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DIVERSITY IN THE STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOM

an IF White Paper

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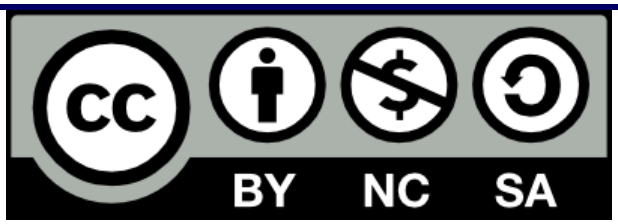

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a study of eight undergraduate classes that implemented a student-facilitated discussion process as a means of improving the ability of students to engage diversity-related topics. The discussion process, designed by the Interactivity Foundation (IF), emphasizes student-led, democratic discussion that aims to explore policy possibilities rather than the traditional top-down, instructor-led discussion model. The purpose of the study was to determine if the IF process correlated with less conflict in the classroom when talking about sensitive topics like diversity, and also to determine if students and teachers had better outcomes related to student satisfaction, learning, and interaction. This study did find that the implementation of the IF process resulted in less classroom conflict and improved student outcomes. In particular, there was more student interaction and collaboration inside and outside the classroom, an outcome that has implications both for improving student retention and for making the entire college experience more engaging, which could be especially significant for first-generation students.

Introduction

Teaching race and other such diversity-related courses to undergraduates is uniquely difficult because these are subjects about which all students have personal experience and longstanding, deeply-ingrained attitudes and opinions. This can make a course rewarding, because class participation and engagement is often not an issue, but it also makes a course problematic because students can prioritize previously held beliefs over the content and theory they study in the course. There are two main approaches to teaching diversity courses in the social sciences: (1) data-driven teaching, which prioritizes presenting evidence and data about racial and ethnic disparities to "prove" to students that discrimination exists, persists and is widespread, and (2) theory-driven teaching, which prioritizes efforts to understand the role and function that discrimination plays in capitalist societies, by examining concepts such as race, class, and sex, and teaching students to challenge their discriminatory beliefs and attitudes.

Most classes, of course, use a combination of each of these approaches, but we contend here that each presents significant weaknesses. As an alternative, we propose that an effective way to teach race without conflict is to utilize democratic discussion techniques in the classroom. The process described here, which was developed by the Interactivity Foundation (IF), emphasizes small-group discussions led by student facilitators. By using the IF process, students never engage in a top-down debate with a professor they might perceive as promoting a particular social agenda, a common suspicion held by students taking a diversity-related course. Instead, students learn to work together to come up with policy possibilities for addressing social problems extending from diversity. This paper presents findings from a study of eight courses on diversity-related topics, at two different colleges, that implemented the IF process.

Our study asks what happens when faculty members abandon traditional teaching methods and instead implement one that focuses heavily on student-centered discussion and participation. Our hypothesis, after we ourselves have utilized the IF process in our own classes over the past several years, is that students and faculty members will have improved outcomes related to teaching and learning. Specifically, we explore whether students being exposed to the IF process will:

- participate in class more frequently;
- raise controversial issues or unpopular perspectives more frequently;
- learn more material in a more substantive manner;
- maintain a higher level of discussion; and
- connect and bond more with fellow students—particularly those from different backgrounds—in and outside of class.

Goals of Teaching a Class on Diversity: Background and Literature

A number of studies and surveys of faculty in higher education suggest that a fundamental goal of teaching about race, ethnicity, and gender is to promote a shift in the way students think and behave (Chang, 2002; Adams, 1997; Metzger, 1995; Adams & Zhou-McGovern, 1994). These faculty members approach teaching race as an effort towards student consciousness-raising rather than the absorption of material and facts. In one study, Adams (1997) identifies three main goals of teaching a class on social justice: (1) increasing personal awareness of the students, (2) expanding their knowledge of the subject area, and (3) encouraging social action. Adams proposes that classes geared towards students new to the topic should focus on increasing personal awareness and expanding knowledge; while more experienced students should be encouraged to take social action. Organista (2000:12) similarly argues that a course on diversity can be used to "educate, sensitize, and stimulate critical thinking about the role of culture and ethnicity in human social behavior."

Other studies show that faculty goals when teaching diversity include trying to "help students develop personal values," to "enhance students' self-understanding," to "develop moral character," and to "provide for students' emotional development" (DeAngelo et al., 2009). These studies suggest that a key objective when teaching a class about diversity is to change the student by promoting consciousness-raising, rather that to simply teach the student basic information (Brookfield, 1991).

Adams and Zhou-McGovern (1994) identify five (relatively similar) objectives in teaching a class about diversity, including—

- Raising awareness: identifying and exploring different social identities pertaining to the course topic.

- Increasing knowledge: conveying traditional course material, including the acquisition of facts.
- Conceptual understanding: tying together these five goals as well as helping students to understand the subject matter and its place in the broader social context.
- Recognizing real world examples: asking students reflect upon their lives and experiences through the lens of the course content they have learned.
- Promoting intervention skills: teaching students to act on what they have learned and to change their own lives and environments.

Surveys also suggest that faculty members are increasingly interested in raising student awareness and promoting tolerance in the context of courses on race and ethnicity and gender studies. According to a 2008 UCLA report, 75.2 percent of professors said that they work to "enhance students' knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups," a gain of 17.6 percentage points since the survey was first administered during the 2004-2005 school year (Wyer, 2009).

The literature clearly illustrates that faculty members prioritize teaching tolerance when teaching about race and ethnicity and that the number of faculty members applying this approach is increasing. One interesting study of outcomes found that students who completed courses about diversity exhibited less prejudice and were more likely to have serious discussions with students of another race or background, suggesting that such courses can be successful in promoting change in students (Chang, 2002).

Problems with Typical Approaches to Teaching Diversity

Still, there are a number of problems that faculty face when teaching a class on diversity. One key problem with data or fact-driven teaching is that students often do not believe data and studies (Horowitz, 2008). For example, in discussions about the persistence of residential segregation, students in the second author's class read a 2007

study wherein researchers approach realtors about buying or renting a property and then real estate agents steer buyers by race and deny services to minorities (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2007). A similar example is exhibited by résumés with white-sounding names receiving more responses than those with black-sounding names. In one such study, researchers found that applicants with white-sounding names received 50 percent more callbacks for job interviews than those with African-American sounding names, even when controlling for occupation, industry, and employer size (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004). Students respond to this finding by arguing that there must be problems with the methodology, or that the simple answer is to name children with white-sounding names.

