem into conversation. It takes a long time to change the world, but it is not impossible if there are some people who keep trying to open mind and reach people.

Additionally, Saya had a specific goal with her father: "I want him [participant's father] to open mind to me…I wanna talk with him from…the same place." Michelle talked about wanting to use dialogue in a future job: "When I do get into an actual 'big girl' job…I will use intergroup dialogue with them because I always want to be where I work a safe environment and I think that by pulling in those techniques it'll make sure that we have that instilled with our work too." Some participants even talked about wanting to engage with different people in the future because of their dialogue experience. For example, Laura asserted:

This bubble, where I'm surrounded by people who are going to validate my own ideas…a

goal after this is taking myself out of that…and into the real world where it's not as safe

and cozy…approaching the people who don't have the same ideas as me but also that

those are the people where the organic conversation that we really need, needs to happen.

Participants discussed action planning through becoming involved with "organizing and

activism," promoting diversity in the organizers of a future science march, and educating others

about injustices. Lastly, a couple of participants connected their action planning to their future

career. Ariana discussed wanting to work with refugees as a lawyer, and Michelle talked about

using her IGD experience in counseling children as a social worker.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to describe students' experiences of an IGD focused on nationality. Four main themes emerged: 1) *Comfort Zone/Out of the Comfort Zone*, 2) *Just a Human Being*, 3) *Learning with Us,* and 4) *Taking It Outside*, with the contextual ground of *National Identity and Family Background.* Findings from the current study appear to be consistent with the four-stage, critical dialogic model, and the three main goals of IGD.

Four-Stage Critical Dialogic Model

The four themes map on substantially to the four stages of the critical dialogic model, which include: (1) group beginnings/forming and building relationships, (2) exploring differences and commonalities of experience, (3) exploring and dialoging about hot topics, and (4) action planning and alliance building (Zúñiga et al., 2007). The thematic structure highlights a temporal relationship between the themes where a "safe space" was first created (theme 1), making it possible for genuine human connection (theme 2). Furthermore, genuine human connection allowed for learning and shared understanding between participants (theme 3), and through this understanding, participants developed capacities to take dialogue skills and actions to support social justice outside of the dialogue course (theme 4). Lastly, in the background of this process were students' experiences related to nationality and family background (See Figure 1 below for an illustration of the thematic structure).

The first theme of *Comfort Zone/ Out of the Comfort Zone* is about the creation of a "safe place" which involves forming the group and establishing group norms which are occurring for the first couple of weeks of a dialogue. Consistent with participants' experiences, the creation of a safe space appears necessary for the building of genuine relationships. The second theme of *Just a Human Being,* with the focus on human connections between people, connects to the first

stage of forming and building relationships, but also connects especially to the second stage where differences and commonalities of experience are explored. Additionally, while understanding is still developed as friendships are forming, genuine human connection is often a prerequisite for deeper learning and understanding. In line with participants' experiences, genuine human connection involves openness, patience and a nonjudgmental approach, creating an environment where understanding and learning with others is possible.

The third theme of *Learning with Us* connects to both stage 2, where students' experiences are explored, but also to stage 3 where dialogue focuses on "hot topics." In this class, the hot topic was on the refugee crisis, and participants discussed developing mutual understanding about each other's perspectives for how to respond to the issue of possible refugee resettlement in the U.S. Finally, the fourth theme of *Taking It Outside* involves applying the dialogue skills to situations with friends, peers, family members, and strangers, and connects to the final stage of action planning where participants identify action steps that they want to take.

IGD Goals

Additionally, the findings are consistent with the three main goals of IGD: building relationships across groups, developing critical awareness of social issues, and creating capacities to promote social justice (Gurin et al., 2013). Building relationships across groups connects especially to the theme of *Just a Human Being,* as participants talked about relationship building, especially as it related to being genuine. The goal of developing critical awareness of social issues was connected to the theme of *Learning with Us*, especially with the following codes: eye opening, gaining perspective, increasing complexity, new/different perspectives, realizing inaccurate assumptions, and self-awareness. For example, reflecting on another students' experiences of growing up in Ethiopia, Ariana asserted "her bringing up that,

specifically, just made it [the other participants' experience] …made it more real for me. Her…being open about it with me. That was very eye opening for me." Lastly, the IGD goal of increasing capacities to promote social justice was clearly connected to the final theme of *Taking It Outside* as participants were focused on specific action steps they would take in the future on both an interpersonal and societal level to promote social justice (especially in regards to the issues of immigration and refugee issues). In addition to students' experiences being consistent with the four-stage, critical dialogic model and IGD goals, students' experiences also related to marginalization, discrimination, intercultural friendships, and acculturative stress.

