Examining Intergroup Dialogue's Potential to Promote Social Justice in Adult Education

## Abstract

Intergroup dialogue (IGD) is a program for facilitating conversations about social identity, institutionalized and systemic oppression, social conflict, and social justice. This article examines how intergroup dialogue can contribute to adult education's socially just goals by facilitating transformative learning. An initial review of the literature, followed by a discussion of IGD's relationship to existing social justice pedagogy, highlights intergroup dialogue's transformative aspects in various learning settings within the adult education field. Finally, this article provides recommendations on how intergroup dialogue can contribute to adult education practice and research while exploring implications and limitations.

**Keywords:** social change, transformative education, adult learning,

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## Introduction

Radical adult educators have long been concerned with education's role in effecting transformational learning that contributes to developing more equitable societies (Brookfield & Holst, 2011). Adult educators in this tradition recognize that privileging and oppressing aspects of socially constructed identities contribute to maintaining oppressive and unequal societal conditions. These educators seek to facilitate learning experiences that deconstruct these unequal societal conditions by creating learning processes and educational programs to highlight and address these issues. Intergoup Dialogue (IGD) is an educational program that aims to facilitate transformational learning related to diversity and social justice. IGD seeks to stimulate and promote learning about social identity-based inequities while also detailing the importance of everyone's role in addressing social justice issues (Hurtado, 2007; Nagda et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2018; Sorensen et al., 2009). Educators and scholars can implement IGD in adult education settings as part of ongoing efforts to engage individuals from oppressed social groups in emancipatory processes while exploring how privileged groups can support oppressed groups in everyday life. In this article, we examine how intergroup dialogue can contribute to adult education's social justice goals by facilitating transformative learning. We also discuss the weaknesses of IGD and provide directions for future research on integrating IGD and adult education.

IGD takes a group-based approach to engage learners in examining social identity-based differences within various secondary, post-secondary, workplace, and community settings (Maxwell et al., 2011). IGD also focuses on various social identity conflicts that allow participants of privilege and oppressed identities to explore the relationships between embedded

structures of power and social identities (Zúñiga et al., 2007). By exploring such relationships, IGD attempts to engage learners in a process that can facilitate critical consciousness and inspire action for social change (Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017; Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Zúñiga et al., 2007).

Grounded in the social psychology of intergroup relations, multicultural education, and diversity and social justice education, IGD attempts to facilitate intergroup understanding, relationship building, critical reflection, appreciation of differences, and alliance building (Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017). Participating in IGD can lead to transformation in learners by facilitating consciousness-raising about existing power structures as well as the privileging and oppressing aspects of various social identity locations. Research has also shown that the program can facilitate relationships across differences, reduce prejudice, and enhance learner capacity for social action (Nagda et al., 2017). IGDs that occur within community settings can be a rich source of adult learning. Community IGDs aim to engage learners in critical reflection, increase awareness of various social issues, build conflict resolution and transformation skills, increase openness to others' experiences, and promote long-term sociopolitical change (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Nagda et al., 2017).

Throughout the remainder of this article, we discuss IGD's relationship to existing social justice pedagogies. We also discuss IGD's founding, development, and expansion across various fields related to education. From there, we give an overview of the educational process at work within IGD, synthesize literature demonstrating the program's transformational efficacy while providing critiques and challenges of IGD, and then conclude with a discussion of implications for adult education.

## Social Justice Pedagogical Approaches in Adult Education

There are several pedagogical approaches to social justice that scholars developed for use within various learning contexts (Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Bohonos et al., 2019a; Brookfield, 2019; Curry-Stevens, 2007; Goodman, 2011; Byrd & Scott, 2010; Ingram & Walters, 2007), as well as calls for the deliberate restructuring of adult education and HRD curriculum towards a focus on social justice (Bohonos et al., 2019b; Merriweather Hunn, 2004). IGD is a program rather than an approach, meaning that IGD is a fully developed learning experience with established outcomes, curriculum, training, and methods of evaluation. As a program, IGD provides an example of how educators can design curriculum to address social justice issues in concert with other social justice education efforts. The aims of IGD are congruent with the goals of several approaches associated with radical adult education, including pedagogy for the privileged (Curry-Stevens, 2007; Goodman, 2011), which seeks to advance consciousness-raising and capacity building among those individuals in dominant social positions. Other approaches include critical pedagogy (Allen & Rossato, 2009; Choules, 2007; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020), in which educators work both to foreground the voices of those historically oppressed and balance power structures between learners and educators. Popular education is also an additional approach and pursues human liberation and institutional structures' transformation by changing attitudes and actions relative to social inequities tied to race, gender, and class (Crowther, 2013; Freire, 2000).

