



# **INTERGROUP DIALOGUE: ENGAGING DIFFERENCE, UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT, BUILDING TRANSFORMATIVE CAPACITY**

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**INTERGROUP CONFLICT: BRIDGING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PEACE PERSPECTIVES**

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# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- What is Intergroup Dialogue?
- Conflict and Intergroup Dialogue
- Multi-university Intergroup Dialogue study
  - How do participants understand and experience conflict?
  - What are the treatment effects?

# INTERGROUP DIALOGUE



Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) brings together participants from diverse social and cultural backgrounds in a sustained and facilitated learning environment. Through dialogic communication, IGD engages participants in exploring similarities and differences in personal and social identities, understanding the nature and impact of group-based conflicts and inequalities, and building capacity for change.

# APPROACHES TO CONFLICT

- Conflict Management
- Conflict Resolution
- Conflict Engagement and Transformation

# Conflict Engagement and Transformation

Many conflict specialists prefer the word “transformation” to “management” because conflicts aren't necessarily 'bad' situations that should be prevented or even managed. On the contrary, conflict can be a source of growth in groups, organizations, communities, and societies and can lead to positive change and new relationships. However, conflict must be dealt with in a proactive, constructive manner. When a conflict has escalated so that it cannot be contained or when violence multiplies what is needed might be conflict transformation so the parties can find solutions in a co-operative, non-violent way.

“Engaging in conflict means accepting the challenges of a conflict, whatever its type or stage of development may be, with courage and wisdom and without automatically assuming that resolution is an appropriate goal.” (Mayer, p. 184)

# INTERGROUP DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT

## RESOURCE-BASED CONFLICTS

- Interest-based
- Tangible
- Cognitive
- Transactional
- Resolution-oriented
- Mediated (neutral third party) with focus on compromised agreement

## IDENTITY-BASED CONFLICTS

- Identity and structural dynamics
- Intangibles
- Affective
- Interactive
- Relations-oriented
  - Voice and recognition
  - Listen and inquiry
  - Reconciliation and joint action
- Facilitated

# INTERGROUP DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT

## PARADIGM

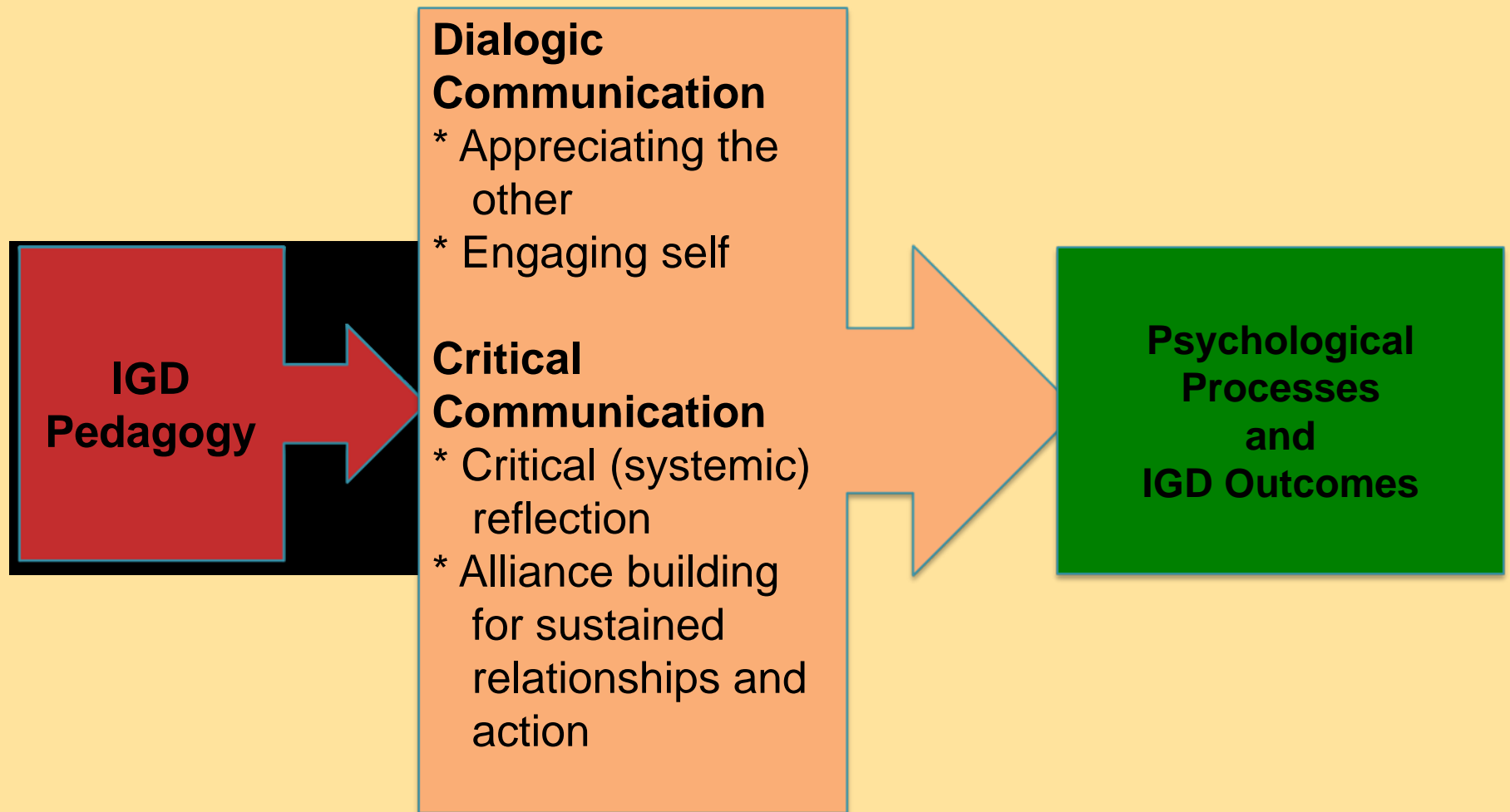
- Living in the context of group-based conflict and inequalities
- Engaging conflict can be transformative
- Conflict engagement is a process
- Nested paradigm
- Nexus of change is in relationships