Foreign-born and U.S.-born Student Intergroup Relations

As described in the literature review, there are several factors that previous research has shown to impact foreign-born students' interpersonal experiences on campus. These include marginalization, discrimination, intercultural friendships, and acculturative stress. Though none of these were directly assessed in the current study, and future research should examine if and how IGD directly impacts or relates to these experiences, some aspects of the participants' experiences do seem to be relevant, and will be discussed in relationship to previous research below.

Marginalization and discrimination. Previous research indicates that intergroup relations between international students and U.S.-born students illustrate marginalization (e.g., Guo & Chase, 2011). Marginalization experiences are described as often being associated with feeling misunderstood (McDowell, 2012), perceived isolation (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011), and a lack of social support (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011). Additionally, experiences of prejudice and discrimination are common for international students (e.g., Cho, 2009), such as racial and ethnic

discrimination (Poyrazli & Lopez), and discrimination based on religion (Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013).

Experiences of perceived marginalization and discrimination at the beginning of the dialogue course where clearly present for both Ariana (Albanian-born Muslim woman) and Saya (Japanese-born woman), while Chen (Chinese-born woman) did not mention any specific experiences of marginalization or discrimination, but could see these experiences for other people. In talking about her experience growing up, Ariana stated that she "never really fit in anywhere" due to being a Muslim person in Tennessee. Ariana described these experiences of discrimination in the following quotation:

Being a Muslim all my life has been a struggle, especially in a place like Tennessee where people are quick to judge and even quicker to assume they know everything about my religion. I have had to deal with people making nasty comments to me all my life so I'm tired of simply playing nice and trying to make others see me as a normal person (Ariana).

In terms of being on campus, Ariana asserted that: "When I'm in a classroom…you're not really sure what you can say from me from my background…even going as far as causing me physical harm…I've had that fear all my life where I live in this area." Ariana talked about the "safe place" that was created in the IGD as helping her fit in, even though she normally didn't experience this outside of the class. In contrast to her experience outside of the dialogue class, Ariana talked about "going into that [the dialogue class], I didn't feel at all that I was a minority." Ariana cited having diversity of people, a lack of judgment, and openness of participants and co-facilitators as helpful in allowing her to be herself. While Chen did not mention any specific aspects of marginalization or discrimination, Saya discussed constantly being asked "where are

you from?" by others as part of her study abroad program and, as a result, asserted "I'm stuck with my nationality." In this respect Saya discussed a contrasting experience in the dialogue course where she was able to "take off my…nationality" and "be a person as the others."

Intercultural friendships. Intergroup relations between international students and U.S.-born students are not all characterized by marginalization and discrimination (e.g., Gareis, 2012). Intercultural friendships are associated with benefits, including course continuation intention (e.g., Shahijan et al., 2015). Though this was not directly assessed, the current IGD course appeared to be helpful in improving the relationship between foreign-born students and U.S.-born students. Participants talked especially about gaining increased intercultural understanding for the experience of other people who are different to them, and developing genuine relationships. In developing relationships with people different from her, Saya said, "They [the other students] are really open-minded…we can touch their…deepest point of their mind and thought." Furthermore, Ariana talked about her assumptions and conclusions about the others in the group and how she was wrong about them. For example: "It is so easy for me to simply guess and come up with my own conclusions as to where these girls are from and what type of personality they have, but as soon as we started speaking and formally introducing themselves, I realized how diverse and wrong my judgments were." Also, participants talked about learning a lot from other students and how this helped build their relationships.

Acculturative stress. Previous literature illustrates that acculturative stress is commonly associated with international students' experiences on U.S. campuses (e.g., Bai, 2014), and relates to various negative psychological outcomes, such as depression (Chien, 2013) and anxiety (Sullivan, 2011). Factors that decrease acculturative stress for international students include personal strengths such as hardiness (Yakunina et al., 2013), and high levels of social support

(e.g. Ye, 2006) while factors that contribute to acculturative stress for international students include language barriers (Chen, 1999) and discrimination (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). It is unclear the extent to which acculturative stress, or the psychological impact of adapting to a new culture (Berry & Anis, 1974) was present. Future research may directly examine if and how IGD may relate to experiences of acculturative stress.

