



RESEARCH ARTICLE

In Creative Fidelity to Dialogue: Bringing Intergroup Dialogue to Jesuit Campuses

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how intergroup dialogue (IGD) offers a contemporary enactment of the Jesuit pedagogical tradition of creative fidelity—a balance between fidelity to Ignatian origins and responsiveness to urgent social challenges. U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities face a dual obligation: to reckon with their entanglement in histories of colonialism, slavery, and systemic racism, and to prepare students for transformative action in a pluralistic, global context. IGD, as an empirically tested and dialogic pedagogy, aligns with Ignatian values of discernment, accompaniment, and *cura personalis*, while fostering whole-person formation across differences of race, culture, and identity. By situating IGD within the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Jesuit mission of educating “men and women for others,” this article identifies key possibilities and pitfalls for implementing dialogue on Jesuit campuses and argues that Jesuit higher education is uniquely positioned to lead in advancing intercultural, justice-oriented dialogue.

Keywords:

intergroup dialogue; Jesuit pedagogy; higher education; social justice

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Introduction

A constant remains at play in the educational and spiritual successes of the Society of Jesus: collaboration. Unlike most other Catholic religious orders, St. Ignatius cofounded the Order with his University of Paris compatriots.¹ Early Jesuits carefully balanced the local and global needs of the Church, partnering with lay and nonbelievers where it served their ultimate purpose. These collaborations were immensely challenging in practice and often fell short of lofty, and not so lofty, aims. European Jesuits' evangelical mission served as a core vector of colonialism that helped produce entrenched inequities across ethnic and cultural groups; contemporary dominance of Western European and U.S. higher education institutions reflects this ongoing reality.² Jesuit priests in the Americas were enmeshed in colonialist logics of the seventeenth-century Americas, and the afterlives of dehumanizing, racist discourse continues to be a source of truth telling and reconciliation on many U.S. Jesuit campuses today.³

Jesuit higher education continues its mission to bridge people striving to live into a faith that does justice in light of these epoch-making conflicts and (un)acknowledged harms. Their history of racial slavery, segregation, and violence obligates U.S. Jesuit college and universities to engage in race-conscious intergroup dialogue for individual formation and collective justice seeking. No two Jesuit institutions share the same history, community, or leadership; however, they are bound by a shared commitment to strive towards justice. In alignment with their institutional mission, Jesuit colleges and universities can engage in sustained, empirically-tested dialogue efforts to holistically prepare students to transform themselves and the world around them. Failing to do so risks further segregating and underserving students.

The ethos of Superior General Fr. Pedro Arrupe offers a starting point in considering the role of dialogue on Jesuit campuses today. In light of Vatican II and its attempts to revitalize the Church in response to societal changes of the twentieth century, Fr. Arrupe called for a renewal of the core Jesuit mission of educating people for others. The rhetoric of social

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- 1 John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 32–34.
 - 2 Nathaniel Millett, "The Memory of Slavey at Saint Louis University," in *Jesuits and Race: A Global History of Continuity and Change, 1530–2020*, ed. Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker (University of New Mexico Press, 2022), 188–89; Alejandro Cañeque, "In the Shadow of Francis Xavier: Martyrdom and Colonialism in the Jesuit Asian Missions," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 9, no. 3 (2022): 440–41, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-09030007>.
 - 3 Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker, "Introduction: Jesuits and Race from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries," in Millett and Parker, *Jesuits and Race*, 1–2.

justice as an essential aspect of current Jesuit education flows from Pedro Arrupe's now famous remarks on educating men and women for others made on July 31, 1973, at the 10th International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe.⁴ He led a shared consideration of the needs of the contemporary world, and the unique place of Jesuit education, in light of the experiences of St. Ignatius and founding documents of the Society, particularly the *Spiritual Exercises*.⁵ Superior General Kolvenbach, in his eulogy for his predecessor, highlighted Fr. Arrupe's enduring commitment to responding to the Jesuit charism with "creative fidelity."⁶

This creative fidelity encapsulated twin desires: to return to the origins of the Jesuit charism and to respond to pressing global injustices demanding meaningful engagement. It walks the line between tradition and adaptation, breathing new life into the ongoing Jesuit way of proceeding. Creative fidelity nurtures a living tradition animated by enduring truths and contemporary demands. As a codified tradition of innovation, Jesuit education has remained strikingly similar and radically divergent across contexts, hungry for the application of effective pedagogy yet true to its guiding philosophy of education.

I argue that structured and sustained educational dialogues are well aligned with the Jesuit charism. The intergroup dialogue (IGD) model is uniquely well suited for Jesuit campuses and serves as an exemplar of empirically-grounded dialogue practice. While initial university intergroup dialogue programs were established over forty years ago, Jesuit colleges and universities have been slow on the uptake. This article contributes to contemporary discussions of Jesuit pedagogy by arguing for greater investment in intergroup dialogue on Jesuit campuses. Such dialogue can catalyze meaningful student growth, reenergize collaborative discourse, and signal long-term value for institutions. Jesuit college and universities in the U.S. can pull on cutting-edge interdisciplinary scholarship and their almost five-hundred-year-old pedagogical tradition to enliven formal dialogue programming.

4 For more on how a faith that does justice has been theorized and instrumentalized in contemporary Jesuit pedagogy, see José Mesa, S.J., "The International Apostolate of Jesuit Education: Recent Developments and Contemporary Challenges," *International Studies in Catholic Education* 5 (2013): 176–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2013.821339>.

5 Obwanda Stephen Meyo, S.J., "The Educational Ideas of Pedro Arrupe, SJ: A Valuable Resource for All Catholic Educators," *International Studies in Catholic Education* 6, no. 2 (2014): 128–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2014.929803>.

6 Vincent T. O'Keefe, S.J., "The Creative Fidelity of Pedro Arrupe," *America*, December 20, 1997, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/1997/12/20/creative-fidelity-pedro-arrupe-december-20-1997/>.

This article offers an overview of contemporary intergroup dialogue scholarship and outlines how intergroup dialogue exemplifies creative fidelity to the Jesuit pedagogical tradition. It also posits four major possibilities and pitfalls of applying intergroup dialogue scholarship in Jesuit higher educational institutions. Jesuit campuses should be not merely late adopters but emergent leaders in meaningful intercultural dialogue, developing new approaches informed by their rich local, global, and Catholic context. This article posits a few pragmatic ways of doing so and suggests directions for further Jesuit dialogic practice and scholarship.

Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) in Higher Education

The Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) model remains a central benchmark and well-regarded exemplar of dialogic programming.⁷ Over a hundred campuses have built learning experiences grounded in the model.⁸ The only model developed specifically for higher education, IGD offers a facilitated, structured dialogue spanning several weeks oriented towards social identity groups with a history of struggle, domination, and/or segregation.⁹ The meaning and boundaries of social identity groups remains fraught, but the term stems from social identity theory, which understands social groups to be about how individuals categorize themselves as part of a collective in relation to an out-group.¹⁰ In the context of race and ethnicity, this might mean broad categories such as white people and people of color or more contextualized identity groupings, such as Afro-Latinas, multiracial students, or Vietnamese; these groupings are not random but depend on how people are differentially racialized with respect to other groups.¹¹ In an

- 7 Keri A. Frantell, Joseph R. Miles, and Anne M. Ruwe, "Intergroup Dialogue: A Review of Recent Empirical Research and Its Implications for Research and Practice," *Small Group Research* 50, no. 5 (2019): 655, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496419835923>; Ximena Zúñiga, Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, Mark Chesler, and Adena Cytron-Walker, "Intergroup Dialogue in Higher Education: Meaningful Learning about Social Justice," special issue, *ASHE Higher Education Report* 32, no. 4 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1002/aehe.3204>.
- 8 Stephanie D. Hicks, "On Being Absorbed: Taking Up Dialogic Pedagogy in University Diversity Plans," *New Directions for Higher Education* (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20521>.
- 9 Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, Patricia Gurin, and Jaclyn Rodríguez, "Intergroup Dialogue: Education for Social Justice," *The Oxford Handbook of Social Psychology and Social Justice*, ed. Philip L. Hammack (Oxford University Press: 2017), 381.
- 10 Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Brooks/Cole, 1979), 36.
- 11 For more on a theory of relational racialization and its use in educational research, see Laura C. Chávez-Moreno, "Toward a Relational Racialization Lens in

intergroup dialogue, two facilitators from divergent social positions led a small group of 12–18 participants through a series of themed dialogues. These facilitators role model inclusive behaviors, frame the dialogue, help process group dynamics and strong emotions, and help manage conflict.¹²

IGD is typically organized around weekly 1.5- to 2-hour meetings, from about 7–8 weeks to a full semester of 14–15 weeks. It consists of four main programmatic stages, each with its own goals.¹³ The first stage, group beginnings, centers on collective trust building and norm setting. Then, participants explore commonalities and differences by sharing personal narratives about how power, oppression, and social identities have impacted their lives. The third stage orients the group towards issues of conflict: these riskier dialogues address more controversial or challenging topics as the group negotiates conflict and competing truth claims. Finally, as the intergroup dialogue experience begins to end, participants determine ways to build alliances and take collective action related to new learnings from the dialogue.¹⁴ For example, an interethnic dialogue concerning the Israel-Palestinian conflict might begin by setting shared expectations for the dialogue; move into personal reflections on how religion, race and ethnicity, and nationality have shaped participants' experience; and only then directly engage with some of the contemporary controversies of the most recent conflict. The intergroup dialogue would also leave time for participants to then consider what alliance building and shared engagement might mean for the group moving forward.

These four stages are fairly standardized across IGD offerings, regardless of if the dialogue is a curricular, co-curricular, or extra-curricular offering. At the same time, facilitator interest, programmatic foci, and the needs and interests of participants often influence how much or how little time is spent in each stage, allowing for more contextualized learning. Many intergroup dialogue programs have focused on gender and patriarchy or

Education: Addressing Critiques of CRT's Race Theory," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 38, no. 2 (2025): 211–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2024.2365196>.

- 12 Chloé Gurin-Sands, Patricia Gurin, Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, and Shardae Osuna, "Fostering a Commitment to Social Action: How Talking, Thinking, and Feeling Make a Difference in Intergroup Dialogue," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 45, no. 1 (2012): 74–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.643699>.
- 13 Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda and Ximena Zúñiga, "Fostering Meaningful Racial Engagement Through Intergroup Dialogues," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 6, no. 1 (2003): 113, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430203006001015>.
- 14 For a fuller description of the four stages of intergroup dialogue, see Zúñiga et al., "Intergroup Dialogue in Higher Education."

on race, ethnicity, and racism.¹⁵ Dialogues grappling with religious and spiritual identity, antisemitism, and Islamophobia; sexuality, homophobia, and transphobia; and social class and classism have also been generated.¹⁶

Intergroup dialogue focuses on iterative cycles of experience, reflection, and action, in alignment with the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm.¹⁷ It illuminates the overlapping sociopolitical, economic, environmental, and cultural contexts of students, scaffolds learning experiences that allow for specific activities and readings, guides reflection on said activity, and then encourages discernment of how to best act in the world given this new understanding.¹⁸ The goal is not to convert students to any one way of thinking or being in the world. Rather, facilitators accompany participants as they query their own felt responses, negotiate group conflict, and reexamine their own experiences alongside those of others. Such dialogue de-

15 Frantell, Miles, and Ruwe, "Intergroup Dialogue: A Review of Recent Empirical Research," 658–72.

16 For more empirical research on religious and spiritually oriented dialogues, see Sachi Edwards, "Intergroup Dialogue & Religious Identity: Attempting to Raise Awareness of Christian Privilege & Religious Oppression," *Multicultural Education* 24, no. 2 (2017): 18–24; and Manal Yazbak-Abu Ahmad, Adrienne B. Dessel, Alice Mishkin, Noor Ali, and Hind Omar, "Intergroup Dialogue as a Just Dialogue: Challenging and Preventing Normalization in Campus Dialogues," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 2 (2015): 236–59, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dome.12067>.

For more empirical research on sexuality dialogues, see Adrienne B. Dessel, Michael R. Woodford, Robbie Routenberg, and Duane P. Breijak, "Heterosexual Students' Experiences in Sexual Orientation Intergroup Dialogue Courses," *Journal of Homosexuality* 60, no. 7 (2013): 1054–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2013.776413>; and Adrienne B. Dessel, Michael R. Woodford, and Naomi Warren, "Intergroup Dialogue Courses on Sexual Orientation: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Student Experiences and Outcomes," *Journal of Homosexuality* 58, no. 8 (2011): 1132–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2011.598420>.

For more empirical research on social class dialogues, see Meredith Madden, "Social Class Dialogues and the Fostering of Class Consciousness," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 48, no. 4 (2015): 571–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2015.1086227>; and Michelle L. Rogers and Adriana Ruiz Alvarado, "Let's Talk about Class: Exploring Social Class Identity through Intergroup Dialogue," in *Social Class Supports*, ed. Georgiana Martin and Sonja Ardoin (Routledge, 2021), 181–94.

17 International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE), "Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach," in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, ed. Vincent J. Duminuco (Fordham University Press, 2000), 235, 237–39.

18 Patricia Gurin, Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, and Ximena Zúñiga, *Dialogue Across Difference: Practice, Theory and Research on Intergroup Dialogue* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2013), 46–51, 69–72.

depends on building collective understanding over time through challenging assumptions, rethinking one's position, and grappling with the emotional realities at play in the group and society at large.¹⁹ Dialogue orients towards emergent understanding and empathetic solidarity while acknowledging that each individual will have different takeaways from the experience.

