

Ben Neale
5-10-05
Educ. 718

**“Voice, I Can’t Hear You, Where Are You?”
A White Man’s Experience of Inquiry Facilitating
Educ. 395Z: Intergroup Dialogue: Men and Women**

Context:

During my last semester as a Master’s student at the University of Massachusetts’ Social Justice Education program, I was fortunate to participate in a truly inspiring intellectual experience called Intergroup Dialogue. More precisely, the course, “Education 395Z: Exploring Differences & Common Ground: Men and Women Dialogue,” met once per week on Thursdays from 4:00-6:30pm (February 10, 2005—April 28, 2005) in 151 of the New Africa House. Intergroup Dialogue is an extensive program that invites UMASS undergraduates to actively participate in semi-structured face-to-face meetings with students from other social identity groups. Students learn from each other’s perspectives, read and discuss relevant reading material, and explore their own and the other groups’ experiences in various social and institutional contexts. In addition, students will explore ways of taking action to create change and bridge differences at the interpersonal and social/community levels.

Those charged with assisting undergraduates in learning more about cultural differences, exploring commonalities across and within sex/gender boundaries, and addressing the impact of sexism on gender relations in a US context, fell on graduate students in the Education 795 practicum. The practicum occurred on Tuesday afternoon from 4:00—6:45pm and provided a space where we could meet to debrief and prepare for the upcoming dialogue class on Thursday afternoons.

The practicum class was comprised of seven colleagues who departed with me on a similar journey at the beginning of the semester. Our experiences were synonymous except for the fact that four groups of two students each facilitated a dialogue of differing subject matter. There were two Race and Ethnicity sections, one Gender and Sexuality section, and one Men and Women section. I facilitated Men and Women Dialogue with a SJE doctoral student named Rani Varghese. Rani and I facilitated a very dynamic group of undergraduate students. To ensure a good mix of social identities, participants could not register for the class on SPIRE like normal class; in this case, they were “screened” through an application process.

The class was comprised of fifteen students. This is an important tenet of Intergroup Dialogue as articulated by Monica Thompson, et. al, (2001), “it is structured around two identity groups, and students are assigned by the program to dialogues so that there is equal representation between the two groups” (104). Considering this section of the program focused on men and women, we needed a fairly balanced representation of gender: 7 participants who identified as male and 8 who identified as female. The program director also wanted our participants to be diverse in race and ethnicity. The following list of my participant identifies the men and women by their race and ethnicity are below. The group of 7 male participants included: 1 man identifies as white as an Albanian immigrant, 1 man identifies as white an Armenian immigrant, 1 man identifies as white from Portuguese decent, 1 man identifies as biracial Chinese and German, 1 man identifies as black from Barbados decent, 1 man identifies as white and Jewish, and 1 man who identifies as black. The group of 8 female participants included:

1 woman identifies as Black from Haitian decent, 1 woman identifies as a white, I woman identifies as Indian as an immigrant, 1 woman identifies as black from Jamaican decent, 1 woman identifies as Indian as an immigrant, 1 woman identifies as black 1 woman identifies as white and as a Ukrainian immigrant, and 1 woman who identifies as white from Armenian decent. My co-facilitator identifies as South Asian, or Indian, woman, and I identify as a white man. As you read on, you will realize why these salient social identities become necessary to describe in such detail.

Statement and Origin of Research Focus:

As a second year M.Ed. candidate in Social Justice Education, I have developed a sense of mission and determination in eradicating unhealthy forms of oppression from my U.S. societal context. As a white male ally trained in an undergraduate background of Gender and Women's Studies, I came to SJE having a theoretical and political framework to work from. My interest in critically viewing gendered interactions brought me to participate in the Intergroup Dialogue program. I studied many texts and theoretical concepts, but I had yet to develop and implement a curriculum that truly addressed the "practical" side of a feminist, anti-patriarchal, and anti-sexist politics. I saw this opportunity as a chance to impart my knowledge to another generation of potential "gender-liberators." As Paulo Friere might put it, I was seeking praxis by bringing my theory together with my practice. This program complete with the undergraduate component paralleled by the graduate course element, presented my chance to learn what it meant to educate for liberation, and at the same time, be educated by my peers on how to do that. Another critical pedagogue, Joan Wink (2005), author of *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World*, gives her depiction on the power of dialogue stating,

“Dialogue is change-agent chatter...dialogue is two-way interactive visiting. Dialogue involves periods of lots of noise as people share and lots of silence as people muse” (41).