IGD can add an additional element to curricular reform efforts because it is a program that provides courses developed to focus on specific social identity-based conflicts. These courses and IGDs in other settings have a history of well-documented outcomes related to social

identity development and communication processes (Keehn, 2015; Nagda et al., 2009), enhanced intergroup understanding through conflict reduction (Hammack & Pilecki, 2015; Ron & Maoz, 2013), critical consciousness development (Griffin et al., 2012; Nagda & Gurin, 2007), and social justice activism (Winborne & Smith, 2001).

## History and Evolution of Intergroup Dialogue

IGD began after World War II to address tensions associated with racial migration in the Midwest and Southwest of Black Americans and Mexican immigrants, respectively (Zúñiga et al., 2007). Still, IGD was not widely utilized until after the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision to end segregated education (Gurin et al., 2013; Schofield, 1991). Because segregation was still prevalent years after the *Brown vs. Board* decision, practitioners and scholars developed IGDs to improve race relations amongst privileged and oppressed groups of young children (Gurin et al., 2013). Even though the primary focus for intergroup relations was for education, IGD has also been used to ease tensions in the workplace and to train employees working across different cultural contexts (Gurin et al., 2013).

### Intergroup Dialogue in Higher Education

IGD was thrust into higher education in the 1980s when students of Color, most notably Black students who faced racist acts by white students at the University of Michigan, began pressing administrators for more diversity-based courses that spoke about social identity differences. Scholars founded the first "formal" intergroup dialogue program at the University of Michigan in 1989 as a response to racial tensions which occurred on campus between Black students and white students (Gurin et al., 2013; Moss et al., 2017; Zúñiga et al., 2007).

Some higher education institutions offer curricular-based academic dialogue programs for academic credit in various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, communication, conflict resolution studies, social work, and education (Lopez & Zúñiga, 2010). Additionally, university offices outside of formal academic departments, such as diversity and inclusion centers or residential life offices, also offer co-curricular IGD programs. IGD topics center on social identity and typically include twelve to eighteen students self-identified to represent two or more social identities. Structures for academic-based IGDs vary. When applied in university settings, the program consists of a four-stage group process that provides structured interactions, introduces content on institutional discrimination and privilege, and offers multiple opportunities for self-reflection and action planning/alliance building (Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017; Gurin et al., 2013).

**Intergroup Dialogue in Non-Academic and Community Settings**

According to Walsh (2006), IGDs have taken place in over 400 cities since the early 1990s. Educational institutions, community centers, non-profit organizations, governmental bodies, and businesses sponsored dialogue programs in efforts to improve civic discourse. These programs have focused on important and controversial topics such as race, gender, socio-economic status relations, abortion rights, and the Israel-Palestinian conflict (Ron & Maoz, 2013; Dessel & Ali, 2011; Maoz, 2003). These dialogues helped community members to understand contrasting viewpoints, find common ground, and work toward shared goals (Dessel & Rogge, 2008).

Structures across community-based IGDs vary widely. The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD), for example, offers a 20-page resource guide on public

engagement and an online database with over 3,000 tools, case studies, handouts, videos, and training materials (NCDD, n.d.). In contrast, other organizations provide users with streamlined approaches to creating dialogue. Everyday Democracy is a national non-profit organization that uses structured dialogues with individuals from diverse social identities, backgrounds, and perspectives as a tool for community organizing, coalition building, and for promoting positive change. The organization provides an established framework for interested parties to follow, offers an open-source resource library, and has a network to organize, recruit, facilitate, and evaluate dialogues (Everyday Democracy, n.d.). IGD has been applied in diverse settings primarily because it has a defined process that characterizes the program and a robust research literature that attests to its effectiveness. The following sections highlight these strengths as well as some of its limitations.