Significant benefits to student participation in intergroup dialogue resound in the established literature. The IGD model focuses on the tripartite outcomes of intergroup relationships, understanding, and collaboration with pre- and post-surveys evidencing significant student learning across all three domains.²⁰ Qualitative studies routinely reinforce the experiential benefits of intergroup dialogue, with participants claiming IGD to be their single most transformative learning experience.²¹ Quantitative analysis from one of the largest experimental studies of a diversity initiative in higher education highlight statistically significant benefits for students, ranging from increased analytical and complex thinking, greater intergroup empathy, and greater motivation and confidence to bridge differences and address social inequities.²² Further reinforcing these findings, a recent meta-analysis of a decade of IGD scholarship found positive outcomes across IGD and IGD-inspired models including increased perspective taking, attitudinal shifts, skill development, and action preparedness.²³ These results hold across race, ethnicity, and gender, suggesting students with salient marginalized identities are not being sacrificed for the benefit

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- 19 Nicholas Sorensen, Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, Patricia Gurin, and Kelly E. Maxwell, "Taking a 'Hands On' Approach to Diversity in Higher Education: A Critical-Dialogic Model for Effective Intergroup Interaction," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 9, no. 1 (2009): 13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2009.01193.x>.
 - 20 Sorensen et al., "Taking a 'Hands On' Approach," 24.
 - 21 Kristie A. Ford and Heather J. Lipkin, "I Wouldn't be the Person I Am Without IGR': Implications and Conclusions," in *Facilitating Change through Intergroup Dialogue: Social Justice Advocacy in Practice*, ed. Kristie A. Ford, (Routledge, 2017), 134–35; Kristie A. Ford, and Victoria K. Malaney, "I Now Harbor More Pride in My Race': The Educational Benefits of Inter- and Intra-racial Dialogues on the Experiences of Students of Color and Multiracial Students," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 45, no. 1 (2012): 31–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.643180>.
 - 22 Gurin, Nagda, and Zúñiga, *Dialogue Across Difference*, 150–60; Jaclyn Rodríguez, Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, Nicholas Sorensen, and Patricia Gurin, "Engaging Race and Racism for Socially Just Intergroup Relations," *Multicultural Education Review* 10, no. 3 (2018): 229, 236–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2018.1497874>.
 - 23 Frantell, Miles, and Ruwe, "Intergroup Dialogue: A Review of Recent Empirical Research," 657.

of their peers. Participants grow in their understanding of self and others; develop fuller capacities to listen deeply, relate authentically, and think meaningfully across diverse perspectives; and build a more complex understanding of social, political, economic, and interpersonal dynamics.²⁴ More than a generation of scholarship makes clear: intergroup dialogue can generate significant whole person learning.

Contemporary research in higher education dialogic contexts seeks ways of maximizing learning and minimizing harm. This includes investigations of how dialogue can be built across ideological positions,²⁵ the impact of dialogue on multiply marginalized communities, such as Black women,²⁶ and the epistemological development taking pace as students revisit truth claims together.²⁷ Practices for effective facilitation continue to be iterated amid contemporary challenges and opportunities.²⁸ For example, consideration of the role of competing historical narratives in dialogue has been essential amidst the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁹

Criticism of intergroup dialogue programming has largely focused on failures to interrupt power dynamics operative in society and possibilities of harm to individual participants, particularly those from salient marginalized communities.³⁰ Dialogue efforts can be particularly insidious when

- 24 Gurin, Nagda, and Zúñiga, *Dialogue Across Difference*, 215–39; Rodríguez, Nagda, Sorensen, and Gurin, “Engaging Race and Racism for Socially Just Intergroup Relations,” 236–39.
- 25 Rachel Wahl, “Agency: The Constraint of Instrumentality,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 56, no. 4 (2022): 512, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12677>.
- 26 Chaddrick D. James-Gallaway and ArCasia D. James-Gallaway, “Structural Acuity: Black Women Undergraduate Students in Cross-Racial Intergroup Dialogues,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 18, no. 4 (2025): 479–90, <https://10.1037/dhe0000521>.
- 27 Grant R. Jackson, “Using Student Development Theory to Inform Intergroup Dialogue Research, Theory, and Practice,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 15, no. 2 (2022): 202, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/dhe0000241>.
- 28 Stephanie D. Hicks and Donna Rich Kaplowitz, *Facilitating Transformational Dialogues: Creating Socially Just Communities* (Teachers College Press, 2024), 15–16.
- 29 Yael Ben David, Boaz Hameiri, Sharón Benheim, Becky Leshem, Anat Sarid, Michael Sternberg, Arie Nadler, and Shifra Sagy, “Exploring Ourselves within Intergroup Conflict: The Role of Intragroup Dialogue in Promoting Acceptance of Collective Narratives and Willingness toward Reconciliation,” *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 23, no. 3 (2017): 269–77, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000205>; Philip L. Hammack and Andrew Pilecki, “Power in History: Contrasting Theoretical Approaches to Intergroup Dialogue,” *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 2 (2015): 380–81, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12116>.
- 30 James-Gallaway and James-Gallaway, “Structural Acuity,” 8; Adrienne Dessel and Mary E. Rogge, “Evaluation of Intergroup Dialogue: A Review of the Em-

they present more dialogue as a panacea, obscuring forms of silencing, alienation, and violence expected in any prolonged intergroup contact and assuming a one-size-fits-all approach to social justice education.³¹

While initial university intergroup dialogue programs were established over forty years ago, Jesuit colleges and universities have been slow on the uptake. Jesuit campuses have long spearheaded forms of interreligious dialogue but have been surprisingly silent when it comes to interracial and interethnic dialogue scholarship. This is starting to change on a practitioner level with specific campuses—such as Georgetown, Xavier, and University of Scranton—innovating dialogue programming. Yet, there remains a scholarly gap regarding how Jesuit institutions create opportunities for interracial and interethnic dialogue in creative fidelity to their educative charism.

Extending the Jesuit Pedagogical Tradition through Intergroup Dialogue

Serving the Mission of Catholic Colleges and Universities

Intergroup dialogue, as both a specific pedagogical intervention and a set of transferrable practices for facilitating sustained dialogue, appears uniquely well suited for Jesuit campuses living into communities in diversity. Intergroup dialogue is a natural extension of the Jesuit pedagogical tradition given the characteristics and purposes of contemporary Catholic colleges and universities. The Catholic Church has reinforced the importance of meaningful dialogue between people of good faith and highlighted the central role of the Catholic university in this work. In his apostolic constitution on Catholic colleges and universities, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II presents the Catholic university as steeped in its mission to pursue the truth while also serving the good of the Church and the communities in which it finds itself. The university community must be “characterized by mutual respect, sincere dialogue, and protection of the rights of individuals” in order to be aligned with the social good at the heart of Catholic education.³² One of the defining characteristics and illuminat-

pirical Literature Colloquy,” *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2009): 224, <https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.230>.

31 Nicholas C. Burbules, “The Limits of Dialogue as a Critical Pedagogy,” in *Revolutionary Pedagogies: Cultural Politics, Education, and Discourse of Theory*, ed. Peter Pericles Trifonas (Taylor & Francis, 2000), 252.

