Civil Discourse and Intergroup Dialogues: Promoting Diversity and Social Justice

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Session Outline

• Development and implementation of intergroup dialogues
• Research background
• Evaluation protocol
• Preliminary findings
• Lessons learned
Development of Dialogues

• 2014 Joan Blades
• Living Room Conversations
  – Grassroots Movement
    • Civil Discourse and Problem Solving
  – Guidelines
    • Authentic sharing, curious and open, respectful listening, finding common ground, staying on point, taking responsibility, civility, suspend judgment, balance of listening and talking.
  – Dialogues to Conversations
Implementation of Conversations

• Diversity and Social Justice
  – Practicing civil discourse skills
    • Explore not correct
  – Building relationships
  – Extending community
  – Movement toward social action
Research Background

Elements necessary to teach social justice successfully:

– Opportunities for reflection (journals)
– Opportunities for interaction (experiential exercises, group assignment)
– Talking/sharing lived experiences (conversations)
– Establishing social relationships (conversations)
– Engagement as change agents (interventive strategies)

(Guthrie & McCracken, 2010; Ibrahim, 2010; Pease & Fook, 1999)
Our Research Questions

• To what extend does participation in Living Room Conversations (LRCs) using civil discourse change students’ understanding of social justice?
• To what extend did students develop relationship skills of civil discourse as they engaged in LRCs over the semester (common ground, authenticity, etc.)
• To what extent do students’ comfort levels, both with assigned topic as well as with their group-mates, increase over the course of the semester?
• How does participation in LRCs affect students’ intentions to advocate for social justice?
Evaluation Protocol

• Quantitative
  – Use of Qualtreks -> SPSS
  – Pre and Post tests to measure impact of the LRCs on students’ understanding of social justice, power, privilege, advocacy, etc.
  – T-test to show a significant difference between pre and post test beliefs
  – Frequencies

• Qualitative
  – Influence of family of origin (family dynamics of problem-solving, patterns of communication, etc.)
  – Ideas about social justice, power, privilege
  – Ideas about civic engagement
  – Patterns, trends, themes
Preliminary Findings

• What is your understanding of Social Justice (SJ)?
  – Significant change (p<.001)

• Advocating for social justice issues is effective, useful, and important
  – Significant change (p<.001)

• How active are you at advocating for Social justice issues?
  – Significant increase in advocating behavior (p<.001)
What is your understanding of social justice?

- Pre N=108
  - 81% SJ means that equitable opportunities are available
  - 6% SJ means everyone is treated exactly the same OR SJ means no one receives special accommodation.
  - 7% SJ means decisions are made on a case by case basis

- Post N=94
  - 83% SJ means that equitable opportunities are available
  - 15% SJ means everyone is treated exactly the same
  - 1% SJ means no one receives special accommodation
  - 1% SJ means decisions are made on a case by case basis
Advocating for social justice issues is effective, useful, and important

- Pretest
  - 49% thought that Advocating for social justice was extremely useful
  - 7% useless, or neither useful nor useless

- Post test
  - 73% thought that Advocating for social justice was extremely useful
  - 0% thought it was useless
  - 1% thought it was neither useful nor useless
• How active are you at advocating for social justice issues?
  – Pretest
    • 47% reported that they have not advocated
    • 35% reported an interest in starting to advocate
    • 20% reported being active or a leader in advocacy
  – Post test
    • 16% reported they have not advocated
    • 53% reported an interest in advocacy
    • 31% reported they had become active or displayed leadership in advocacy
Lessons Learned

• Anecdotal
  – More LRC than required (on own time)
  – Friendships
  – Reaching out to neighbors (previously unknown)
• Roundtables as possible additional activity
• Measuring Progression of discourse
  – Journals on Monday before class
  – Experientials on Wed
  – LRCs on Fridays
Questions
References