## PRACTICE

- Focus on relationships
- Building community to engage conflict:
  - Engaging relationships (affective)
  - Understanding relationships (analysis)
  - Transforming relationships (behavioral)
- Communicative engagement is crucial

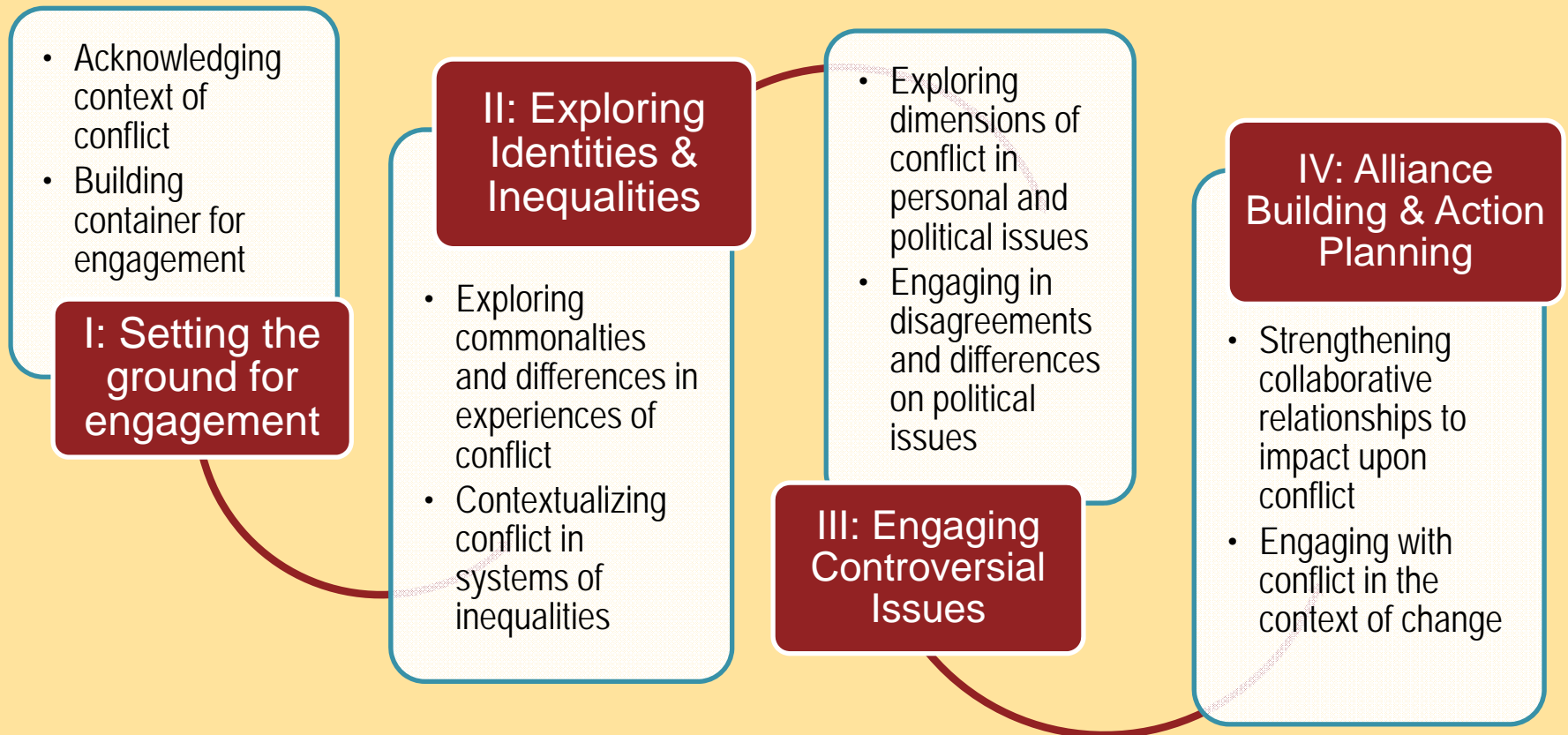
Collins (1999), Freire (1970), Lederach (1995), Pheterson (1990), Rothman (1997), Saunders (1999)