As a white man living in a white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, I embody much privilege that often goes unnoticed. In the book, *The Future of White Men & Other Diversity Dilemmas*, author Joan Steinau Lester (1994), asks what will be the fate of this group, “this 25 percent of the U.S. population—heterosexual white males—who currently hold more than 90 percent of the political, economic, and cultural directorship seats” (17)? I consider my unique position an important point of departure. I have adopted revolutionary politics critical to the cause, particularly in assisting efforts that move beyond hurdles of “gendered” and “raced” communication. Though I embody much privilege and am apart of an oppressive legacy, I have chosen to subvert this inherent power.

As a self-avowed feminist, I realize I hold what is often a troublesome space. Individuals have made apparent to me that my interests and scholarship are problematic. Some women (and some men) are hostile to the idea of men labeling themselves feminist and their research “feminist research” (Reinharz, 1992). Nonetheless, I believe I belong in the field where I have a vantage point of increased access and voice to articulate the oppressive nature of sexist stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. I am able to reach individuals like me who, without hearing from a fellow privileged peer, may never know the loss that accompanies their unbeknownst power. This is easier said than done.

Though I want to be a voice of change, I have found that I have a difficult time actually doing it when given the opportunity. Because I plan to continue educating people about oppression, identity, power and privilege, I feel that any reservations or

roadblocks in my process of teaching must be looked at critically, so as not to hamper or jeopardize the message I am trying to communicate.

At every moment, my co-facilitator, Rani, and I attempted to model equal and balanced authority, communication, decision-making and other traits that we think exemplify gender sensitive teamwork. The balance of race and gender represented in our participants must also be present in the facilitator team, which is why Rani, with her subordinate or “targeted” social identities, and I, with my dominant or “agent” identities, come together. Pat Griffen (1997) supports by stating, “We believe that two teachers, one from the agent group and one from the target group, can work together more effectively than one teacher working alone to identify strategies that maximize student learning in social justice education” (281). As a woman of color and a white man, we tried to show how individuals from disparate social groups could join together forming a coalition against sexism. It is impossible to leave the heritage, history and experiences of power that make up our identities outside the classroom. It is difficult to accomplish our objective when we think we must take ourselves out of the socialized roles we come to class with. In that way, I am owning what Maxine Greene refers to as ‘existing being,’ or “the person being in the situation with ‘all its shifting moods, feelings, impulses, and fantasies.’”

On the one hand, I want very much to keep striving to model the possibility of change in the way a white man can educate in an anti-sexist and anti-racist way, a course the attempts to expose the way our racist and sexist society has determined how we act towards one another across difference. On the other hand, I do not want to limit myself by incessantly self-censoring my words for fear that I will not say the correct thing. I

have some solace knowing that I understand this shaky position as natural for people in my position. Self-awareness and self-knowledge are hard to navigate because, “for most faculty, our professional training has not prepared us to address emotionally and socially charged issues in the classroom” (Bell, et. al., 1997). bell hooks (1994) adds, “among educators there has to be an acknowledgement that any effort to transform institutions so that they reflect a multicultural standpoint must take into consideration the fears teachers have when asked to shift their paradigms” (34). The fears that hooks mentions are what prompted this research.

I very much wanted to investigate why I hesitated to “put myself out there.” My goals were to thoroughly deconstruct my process, so that I knew what were the class dynamics that existed when I would not speak up. What did I feel like at the time? What were the class dynamics that allowed me to move beyond this anxiety and speak from an authentic place? How did these instances of free flowing articulation impact my students, and what did they say about it? Finally, how did I respond from my students’ and co-facilitator’s feedback to inform my growth?