In each of these instances, during most traditionally-taught courses that emphasize lecture and faculty-led discussion, students consistently challenge the findings (Horowitz, 2008). For example, even after learning about discrimination by realtors, and about the persistence of neighborhood segregation throughout the United States, white students often insist that minorities like to live with each other and that this is a matter of personal choice. This response is not limited to housing preference – even though Brown V. Board of Education was decided fifty years ago, ruling that separate is *not* equal with regard to education, white students often state that minorities choose to attend segregated schools because they are simply more comfortable there.

Teaching using theories of race and racism is also problematic, particularly when teaching at a non-elite institution or to students who are often suspicious and uncomfortable with theory (St. Francis College and Trinity College are representative of these sorts of institutions). One central theoretical approach in sociology is to assume that race is primarily a social construction and not a biological truth. Students can understand this intellectually and can even analyze this concept and write about it, but it does not seem

to influence their own response to the problems facing racial minorities (Wlodkowski, 2002; Brookfield, 1991). For example, even when students read sociological interpretations of race and can comprehend the underlying concept that race is a functional rather than an organic or objective reality, they do not really *buy* this because, for many students, the proof that race exists is a result of their own daily realities and not a theoretical or even an historical construct. Again, the evidence or data is less convincing than their own micro-level experiences, so the work of penetrating the student consciousness is nearly impossible when they are bombarded with competing realities outside of class.

Teaching that racism divides the working class and keeps workers from uniting is something else students will comprehend, but it is clear that theory does little to convince them. Many of the instructors on this project have found that, in a diversity class focused on faculty-led, theoretical discussions, it is nearly impossible for students to get excited or engaged. They will seldom debate in class or write critical race essays. They are not willing to engage or challenge in any kind of genuine way. Since the election of Barack Obama, several instructors who participated in this study have found that students are even less interested in data showing different life chances for minorities because, they argue that, if a minority can have the most powerful job in the country, there cannot possibly be any barriers to advancement.

Most debates about policies rarely mention race or racial disparities overtly, even when that is the most obvious subtext. Political candidates rarely challenge affirmative action policies, yet they also rarely discuss any other policies that might decrease disparity. The increasing realities of neighborhood and school segregation are rarely if ever addressed, and there are virtually no explicit efforts by mainstream politicians or pundits

to propose policies related to desegregation. Discussing race-based policies is even more contentious in the context of the classroom. College students are acutely aware that race matters in the admissions process and many white students express annoyance that "unqualified minorities are getting into elite institutions solely because of race." Many white college students are also convinced that minorities are eligible for extensive scholarships and financial, which is unavailable to white students, and they are comfortable expressing anger at this perceived inequality. Now that an African-American is president, students are even more vocal about challenging the existence of racism.

Using the Democratic Discussion Processes to Reach Goals

These examples highlight the difficulty of relying on data, theory, or even history to discuss diversity. Students know that the reality of differing life chances is unfair, but because of the broader cultural sense that any discussion of race is "playing the race card" or engaging in political correctness, many students are unwilling to address substantive data seriously (Organista, 2000). It is frequently impossible to prove to students that racism persists, even if they read thousands of studies documenting the persistence of racial and ethnic disparities. The point of teaching sociology, however, is arguably not to prove to student that social problems exist but to raise awareness and understanding of these problems so that students can view them in a more critical way (Adams, 1997; Adams and Zhou-McGovern, 1994). We believe that teaching race, gender, inequality, and other diversity-related topics presents a particular problem because of the fear that many students have that they are being indoctrinated or that they might say something to offend another student (or the professor). The media has done an excellent job of convincing Americans that any discussion of race is actually anti-American: if you talk about race you are really talking about quotas or favoritism, and the basis of American ideology is that

everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed and there are no barriers to success if one works hard enough. If one acknowledges that race has *any* role in determining life chances, many students seem to believe that they are engaging in anti-Americanism. Many times, classroom discussions about race and other diversity topics are often uncomfortable and sometimes even painful, and the teacher works to de-personalize the conversation so that the students do not feel bad, resentful or insulted, and deliberately change the subject when a student makes a racist or provocative comment (Goebel, 1995; Davis, 1993).

The IF discussion process, described below, allows students to guide the discussion by brainstorming about ways to resolve problems, rather than by simply focusing on whether or not problems exist. The process requires a student facilitator in each group of 4-8 students to make sure that no policies are excluded, so students are free to express radical ideas and options without fearing the limits of negative responses from other students *or from the teacher*. The most effective aspect of this process is that it removes the teacher from the impossible task of proving the existence of racial discrimination. Students must still read substantive theoretical and data-driven content, but the work in the classroom is focused on responding to content by creating new policy possibilities. Students do not have to argue with the instructor, or with another, about whether problems exist, but can focus on how the problems can be resolved.

Some faculty who participated in this study were concerned, initially, that students would not be able to let go of the ideologies about racism and whether it exists, or that they would be unable to collaborate with other students on a policy project directly focusing on how to resolve a problem that many feel should not be addressed by government or policy. Surprisingly, most students themselves included affirmative action and other policies they might previously have argued against as policy possibilities and even wrote passionate,

informed, and non-ideological reports about what is good and bad about various policy alternatives. Faculty were surprised because, when they had taught their content in a more traditional manner, policies such as affirmative action were universally dismissed by students of all races and were the inevitable focus of many unpleasant classroom interactions. When the students themselves were allowed to question how to address and resolve the issue of racial disparity, they developed affirmative action policies that generally incorporated class, as well as race and ethnicity, as the most effective and logical solution. Faculty teaching courses as varied as Human Sexuality and Social Inequality noticed these same tendencies. Students left to their own devices will "discover" the very things that they will resist when faculty are simply lecturing about the same information.

Research Methods

Our study, which aspired to convey the core components of a student-centered discussion format developed by the Interactivity Foundation (see below), was initiated in the summer of 2008. The teaching method was taught to the first two authors by IF at a Summer Institute program lasting ten days during July, 2006. The goal was to see if enough of the method could be conveyed in half-day training, with subsequent follow-up, to a group of faculty colleagues so as to allow them to adequately apply the method to redesign a diversity-focused course. Participants were recruited at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, NY, and at Trinity College in Washington, DC. Nine faculty members were selected to participate in the study, representing both social science and humanities courses (2 Sociology, 2 Criminal Justice, 2 Psychology, 1 Philosophy, and 1 Communications courses).