32 John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae* [Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities], The Holy See, August 15, 1990, §21, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html.

ing purposes of Catholic higher education is cultural dialogue, one that is “open to all human experience and is ready to dialogue with and learn from any culture.”³³ This includes dialogues among cultural traditions within the Church, between the Church and the greater society, and between Catholic thought and contemporary evidence-based research. Prioritizing cultural dialogue complements a rethinking of evangelization away from convincing others through direct pleas towards an understanding of evangelization as embodying “a living institutional witness to Christ and his message.”³⁴ Evangelization appears not in the form of the preacher nor missionary but rather in the welcoming dialogue partner open to exploring, and living out, their internal values and guiding beliefs.

In *Veritatis Gaudium*, Pope Francis reinforces this dialogic theme in his four criteria for ecclesiastical studies, specifically, and Catholic higher education, more broadly.³⁵ He refocuses on the sacred mystery of the trinity, and outlines three additional criteria that flow from it: wide-ranging dialogue between people and communities, wide-ranging dialogue between ways of knowing (i.e., increased cross- and interdisciplinary work), and global dialogue between Catholic institutions. All four criteria deal with collaboration and dialogue.³⁶

These two apostolic constitutions on Catholic higher education reflect a broader refocusing of the Church on dialogue as a means towards uplifting the dignity of all people, reinvigorating Catholicism as an “all-embracing” Church, and working towards social justice in the spirit of the Gospels. This shift has been pronounced in the forceful embracing of inter-religious dialogue as an essential good and the revitalization of synodality; in fact, many claim synodality as the cornerstone of Pope Francis’ vision for the church with the Synod on Synodality as its clearest enactment.³⁷ Critics and advocates of the Synod on Synodality agree that the specific

33 John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, §43.

34 John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, §41; Joyce Ann Konigsburg, “Religious Pluralism: Transforming Society Using New Concepts of Evangelization and Dialogue,” *Religions* 14, no. 1 (2023): 80, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010080>.

35 Francis, *Veritatis Gaudium* [On Ecclesiastical Colleges and Universities], The Holy See, December 8, 2017, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20171208_veritatis-gaudium.html.

36 Francis, *Veritatis Gaudium*, §7.

37 Richard R. Gaillardetz, “Synodality and the Francis Pontificate: A Fresh Reception of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 84, no. 1 (2023): 60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00405639221147844>; Lucas Briola, “Why Can’t We Be Friends? The Synod on Synodality and the Eucharistic Revival,” *Religions* 14, no. 7 (2023): 865, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070865>.

policies and practices that govern such dialogic engagement are of paramount importance, even as some critics bemoan the overly bureaucratic nature of much framing of synodality.³⁸ The Catholic university has a central role to play in empowering synodal engagement and serving as a living institutional witness. Evidence-based practices for effective dialogue across difference can bolster these efforts.

Engaging the Jesuit Charism

Jesuit campuses are well positioned to take a leading role in such dialogic encounter, particularly in light of the Jesuit charism. Jesuit spirituality shares epistemic and pedagogical roots with the intergroup dialogue model. The assumption that God works through each of us in unique ways worthy of celebration remains a core aspect of the Society's "world-friendly spirituality": an understanding of the divine as always already a part of all things, peoples, and contexts.³⁹ This abiding belief reinforces a focus on the collective sensemaking and shared perspective taking of intergroup dialogue.

In addition, St. Ignatius clarified that discernment requires the presence of another. Individuals were not to try to understand God's operations in their life on their own even as their emotional landscape provided the seeds of illumination. The *Spiritual Exercises* were uniquely designed as a text of accompaniment, both in the individual's accompaniment of Jesus and in their accompaniment by their spiritual director.⁴⁰ Intergroup dialogue shares this understanding that meaningful discernment and holistic growth happen in community. It also foregrounds contemplation in action, a hallmark of Jesuit education, in its praxis.⁴¹ The Jesuit have long centered iterative action and reflection, buoyed by ritualized practices of contemplation, structured retreats, and daily pauses.⁴² Intergroup dialogue offers a structure for taking students out of their everyday routines to critically reflect on their behaviors, assumptions, and beliefs. Dialogue is framed as

38 Briola, "Why Can't We Be Friends?," 865; Nicholas J. Healy, Jr., "Communion, Sacramental Authority, and the Limits of Synodality," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 48, no. 4 (2021): 678, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cmm.2021.a933428>.

39 John W. O'Malley, *Saints or Devils Incarnate? Studies in Jesuit History* (Brill, 2013), 204.

40 Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph: A New Translation*, trans. Louis J. Puhl (Loyola Press, 1954).

41 Barton T. Geger, S.J., "Cura Personalis: Some Ignatian Inspirations," *Jesuit Higher Education* 3, no. 2 (2014): 14.

42 O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 340.

both an opportunity to glean critical insight from the past and build momentum towards renewed action.

Exploring Jesuit legacies

Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S. also have an obligation to interrogate their historical role in colonization, genocide, and white supremacy. It is well known and well documented that the Society of Jesus played an instrumental role in colonial enterprise, serving as missionaries to indigenous populations across Asia, Africa, and the Americas.⁴³ The historical, geographical, and sociopolitical range of these activities renders summations a fool's errand. Yet, it is clear the Jesuits lived a commitment to finding ways of bridging sociocultural differences, developing shared communication, and advancing interpersonal relationships across chasms of culture and history. They also led efforts towards European hegemony and colonial authority. Perhaps O'Malley's infamous title sums up the complexity of Jesuit global history as well as four words can: saints or devils incarnate.⁴⁴ Enmeshed in the world, so, too, was the Society of Jesus enmeshed in the European colonialist, imperialist, and unflinchingly white supremacist logics fueling a forced march into modernity.

Recent racial reckonings on U.S. Jesuit campuses—such as the 2017 student protests following the uncovering that Georgetown University Jesuits sold 272 enslaved people down the river in 1838 as an act of financial expediency—has catalyzed scholarship and engagement concerning this legacy.⁴⁵ Contemporary scholars highlight the Jesuits as integral actors in the colonial exploitation and forced acculturation of indigenous peoples to European powers as well as influential slaveholders with sizable plantations.⁴⁶ They also call attention to the enduring European supremacist log-

43 Millett and Parker, *Jesuits and Race*, 3–4.; For more on the colonial enterprises of the Society of Jesus in North America, see Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632–1650* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

44 O'Malley, *Saints or Devils Incarnate?*.

45 Hilary Green, "The Georgetown Slavery Archive. <http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/>," *The American Historical Review* 125, no. 2 (2020): 587–89, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhaa186>.