My original ideas did not change very much throughout the course of the semester’s research. I continued to pursue my original objective from start to finish, but as you will read in my methodology, the different ways I collected data to accomplish this changed. My methodology expanded and went deeper, targeting different aspects of my goals to accommodate new opportunities for data collection.

My research notebook group provided invaluable research feedback throughout the semester. I do not know if many of them could sympathize with my research question, but the questions they asked to inquire about my progress, my frustrations, and

my accomplishment, kept me on track. At the same time I heard myself answering their questions, my research became clearer. My sub-questions and the way I presented them became tighter. The data I collected was made more valuable when I was directed to revisit certain aspects that I had overlooked or seen as unimportant. The research notebook group played a central role in breathing new life into my research as the semester transpired.

Methods:

As a student with much social science and qualitative research experience, my action research methodology led me to many of the same data collection procedures that I had used before in my feminist research. John Elliot (1991) gives a straightforward depiction action research as, “the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it” (69). The process is that of a systematic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990). In addition to abiding by the predominant premise of action research, I wanted my process to be critical and emancipatory. I wanted my research to have the integral interplay between action and reflection. In this dialectical between action and reflection, complex concerns such as “authenticity, alienation, ownership of knowledge, hierarchical schooling systems, oppressive roles, and emancipatory actions” (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990). My emancipatory research practice entailed several main facets that I will lay out in the following section. The various forms of current data that I have collected include a personal log, consultant observation notes, written in-class survey, and an interview with my co-facilitator.

Because my research was based on my experience in the classroom with the Intergroup Dialogue class, I had ample opportunity to collect data from the various constituents around me. I tried to get a range of data from various sources who in some way had observed or participated in my teaching practice. I also tried to focus on one specific theme and have as many perspectives as possible to reference for analysis.

The first form of data collection that I found useful was my own log notes. I mostly wrote down the thoughts and feelings I felt were pertinent to my research after each Thursday class. I realize that there were probably times when I should have simply written notes after class without the intent of them fostering “good” data. That way, at the end I would code generative themes that would arise from the unfocused post-class ramblings. I missed several classes and some of my recollections have not produced the data I would have liked, but to a large extent, logging after class has been a good way to frame my experiences in my own words. Through personal interpretations, I have marked significant incidences that pertain to my research question and that have allowed me to view myself as reflected in my students’ words and actions.

Second, in my practicum, each section of the intergroup dialogue has an assigned consultant. My consultant, Tanya Kashwaha, has been very cooperative and willing to help me with my pursuits in and outside the classroom. She attended our session five class. She observed our class taking notes all the way through, which I received and coded for themes relating to my research question.

Third, on our last day of class, I administered an in-class written evaluation for my students to complete (See Appendix 1). The survey was produced, and reviewed by several key-advising members: Allan Feldman, my Action Research Prof.; Rani

Varghese, my IGD co-facilitator; and Tanya Kachwaha, my IGD consultant. With their help, I developed an instrument with encouraging potential.

The survey features questions I would like my students to fill out regarding their impressions of Rani and my social identities and their impact on their learning experience. This was an important piece of data for my research because it allowed my students to really delve into the relationship that we have spoken about but have had little time to reflect upon. I believe Rani will gain much from this as well because she and I have wanted to know more about how our personal style combined with our gender and race identities, have impressed our students.

Five days before our last class, I sent every student my survey and a informed consent form (See Appendix 2). This way, they could have more time to think about their answer before filling it out. One the day of our last class, two participants brought in completed surveys. Seven other students filled out the survey during class. Unfortunately, on that day, participants were asked to fill out two other evaluations, both UMASS' standard and my advisor's internal class evaluation for her research. I think the immense amount of evaluations deterred some students from filling out mine, which was not required.

Finally, I completed an interview with my co-facilitator Rani. I felt as if she is one of the best people in a position to tell me how I had conducted myself this semester with regard to my research questions. She embodies a wealth of information because she and I have spent many hours developing, planning and implementing designs for our weekly classes. Not only did we reflect a lot about our facilitation together, but we spoke candidly about our individual success and challenges in facilitating this class.