# Communicative Engagement in IGD





# FOUR-STAGE MODEL OF IGD



# MULTI-UNIVERSITY INTERGROUP DIALOGUE RESEARCH



- Arizona State University
- Occidental College
- Syracuse University
- University of California, San Diego
- University of Maryland, College Park
- University of Massachusetts at Amherst
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- University of Texas at Austin
- University of Washington, Seattle

# Multiversity Intergroup Dialogue Research Design

## Field experiment

- Random assignment – dialogue and control groups  
26 Race Experiments  
26 Gender Experiments  
IGD n=742, Control n=721
- Social science class comparison groups (n=438)
- 14 Race comparison groups
- 14 Gender comparison group

## Quantitative Data

- Students in Dialogue, Waitlist Control, and Social Science Comparison
- Pre-test, post and 1 year longitudinal surveys

## Qualitative Data

- Students in Dialogue
- Final papers
  - Video taping of early, mid, late session
  - Individual interviews

# Results and Discussion

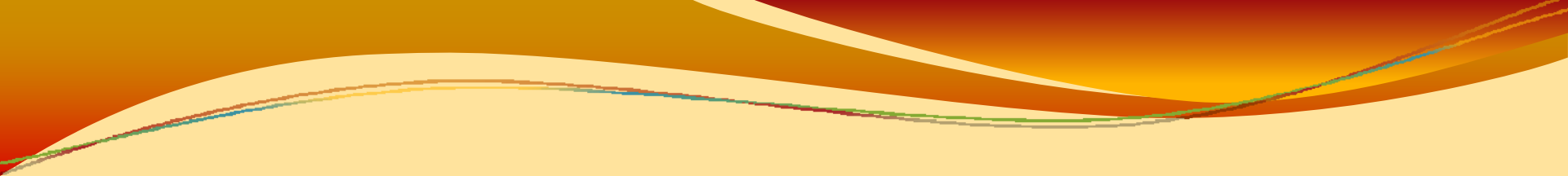
Three questions:

1. How do participants express their understanding and experience of conflict engagement?
2. What are the treatment effects re: skills in working with conflict?
3. How do participants apply skills in working with conflict inside and outside of the dialogue setting?