46 Local historiographies of the Society of Jesus' colonialist past continue to proliferate. See William (Bo) Chamberlin, "Silencing genocide: The Jesuit Ministry in Colonial Cartagena de Indias and its Legacies," *Journal of Black Studies* 49, no. 7 (2018): 673–75, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934718778718>; Brendan J. M. Weaver, "'The Grace of God and Virtue of Obedience': The Archeology of Slavery and the Jesuit Hacienda Systems of Nasca, Peru, 1616–1767," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 8, no. 3 (2021): 437, 441, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/22141332->

ics that continue as white supremacist and neocolonialist logics in contemporary Jesuit institutions. This includes locating lingering racial divides on contemporary Jesuit U.S. campuses to these ongoing colonial legacies.⁴⁷

Today, projects of racialized truth-telling and reconciliation have been undertaken by Jesuit provinces and campus communities to attend to this violent history and envision more just futures.⁴⁸ This work can be forwarded through structured, curricular dialogic engagement. Intergroup dialogue programming offers space for holistic formation of students, staff, and faculty in light of institutionalized histories of racial oppression and exclusion. Intercultural opportunities may be meaningful in their own right, but a lack of structured analysis of power and identity curtails truth-telling, reconciliation, and justice. Students need opportunities to develop skills necessary to grapple with personal experiences occurring within racialized campus spaces. Intergroup dialogue offers a powerful, evidence-based framework through which to do so. Such efforts can enact the Jesuit obligation to interrogate its history of intercultural service and role in (neo)colonization, genocide, and White supremacy in ways that center the marginalized and walk with young people as they live into a hopeful, shared future.⁴⁹

Leveraging Contemporary Global Networks for Social Justice

The formation of global citizens is no small task. Uniting across differences, leading through complexity, and navigating competing systems of knowledge and value grows logarithmically more difficult in globalized contexts.⁵⁰ Higher education scholarship highlights the immense potential

0803P005; and Susan M. Deeds, “The Most Barbarous and Fierce Peoples in the New World: Decoding the Jesuit Missionary Project in Colonial North Mexico,” in Millet and Parker, *Jesuits and Race*, 166–69. In addition, Jean Luc Enyegue, *Competing Catholicisms: The Jesuits, the Vatican and the Making of Postcolonial French Africa* (Boydell & Brewer, 2022) offers a detailed accounting of neoliberal Church practices in the region from 1935 to 1978.

47 Millet, “The Memory of Slavery at Saint Louis University,” 185.

48 Adam Rothman, “Introduction” in *Facing Georgetown’s History: A Reader on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation*, ed. Adam Rothman and Elsa Barraza Mendoza (Georgetown University Press, 2021), 4–6.

49 This is in keeping with the four Apostolic Preferences of the order: showing the way to God, walking with the excluded, journeying with youth, and caring for our common home. For more on the current Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, see Arturo Sosa, S.J., “Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019–2029,” Letter to the Whole Society [of Jesus], February 19, 2019, https://www.jesuits.global/sj_files/2020/05/2019-06_19feb19_eng.pdf.

50 Jan Blommaert, *Discourse: Key Topics in Sociolinguistics* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 15.

of building international learning experiences and the immense difficulties inherent in doing so.⁵¹ Jesuit higher education seeks to leverage an international network for student growth and collaborative action in mutually enriching ways oriented towards greater social justice.⁵²

Much work is being done to keep the Jesuit network alive as a singular body with significant cross-regional collaboration. General Congregation 36 led to the formation of Educate Magis, a global reorientation of Jesuit pedagogy and attempt to spur international partnerships.⁵³ Secondary and pre-secondary partnerships continued to be advanced through multinational affiliations (e.g. Jesuit Schools Network), and partnerships have expanded beyond educational initiatives (e.g. Xavier University's Jesuit Network for Mission and Development).⁵⁴ Intergroup dialogue naturally extends this core strength, offering students tools, frameworks, and practices that aid in the co-construction of knowledge across local contexts. Students at Jesuit universities in Tokyo, Milwaukee, Rio de Janeiro, and Kraków could now dialogue virtually in real-time on issues of personal and global importance. Intergroup dialogue is one empirically tested approach that can activate this rich global network for personal, institutional, and social transformation.

Applying Intergroup Dialogue to Jesuit Contexts: Possibilities and Pitfalls

I have offered a multifaceted rationale for the institutional uptake of intergroup dialogue on Jesuit campuses. An exploration of some expected opportunities and challenges in implementing intergroup dialogue pedagogy in Jesuit higher education contexts follows. These pitfalls and possibilities should be considered when creating, facilitating, and evaluating intergroup dialogue programming at Jesuit colleges and universities:

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- 51 Hans de Wit and Philip G. Altbach, "Internationalization in Higher Education: Global Trends and Recommendations for Its Future," *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 34–35; Hilary E. Kahn and Melanie Agnew, "Global Learning Through Difference: Considerations for Teaching, Learning, and the Internationalization of Higher Education," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 21, no. 1 (2017): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322969.2020.1820898>.
 - 52 David Hollenbach, S.J., "The Challenges of Jesuit Global Education: Responses to Poverty and Displacement," *International Studies in Catholic Education* 12, no. 2 (2020): 149–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2020.1810980>.
 - 53 "Jesuit Global Network of Schools," Educate Magis, accessed August 7, 2025, <https://www.educatemagis.org/jesuit-global-network-of-schools/>.
 - 54 "Jesuit Global Network of Schools," Educate Magis; "Xavier Network: The Jesuit Network for Mission and Development," Xavier University, accessed August 7, 2025, <https://xavier.network/>.

Pitfall #1: Backfiring Advocacy Facilitation

The more a facilitator engages as an advocate the more they tend to undermine their advocacy. When facilitators promote a singular position and directly challenge others, they often subtract from the transformative potential of the dialogue.⁵⁵ This kind of advocacy facilitation “silenc[es] participants whose perspectives it challenge[s]; and then that same ideology [is] used to justify their silencing” in a toxic negative feedback loop.⁵⁶ Such an approach was found to negatively impact intergroup understanding and collaboration of participants.⁵⁷ In dialogue settings, it is better to be a Catholic witness and role model, to be invitational, than to be a traveling Catholic salesman, forceful in convincing others to one’s position. Approaches to dialogue that champion a more traditional approach to evangelization and lack responsiveness to “each individual and the socio-cultural context in which individuals live and act and communicate with one another” will likely fail.⁵⁸ A more formal acknowledgement of evangelization and dialogue as distinct yet complementary activities of a Catholic university can bolster both efforts.⁵⁹

Possibility #1: Embracing Multipartial Facilitation

Multipartiality takes into account the larger oppressive context, social group memberships, storytelling resources, and developmental lens framing individual responses.⁶⁰ Multipartiality as a facilitative practice seeks to compensate for both hermeneutical injustice, where perspectives are not yet articulate or forcibly silenced, as well as testimonial injustice, where particular speakers have too much or too little authority due to structuring power asymmetries.⁶¹ To be multipartial is to be cautious of how certain

55 Roger Fisher, “Power Balancing and Multipartiality: Chapter 2: Facilitation Styles,” The Program on Intergroup Relations, 2015, video.

56 Christine Clark, “Diversity Initiatives in Higher Education: Intergroup Dialogue as Pedagogy across the Curriculum,” *Multicultural Education* 12, no. 3 (2005): 55.