However, there was clearly an impact of language difficulties for both Chen and Saya. Saya talked about her personality changing when she speaks English, versus when she speaks Japanese. Additionally, Saya talked about having language difficulties both inside and outside of the dialogue class and that the course helped her improve her communication skills. For example, "I think my ability to listen…and deliver my opinion and overall communication skills is getting better through the course" (Saya). Furthermore, Saya talked about these communication skills helping her to acknowledge herself and speak up more. Additionally, Chen discussed needing to take time to respond, and talked about the importance of having the freedom to speak Chinese, not only English. In summary, students' experiences of this intergroup dialogue were consistent with the four-stage, critical dialogic model (Zúñiga et al., 2007), the three goals of intergroup dialogue (Gurin et al., 2013), and international students' experiences related to marginalization (e.g., Guo & Chase, 2011), discrimination (Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013), intercultural friendships (e.g., Gareis), and acculturative stress (e.g., Bai, 2014).

Strengths and Limitations

One strength of this study is that, to my knowledge, there has been no prior study about experiences of IGD focused on nationality. Understanding experiences of IGD participants provides rich contextual data and could be especially valuable for informing future research and

practice of IGD. Another major strength relates to the course design of the IGD class, created in conjunction with this study. Dialogue sessions went two hours in length for seven consecutive weeks, with a five-minute break in between each hour. A couple of participants talked about the importance of having this time to go "deeper." One participant compared her experiences with the current dialogue course to a previous dialogue course at the same university with a shorter session length of 75 minutes, and much preferred having two hours.

There are, however, a few limitations to this current study. First, there is a self-selection bias as participants freely chose to take this course, and therefore, the students are unlikely to be representative of the general student population. Second, there is a limit to the generalizability of the sample given that it was a university sample of predominant white, southern students for the U.S.-born students, and all participants were female. Third, there were some language barriers that made it difficult to understand the intended meanings behind two of the students' transcripts and reflective journals, given that the interviews were conducted in English, not the language of origin of these participants. Lastly, I focused on phenomenological experiences of students, with the broad question of asking students about their experiences of IGD. Thus, there was no baseline quantitative measure or post-measure determining the extent to which marginalization, discrimination, acculturative stress or intercultural friendships were concerns for the foreign-born or U.S.-born students as part of the study, and thus, the extent to which dialogue helped decrease these issues.

Implications for Research and Practice

One implication for future practice comes from comments students made about their physical environment. Several students commented about the physical space of the room, noting that to help create deeper and genuine connections the environment should be free from physical

obstacles such as desks, chairs and even writing instruments in between participants. Ideally a circle of chairs that are relatively close together is recommended. Additionally, given that some students disengaged during dialogue when they were uncomfortable and then found it difficult to stay present, co-facilitators can pay attention to non-verbal cues of participants to support their engagement in the process. For example, co-facilitators can make process comments when they notice that a participant is not as engaged in the dialogue, or find ways to share the space more so that all participants have room to further explore their own discomfort and learn through this experience.

Additionally, due to the dearth of research on this specific IGD topic, researchers might explore further an intervention study focused more specifically on the underlying mechanisms that may lead to the best outcomes of IGD groups focused on nationality, and directly investigate the impact of IGD for foreign-born students separately from U.S.-born students. Future quantitative research could more rigorously investigate experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and acculturative stress and the effectiveness of IGD to alleviate these issues. Lastly, future research could explore the underlying mechanisms for developing intercultural friendship between foreign-born and U.S.-born students in IGD.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

This is the first study to consider students' experiences of IGD focused on nationality. The findings provide rich descriptive information about foreign-born and U.S.-born students' lived experiences of IGD. The results support intergroup dialogue being a beneficial intervention to improve intergroup relations between foreign-born students and U.S.-born students, especially with the building of friendships. Based on these findings, co-facilitators of future IGDs focused on nationality will have valuable contextual information to inform their dialogue leadership. Lastly, the current study opens possibilities for future research on IGDs focused on nationality as an intervention to increase foreign-born and U.S.-born intergroup relations.

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APPENDICES

Table 1.