## Overview of the Intergroup Dialogue Process

IGDs follow a four-stage design, regardless of the topic or issue covered. Stage one aims to establish the dialogue process expectations and initiate relationship building across differences. The second stage examines social identity-based differences and commonalities across interpersonal relationships. It explores concepts related to the systemic basis of differences (e.g., privilege, oppression, discrimination) to promote consciousness-raising (Zúñiga et al., 2007). During the second stage, IGD participants engage in several readings and activities that encourage sharing their own social identity-based experiences regarding privilege or oppression. Then students and facilitators work to identify shared experiences of systematic oppression that exist within society. In the third stage, learners dialogue about controversial issues, hot topics, and intergroup conflicts that impact interactions on personal and structural

levels (Moss et al., 2017). The final stage serves to transform the prior stages into action planning and attempts to build alliances for social change.

Key features of IGD include content-based learning, structured interaction through process-oriented learning, and facilitation (Gurin et al., 2013; Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Nagda & Gurin, 2007). Many IGD programs utilize a critical-dialogic model. This model aims to facilitate critical analyses and link interpersonal dialogic relationships communication within "broader and more complex ways than merely being aimed at creating intergroup harmony or at reducing unconscious prejudice" (Gurin et al., 2013, p. 45). In this sense, critical emphasis involves a "conscientious effort to examine how individual and group life are embedded within a structural system of inequality and privilege and to connect that analytical understanding to action" (Gurin et al., 2013, p. 44). The dialogic emphasis of the model involves engaging in communication among and within groups to build relationships, creating "understanding through exploring meaning, identifying assumptions that inform perspectives, and fostering a willingness to reappraise one's thinking in light of these exchanges" (Gurin et al., 2013, pp. 44–45). The critical-dialogic model, coupled with the key features and the stages, results in a comprehensive framework of IGD.

**Facilitation**

IGD often uses facilitators as educators due to their unique role in co-constructing and guiding the dialogue experience. Facilitators of IGD follow distinct principles that parallel the overall program goals (Maxwell et al., 2011; Zúñiga et al., 2007). The first principle calls for guiding learners in a collective learning experience, including creating an inclusive space for differences and dialogue and integrating content and process. IGD facilitators attend to

individual participants' and group knowledge, contextualize personal experiences in larger institutional systems, and both supports and challenges participants to ensure that conversation about participants' own experiences and understanding of oppression and privilege are meaningful and sustained (Maxwell et al., 2011; Zúñiga et al., 2007).

Principle two of facilitation involves empowering learners through a continual reflection process, using praxis to create a cycle of reflection and action. Within this principle, facilitators use themselves and their experiences to enact praxis as a model to deepen the dialogue. The facilitators also encourage learners to see themselves as individuals and as people situated within social groups, social identities, and privileged and oppressed relationships to those identities that influence one's experiences (Maxwell et al., 2011). To account for broader societal power dynamics, facilitators observe and identify how learners occupy the dialogue space based on how much learners do and do not contribute; they look for patterns of oppression in the dialogue; encourage dominant and counter-narrative perspective-taking; and challenge (mis)conceptions and confront oppressive behaviors (Zappella, 2007, p. 2).

The third principle attends to communication processes and integrates content. IGD facilitators are participants in the learning process, who also enhance their own development through the dialogue. The third principle involves using the dialogue process to build relations within similarities and across differences. Facilitators prompt, encourage, and challenge participants to acknowledge multiple and varied perspectives, with the notion that these experiences create opportunities for a new and deepened understanding of the learner's own experience and others. Beyond the relationship engagement, facilitators also use a critical-

dialogic approach to promote alliance building to bridge the learning with action (Maxwell et al., 2011).

IGD facilitators are trained as guides who actively engage and learn with participants to shape a meaningful dialogic experience (Maxwell et al., 2011; Zúñiga et al., 2007). Training in IGD facilitation typically occurs for dozens of hours, covering necessary facilitation skills, intergroup processes, conflict mediation, conceptual foundations, and simulated role-plays. Many academic-based IGDs utilize a co-facilitation learning model by choosing two people who represent two or more social identities of the dialogue topic who work collaboratively to foster learning.