What is not included in this methodological description will be articulated further in the section on “findings.” In this section, the successes and difficulties I had with my research will be revealed alongside what was produced through my action research methods.

Findings:

The process through which I took my collected data and coded for meaning was one of the most gratifying parts of this project. I was elated that my eyes were instantly “opened” to ample amounts of information revealed through my “findings.” My findings suddenly become transformative when I understand and know the process because then I may be able to convey that understanding, model it and in doing so, make it accessible as an idea and a practice to students (Brockbank and McGill, 2000).

I am not going to organize my “findings” section by research instrument, or methods, or the results from each. I will however, organize my “findings” by the themes that emerge and the “findings” that answer my initial research questions and goals. Overall, the major inquiry I want closure to is why I hesitated to “put myself out there.” What was my validation that I actually have this issue and what did that look like? What did it look like when I did “say something?” How was that received?

One of the first themes I wanted to establish from the beginning was whether this was only an issue for me or did was this something other’s saw me do? In other words, am I the only person that saw my whiteness and my maleness coming together in this class as a detriment to full and honest communication?

One of the first indications that others were privy to this behavior came in the form of my consultant's feedback. Tanya Kachwaha was assigned to Rani and my section of Intergroup Dialogue. As a graduate of the program and a former facilitator, she assisted in our course planning. She also came and observed our fifth session to check in and collect her impressions in order to relay back to us. I have three particularly striking examples of how Tanya named my inability to be myself while facilitating various activities during class.

The first example comes from written feedback Tanya gave Rani and I a couple weeks after our observed session. The feedback came in the form of Tanya's observations on the left and interpretations on the right. This one focuses on how I divert attention from my stories not using my experience of how I felt at the time as fodder for group learning.

Example ONE:

What Tanya observed:

"He then begins to facilitate an interactive presentation by asking the group to name categories at each end of the continuums. He starts by asking, 'What is biological sex?' and elicits responses from the group."

What Tanya interpreted:

"Although Ben gives some good personal examples, they are mentioned quickly and not explored enough, especially in terms of how he felt at the time and how they connect to the activity."

What I gather from this observation is that I am reluctant to talk about myself, use myself as an example. I want to dislodge my identities and positionality from the group, making the group the focus and not me. The second example pulled from the same written feedback relates to how I handle my co-facilitator's discomfort while I lead an activity.

Example TWO:

What Tanya observed:

"The activity is supposed to be a fairly quick brainstorm but conversations ensue, participants voice their confusion, and the brainstorm aspect of the activity gets lost for a while. During this time, Rani is sitting on the edge of her seat and attempts to intervene a number of times. When

she finally enters, she jumps up and takes over. Ben steps aside and Rani tries to give some structure to the brainstorm.”

What Tanya interpreted:

“It feels very uncomfortable for me to see Rani ‘take over’ especially when it was clear from her expressions and behavior that she did not like the way the brainstorm was going. As she takes over and Ben moves to the background, I feel that neither of them realize what they are doing or what they are modeling.”

In this example, it appeared to Tanya that I succumbed to Rani’s assertive behavior by not wanting to create waves or show an outward power struggle between the two of us.

In fact, at the time, I did not even know this was going on. She was supposed to take over the activity, and she did. I did not realize what it might have looked like to others watching from a different standpoint. The final observation portion that I will share applies to how I handle a situation.

Example THREE:

What she observed:

“The conversation gets off track when one man asked very sincerely, ‘do you like sex or performing sex?’ The group is struck trying to explain what this question means and the person who originally asked the question gets embarrassed and quiet. Ben refocuses the group back onto the topic and asks a question to keep it there.”

What she interpreted:

“Ben’s soft-spoken nature comes across as compassionate and kind. It feels like he is trying to ‘hold’ the group and support everyone. This is a very good skill and works well in this situation.”

What is striking in this example is that the skill that comes out with most visibility is my

“soft-spoken nature.” Finally, the overall comments that Tanya makes are quite

noteworthy.