Sociocultural Identities of Group Members and Co-facilitators

Pseudonym	Age	Current year in school	Highest degree earned	Country of origin	Gender	Race/ ethnicity	Sexual orientation	Religious preference
Group members:								
Saya	21	Junior	h.s.	Japan	woman	Asian	heterosexual	No preference
Jennifer	22	Senior	Associate	U.S.	woman	white	pansexual	My own religion
Laura	22	Senior	h.s.	U.S.	woman	white	heterosexual	Atheist
Ariana	21	Junior	h.s.	Albania	woman	white	heterosexual	Islam, Sunni
Michelle	22	Senior	Associate	U.S.	woman	white	heterosexual	Christian-spiritual
Chen	24	Ph.D.	h.s.	China	woman	Asian	heterosexual	N/A
Co-facilitators:								
Maria	26	Ph.D.	M.A.	U.S.	woman	white/ Latina	heterosexual	Spiritual
Aman	35	Ph.D.	M.A.	Eritrea	Man	Black	heterosexual	Christian (orthodox)

h.s. = high school diploma, Associate = Associate's degree, M.A. = Master's degree

Table 2.

Sociocultural Identities of Coding Team Members

Age	Current level in school	Highest degree earned	Gender	Race/ ethnicity	Sexual orientation	Religious preference
28	Ph.D.	M.A.	man	white	heterosexual	Christian
37	-	Ph.D.	man	white	heterosexual	Catholic
57	-	Ph.D.	woman	white	heterosexual	Mormon
77	-	Ph.D.	woman	white	heterosexual	Christian
70	-	Ph.D.	woman	white	heterosexual	Unitarian Universalist
52	Ph.D.	M.A.	woman	white	heterosexual	Non-denom. Christian
47	M.A.	M.A	man	white	gay	None
45	M.A.	M.A	man	white	heterosexual	Agnostic
43	-	Ph.D.	woman	white	queer straight	Jewish Buddhist
62	-	Ph.D.	man	white	heterosexual	Non-denom. Christian

M.A. = Master's degree, Ph.D. = Doctorate in philosophy

Appendix A.

Meaning Units in Categories of Body, Time, Others, and World.

Four Categories:

Body:
Being a spectator
Being brave
Challenging own beliefs
Comfort zone
Eye contact
Fear of failure
Feeling nervous
Feeling vulnerable
Feeling stuck
Feeling tension
Just me
In and out
Inside a bubble
Moving through fear
Nowhere to hide
Opening up of self
Openness leads to intimacy
Out of the comfort zone
Proximity
Relaxing atmosphere
Self-awareness
Smaller space
Small group creates conversation
Speaking my mind
Sharing own voice
Understanding own feelings

Time:
Anticipated sharing
Anticipation about the future
Hopeful about the future
No expectations
Takes time
Time went quickly
Too long
Too short

Others:
A good way to communicate

All female dialogue
Best way to communicate
Building relationship
Building understanding
Breaking down barriers
Changing others beliefs
Changing others
Comfort through difference
Common humanity
Comparison between self and other
Compassion towards others
Connection through human experience
Constantly analyzing
Constructed space
Continuum from participants to leaders in group
Dialogue as a skill
Different types of communication
Diversity of people
Educating others
Eye opening
Expression in harmony
Facilitators with us
Finding commonalities of experience
Finding differences of experience
Finding humanity
Focused on understanding
Focus on facilitators
Focus on others
Friendship development
Gaining perspective
Genuineness between people
Growth through differences
Human connection
Improved communication skills
Just a human being
Just a person
Learning from others experiences/perspectives
Learning through listening
Listening first
Listening to understand
Modeling from others
Mutual learning
New/different perspectives
No judgement from others
On the same plane
Openness to experience

Perspective taking
Realizing inaccurate assumptions
Relationship reciprocity
Respectful communication
Respecting others
Self-selected students
Shaping space together
Shared emotions
Sharing ideas
Social skills learning
Understanding builds relationships
Understanding others perspectives
Understanding self before dialoging
Us versus them
Validation from others
Validation through shared experience
We are one
Willingness to understand/share

World:
Application of learning
Commitment to action
Facilitators created safe place
Identities as limitations
Increasing complexity
Individuals can make changes
In versus out of class
Love for learning
Opening possibilities
Responsibility to help
Safe place
Taking it outside
Translating skills to real world

Appendix B.

Meaning Units Clustered into Themes.