Trinity College and St. Francis College are schools that are similar in terms of demographical characteristics. They are very similar schools in terms of size: Trinity has 1,700 students, and St. Francis has 2,000. Both schools have Catholic traditions, and Trinity

has a religious affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church, while St. Francis is not formally affiliated with a religious institution but has a strong Franciscan tradition that teaches and promotes Franciscan values. Both colleges are private and not-for-profit schools. While St. Francis is coed, Trinity's College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) is comprised entirely of women. All faculty from Trinity who participated in this study were teaching in Trinity's CAS. Trinity has a significantly higher percentage of African-American students: 64% of students at Trinity are African-American, and only 19% of students at St. Francis are African-American. St. Francis has a somewhat greater percentage of Latino/a students than does Trinity; approximately 14% of students at St. Francis are Latino/a while 7% of students at Trinity are Latina. The most meaningful similarity between the schools is that both schools serve a substantial population of first-generation college students, and the majority of students live off-campus. These qualities contribute to a student body that is similar in terms of perspectives and attitudes about college life.

The requirements for being selected to participate in the study were a willingness to learn about the IF process and to utilize it in one diversity-related course during the spring of 2009. Faculty must also have previously taught the course they would be teaching in spring, 2009. Additionally, faculty members had to agree to participate in surveys and interviews about their experience using the process, and they had to allow the investigators to invite their students to answer surveys after being exposed to the process. Participating faculty were awarded a small stipend for their time and effort.

At the end of the semester, each class was observed by one of the study's principal investigators, and students were invited to debrief with the investigator after the observation. Students were not required to participate in the debriefing, but many students elected to participate. Those students who elected to participate in the study had

to sign informed consent forms. Fifty-two students out of 127 also completed an online survey at the end of the semester. The rest of the students either elected not to participate or signed consent forms but never completed the survey. Some students participated in debriefings after the classroom observations but did not respond to the online survey. Students who completed the anonymous survey were entered into a drawing for one of two small gift cards. The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey, which allows one to know who completed the survey but not to know the answers of any particular individual.

Appendix I includes the faculty survey and responses, and Appendix II includes the student survey and responses. Faculty members also had to participate in one half-day training session prior to the start of the course as well as a debriefing session midway through the semester and another at the end of the semester.

What IF? The Interactivity Foundation's Discussion Process

The Interactivity Foundation's[1] discussion process emphasizes student-facilitated discussion and takes classroom discussion a step beyond the Socratic classroom, which still features the instructor on center stage. The IF approach gives students more responsibility for learning. The following is a description of one way this has been made to work:

- Students are placed into groups of 6-8; depending on the size of the class (the method is probably best-suited to courses with fewer than 40 students).

[1] The Interactivity Foundation (IF) is a private foundation dedicated to engaging citizens in the exploration, development, and testing of conceptual possibilities for future public policy and democratic governance. IF employs several fellows who facilitate public discussions of policy possibilities, oriented around a particular area of concern. Based upon the success and appeal of these citizen discussions, IF began to wonder whether its approach to discussion might have a place in other realms, such as higher education. In the summer of 2006, IF organized a two-week Summer Institute training seminar in which it presented its discussion process in a hand-on, immersion-based manner to ten faculty members selected from colleges and universities located throughout the country. Faculty members agreed to use the process in one of their classes during the spring 2007 semester. Unanimously, these faculty—all of whom tended to be discussion-oriented and exploratory in their teaching methods—found the IF process to be remarkably effective in their classrooms.

- Students are given a discussion topic. This topic is one on which the teacher would normally have lectured but which is framed in a way that connects the course content to an issue of broader social concern. The assigned topic should require students to develop their own ideas about the subject over the course of the semester. The idea is that students will systematically discuss the topic (using a set of IF materials that will help to guide them in facilitating a sustained discussion). Their ultimate goal is to think about the possibilities that arise from their discussion topic. Specifically, the goal is that they derive at least four *contrasting* possibilities. These possibilities should be *conceptual* in nature and thus not focus on the present state of affairs or on problem-solving. Instead, the focus should be on a more future-oriented consideration of the social, political, economic, and other such macro factors that might impact their possibilities.

- Student groups meet weekly, rotating leadership of the discussion so that everyone leads discussion at least twice during the semester. Discussion leaders (called "facilitators") are expected to engage *all* members of the discussion group. Facilitators capture comments on a flip chart notepad for visual organizational purposes while another member of the group keeps, compiles, and later distributes written notes from the session. The note takers then become the next week's facilitators. The student groups are responsible for organizing and managing themselves and their discussion process.

- When students have specific questions they cannot resolve on their own, they record these for later interaction with the teacher. Additionally, the instructor observes the student groups and makes notes of any points of confusion that students encounter. The instructor addresses these points later, during lecture.

- While students are having discussions, the instructor sits at a central place in the classroom and observes students in each of the groups, making evaluative comments on a rubric or template. Students are expected to build upon their knowledge in the course. Discussions are also evaluated in a social context (e.g., how ideas were accepted and developed, how did students work together, etc.). Students are encouraged to constructively and positively build upon one another's ideas. At the end of the class, the instructor saves some time to provide feedback. A grade is later assigned for the facilitators and the group discussion.

- Faculty lead a traditional course on the other day(s) that the class meets. In some of these class sessions, they may model the IF discussion process by being a facilitator of learning rather than an expert who conveys knowledge. The instructor also answers questions students had during their discussions and gives students

feedback on their overall understanding of the topic, as judged by students' discussions.[2]

The IF process proves a good "fit" to the modern student based upon two broad realms: (1) the cultural characteristics of this generation of students and (2) the set of skills our students tend to need if they are to be prepared for the modern work world.

How the IF Process Helps Students to More Effectively Engage Diversity

Using the IF process to facilitate coverage of diversity-related topics within the university classroom offers numerous gains with regard to student learning outcomes. The IF process puts students in charge of their own learning by assigning the students to small groups that meet consistently over the course of the semester. It is important that faculty assign students to groups in such a way as to balance (as nearly as possible) the distribution of students by race, gender, socio-economic status, age, major, academic skill, and other such variables. Letting students self-select groups, assigning groups completely randomly, or simply placing students into groups by where they are sitting in the classroom inhibits the chance that the student groups will maximize student learning by exposing students to a more diverse array of classmates.