# Conflict Engagement

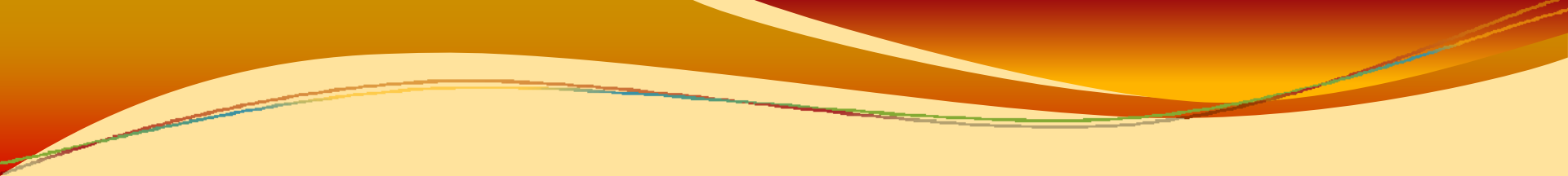
Throughout the course of the dialogue, the group in terms of quality of interactions, sharing, comfort and dealing with difficult questions and conflict improved tremendously....The group worked through dialogue to share information and create the environment where they felt they could do that and be understood by others. I think at first this was difficult for the class.... the group was reluctant to express their ideas that would create this conflict. It seemed that many were reluctant to share ideas and were not yet comfortable with the idea of trusting the groups with personal information. ... As time passed by and we dialogued more and more, the environment that produced constructive dialogue and learning began to develop.

(White Woman)



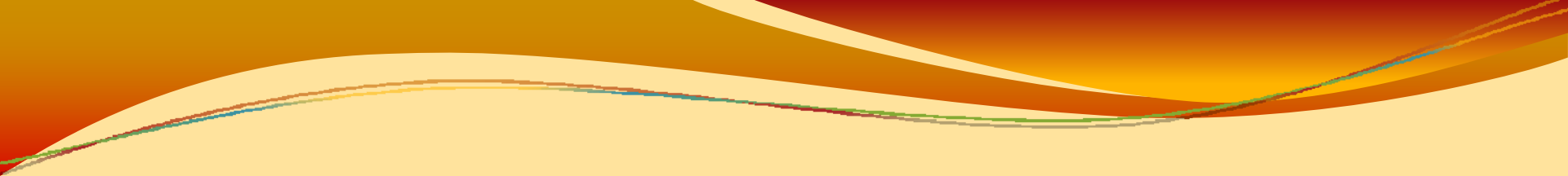
We started out very polite, slowly we moved to a little aggressive trying to compete with each other to the point where disagreement turned into debate in one particular class. We would shake our heads when someone would say something that we disagreed with, as if they were wrong and we were right. After that we realized this had to change. It wasn't very verbal or even expressive in any other way, but we all grew with in us to get to a point where we could just talk and agree to disagree.

(Woman of color)



... When I initially began the course with my analytic mindset, my goals for the class were to do the readings, make one or two contributions to the discussion, then float through the rest of the class, I did not want to make myself vulnerable. I am not sure exactly why I was afraid of being vulnerable; however I guess it was derived from the fear that I would get my feelings hurt. I soon began to discover though, that despite the risks one takes when making themselves vulnerable, there is also a great satisfaction in openly expressing oneself. I feel like I was able to make this transition to openness because of the other members of the dialogue.

(White man)



Conflict and disagreements came up all the time ... Whenever there was disagreement the dialogue was so much more passionate and meaningful. You could see that when disagreement arose we were into the conversation much more, we were eager to learn and hear others' opinions. ... Although at times we didn't come to a mutual consensus, our thoughts and feelings were heard and respected, that's what matters. The reason why our group was able to accomplish all these aspects is because of the feeling of community we shared. ... There was a mutual respect and friendship ...

(Man of Color)



## ***Web of Oppression activity***

The most intriguing dialogue that we had was about the web of oppression. ... Another participant and I were particularly at odds over the subject of women being oppressed. She was speaking from the position that women are the weaker sex and that there are distinct biological differences between males and females that justify patriarchy. I held the position that biological differences may exist but they are the result of patriarchal oppression and that females can develop strength on par with males if they are permitted to cultivate those characteristics that are attributed to males. I know that she was speaking from a position of white upper-class privilege and that she attended an all girls school which certainly had an influence in her opinion. Coming from a Latino working-class background I have seen women that need to possess strength and qualities normally attributed to men in order to survive. I can only assume that her own background did not afford her the opportunity to witness physically strong women and therefore she can not conceive of a woman that could perform labor that requires extreme physical strength.

(Woman of color)

## Hot topic dialogue on *Sports, Women and Gender*

So I have contempt for sports because it undermines the importance of relationships with other people, unless within a particular setting. Emotions are boundless and should be expressed when necessary, not just when a game is won or lost. Additionally, sports are a social institution that allows people to showcase and romanticize violence and the dominance over an opponent. Its testosterone driven space embodies problems of our society, and provides a platform for them to be justified. That was my input to the discussion, not taking either side of the argument, but providing a third perspective.