Overall Comments:

“In general I feel that Rani fills the space more than Ben. She has a more ‘on’ energy and is more verbally and physically expressive. Ben’s quieter, more passive nature along with Rani’s more outgoing nature causes a dynamic where Ben seems to get lost...I would like to see Ben be more assertive and honest. It feels like Ben chooses to stay in the background because he is afraid of what it might look like for a white man to challenge a woman or take up space and time. I would like to see Ben model how men can talk honestly and share their feelings about issues related to gender and feel okay with taking up space to do so.”

This description summarizes the first three examples reinforcing that my default persona is of someone who is quick to softly acquiesce as to not overstep my bounds in this delicate position as a white male facilitate teaching alongside a woman of color in front of a diverse participant population. The dynamics that I consciously and unconsciously consider in those moments are both layered and complex.

This second section of my “findings” helps me know what it looks like when I do put myself out there contrasted against a moment in the same class when I do not. This is an excerpt from my log.

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“Earlier today after class was over, Rani was helping me arrange the chairs when she said that she had some feedback for me. She said it in an emphatic voice. I could tell she was serious. Her tone was somewhat light, but her meaning behind the words were not. Something was up. I asked her to continue. She said in class, she needed me to talk about me. She needed me to tell the group, especially the men, what it is like to be in situations where we see sexist behavior that we think is unacceptable. She told me that when I described what I thought about the meaning of several women dancing together in a dance club setting, I made an impact for everyone in class. Rani said I needed more of that instead of moving the students with another question. She said she was getting tired of sharing with the group her experience, her struggles with sexual violence. She thought it would be much more powerful for a man to share his experience or what he thought about it. She went on to state that men would listen to me well before they would listen to her. She said I need to recognize the power that I have now, as a white man and with the knowledge, what impact I can make, few others can make.”

As I remember, I was quite distraught after this conversation. In the moment, I did try and state my opinion by asking important questions, shifting the energy and creating a safer space with my suggestions. Again, I gained insight into how I am perceived.

In addition to the former accounts from my class consultant and from myself, I think a key determinant in assessing my issues with speaking out must come from my students. In this section, I will provide several student quotes taken from their in-class survey administered on the last day of school. Several of these quotes sit in contrast to previous descriptions of my less than out going behavior.

The first survey question asks:

Student Survey:

In the context of this Women and Men Intergroup Dialogue, what was it like to have Rani (a South Asian, i.e., Indian, woman) and Ben (a white man) as your facilitators?

The responses for this question varied. Yet, a resounding theme that arose dealt with the security and balance that I provided in addressing such delicate topics between college-aged men and women. Specifically, it seems that I made the space more palpable for the men in the group. Another theme related to the subject of me, as a white man, acknowledging my whiteness and grappling with it, as well as prompting other white men to do the same. See below.

- “I loved having Ben as the facilitator because he balanced out Rani perfectly by providing a dominant group perspective. He is very aware of the effects of his dominant group membership on the world and helped to bring out the voices of other men in this group to speak openly about what dominant group membership affords them vs. those who are targeted.”
- “Having a white male as a facilitator was also important because there were several white males in the class including myself in the class. Having Ben as a facilitator in the class helped make the class seem like it wasn’t going to be biased against the white male majority that exists in our society.”
- “It was fun because he was dealing with his own white issues, and I thought it was great to see white men dealing with whiteness.”

The next question that raised a lot of issues about what I look like doing this work. What comes out of me and stays with the students when I am in this classroom setting? The next question was my attempt to capture specific instances that my students had related to my gender and race/ethnicity. From their responses, I would go back to my original question to see if this illuminated anything.

The second survey question asks:

Describe one or two instances in which Rani and Ben’s race/ethnicity and gender impacted you (thinking about your race/ethnicity and gender), and the group as a whole. Please be specific.

The next set of responses answer the second question. Again, issues of comfort due to the fact that several white male students identify the same as I, which provided some

stability for stressful conversation to transpire. The other theme that emerged related to my ability to break out of my own social identities' stereotypes and model what is possible when white men take ownership to educate themselves and then pass on that knowledge.