Our study included an initial training of faculty, a debriefing with faculty during the middle of the semester, observation of students in their IF classrooms, debriefing with faculty and students at the end of the semester, and a survey of both students and faculty at the end of the semester. With regard to student learning, there were several key outcomes[3] garnered from debriefings and surveys with both students and faculty:

[2] You can obtain more information on this student-centered approach to education by visiting the Interactivity Foundation website: http://www.interactivityfoundation.org.

[3] In reporting the outcomes, below, percentages are based on a combination of the "strongly agree" and "agree" response options in the student and faculty survey questions. Other options included "disagree,"

- **Students enjoy working in groups**. About 60% of students said that they enjoy listening to fellow students share experiences and ideas by participating in small-group discussions. When challenged with affirmative action lawsuits, many universities contend that diversity is crucial to creating an effective learning environment. The problem, though, is that too often faculty members have difficulty figuring out how to engage the diversity in the classroom (Geobel, 1995; Davis, 1993). The IF method provides a means by which to more effectively engage the diversity that *can* significantly enrich the learning outcomes of all students.

- **Students connected and bonded with one another**. Most students (84.2%) reported that they felt more connected to their classmates in an IF classroom. This translated to 71% of students reporting that they were more interested in attending class and 73.7% saying that they were more likely to read for class when they knew they would be discussing the readings in a small-group setting. Faculty echoed student reports: a full 100% of participating faculty said that their students bonded both inside and outside of class. Faculty and students both told of impromptu final exam study groups forming around the in-class discussion groups, and 73% of students noted that they had developed or deepened friendships with students in their discussion group.

- **Nearly all students participated more actively.** Students (80%) reported talking more in their IF class than in their other classes. Faculty members noted that immigrant women and other, typically quieter students especially benefited in an IF classroom. One faculty member remarked that the "greatest reward for me [was] seeing quieter students engage and offer their thoughts about very complex cultural issues." Another faculty member said that, "listening to our Hispanic students—who VERY rarely say anything—volunteer their thoughts and their insights" was especially rewarding. Another faculty participant explained that "Latina women were most influenced in a positive manner by the IF process. They spoke without being asked and they brought stories and anecdotes (both private and political) from their homelands." One student observed that "students need to feel

"strongly disagree," and, in for some questions, "Not sure." The full surveys, including questions and responses, are available in Appendix I (students) and Appendix II (faculty).

comfortable that their ideas will not be shut down by the professor before they are able to be explored," which is why the IF classroom works seems to work so well. Summarized by one of the faculty who participated in this study, "The students were very engaged in the class, and it was obvious they felt their ideas mattered. Just empowering students to contribute their ideas and encouraging the more reticent ones to be involved made a big difference overall. It worked because students felt some ownership over what happens in the classroom." The benefit of having all students participate in the discussion was that students were able to hear others' points of view. Nearly all (92.1%) students felt that it was valuable to hear other students' points of view and that the diversity of students' experiences was especially valuable to hear.

- **Students were more likely to raise controversial issues**. Nearly all students (76.3%) said they felt more comfortable raising controversial issues in an IF classroom, and 73.6% felt that raising controversial issues first in a small-group setting made it easier to discuss the issue within the whole-class setting. Faculty confirmed students' impressions, with all faculty agreeing that the IF process made it easier for students to talk about diversity. Nearly all faculty members (89.1%) felt that students were more respectful toward one another.

- **Students learned more and were able to maintain a higher quality of discussion.** Students (86.8%) reported that they felt they had learned a great deal from their IF class. This sentiment was echoed by faculty members, who nearly universally (89%) agreed that students learned more in the IF-styled class. Faculty members reported that learning in this way, "clearly changed the way students approached the topics—respect for each other's opinions, articulating connections with other already-read articles, more open-ended questions, and actually more rigor in pursuing a point (with less hostility altogether!)." Nearly all faculty members (89.1%) felt that the quality of student discussions were better in the IF classroom than in previous settings, largely, they said, because students met in consistent groups, were focused by having a specified task at hand and role in the group (facilitator, note taker, participant), and knew that instructors were evaluating their performance (though not the quality of their ideas) in the group.

Clearly, the IF process offers many gains in student learning, particularly with regard to the goals of teaching diversity-related topics in the undergraduate classroom. The IF process provides a setting in which the joint—and sometimes opposing—goals for teaching diversity, raising students' awareness, and teaching about facts and content can be unified. Students can engage content in their own ways and on their own terms via a diverse, small-group setting, which allows that students bring their own range of perspectives to the content and engage the controversy raised by the content in a constructive manner. What is more, the core portions of the IF methods are easy to convey. After an initial 5-hour workshop, all faculty members reported that they felt that they had a good understanding of the method. Moreover, a full 100% of faculty note that they would use the method again.

Resistance to Diversity in the IF Classroom

Resistance to a diverse classroom and to the aspirations of teaching about diversity can emerge in some interesting ways. In this study, we noted a few examples of such resistance, from both the side of the students and from the side of faculty. One interesting thing noted in this study and in other uses of the IF process, including among faculty trained by the Foundation in 2006, who later went on to integrate the process into their classrooms, is that students who perform most successfully in the traditional academic setting are most resistant to engaging in group work. We strongly believe that an analysis of this trend contributes strongly to a better understanding of the "free rider" effect, by which the academically more "gifted" students tend to characterize their less academically-astute classmates when forced to work in groups with them.

By Students

Any faculty member who has assigned small-group projects to a class knows that, nearly always, the best students in the class, in terms of academic talent, will most resist