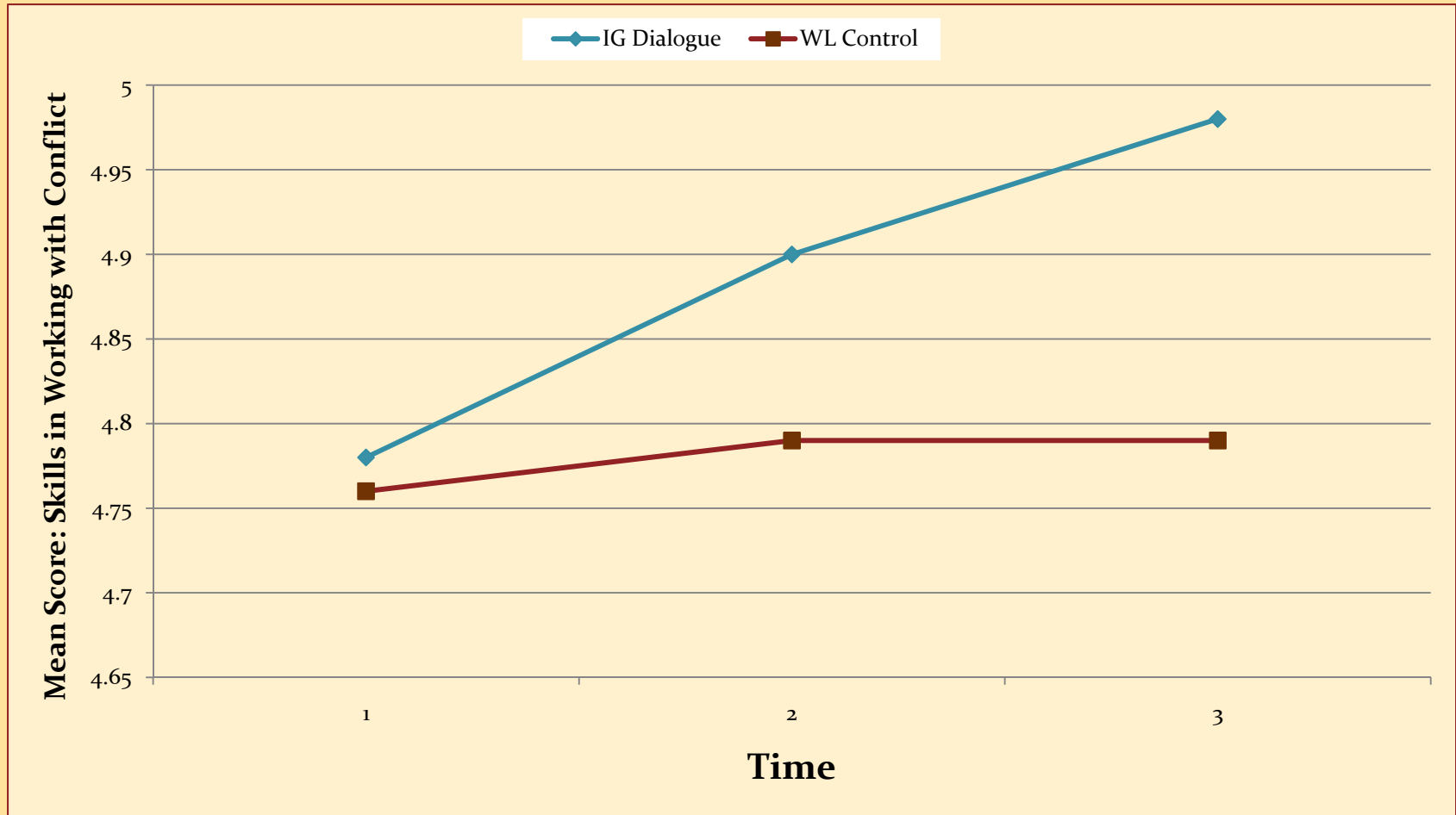
(Man of color)

# Skills in Working with Conflict

- I generally try to avoid conflict\*
- I can help people from different groups use conflict constructively
- I clam up (freeze) when conflict involves strong emotions\*
- I can work effectively with conflicts that involve me
- I am usually uncertain how to help people learn from conflicts\*
- I learn a lot about myself in conflict situations
- I'd like for groups to just get along rather than deal openly with their conflicts\*
- I can help people from different groups deal with conflicts that break about between groups.