**Multipartiality**

IGD offers a conscientious approach to power and positionality called multipartiality through attempting to equalize authoritative power structures that traditionally exist between students and educators. Multipartiality, or "the ability to analyze a conflict using multiple viewpoints" (Giacomini & Schrage, 2009, p. 121) is a complex facilitation tool that allows for all voices to be heard while balancing power among participants (routenberg et al., 2013).  Its use as an educational practice is similar to other practices evident in critical pedagogy, popular education, and anti-oppressive education.

Facilitators cultivate multipartiality by considering participants' social identities, their own, and how social identities influence the dialogue process. Integrating knowledge of social power structures and societal positionality, facilitators intentionally navigate group dynamics to construct equitable power dimensions ( Zappella, 2007). This practice seeks to equitably balance participation among members from privileged and oppressed social groups through several

strategies. These strategies include critiquing ideologies; asking individuals to share where they learned perspectives; inviting, acknowledging, and including reactions from other participants; asking participants to consider differing and alternate perspectives and why others may hold those beliefs; and using one's own experiences as a learning tool (routenberg et al., 2013). Failing to practice multipartiality effectively can undermine the dialogue process and perpetuate hegemonic and oppressive norms.

**Effectiveness of Intergroup Dialogue**

A growing body of literature has evaluated the effectiveness of IGDs in various settings, including higher education (Buckley & Quaye, 2016; Clark, 2005; Dessel, 2011; Keehn, 2015; Miles et al., 2015), youth development and high schools (Griffin et al., 2012; Maoz, 2003), workplace settings (Ramos & Mitchell, 2001), community settings (Judkins, 2012; Ramos & Mitchell, 2001; Walsh, 2006) and within long-standing socio-cultural and political conflicts (Maoz, 2003; Ron & Maoz, 2013). Many studies also examine dialogue effectiveness based on social identities such as race and ethnicity (Khuri, 2004; Nagda et al., 2009; Walsh, 2006), religion (Joslin et al., 2016), sexuality (Dessel, 2010; Dessel et al., 2011), and nationality (Maoz, 2003; Ron & Maoz, 2013). Research on IGD also explores its effect on social identity development and communication processes (Keehn, 2015; Nagda et al., 2009), group development (Miles et al., 2015), and intergroup understanding (Hammack & Pilecki, 2015; Ron & Maoz, 2013). These studies provide evidence for IGD's potential to reduce sociocultural conflict and improve communication across social identity-based differences. Multiple disciplines, including psychology, education, communication, and social work, substantiate IGD

as an effective pedagogical practice, as evidenced by diverse participant samples, various methodologies, and research designs.

Pre-experimental and quasi-experimental studies are the primary research design used within studies evaluating IGD's effectiveness (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). Nagda et al. (2009) were among the first researchers who applied a true experimental design to determine causality and to examine the effect on IGD processes. This interdisciplinary longitudinal multi-university study compared undergraduate social sciences courses related to race and ethnicity with IGDs of the same topic. Findings showed that students who participated in IGDs, compared to peers who enrolled in a social science course, exhibited increased engagement with communication processes, an increased critique of inequality across groups, and a higher commitment to action that addresses inequality. Qualitative research also examines and chronicles experiences within IGD and how participation therein affects future actions. As an example, Vasques Scalera (1999) explored post-graduation experiences of former student facilitators. After several years, the former facilitators reported that they continue to use facilitation tools from IGD to advance their own knowledge, build strong relationships across conflict, and commit to working through social justice issues (Vasques Scalera, 1999). Other qualitative research has explored students' reflection of learning within IGD experiences, using interviews to explore narratives (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). Yet, the qualitative-based methodology is less prevalent than quantitative approaches.

Research regarding IGD also suggests its potential to facilitate learner transformation. Literature indicates that participants often develop a critical consciousness in IGD (Gurin et al., 2013; Nagda & Gurin, 2007). Winborne and Smith (2001) showed how applying IGD models in

community settings resulted in many forms of action, including collaboration and coalition building, thus transforming communities for the common good. Other outcomes associated with IGD include encouraging networks and friendships across different social identities and increasing community involvement to combat issues related to oppression across social identities (Hopkins & Dominigue, 2015). Key gaps in the existing literature that scholars should explore include potential program weaknesses and limitations, some of which we introduce in the following section.