57 Gurin, Nagda, and Zúñiga, *Dialogue Across Difference*, 266, 274.

58 John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, §48.

59 Konigsburg, “Religious Pluralism,” 80.

60 Leah Wing and Janet Rifkin, “Racial Identity Development and the Mediation of Conflicts,” in *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Anthology*, ed. Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe and Bailey W. Jackson III (New York University Press, 2001), 192–93.

61 Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 4, 6.

perspectives are amplified or silenced systemically.⁶² Multipartial facilitators frame dominant perspectives and support marginalized perspectives, including calling attention to those missing entirely from a dialogue.⁶³ Facilitator training and preparation that offers techniques for welcoming and contextualizing a wide range of perspectives can help forward multipartial facilitation for inclusive, socially just dialogues. Multipartial facilitation practices offer opportunities for living into religious—and other forms of—pluralism “without succumbing to relativism.”⁶⁴

Pitfall #2: Difficult, Emotionally Draining Work

Dialogue exacts a metabolic cost. Facilitators speak to the exhaustion, frustration, and emotional tax exacted from them.⁶⁵ Student and faculty participants acknowledge the emotional resources expended in listening to understand, enacting radical empathy, and confronting the incompleteness and potential bias of deeply held beliefs.⁶⁶

The emotional burdens of dialogue tend to fall most heavily on those already marginalized within higher education. For example, within interracial dialogues, people of color face a host of microaggressions and other forms of racialized trauma that negatively impacts their immediate experience and long-term health.⁶⁷ People of color, as facilitators and par-

62 Sara DeTurk, “Quit Whining and Tell Me about Your Experiences!,” in *The Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication*, ed. Thomas K. Nakayama and Rona Tamiko Halualani (John Wiley, 2011), 579.

63 Kelly E. Maxwell, Roger B. Fisher, Monita C. Thompson, and Charles Behling, “In the Hands of Facilitators: Student Experiences in Dialogue and Implications for Facilitator Training,” in *Facilitating Intergroup Dialogues: Bridging Differences, Catalyzing Change*, ed. Kelly E. Maxwell, Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, and Monita C. Thompson (Stylus, 2011), 50–51.

64 Konigsburg, “Religious Pluralism,” 80.

65 For near peer facilitator narratives, see Kristie A. Ford, *Facilitating Change through Intergroup Dialogue: Social Justice Advocacy in Practice* (Routledge, 2017). For richer contextualization of women of color faculty facilitators, see Bridget Turner Kelly, Milagros Castillo-Montoya, Rani Varghese, and Ximena Zúñiga, “Braids and Bridges: A Critical Collaborative Autoethnography of Racially Minoritized Women Teaching Intergroup Dialogue,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 17, no. 1 (2024): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000374>.

66 James-Gallaway and James-Gallaway, “Structural Acuity,” 7; Aireale J. Rodgers, “Narratives of Faculty Fatigue and ‘Consciousness’ in Intergroup Dialogue,” in *Facilitating Learning Communities: Working Towards a More Equitable, Just, and Antiracist Future in Higher Education*, ed. Kristin N. Rainville, Cynthia G. Desrochers, and David G. Title (Information Age Publishing, 2024), 93.

67 Dotun Ogunyemi, Camille Clare, Yaritzky M. Astudillo, Melissa Marseille, Eugene Manu, and Sun Kim, “Microaggressions in the Learning Environment: A Systematic Review,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 13, no. 2 (2020):

ticipants, speak to the additional sensitivity, exhaustion, and stress they shoulder in comparison to white peers.⁶⁸ Faculty, staff, and students already asked to step up for other diversity efforts and demonstrate inclusivity by their very presence may rightfully turn down dialogue opportunities, especially if these are not recognized as institutional, departmental, and community priorities. Refueling spaces that allow marginalized communities to connect, celebrate, and rest, such as an LGBTQ resource center or a multicultural center, can aid in wellbeing and reenergize individuals for intergroup conversation.⁶⁹

Intergroup dialogue programming requires significant institutional investment in the form of compensation, time, personnel, and space. Contemporary training recommendations for facilitators reinforce the need to carve out ample space to debrief dialogue encounters, prioritize self-renewal, and find healthy outlets to destress.⁷⁰ Deprived of such investment, facilitators and participants are positioned to pay the emotional tax of dialogic engagement without receiving adequate support in return. Burnout, hopelessness, and a rejection of dialogic engagement can ensue. Better not to dialogue at all than to do so poorly and expose participants and facilitators to its manifold risks.

Possibility #2: Forwarding Whole Person Formation and Wellbeing

Those who have experienced intergroup dialogue spaces continue to describe them as spaces of healing and rich emotional processing.⁷¹ Graduate facilitators have even used the language of love to describe their experi-

111, <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000107>; Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact* (Wiley, 2010), 11.

68 Chaddrick D. James-Galloway, Marigold M. Hudock, and Corbin Franklin, “‘They Didn’t Really Have Key Experiences That They Thought They Could Bring to the Table’: Perceptions of White Racial Absolution during Cross-Racial Intergroup Dialogues,” *Human Communication Research* 49, no. 2 (2023): 153–54, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqad008>; Rodgers, “Narratives of Faculty Fatigue and ‘Consciousness’ in Intergroup Dialogue,” 92.

69 Beverly Daniel Tatum, “Together and Alone? The Challenge of Talking about Racism on Campus,” *Daedalus* 148, no. 4 (2019): 86, https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_01761.

70 adrienne maree bown and Stephanie Hicks, “Well-being and Facilitation Hicks,” in *Facilitating Transformational Dialogues: Creating Socially Just Community*, ed. Stephanie D. Hicks and Donna Rich Kaplowitz (Teachers College Press, 2024), 115; Donna Rich Kaplowitz, Shayla Reese Griffin, and Seyka Sheri, *Race Dialogues: A Facilitator’s Guide to Tackling the Elephant in the Classroom* (Teachers College Press, 2019), 78–79.

71 Hicks and Kaplowitz, *Facilitating Transformational Dialogues*, 57–60; Kelly et al., “Braids and Bridges,” 7.

ences.⁷² Participants have noted less fear, prejudice, and anger toward out-groups and greater empathy and curiosity.⁷³ A recent study of student facilitators found the majority (24 out of 28) attributed their lived personal and professional commitment to social justice years later to their experiences with IGD.⁷⁴ These findings sum up to a transformational learning experience.

With the resources, time, and community necessary to live into dialogic encounter, people flourish. Intergroup dialogue invites cognitive, rational, emotional, embodied, ethical, and spiritual selves to show up more fully, a recipe for *cura personalis*. Students gain skills for acknowledging the wisdom inherent in one's own experience and in others' perspectives. They can learn to embrace an ethical vision for just action aware of multiple perspectives and truth claims. What could be a way of proceeding more Jesuit than inviting students to engage in collective reflection to better seek right action? The Ignatian approach to whole person formation lays out the road; intergroup dialogue can be a trusty vehicle for traveling it.