- “Having a white male in the class definitely made me feel more comfortable in the class. The reason for this is because I knew that in the dialogue we'd be talking about race and privilege. Since I'm in the privileged position in our society, it made me more comfortable to have a facilitator in the class that was in the same position so I wouldn't feel like I have to defend myself in the class all the time.”
- “Basically your whole perspective impacted me. It was great to know (as I am guilty of stereotyping too) that not every white male sees things the way I assume. You are very different in that you have enormous courage to do what you are doing and this has impacted me personally. It is inspiring.”
- “Having Ben in the class definitely gave the group as a whole an example of what education can do. We had a white male who was supposed to be enjoying the privileges of his status but instead he's spending his time teaching a class aimed at raising awareness about his own privilege that he didn't work to attain. I think just having a white male teaching a class like this important in showing that the barriers or oppression can be broken if everyone works together.”

The last survey question I asked did not reap the data I would have liked.

The third question asks:

When thinking about the social identities focused on above, what would you have us think about for future class facilitations?

My hope with this question was to gather info on what I should do in the future. Based on how the respondent answered the first two questions, I wanted to ask what further steps could I take to sustain my approach? Even though I did not successfully gather information to take with me by posing that question with the students, I was able to reach some further understanding by asking a similar question within my open interview with Rani, my co-facilitator. I posed an analogous question to Rani that read:

Where do you think I need to keep going with it?

She responded by stating:

I think you need to just continue to talk about it. You need to be one: comfortable talking about your self, whether it relates to whiteness, or relates to being a man, relates to sexuality or sexual orientation. You need to share more of yourself in a dialogue situation. I don't believe you need to do that in a traditional classroom. If you are teaching about race or gender, you need to really use yourself in the conversation, or in the dialogue. Because as we saw in the evaluations, it was really important to the white men to have a white male facilitator which meant you are really modeling for them how a white man can be a really good ally. So I think that that is important for you to continue doing.

Rani's answer makes a lot of sense for me. She is more or less saying that I need to continue what I am doing and then some. There is no better way to get comfortable talking about oneself than to do it. I should put myself in situations that allow me to flourish. I will talk more about this in the next section, "implications."

I have presented several pieces of my results that have brought me to new understanding of my own education situation. I have a couple of thoughts on circumstances that did not furnish the new level of awareness I had hoped for.

First, my student survey did not bring in the most balanced responses I wanted. I wanted more depth and diversity in perspective. I did not get that. To counter that lack of data, I wanted to arrange a focus group. The lack of time and busy schedule at the end of the semester was the determining factor in deciding not to hold the group. I believe I would have had more genuine and broad-based responses had I done that.

Second, I would like to have had more opportunity to study the literature out there on this subject. I do not know who is writing about the difficulties of activists/educators who hold privileged social identities and try to teach on the subject of diversity with diverse student populations. I have considered doing research to find out who is thinking/writing about this subject. In the short run, I wish I had found some citations to help shape more of my research.

Implications:

My project had some far reaching effects. My participation in this research has sparked something in me. Thinking about this research all the time has had a tremendous affect on my communication abilities. I wear my feelings on my sleeves, so the stress that has boiled in me like the teapot on a hot stove has not been left in the classroom. This struggle has persisted in my personal life as well. I see the research findings in this project directly translate to my life outside the classroom.

What I have gleaned from my data collection and analysis is that I have grown up with an idea of being an exception. I have been “exceptional” with many things I have done especially when it comes to relationship with individuals. Though this may sound admirable and a prized place to be, it is not. I have developed a persistent pressure to not be “raggedy” or tarnish my exceptional “shine.” I find myself in a professional and personal life that holds me in high esteem for the political stands I take.

In classes and in relationships in general, one cannot always be seen in a good light. Usually, something different comes out, and it is often during conflict. I think this is a reason why I avoid conflict, which in a political classroom dialoguing about sensitive subject matter, is very hard to do. Therefore, this gives credence to my observation that I do not want to enter in conversations and share about myself in a way that would show “faults” or “unveil” certain unexpected failings.