**Intergroup Dialogue Challenges and Criticisms**

Though IGD has been embraced by many academic disciplines and organizations, criticisms on its aims, application, and success warrant attention. Primary criticisms explored in extant literature include the possibility that IGDs can perpetuate stereotypes or otherwise harm people from oppressed groups and learners can sometimes prove resistant to the IGD's interactive nature (Gurin et al., 2013). Additional criticisms acknowledge how disproportional focus on interpersonal aspects of oppression can inadvertently distract from discussions of systemic inequality and produce challenges in managing power dynamics that emerge in the dialogue process.

**Dialogue Can Perpetuate Harm on Learners From Oppressed Identities**

Using dialogue as a tool for members of oppressed identities is a nuanced and complex process. Gurin et al. (2013), who examines multiple critiques to IGD, studies how IGDs use a critical-dialogic approach to foster increased understanding and empathy for building bridges across differences. Scholars argue that this approach does not adequately address power dynamics across pre-existing social structures. As a result, the dialogue structure and process

may lead to stereotyping and tokenizing learners with oppressed identities. Another important note is that often the IGD process evokes intense emotions and feelings of discomfort. Learners with oppressed identities may feel less apt to participate because the emotions are often associated with a history of trauma and mistrust (Dessel, 2011).

Further concerns exist about the expectation that learners from oppressed identities educate privileged learners about racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (DeTurk, 2011). Conversely, participants from privileged identities may encounter cognitive dissonance and express resistance to the content or dialogue process. Even more so, privileged learners may support stereotypic tropes and perpetuate harmful thinking within the dialogue process. Using skilled and knowledgeable facilitators who can balance supporting and challenging participants within the dialogue process is crucial to mitigating these unique challenges (Gurin et al., 2013; Quaye, 2012).

**Learners' Struggle with the Structure and Process**

IGD uses structured interaction as a key pedagogical component in contrast to formalized lectures. Students accustomed to traditional teaching methods, whereby the educator bestows knowledge that the student observes, may find IGD difficult as a learning approach and may not associate the structure and processes with explicit learning outcomes (Zúñiga et al., 2007). When applied in formal classroom settings, some students struggle with and resist IGD's informal and discursive nature. It may take facilitators several sessions to draw students beyond this expectation to gain fuller participation in the unique learning experience. IGD-based experiential learning structures requires educators to support learners throughout this experience and challenge learners to expand their understanding of how and in what ways learning can occur.

**Too Little Attention to Structural Inequities**

Scholars such as Buckley and Quaye (2016), Nagda et al. (2009) and Zúñiga et al. (2007) critique IGD for giving too much attention to the interpersonal interaction within the dialogue, thus minimizing the attention paid to systems of privilege and power relations. Buckley and Quaye (2016) assert that while "dialogu[ing] about experiences can help students learn how to understand and communicate about differences, we also recognize seeking to know each other's experiences does not necessarily fully address the need to challenge systemic issues of power and privilege" (p. 1121). This conflicting tension may leave some to question how IGD engages in promoting social justice and what social justice components receive attention. Buckley and Quaye (2016) note that IGD "seems to foster a vision of social justice rooted in micro experiences and recognition of difference" and "its structure seemed less equipped to engage macro elements of social justice" (Buckley & Quaye, 2016, p. 1135). Instead, the focus is on understanding and validating others' experiences to foster a commitment to social change, specifically through critical reflection (Gurin et al., 2013).

**Challenges Addressing Power Differences That Emerge Within Dialogue**

Exploring issues across identity, ideology, and difference is daunting even for the most skilled educators. At times, IGD facilitators encounter difficulty balancing educators and learners' power distribution and across learners' social identities (Dessel et al., 2006; Maxwell et al., 2011). Though IGD is focused on relieving social identity-based oppressions, problematic actions can still enter the dialogue space. According to DeTurk (2011), "Anglo-Americans (in particular) simultaneously tried to understand and to silence the "other," as a result of tensions between their interests in ontological security and cognitive complexity, and between privilege and equality" (p. 579). Another challenge is navigating overt and covert resistance to conflict

from participants (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Zúñiga et al., 2007). If approached incorrectly, facilitators can inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes and oppression against participants from oppressed social identity groups, or facilitators can reinforce dominant social norms as a standard. Conersely, adequately addressing power dynamics within IGDs can facilitate transformative learning.