Pitfall #3: Dialogue as Institutional Band-aid

Calls for dialogue often sound after a crisis: after a particularly well publicized hate crime, ethical crisis of leadership, or geopolitical conflict. This dynamic played out in the national spotlight recently with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, wherein campus leaders called for dialogue to quell tensions, redirect student activism, and build understanding.⁷⁵ Reactive approaches seek to use abbreviated or one-time dialogues to cool off a

72 Brittany A. White, Joseph R. Miles, Keri A. Frantell, Joel T. Muller, Lynsay Paiko, and Jarod LeFan, "Intergroup Dialogue Facilitation in Psychology Training: Building Social Justice Competencies and Group Work Skills," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 12, no. 2 (2019): 187, <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000089>.

73 Gurin, Nagda, and Zúñiga, *Dialogue Across Difference*, 182–97.

74 Kristie A. Ford and Heather J. Lipkin, "Intergroup Dialogue Facilitators as Agents for Change," *New Directions for Student Leadership* 2019, no. 163 (2019): 47–48, <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20346>.

75 University publications are helpful archives here. For examples of calls to dialogue following the resurgence of Israel-Hamas hostilities, see "Georgetown Partners on New Dialogue Program to Address Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," Georgetown University, accessed September 24, 2024, <https://www.georgetown.edu/news/georgetown-partners-on-new-dialogue-program-to-address-israeli>; and "Marquette Offering an Ignatian Examen on Dialogue and Discernment in Difficult Times," Marquette University, accessed October 25, 2023, <https://today.marquette.edu/2023/10/marquette-offering-an-ignatian-examen-on-dialogue-and-discernment-in-difficult-times-oct-25/>.

campus, to dampen social action.⁷⁶ It is an open secret in higher education that “even diversity programs can reinforce and legitimate racial hierarchies they are purportedly designed to undermine.”⁷⁷ Dialogue falls into this trap when it serves the purposes of maintaining university routines and institutional status instead of creating conditions for coalitional movement towards greater justice and equity.⁷⁸ Increased social justice rhetoric on Jesuit campuses used for a variety of purposes, from marketing to potential students to fundraiser cultivation, also increases the risk that this rhetoric rings hollow, serving institutional status instead of generating insight and action necessary for social change.⁷⁹

Dialogue is particularly susceptible to this snare of being coopted for two reasons. First, a sedative effect—wherein participants are less likely to take collective action for social change and less likely to view social group oppression as pressing—has been found in some intergroup contact interventions.⁸⁰ Jesuit colleges and universities that remain predominantly white, heterosexual, able-bodied, and upper class already exert a normalizing force that can underpin such a sedative effect of dialogue. Second, in dialogue contexts, saliently privileged groups are more likely to focus on commonalities and peaceful coexistence while saliently marginalized groups are more likely to focus on exploring power and oppression and advocating for justice.⁸¹ Dialogue that sedates and single-mindedly seeks commonality sprints away from social justice. It establishes community by sacrificing diversity, seeking peace without justice. Calls for dialogue in the wake of student protests exemplify this dynamic when they seek

76 Bridget Turner Kelly, “Intergroup Dialogue in Higher Education: Navigating Campus Challenges with Intentional Conversation,” moderated by Heather Shea, posted March 20, 2024, by Student Affairs Now, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/Q-pjCnn4e6M>.

77 Victor Ray, “A Theory of Racialized Organizations,” *American Sociological Review* 84, no. 1 (2019): 39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418822335>.

78 Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Duke University Press, 2012), 34–37.

79 Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 117; Dian Squire, Z Nicolazzo, and Rosemary J. Perez, “Institutional Response as Non-Performative: What University Communications (Don’t) Say About Movements Toward Justice,” *The Review of Higher Education* 42, no. 5 (2019): 129–30, <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0047>.

80 Huseyin Cakal, Miles Hewstone, Gerhard Schwär, and Anthony Heath, “An Investigation of the Social Identity Model of Collective Action and the ‘Sedative’ Effect of Intergroup Contact among Black and White Students in South Africa,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 50, no. 4 (2011): 620, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02075.x>.

81 Nagda, Gurin, and Rodríguez, “Intergroup Dialogue: Education for Social Justice,” 396–97.

to mitigate—or outright prevent—future student activism. Paraphrasing Malcolm X, institutions can point to the band-aid of half-hearted dialogue efforts to hide the dagger still six inches deep in the collective student body.

Possibility #3: More Vibrant, Inclusive University Cultures

Intergroup dialogues can build rapport and understanding well in advance of heightened conflict. Proactive approaches to dialogue offer faculty, staff, and students opportunities to enhance their dialogic communication skills, wrestle with conflict and power within trusting relationships, and deepen their appreciation for shared humanity and radical differences. Cross-group friendships, a key outcome of dialogue, have also been found to positively correlate with positive outgroup attitudes (e.g., they're good people!), perceived outgroup variability (e.g., they're not all the same!), and negatively associated with negative action (e.g., I'm less likely to fight with them!).⁸² Such durable community building can serve as an anchoring bridge in times of crisis.

Participants experience inclusive community and are then better positioned to enact it outside of the dialogue. They build sturdy relationships across difference by acknowledging how power, oppression, and marginalization structure lives and personalizing practices for engaging with one another. For Jesuit campuses looking to welcome increasingly diverse student bodies and better prepare all students for an increasingly globalized world, intergroup dialogue can be a crucial, evidence-based method of relational bridgebuilding.

At the same time, university leaders and scholar-practitioners should resist calls to treat dialogue as a band-aid. One institutional gut check: whether dialogue programs are open to a synodal wisdom where members may suggest ways the institution might better serve them or if such insights are taken as threats to be eliminated.

Pitfall #4: Furthering Eclecticism

Jesuit education has resisted trends towards eclecticism and a narrow view of vocational education even as it has willowed under these pressures, bending towards greater eclecticism than in the past.⁸³ The Jesuits have traditionally been rooted in a unified course of study, grounded—since

82 Hermann Swart, Miles Hewstone, Oliver Christ, and Alberto Voci, "Affective Mediators of Intergroup Contact: A Three-Wave Longitudinal Study in South Africa," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 6 (2011): 1233, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024450>.

83 Claude N. Pavur, S.J., *In the School of Ignatius: Studious Zeal and Devoted Learning* (Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2019), 95, 127–28.

1599—in the *Ratio Studiorum*. The *Ratio Studiorum* pulled from the experience of a generation of Jesuits pedagogically engaged across continents. The *Ratio* standardized a humanistic curriculum with a fine-tuned scholarly trajectory from the *studia inferiora* (rhetoric and grammar, Latin and Greek) through studies of mathematics, philosophy, and theology.⁸⁴ Its two most heavily cited scholars—Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas—evidenced the Renaissance humanism and Catholic doctrine at the heart of this course of study.⁸⁵ While the letter of the *Ratio Studiorum* was discontinued, its spirit lives on in institutionalized defenses of liberal arts curricula and in skepticism regarding ad hoc undergraduate education premised on eclectic eclecticism.