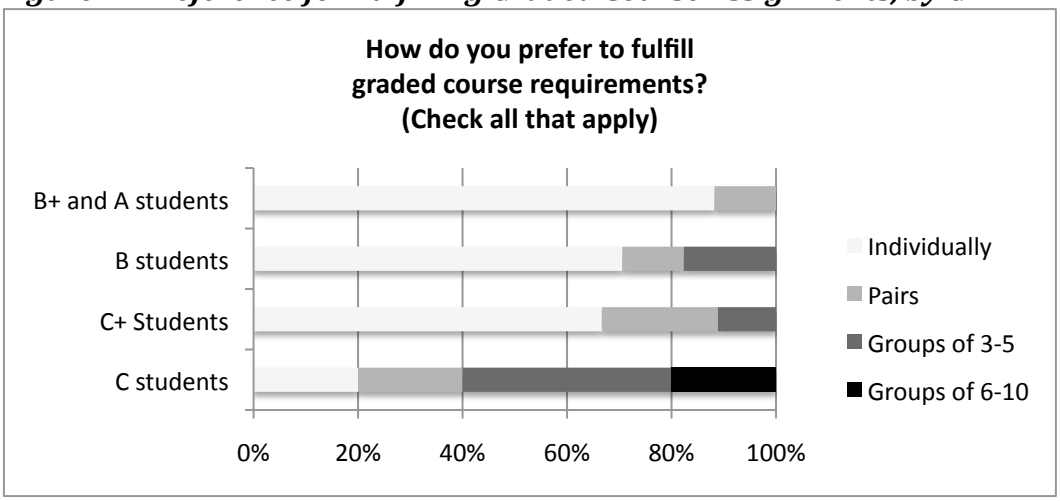
the small-group work in class. Academically talented students complain of what has become known as the "free rider" effect, or the perceived propensity of less talented or motivated students to participate in the small group's responsibilities. What is interesting is that *weaker students tend to do better in IF classes.* On average, C and C+ students, in terms of overall GPA, were most likely to expect a B in their IF-styled course. The B students were mostly expecting an A in their IF course. However, a sizeable chunk of the B+/A students were expecting a B or, in one case, even a C.

A comment from a faculty member suggests that, in fact, weaker students may feel more engaged and thus perform better in an IF course:

> Oddly, all of our students participated, even the "weaker" students whose writing was not as polished as the stronger ones. Everyone really contributed. We were excited to see the often quiet, Latina students expressing opinions, sometimes controversial ones.

Additionally, it seems plausible that some of the more academically gifted students may actually be resisting engaging diversity within the small-group setting. On average, academically gifted students tend to overvalue academic talent and to dismiss those students who are not "quick enough" in a discussion or who do not know who to produce "good quality" written documents. Academically talented students tend to assume that their less gifted peers are lazy and to therefore overlook the other talents their fellow students might bring to the table. As the survey results in Figure 1 (top of next page) show, students with the highest GPA's are least willing to work in small groups or even with peers.

Figure 1. Preference for Fulfilling Graded Course Assignments, by GPA



While C and D students may indeed be exhibiting a "free-rider" effect, given their strong proclivity to want to work in groups, it seems evident as well that the best students, in terms of grades, are dramatically unwilling to work with others.

Some faculty participants observed that the more academically talented students were inclined to dominate small-group discussions, wanting everyone else in the group to follow their lead and to adhere to their standards. These students assumed that their standards were most correct and that the group would do best if it followed their leadership. The typical result of such efforts to dominate was that the less high-achieving students exhibited a passive-aggressive resistance to the dominating students by simply pulling out their efforts from the group. This resulted in the top students perceiving that the weaker students were lazy, but, in fact, they were simply resisting the dominance being demonstrated by the more academically talented students. In climates where many students are first-generation students and a relative few are not, it is more likely that students whose parents have university educations will perform better in university classes than their first generation counterparts. Students with parents who attended

university typically know "how to play the game" and tend to more strongly identify with academic success.

One of the more useful things that faculty can perhaps do for these dominating over-achievers is to provide them feedback, when debriefing with the facilitator of the small group after the day's class, so as to help them realize the results of their interactional style. All students will graduate into a collaborative workplace in which group interaction is mandatory. Many top students flounder in workplaces exactly because they cannot engage a diverse range of fellow colleagues in an effective manner so as to garner everyone's best contribution to the work endeavor. Faculty in an IF classroom can act as a sort of coach to help these students to gain something that may prove to be much more valuable than more academic facts and figures.

By Faculty

Some faculty reported that it was very hard to turn control over to students but that they and their students benefited greatly once the faculty member was able to cross this line:

- In some central way it was harder to teach - there were explanations and background that I wanted to provide, and keeping quiet was hard. Nevertheless, it was more obvious that the students were learning - in the past I've had to wait for written assignments; this time, I could more clearly see who had read, who was thinking reflectively and critically. The pace of the class was different.
- I didn't feel so anxious about making sure they really GOT a point - I saw it happening with little interference from me. It was exciting to see the students bringing in their own ideas for discussion even if they weren't on that day's agenda.
- Thanks for this new pedagogy - I feel MUCH more comfortable with what I previously regarded as a somewhat high-risk endeavor (turning "control" of a class over to the students) and I am pretty sure I will incorporate components of the method into many future classes - I am likely to use it wholesale in similar seminar classes.

Despite the gains evident when faculty did relinquish classroom control to students, some faculty were not able to give up classroom control.

We suspect that this resistance to relinquishing control is similar in motivation to that which drives the more academically gifted students. Most faculty, even those teaching at smaller, teaching-oriented colleges and universities, were trained at top, Research I institutions. Faculty members, on average, were overachieving students. We would contend that some faculty, when placed in classrooms where they are serving students that they perceive as less academically talented than themselves, develop a disdain for their students. Rather than trying to identify the talents their students might have, they seem sometimes to simply "write off" the students as "unteachable." This seems the very same resistance to diversity of view, learning style, and value system that the top-achieving students demonstrate with regard to group work. *And* this may also explain why faculty members tend to be so sympathetic to the "free rider" explanation offered by the more traditionally-skilled academic achievers. There seems to be a correlation, too, between faculty who want to control their classrooms and a general disdain towards one's students. Such faculty are not well-suited to the IF method. In order to give up control of the classroom to students, you must have respect for and confidence in them.

Discussion

Clearly, the goals of teaching a diversity course differ from the goals of teaching a more straightforward content-oriented course. As noted earlier, the literature shows that the goals of many faculty members include an increase in personal awareness about diversity-related social problems. In our study, we were not able to directly assess whether students did in fact experience a process of consciousness-raising, but we did find evidence that students were more willing to raise a range of alternative views in small

groups and that they forged friendships inside and outside of class by bonding with the students in their small groups. Since small groups are assigned by faculty and aspire to put together students representing a range of different backgrounds and points of view, the chances that students are forging friendships with a more diverse array of classmates seems likely.

The literature also shows that faculty members prioritize an increase in learning and knowledge as a primary outcome of a diversity-related course. This goal was also one of the key goals of our study because studies have shown that faculty members tend to believe that students have difficulty grasping the material in these courses. This question was at the core of our study because we feel that one of the main problems when teaching about diversity is that students often resist hearing about ideas and information that they feel requires them to take a stand or a position. As noted earlier, diversity courses frequently force students to decide how they feel about an issue. Students feel that they have to take a position either for diversity or against diversity when traditional teaching methods are used. Our research question asks whether a teaching method that emphasizes the democratic discussion of possibilities increases student knowledge and absorption of the material. Instead of being forced to take a side or a stance, students were able to freely discuss policy possibilities without being for or against diversity. Both students and faculty reported that they enjoyed the discussions in class and that participation increased. Also, both students and faculty reported that students learned more and that learning was of a higher quality.