*pretest Cronbach's  $\alpha = .739$ ; posttest  $\alpha = .758$*

# Treatment Effects over Time



# Consistency of Effects

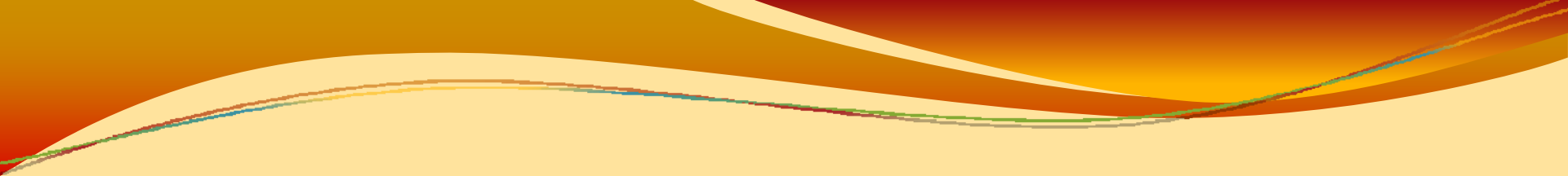
- These results hold consistent across dialogue group topic and demographics
- No moderating effects at Time 2 or Time 3 for:
  - Advantaged-Disadvantaged status
  - Topic of Dialogue (Race or Gender)
  - 4-way interaction (Time X Condition X Status X Topic)
  - Demographic category (Women of color, White women, Men of color, White men)

# Applying Conflict Skills

Positive dialogue was used a lot when working with my ICP [collaborative project] group because we were all the go-get-it type, without dialogue our groups strong personalities would have made us fail miserably.

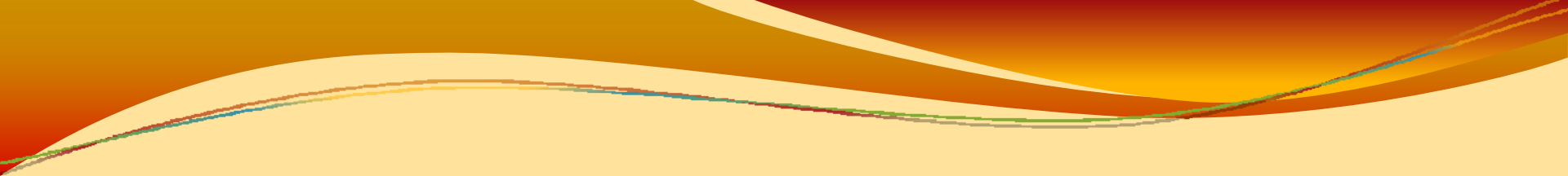
Instead of trying to compete with each other by talking over one another, we took turns voicing our ideas on what our project goals and plans were, in the end we collaborated bits and pieces of everyone's ideas and made it into a great project.

(White Woman in Race Dialogue)



I have applied to be a student mediator .... I think many of the skills I acquired in dialogue such as understanding other people's perspectives, and surfacing conflict can be utilized to resolve disputes amongst students on campus. ... I think that the resolution of even small issues amongst students will yield a more positive campus climate.

(White Man)



One point that really hit home is the fact that even though we don't say nothing, the not speaking up can still hurt. I am now trying to speak up, as I am guilty myself of using my culture and my identity to bring my own people down. I will say that "because I am Indian" and even when I say it to bring myself down, it still does not make it right. It is still racist, and it leaves the door open for other people to talk down about you and your race. I mean if they see that you can do it, why can't they. So the education starts with a voice and this dialogue gave me the opportunity to realize that the voice can start with me.

(Man of Color)



Outside of dialogue, I have used the concepts and skills learned in the dialogue to address issues of negative gender representation at a local fast food establishment. ... I was able to identify and articulate the ways in which the restaurant logo perpetuated the objectification of women through sexualized depictions. I supported a campus group in their protest against the logo and I posted a response to an article in the Daily about the protest. Before this dialogue I would not have felt confident in speaking out against the logo. I would have recognized it as offensive but I would have been apprehensive about voicing my opinion ...

(Woman of Color)

**Thank you!**

**Let's  
Dialogue**