To reconcile this complex and well-learned character trait, I do not need the “permission” or acknowledgment from those who I have reached to tell that I have the right to make mistakes. I do not need the post facto commentary to support my difficult career in “subverting the dominant paradigm.” I must use this as a lesson, as if I had not

heard this before. I must trust my knowledge, my thought process, my time, energy and determination to these causes of ending sexism, racism and the like. If it is not the white man or the Haitian woman in my class telling me that I am needed—that a significant portion of their success in the class was attributed to my questions, my answer, and my presence—who will it be next?

They heard my trepidations, my struggle, my “weakness” when I spoke up or questioned them. It was the very behavior that I have avoided because then, individuals would find out that I would not be exceptional, or “the only one” able to do this with such conviction. The pressure on one hand of entering into such a tumultuous space, and on the other hand, not allowing myself to make mistakes, has been very tenuous place to be for the past couple of years. Through this process, I am learning that I can be the complex person who still struggles to “get it right.” In fact, my transparent struggle with living as a privileged white male in a racist and sexist culture will be seen as courageous and an excellent learning tool if I trust it as such.

The next steps of the research could be applied virtually anywhere. As I move on to another educational setting for my future employment, I can improve on my findings. I could look for key figures in my professional life who would be able to give me feedback around this issue of mine. Have others struggled with this? What are things I can do to practice opening up? Has anyone written on this; are there any resource guides for people like me?

The premise of action research is not complicated. Therefore, the amount of support I would need to conduct an action research project is minimal. I believe I will always be able to implement a practical way for me, as an educator, to uncover some of

the complexities of the teaching process. This will only support what should be my end goal as an educator in the first place—to improve the quality of my students’ learn

(Appendix 1)

Intergroup Dialogue Facilitator’s Social Identity Survey

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. This survey is a tool that we are using to gauge how social identities impact facilitation, connection to participants and the dialogue overall.

Social identities include race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. but for the purposes of this survey our questions reflect our racial and gendered identities.

1. In the context of this Women and Men Intergroup Dialogue, what was it like to have Rani (a South Asian, i.e., Indian, woman) and Ben (a white man) as your facilitators?

Rani:

Ben:

2. Describe one or two instances in which Rani and Ben’s race/ethnicity and gender impacted you (thinking about your race/ethnicity and gender), and the group as a whole. Please be specific.

Rani:

Individually:

Group:

Ben:
Individually:

Group:

3. When thinking about the social identities focused on above, what would you have us think about for future class facilitations?

Rani:

Ben:

Thank you for your valuable contribution to my research and our own learnings!

(Appendix 2)

Informed Consent

My name is Benjamin Neale. I am a Masters candidate at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in the Social Justice Education in the School of Education. For the course, EDUC 718, Action Research in Schools, I am interested in surveying undergraduate students taking the class I am teaching called Intergroup Dialogue: Women and Men. The study has one main objective, which is to investigate how a diverse group of undergraduates taking my class perceive my behavior as a white male facilitator.

The study will collect data in the form of a survey conducted as a student feedback activity for a future class (approx. 10-15 min. activity).

In signing this statement you are agreeing to allow Benjamin Neale to refer to your feedback in EDUC 718, in papers and articles prepared as assignments for class. All information shared in written feedback form will be confidential. No names will be taken on survey forms. The information gained in the surveys will be shared in class and in written form.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to discontinue or refuse participation at any time. Please note that the purpose of this study is to learn more about the teaching of diverse groups, when teaching about social identity and oppression, as an educator with social privilege, and *not* to evaluate you as a student. In other words, participation, or non-participation, in this project will have no effect on your grades or progress at the University of Massachusetts.

If you would like further information about the study or your participation in it, please feel free to contact Benjamin Neale, Social Justice Education, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003, or call (H): (413)-695-4536 or (O): (413)-545-0892, or email at bneale@educ.umass.edu.

You may also contact my instructor, Dr. Allan Feldman, at (O): (413)-545-1570, or email at afeldman@educ.umass.edu.

Thank you.

name

signature

date

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