Interestingly, faculty in our study reported that less *material* was being covered in class but that more *knowledge* was being absorbed by the students. According to the literature, this is a primary goal of most instructors when teaching about diversity. Most of

our faculty members reported that students did better in the IF-styled course and that the improved performance was directly related to the utilization of the IF process. It is significant that both faculty members and students reported that they learned more and participated more, because this highlights that it is the process itself that is contributing in a meaningful way to the improved classroom experience.

Another key goal of our study was to help students connect with one another. This was a goal because we know that retention is now a primary aim of colleges, and we believe that, when students get to know other students, they are more likely to stay in school. This seems to be especially true of first-generation students who often arrive with a very strong feeling of being "awkward" within a campus environment. We found that the IF process encouraged student connectedness and bonding, and this in itself can improve the experiences of students in and out of the classroom. Curiously, the students that most resisted the small-group process were those who traditionally do well academically. We suspect that academically gifted students sometimes have difficulty relating with peers and managing peer interaction in small groups. Given the nature of the modern workplace, however, the latent, non-academic skills these students will gain in small-group interaction may be least measurable and most invaluable to their learning.

While all but one of the faculty who participated embraced and engaged the IF process, we did find one case in which a faculty member was unable to sufficiently let go of their control position in the classroom so as to permit students the space to engage with one another in a non-critical manner. We suspect that some faculty may be in settings in which they have difficulty relating to their students. Under these conditions, faculty will not have sufficient trust in their students to allow them the space to explore and discover. Faculty are often trained to teach using critical engagement and will feel that they must

correct students' misconceptions. The IF process provides space for this during full-class discussions at the end of the small-group class meetings, but it is imperative that faculty restrain themselves from criticizing or interrupting small-group student discussions. Students must feel safe if they are to be open to exploring alternative viewpoints, and they seem most able and inclined to do this by engaging with peers in advance of hearing the ideas that faculty have to present.

Conclusion

Teaching race, inequality, and other diversity-related courses are among the most difficult subjects to teach because everyone feels she or he is an expert on the subject based upon common-sense interpretations of experience. As a result, students enter the classroom armed with ideology and preconceptions, and they are not as receptive to data and theory as they are in other sociology classes that cover less controversial and personal subjects such as social theory, marriage and the family, social movements, etc. Specifically, students argue and doubt the existence of racism, sexism, and inequality, even in the face of irrefutable evidence, because of longstanding beliefs deeply rooted in personal politics. One solution to the problem of angry, exasperated, and often embarrassed students – and anxious teachers – may be to have students work democratically in small groups, with rotating facilitators, and to focus on policy possibilities rather than arguing about the existence of the problem.

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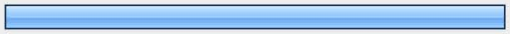
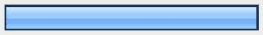
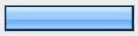
APPENDIX I

IF Faculty Survey

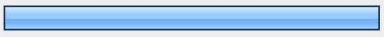
1. Please check all of the teaching approaches that you have used in the past.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Lecturing		**100.0%**	**9**
Instructor-Led Discussion/Socratic Discussion		88.9%	8
Small-Group Student Discussion		88.9%	8
Student Presentations		**100.0%**	**9**
Students as Guest Teachers (students develop an activity to use to teach a concept or class session)		44.4%	4
Service Learning		55.6%	5
Other		22.2%	2
		answered question	**9**
		skipped question	**0**

2. If you checked "Other," above, please explain the other method(s) you have used.		
		Response Count
		3
	answered question	**3**
	skipped question	**6**

3. Thinking about each of the statements listed below, please evaluate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Count
By the beginning of class, I had a reasonably clear understanding of how to implement the IF approach of student-centered learning, whereby students direct their own learning in small groups settings.	0.0% (0)	**88.9% (8)**	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	9
By the end of class, I had a good understanding as to how to implement the IF process.	**55.6% (5)**	44.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	9
The IF process worked effectively in my class.	**55.6% (5)**	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	9
I was able to give students space to explore ideas in their small groups.	**55.6% (5)**	44.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	9
				answered question	**9**
				skipped question	**0**

4. The IF process made it easier to address difficult or controversial topics in my class.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree		**66.7%**	**6**
Agree		33.3%	3
Disagree		0.0%	0
Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
		answered question	**9**
		skipped question	**0**

5. Did the IF model change the way that you approached difficult or controversial topics in your class? If so, how? Please explain.

		Response Count
		5
	answered question	**5**
	skipped question	**4**

6. How did the IF process affect how you taught this course (compared to times you have previously taught it)?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Count
I have taught this course in the past, but I think students learned more this semester.	22.2% (2)	**66.7% (6)**	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	9
I covered less material in class this semester than I did last semester.	**66.7% (6)**	33.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	9
Students understood the material we covered in class better than they have in previous semesters.	11.1% (1)	**44.4% (4)**	**44.4% (4)**	0.0% (0)	9
Students more actively participated in the class this semester, as compared with prior semesters.	**55.6% (5)**	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	9
The quality of student discussions was better this semester than it has been in prior semesters.	**66.7% (6)**	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	9
Student exams and/or written assignments were better this semester than they have been in prior semesters.	11.1% (1)	**44.4% (4)**	**44.4% (4)**	0.0% (0)	9
			answered question		**9**
			skipped question		**0**

7. How did the IF process affect the way you taught this course? Was it easier or harder to teach the course this semester? Please explain.		
		Response Count
		8
	answered question	8
	skipped question	1

8. How did you evaluate the student discussion portion of the class?		
		Response Count
		8
	answered question	8
	skipped question	1

9. What was the most challenging aspect of using the IF process?		
		Response Count
		9
	answered question	9
	skipped question	0

10. What was the most rewarding or positive aspect of using the IF method? To the extend that this method worked, why do you feel it worked?		
		Response Count
		9
	answered question	9
	skipped question	0

11. Did the students respond to you different this semester? If so, how?	
	Response Count
	8
answered question	**8**
skipped question	**1**

12. Did the IF process seem to benefit certain students more than others? For instance, did certain kinds of students participate more? Please explain.	
	Response Count
	8
answered question	**8**
skipped question	**1**

13. Students read _____ this semester than they have in previous years that I have taught this course.		
	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Much more	0.0%	0
More	11.1%	1
About the same	**88.9%**	**8**
Less	0.0%	0
Much less	0.0%	0
answered question		**9**
skipped question		**0**

14. During student-led discussions, students were eventually able to respectfully raise and consider a wider range of viewpoints than they have been able to engage in previous years (i.e., students who held "unpopular" views felt comfortable raising their ideas).

