

Intergroup Dialogue

Susan Jahoda and Caroline Woolard

The following lesson plan integrates Intergroup Dialogue¹ within the context of a workshop on Support. We have incorporated Intergroup Dialogue as a practice into undergraduate and graduate classrooms, exhibitions, and public workshops.

What is Intergroup Dialogue?

Intergroup dialogue is a deep listening exercise that promotes engagement across social and cultural divides. It's used for anti-racist communication in higher education, community organizing, and international conflict resolution. It's named for the different social and cultural groups, e.g. class, organization, movement, etc). Intergroup Education (1940s-50s) aimed to highlight similarities amongst different groups so as to reduce conflicts when addressing contentious issues.²

The workshop is based on *Ways of Being*, an open source book, website, workbook, and card game that we have written for undergraduate and graduate classes in art and design.³ *Ways of Being* provides a framework for thinking about the production of projects which looks at the whole lifecycle of any given project. We have identified ten components of each project's lifecycle; we call these components phases. In this workshop we are focusing on the phase of the lifecycle that we call support.

We define 'support' as the ways your needs for well being are met in order to dream, practice, and work on any project. Support extends beyond the life of the project, often shaping the ways in which people navigate the contradictions of living and working. We are focused not on the support practices that we utilize for short-term projects, but on the ongoing support that is necessary for livelihood and for social reproduction.⁴

¹ Ximena, Zúñiga, "[Bridging Differences through Dialogue](#)" (PDF). About Campus. Retrieved 15 February 2015.

² Ximena, Zúñiga, "[Bridging Differences through Dialogue](#)" (PDF). About Campus. Retrieved 15 February 2015.

³ Susan Jahoda and Caroline Woolard, *Ways of Being*, (Goleta: Punctum Press), forthcoming

⁴ [Fulvia Serra](#), "Reproducing the Struggle: A New Feminist Perspective on the Concept of Social Reproduction," *Viewpoint Magazine*, Issue #5 Social Reproduction, (October 31, 2015).

Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner write that:

...feminists use social reproduction to refer to activities and attitudes, behaviours and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis, and intergenerationally. Among other things, social reproduction includes how food, clothing, and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, the ways in which the care and socialization of children are provided, the care of the infirm and the elderly, and the social organization of sexuality. Social reproduction can thus be seen to include various kind of work - mental, manual, and emotional - aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined care necessary to maintain the existing life and to reproduce the next generation.⁵

Social reproduction is often enabled through practices of movement, healing, ritual, stillness, and listening. We believe that forms of “contemplative practices”⁶ provide the strength and energy to continue projects and maintain a sense of well being individually and collectively. In this workshop, we look at a wide range of contemplative practices to offer new forms of support for ourselves and for you. Some of you will be familiar with these, but it is unlikely that you have had regular conversations about them in the classroom.

Types of support include practices of *stillness* (meditation, silence, centering, etc.), *movement* (yoga, walking, dance, aikido, etc.), *listening* (deep listening, dialog, circle council, etc.), *ritual* (ceremony, sacred space, retreat, etc.), *creation* (journaling, singing, dancing, improvisation, contemplative arts, etc.), *healing* (acupuncture, massage, physical therapy, aromatherapy, etc.), and *generative practices* (visualization, tarot, beholding, etc.).

In addition to caring for yourselves and your community through non-monetary support practices, you are likely finding monetary support from credit cards, student loans, day jobs, and possibly past sales, grants, cash gifts, inherited wealth, income generated by rental property, or financial investments. We are all born into the world with privileges and oppressions based upon our class, or socioeconomic status, and this cannot be ignored. In this workshop, however, we

⁵ Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner, *Gender and Social reproduction: Historical Perspectives*, Annual Review of Sociology, vol. 15, 1989, pp. 383-384.

⁶ D. Barbezat and M. Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass) 2014

are focused on contemplative practices of support rather than monetary forms of support, because many contemplative practices are available to everyone whereas many financial forms of support are not.