### Intergroup Dialogue, Transformative Learning, and Applications with Adult Education

This section outlines key aims of transformative learning and how IGD can contribute to these goals. We suggest several ways the adult education field can incorporate the program in our professional practice. Transformative learning is known by many lenses, but in general is "learning aimed at changes not only in *what* we know but changes in *how* we know" (Kegan, 2018, p. 36). One such transformative learning perspective is the social-emancipatory approach, a philosophy of transformation that considers how sociopolitical contexts and current perspectives influence change within an individual (Taylor, 2008). This socio-emancipatory perspective to transformation uses critical reflection and deconstructed student-teacher interactions to facilitate critical consciousness and social transformation.

One IGD goal that dovetails with transformative learning is consciousness-raising, that is, understanding how power, privilege, and oppression relate to inequalities that exist in society. Inherent within this goal is learning transformation through critical consciousness, a vital feature of the social emancipatory approach to transformation. According to Mezirow (2018), the scholar who developed transformational learning theory, critical reflection is necessary for learners to experience transformation. Critical reflection involves continual self-examination and assessing one's own assumptions about oneself, others, and society and is an essential part of

developing critical consciousness. Gurin et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative pre-post study and found positive outcomes regarding "motivations, cognitions, and behaviors known to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice" (p. 171). These outcomes support transformation by developing learners' critical consciousness and influencing behavior changes.

Hoggan (2016) conceptualized transformative learning as a process that facilitates significant changes in the way learners experience the world. Changes in worldviews that include how one sees and engages with others, particularly those different from oneself, can create significant changes for learners' perspective of self and lead to transformation (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). IGD can produce significant changes for how learners see the world through facilitating a new understanding of individual experiences as informed by power structures (Keehn, 2015; Nagda et al., 2007).

As aligned with Taylor's (2008) socio-emancipatory approach to learner transformation, IGD aims to use increased critical consciousness and enhanced understanding of socio-political contexts to strengthen capacity for and commitment to social justice (Zúñiga et al., 2007; Dessel & Rogge, 2008). Several studies to-date found that IGD can positively affect commitment to social action and change (Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017; Gurin et al., 2013; Zúñiga et al., 2007). Wilhelmson (2006) posited that training adult learners in dialogue competences may create or enhance transformative learning experiences, both individually and collectively.

**Applying Intergroup Dialogue in Adult Graduate Education**

Incorporating IGD within adult education graduate programs can inform diversity and social justice practice for future adult educators. Social work is a field with similarities to adult education that has incorporated IGD practices within graduate education programs. The social

work profession seeks to empower and enhance the well-being of individuals, groups, communities, and organizations through helping meet basic human needs and by promoting and advocating for social change (National Association of Social Workers, 2020). Also analogous to adult education, social work practice inhabits multiple settings—from schools, communities, government, administration, and policy. Social work integrates IGD within other professional settings to train, develop, and prepare social work practitioners to navigate socio-cultural environments through a critical and culturally competent lens (Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017; Joslin et al., 2016; Dessel, 2011). Social work education programs benefitted from IGD through enhanced communication skills, increased understanding of nuanced social dynamics that affect practice, and knowledge to support and advocate for social change. Similar learning outcomes are possible in adult education graduate programs.

**Diversity and Social Justice in Adult Education Graduate Coursework**

Identifying, examining, and deconstructing how social identity, power, privilege, and oppression influence adult education are crucial topics to include in adult education graduate programs. Social identities such as race, gender, and class inform individual and collective learning and teaching practices within adult education, imploring adult educators to consider existing covert and overt power dynamics (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2008; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998). Hence, students are likely to interpret and respond to course content in racialized and gendered ways by applying politicized perspectives to adult learners who belong to historically oppressed social identity groups, rather than to learners who traditionally hold power and privilege in society. Because IGD involves both interpersonal and group developmental processes, it provides multiple opportunities for students to consider the personal

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effects of power, privilege, and social identity on one's life and how these concepts may influence the perception of others different from self, particularly as an adult educator. Integrating IGD in adult education graduate programs would have the potential to increase critical self-awareness, social and political learning, thereby embracing a more democratic learning process that can promote social change.