Four themes:

Theme 1: Comfort Zone/Out of the Comfort Zone:
Anticipated sharing
Anticipation about the future
Being a spectator
Being brave
Comfort through difference
Comfort zone
Constantly analyzing
Constructed space
Eye contact
Fear of failure
Feeling nervous
Feeling vulnerable
Feeling stuck
Feeling tension
In and out
Inside a bubble
Moving through fear
Nowhere to hide
Out of the comfort zone
Proximity
Relaxing atmosphere
Safe place
Smaller space
Small group creates conversation
Speaking my mind
Sharing own voice

Theme 2: Just a Human Being:
Building relationship
Challenging own beliefs
Compassion towards others
Connection through human experience
Continuum from participants to leaders in group
Diversity of people
Finding commonalities of experience
Finding differences of experience
Finding humanity
Friendship development
Genuineness between people

Human connection
No judgement from others
Opening up of self
Openness leads to intimacy
Openness to experience
Respectful communication
Respecting others
Validation from others
Validation through shared experience

Subtheme: On the Same Plane:
Common humanity
Expression in harmony
Facilitators created safe place
Facilitators with us
Just a human being
Just a person
Just me
Relationship reciprocity
We are one

Theme 3: Learning with Us
Building understanding
Comparison between self and other
Eye opening
Focused on understanding
Gaining perspective
Growth through differences
Identities as limitations
Increasing complexity
Learning from others experiences/perspectives
Learning through listening
Listening first
Listening to understand
Love for learning
Modeling from others
Mutual learning
New/different perspectives
Perspective taking
Realizing inaccurate assumptions
Self-awareness
Shaping space together
Shared emotions
Sharing ideas
Social skills learning
Understanding builds relationships

Understanding others perspectives
Understanding own feelings
Understanding self before dialoging
Willingness to understand/share

Theme 4: Taking It Outside:
A good way to communicate
Application of learning
Best way to communicate
Breaking down barriers
Changing others beliefs
Changing others
Commitment to action
Dialogue as a skill
Different types of communication
Educating others
Hopeful about the future
Improved communication skills
Individuals can make changes
In versus out of class
Opening possibilities
Responsibility to help
Taking it outside
Translating skills to real world
Us versus them
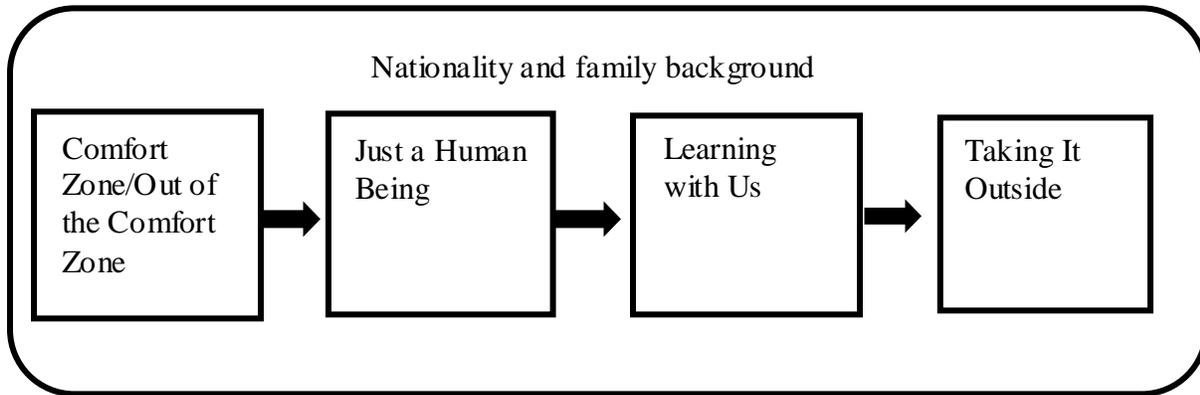
Figure 1. Diagram of the thematic structure.

VITA

Joel Timothy Muller was born in New Zealand to the parents of Mary and Timothy Muller. He lived in Australia from the age of four to fifteen and now resides in the United States. He is the first of four sons: Caleb, Micah, and Zebedee. After high school he enrolled at Valparaiso University where he developed a passion for psychology. While at Valparaiso he interned as part of a gender awareness program in Namibia in Southern Africa, was a counselor for troubled adolescences at a residential treatment facility in New Hampshire for six weeks during a summer, and assisted in teaching various psychology courses.

Joel joined the Counseling Psychology doctoral program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) in 2012 studying under Joseph Miles, Ph.D. Joel has taught courses in general psychology, honors general psychology, and abnormal psychology. In terms of clinical work, Joel has worked as a therapist at the UTK Student Counseling Center, Cornerstone of Recovery (a drug rehabilitation center), and the Family Justice Center (a domestic violence center). Joel has also been involved with advocacy work through the organization Global Seeds, carrying out various systemic interventions with Iraqi refugees in the community. Joel's research interests relate to social justice, with a specific focus on intergroup dialogue (IGD).