	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	**44.4%**	**4**
Agree	**44.4%**	**4**
It was similar to prior years	11.1%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0
	answered question	**9**
	skipped question	**0**

15. Students exhibited _____ initiative in this course than they have in prior semesters.

	Response Percent	Response Count
More	**66.7%**	**6**
About the same	33.3%	3
Less	0.0%	0
	answered question	**9**
	skipped question	**0**

16. Student groups seemed to bond more and even to interact outside of class.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree		0.0%	0
Agree		**100.0%**	**9**
Disagree		0.0%	0
Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
Don't know		0.0%	0
	answered question		**9**
	skipped question		**0**

17. I would use the IF method again in this or another course.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, definitely (or, yes, I already have)		**77.8%**	**7**
Probably.		22.2%	2
Maybe.		0.0%	0
Probably not.		0.0%	0
Definitely not.		0.0%	0
Don't know.		0.0%	0
	answered question		**9**
	skipped question		**0**

18. Please explain why you would or would not be inclined to use the IF method again.	
	Response Count
	8
answered question	8
skipped question	1

19. What, if anything, could we have done to better support your use of the IF method?	
	Response Count
	8
answered question	8
skipped question	1

20. Any other comments?	
	Response Count
	4
answered question	4
skipped question	5

(Faculty Comments begin on next page)

FACULTY COMMENTS (exactly as written)

QUESTION #2:
If you checked "Other," above, please explain the other method(s) you have used.

Case studies

In seminar courses, the student is primarily responsible for presenting on a particular journal article or chapter. The student must also 'lead' the discussion.

Role plays, on-line simulations

Did the IF model change the way that you approached difficult or controversial topics in your class? If so, how? Please explain.

Not so much the way I would approach difficult or controversial topics; rather it clearly changed the way the students approached the topics - respect for each other's opinions, articulating connections with other already read articles, more open-ended questions, and actually more rigor in pursuing a point (with less hostility altogether!).

It certainly did as the student input clarified the attitudes as well as the level of knowledge in the class which made it easier to pitch the lecture and also to know the direction to take in terms of group work and the topics for class discussion.

In the past, I would be more autocratic about pointing out, at the end of a discussion on a difficult topic, which viewpoint was the CORRECT one to adopt. In this class, I allowed the students to come to their own conclusions without being as directive.

No. We have those discussions regularly anyway.

Yes. Students felt freer to think and brainstorm without judgment.

How did the IF process affect the way you taught this course? Was it easier or harder to teach the course this semester? Please explain.

It made it easier.

Although I covered less class material, the students engaged with each other in rich and meaningful ways. The method strengthened their problem-solving skills and helped them explore their leadership potential.

In some central way it was harder to teach - there were explanations and background that I wanted to provide, and keeping quiet was hard. Nevertheless, it was more obvious that the students were learning - in the past I've had to wait for written assignments; this time, I could more clearly see who had read, who was thinking reflectively and critically. The pace of the class was different...

It was easier in many ways however it did not leave enough time for covering the topics planned and it was also more difficult to emphasize the objectivity essential to the social sciences while encouraging the expression of opinion as part of the IF process.

I wouldn't say it was easier or harder, but it was more fun and interesting for everyone. I didn't feel so anxious about making sure they really GOT a point - I saw it happening with little interference from me. It was exciting to see the students bringing in their own ideas for discussion even if they weren't on that day's agenda.

I found it relatively easy to implement IF. The difficulty was covering all the material while still allowing sufficient time for student discussion.

The IF process allowed the class to address some sensitive topics in an inclusive and interactive manner.

The discussions made it easier because they gave students an opportunity to explore ideas before or after a topic was presented by me. The format also made the class more informal and students were more receptive to the topics.

How did you evaluate the student discussion portion of the class?

For the strong students it worked really well, but not for the weaker ones.

It was a part of their participation grade (10%). If they were present and participated in the groups they earned their points.

We assigned the summary paper, collected the notes (early on; after the midterm the discussions moved in avery natural way. I began to take notes during the discussion. The note takers seemed to take fewer notes. We moved steadily from small groups to full class discussions.

A portion of the grade was allocated to class participation. For the student presentations the grade had a peer grade incorporated- students were also given points for their input in discussions resulting from peer presentations.

We evaluated the discussions based on level of participation and on the group reports they produced based on their notes.

The evaluation was relatively difficult. I assessed participation and their written reports.

The students really got into the discussions. Students who generally are very quiet, with a little encouragement, started to open up and talk.

I keep a log of who played the roles of facilitator and note taker to make sure as many students as possible participated in those roles. I made notes of who participated the most in the discussions. Frankly it was hard to evaluate the discussion.

What was the most challenging aspect of using the IF process?

Preparing the course structure and planning for the pace of the course. Our syllabus was already focused on 6 sections. The course was co-taught, and we modeled the process for the first topic, including the summary report. But after that, it was difficult to gauge how long to stay on topic.

Weaker students need more background information presented in the form of lectures before they can engage in constructive discussions.

Explaining the concepts to them without providing them with formal training.

To keep to the schedule in covering subject matter as the input from the instructor in terms of theory, state of the art in terms of research etc. though imperative would often be usurped by the interactive process.

Keeping the instructors (myself and my co-teacher) quiet to allow the students to take ownership of the concepts!

Evaluating the students and having enough time in class to cover required material (this was in introductory-level course).

The most challenging aspect for me was letting go and allowing the kids to discuss without my controlling the direction and goal of the discussion.

I was difficult to plan the discussions and interject them into the classes. Because they took so much class time, I was unable to cover as much material as usual.

Getting started - finding enough time to discuss topics while not neglecting course curriculum.

What was the most rewarding or positive aspect of using the IF method? To the extent that this method worked, why do you feel it worked?

Listening to our Hispanic students - who VERY rarely say anything - volunteer their thoughts and their insights.