Intergroup dialogue programming risks adding yet another plate to the overstuffed buffet of undergraduate study. This tension is reinforced by intergroup dialogue practitioners who caution against mandatory experiences as less effective and more likely to produce interpersonal harm. Intergroup dialogue has not been studied under mandatory conditions, such as in coursework required by an entire entering class. Those who might have the most transformative experience are exactly those least likely to embrace optional dialogue programming.

Possibility #4: Integration of Intergroup Dialogue across Course Offerings

Dialogue programming can be incorporated into the liberal arts core curriculum, deepening student learning without adding to already crammed schedules. Intergroup dialogue coursework can be woven into coursework that shares many of its epistemological foundations. Courses in disciplines already partial to dialogic engagement include a wide range of (inter)disciplinary fields of the humanities and social sciences. Investment in such learning environments forwards liberal arts training in ethical decision-making, full person leadership, and working towards the collective good. Faculty can be invited to enhance curricula through incorporation of the four-stage model of intergroup dialogue and tested facilitation techniques. Clear designation of dialogue coursework—in syllabi and course descriptions—respects students' agency in deciding they do not wish to take on such an emotionally-laden classroom experience at a particular moment in time.

Secular campuses have explored building out institutional capacity for intergroup dialogue by developing certificates or minors in dialogic facilitation and intergroup communication.⁸⁶ Intergroup dialogue has also

84 Pavur, *In the School of Ignatius*, 3, 104–5.

85 Pavur, *In the School of Ignatius*, 13, 120–22.

86 For exemplars of curricular dialogue programs, see “Intergroup Relations (IGR)

been implemented at the graduate level with great success, forwarding the educative mission of a range of graduate schools, such as counseling psychology, education, and social work.⁸⁷ Scholars have increasingly called for dialogic facilitation and participation by graduate students to better meet their programmatic and professional learning objectives.⁸⁸ Opportunities abound for greater collaboration across graduate and undergraduate programs, including: graduate students facilitating undergraduate courses, graduate professionals-in-training helping undergraduate facilitators debrief dialogue experiences, departmental facilitator trainings, and research and scholarship on dialogic engagement.

Intergroup dialogue credit-bearing coursework has been successfully integrated on a range of campuses. Jesuit universities should take heed of leading institutions in the field of dialogic learning to advance the holistic growth of their own students.

Conclusion: Being Better at Being Together

U.S.-based Jesuit colleges and universities continue to serve as beacons of contemplation in action by forwarding cutting-edge research, student formation, and ethical leadership. To keep vibrant the Jesuit pedagogical tradition is to keep hope in a shared future grounded in mutuality, respect, and truth. Intergroup dialogue forwards Jesuit education in creative fidelity to its mission of forming people ready to be of service to others. Pitfalls of such work include advocacy facilitation, emotional exhaustion, institutional cooptation, and furthering eclecticism. At the same time, possibilities beckon, such as embracing multipartial facilitation, forwarding whole person formation and wellbeing, building more vibrant and inclusive campus cultures, and integrating dialogue with (under)graduate, credit-bearing course offerings.

Minor,” Skidmore College, accessed August 7, 2025, <https://www.skidmore.edu/igr/minors/>; and “Minor in Intergroup Relations Education,” University of Michigan, accessed August 7, 2025, <https://igr.umich.edu/minor>.

87 White et al., “Intergroup Dialogue Facilitation in Psychology Training,” 188; Yochay Nadan, Galia Weinberg-Kurnik, and Adital Ben-Ari, “Bringing Context and Power Relations to the Fore: Intergroup Dialogue as a Tool in Social Work Education,” *The British Journal of Social Work* 45, no. 1 (2015): 274, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct116>.

88 For more on how intergroup dialogue training and facilitation can strengthen graduate education, see Joel T. Muller and Joseph R. Miles, “Intergroup Dialogue in Undergraduate Multicultural Psychology Education: Group Climate Development and Outcomes,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 10, no. 1 (2017): 67–68, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0040042>; and White et al., “Intergroup Dialogue Facilitation in Psychology Training,” 189.

Scholar-practitioners of intergroup dialogue can explore adaptations that best serve their campus. This includes discerning the institutional home(s) of intergroup dialogue programming. Different constraints and affordances come from investing in dialogue within a specific academic department or college, as a separate research institute, as a student affairs initiative with or without curricular goals, or as a faculty and staff development offering. Additional research is needed to clarify how the institutional home(s) of intergroup dialogue impact participant learning outcomes.

Jesuit higher education institutions are well situated to develop new models and techniques for critical dialogic engagement. Researchers can think across interreligious dialogue experiences and more agnostic approaches to dialogue as well as investigate the impact of institutional mission and culture on learning outcomes. The impact of dialogic retreats and other shorter term critical dialogic experiences also deserve attention. High school practices of intergroup dialogue have emerged as an area of scholarship and practice to which Jesuit networks can meaningfully contribute.⁸⁹ International Jesuit networks can also be leveraged to explore international framings for intergroup dialogue, offering more nuanced ways of engaging an ever more globally-oriented student population.

Dialogue happens with and without intention on campuses every day. The research on intergroup contact is clear: not all intergroup contact expands our thinking, enriches our empathy, nor deepens our appreciation for our shared humanity.⁹⁰ Jesuits have been at the forefront of intercultural exchange and dialogic engagement through their global ministry, educative mission, and willingness to seek God in the lovely, messy complexity that surrounds us. The Jesuit tradition carries its light and its shadows: aspects of colonialism and white supremacy as well as lived commitments to social justice and walking alongside the marginalized. Applying contemporary intergroup dialogue scholarship can help leverage the transformational potential of dialogue while better accounting for forms of silencing, harm, and (micro)aggression that can occur through dialogic encounter.

The Catholic intellectual tradition and the Jesuit charism clearly encourage us to embrace one another in the shared pursuit of truth and justice. Bringing intergroup dialogue praxis to Jesuit campuses offers powerful opportunities for building more empathetically courageous, critically thinking, and self-motivated individuals. This exemplifies the ideal of Catholic institutions as embodying an open circle, proudly rooted in their tradition yet welcoming of the dynamic multiplicity of perspectives that

89 Kaplowitz, Griffin, and Seyka, *Race Dialogues*, 23–24.

90 Thomas F. Pettigrew, “Intergroup Contact Theory,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 49, no. 1 (1998): 77–80.

defines a healthy university culture.⁹¹ Intergroup dialogue creates learning spaces wherein young people are respected as co-creators of knowledge and accompanied as they envision and enact a mission of reconciliation and justice for the long-term flourishing of our shared world, in keeping with the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus.⁹² Jesuit institutions can help discern pragmatic ways of turning this ideal into a vibrant reality for undergraduate and graduate students. We are better together, and intergroup dialogue is an effective, evidence-based framework for helping us to be better at being together. Let us live into new formations of beloved community enhanced by the enduring Jesuit way of proceeding.

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91 James L. Heft, *The Future of Catholic Higher Education: The Open Circle* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 129–30.

92 Sosa, “Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019–2029.”