Artists who make their own structures of support visible often do so in order to speak openly about the politics of social reproduction. Just as ninety percent of mothers in Iceland went on strike for a day in 1975, taking to the streets and refusing to work, cook and look after children to demonstrate that housework is essential for all productivity in society, many artists wish to reveal the support structures that make livelihood possible. Artists often direct attention to overlooked practices that enable people to return to work the next day as healthy and capable workers.

Words of Caution

Support is one of the most vulnerable phases that we have identified in the lifecycle of each project. In the context of a semester long course this practice plan takes place at the midpoint of the semester. It is necessarily preceded by readings and conversations about race and class processes, collaborative practices within in-class exercises, and the exchange of resources and skills.

Space and equipment needs for this lesson plan include movable chairs, paper and writing implements, and a timing device.

LESSON PLAN

1 hours 55 minutes

5 minutes: provide a history and context for Intergroup Dialogue

15 minutes: write about the support of your projects (Step One)

15 minutes: write about the support of a specific project (Step Two)

10 minutes: condense this into a narrative that will be spoken (Step Three)

36 minutes: Intergroup Dialogue (Step Four)

30 minutes: reflection

4 minutes: closing

Step 1. Timing 15 minutes

You are asked to write about how you currently support making your projects and how you envision supporting your projects in the future. Support encompasses how you financially support your projects (cash gifts, debt, past sales/grants, day jobs, investments, mutual aid,) aided by (you, friends/family, community/collective, public or commons).

Step 2. Timing 15 minutes

You are asked to refer to the project that you are currently working on and write about the challenges you are facing in bringing it to completion. Using the phases in *Ways of Being* you are asked to identify and write about where these challenges/solutions lie and how you are / have navigated working through these challenges?

Step 3. Timing 10 minutes

You are asked to organize what you have written about in step 1 and 2 into a five-minute narrative. This is in preparation for Intergroup Dialogue.

Step 4. Timing 36 minutes

Instructions for Intergroup Dialogue:

This is a deep listening exercise so try to remain focused on your partner and what they are narrating. The facilitator will keep time and guide you through the following steps.

1. Find a partner and sit facing one another.
2. Choose who will be partner A and who will be partner B.
3. Your knees will remain in contact throughout the whole practice. You will also maintain eye contact and an affirming expression.
4. Partner A has 5 minutes to narrate the challenges they have faced in bringing a project to completion.
5. Partner B has 2 minutes to recall what they heard Partner A say.
6. Partner A has 2 minutes to adjust/add to Partner B's recollection if they feel something important was not heard and repeated back.
7. Reverse roles. Partner B narrates the challenges they have faced in bringing a project to completion.
8. Partner A has 2 minutes to recall what they heard Partner B say.

9. Partner B has 2 minutes to adjust/add to Partner A's recollection if they feel something important was not heard and repeated back.

10. After the listening practice is complete take 10 minutes to reflect together on the themes that emerged from your narratives. Reconvene as a large group.

11. We ask: "What did you hear? – without necessarily sharing the details of your stories, pull the themes and concerns that arose and bring them into the larger discussion. Write these down.

Step 5. Timing 30 minutes or when the conversation has reached a natural conclusion.

Reflection: We reconvene as a large group in a circle and ask, "What did you hear?"

We share what emerged from the practice.

Step 6. Timing: 4 minutes

Closing: You are invited to say one word that resonates with you after this shared experience.

Suggested bibliography

Jahoda Susan and Caroline Woolard. *Ways of Being* (Goleta: Punctum Books. 2017).

Serra, Fulvia "Reproducing the Struggle: A New Feminist Perspective on the Concept of Social Reproduction," *Viewpoint Magazine*, Issue #5 Social Reproduction, (October 31, 2015).

Laslett Barbara and Johanna Brenner, *Gender and Social reproduction: Historical Perspectives*, Annual Review of Sociology, vol. 15, 1989, pp. 383-384.

Zúñiga, Ximena. "Bridging Differences through Dialogue" (PDF). About Campus. Retrieved 15 February 2015.

Barbezat, D., and Bush, M.. *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (2014).