**Intergroup Dialogue and Adult Educator Development**

While we primarily focus on engaging adult learners in IGD, equally important is training educators as facilitators. Using IGD facilitation in adult learning settings can help to address the power and positionality dynamics often present in adult learning experiences. As discussed previously, utilizing multipartiality allows for an intersectional approach to learning and development, which often is unaddressed within learning settings (routenberg et al., 2013). Training in IGD prepares educators to challenge participants to acknowledge multiple and diverse perspectives while not expecting consensus (Maxwell et al., 2011).

IGD attends to the training and development of facilitators by seeking to provide a holistic process that centers the learner, facilitative processes for educators, and a broader developmental perspective of greater facilitator effectiveness (Maxwell et al., 2011). Throughout training and the dialogue experience, facilitators must examine their own social identities and previous experiences specific to how they inform the learning process, an essential component within IGD. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998) discussed power relations across social identities such as race, class, and gender within learning contexts and determined the extent to which the positionality of teachers and learners influenced classroom learning environments. In the study, both scholars, Cervero, a white male, and Johnson-Bailey, a Black woman, taught the

same course on critical perspectives in adult education and examined different experiences and

reactions with the students and how hierarchies of privilege and oppression operated within

learning settings. The outcomes of the study illustrated how sociopolitical power dynamics

which occur within the broader society also exist within and influence the learning environment.

Overall, IGD facilitation can help improve adult educator training and development and provide

transferable skills beyond the dialogue setting to foster learning, build common ground across

divisive and ill-understood differences, and advance social justice goals.

### Implications for Future Research and Practice

Over twenty years of literature highlights IGD's effectiveness in various settings. Yet,

there exists an excellent opportunity to examine more closely its impact on adult development

and adult learning. Expanding research within adult education graduate programs and adult

educator development are two areas for future research. Another area in need of future research

is IGD interventions in community-based settings (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Dessel et al., 2006;

Judkins, 2012). While scholars and practitioners have employed IGD within community-based

settings, also a setting where many different forms of adult learning occur, research which

utilize theoretical and pedagogical frameworks of adult learning is absent from IGD scholarship.

Quality research on the application of IGD in non-higher education settings is also needed to

bode a deeper understanding of learners' experiences and facilitators' experiences (Moss et al.,

2017).

Findings from several studies on intergroup dialogue outcomes signify needed expansion

in research methodology and design to examine and evaluate IGD (Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017;

Gurin et al., 2013). To date, most literature on IGD utilizes pre-experimental or quasi-

experimental designs and offer limited qualitative methodology (Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017; Gurin et al., 2013). Adult education scholars currently produce robust and sophisticated qualitative research such as ethnography, narrative analysis, and systematic observation and present an opportunity to contribute to IGD literature. Research in adult education also employs a plethora of theoretical and conceptual frameworks to apply and examine within IGD. Using the strengths of adult education theory and scholarship can lead to insights about learners' transformation, experiential learning, and the effects on lifelong learning.

Adult education scholars should produce further research to examine the extent to which IGD facilitates transformation in learners. A critique of transformational learning has been the lack of testing on the presence of transformation and meager existence of variables due to the overwhelming representation of qualitative research (Merriam & Kim, 2012). Quantitative methodologies are the primary orientation used to examine, explore, and evaluate IGD, and there exist several validated scales to measure related learning phenomena (Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017; Gurin et al., 2013; Zúñiga et al., 2007). Further research in adult education on IGD may fill the gaps in quantitative and empirical research on learner transformation.

Based on a review of literature and practices, we found that IGD is of utility and benefit in adult education programs because its goals are grounded in advancing inclusion and social justice. Various IGD programs and initiatives have demonstrated effectiveness in community, non-profit, organizational, and academic settings. IGD may enhance social justice learning and development in the adult education field by equipping educators with key tools and increasing their critical consciousness. Its success in academic and non-academic settings is a testament to its effectiveness in meeting learners' needs. Despite its challenges and limitations, using a

program like intergroup dialogue in adult education can help move our society closer to the goal

of a "participatory democracy" (Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p. 2), that encourages learning across

various political, cultural, and social spheres to recognize and create more just conditions

collectively.

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