The method works because the students own their learning in a clear and palpable way. They develop a sense of the class as theirs and so they prepare

The depth of the insights that stronger students developed. IF is very effective for advance students.

Greatest reward for me - Seeing quieter students engages and offer their thoughts about very complex cultural issues.

The most positive aspect was the increased level of student interest and student confidence. It worked as the space created for discussion and participation peaked their interest and curiosity.

I think I wrote this above - that the students began to bring in and discuss their OWN concepts and ideas related to the course topic. I think it worked because the students felt very safe in the class.

Listening to the students explore the topics.

The most rewarding aspect was the class reaction; they all enjoyed the discussions and liked the method.

The students were very engaged in the class and it was obvious that they felt their ideas mattered. Just empowering students to contribute their ideas and encouraging the more reticent ones to get involved made a big difference overall. It worked because they felt some ownership over what happens in the classroom.

That a few students spoke to me privately after a class to share how the discussion affected them.

Did the students respond to you different this semester? If so, how?

The students were more 'serious' about their own work...they were definitely more vocal and (this is subjective) more insightful.

No they didn't respond to me any differently.

As I do incorporate a considerable amount of student input and discussion in my classes I did not notice a difference in their response to me however I did notice that this group felt more confident of their understanding of the subject matter.

We always form a good bond with the students in teaching this class, but this was just one of those classes that "clicked". There was a new level of respect among all of us - more egalitarianism across the board.

Not sure.

Not really, that I noticed.

Students were very positive toward me this semester. While this is normal in my experience, I felt it was heightened somewhat, even if their grades weren't better than previous semesters.

Not really. I'm fairly open/flexible with them and this is a class that involves small groups and interactions as part of its design.

Did the IF process seem to benefit certain students more than others? For instance, did certain kinds of students participate more? Please explain.

Definitely the Hispanic or Latina women were most influenced in a positive manner by the IF process. They spoke without being asked, they brought stories and anecdotes from home (both private and political), and the choices they made for their written work tended towards the more radical journal articles we used. No question about it.

No.

It benefited everyone in a relative way- those who were likely to participate enjoyed the opportunity and those who were shy found the confidence to do so.

Oddly, all of our students participated - even the "weaker" students whose writing was not as polished as the stronger ones. Everyone really contributed. We were excited to see the often quiet Latina students expressing opinions, sometimes controversial ones.

Everyone in my class participated.

The quieter kids opened up with their peers.

I didn't see any specific difference except that I believe students who might be reluctant to speak in a larger group were able to express themselves in the small groups. This is just a subjective observation as I don't know which students would normally not speak in class.

Please explain why you would or would not be inclined to use the IF method again.

For me the metaphor that I use for teaching is 'A Conversation' - and that is what the class was.

I would use it in some sections of my courses.

I would be inclined to use this method again because students assumed a great deal of responsibility for the material and the discussions.

I would certainly use the IF method again as there are definite gains to be made. I would however be stricter about time slots allocated to the interactivity portion and leave sufficient time for the conventional lecture. It is an undergraduate institution and I believe that for such a student population the instructor cannot be a mere facilitator- it has to be an optimum and judicious blend of instruction and facilitation.

For the above reasons - I thought it was a very successful and exciting method and I plan to use it in senior seminar this coming fall. I liked the depth of learning that I felt occurred.

I would use IF again, but only in an upper-level course, where all the basics have already been covered in a pre-requisite.

I liked the personal interaction the students had. This is always something I wanted to encourage among our graduating seniors.

I would probably use the method informally. I'm not comfortable with evaluating student participation in this format, so I would reduce the grading part of it but keep the discussion format. I would also probably use it less so that I could get through more of the material.

What, if anything, could we have done to better support your use of the IF method?

I would have liked to meet more often at the beginning. Our facilitator was very respectful of our time; but we really needed more discussion amongst ourselves to generate practical advice.

More training.

Well, we always want more money for more and more exciting toys!! But overall I feel this method is pretty low-tech, so whether or not our audio-visual equipment was actually working on the day we were scheduled to use it (smile) we were able to carry on the class effectively.

The materials provided were helpful, but I would like to see more examples of use in different kinds of courses.

Everything was good. The materials were comprehensive and Emily did a great job preparing us for the semester.

It took me a while to feel comfortable with applying the process to my class. Perhaps more upfront preparation would help.

Need more time to restructure course to teach with this method

Any other comments?

It was a wonderful experience. I NEVER used small discussion groups because they felt so fake to me - this was an amazing experience and quite challenging (in the best sense).

This is an interesting and meaningful endeavor especially useful for the study of controversial and sensitive topics. IF is a useful pedagogical tool that I believe would be even

Thanks for this new pedagogy - I feel MUCH more comfortable with what I previously regarded as a somewhat high-risk endeavor (turning "control" of a class over to the students) and I am pretty sure I will incorporate components of the method into many

future classes - I am likely to use it wholesale in similar seminar classes. More effective with more mature students.

It was a good experience and I will adapt it in the future, though not necessarily as formally as we did this semester.

APPENDIX II

Student Survey 2

1. What sort of classroom structure/format is most effective for you?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Working in pairs	3.8%	2
Working in small groups of 3-4	**38.5%**	**20**
Working in larger groups of 5-8	11.5%	6
Listening to the professor talk in a lecture setting	**38.5%**	**20**
Other (please specify)	7.7%	4
	answered question	52
	skipped question	0

2. What sorts of teaching techniques best help you learn the material being presented in your classes? (check all that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Listening to the professor lecture during class	69.2%	36
Viewing information (PowerPoints, films, etc.) provided in class	**73.1%**	**38**
Watching demonstrations or role play exercises during class	34.6%	18
Listening to fellow students share experiences and ideas	59.6%	31
Participating in class discussions	63.5%	33
	Other (please specify)	0
	answered question	52
	skipped question	0

3. How do you prefer to fulfill graded course requirements (projects, papers, take-home exams, etc.)? (check all that apply)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Individually	**84.6%**	**44**
Pairs of 2	21.2%	11
Groups of 3-5	13.5%	7
Groups of 6-10	1.9%	1
answered question		**52**
skipped question		**0**

4. Before taking the IF class (emphasizing small-group, student-centered discussion), how comfortable were you talking in front a full classroom?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Extremely comfortable	17.6%	9
Comfortable	25.5%	13
Semi-comfortable	**31.4%**	**16**
uncomfortable	23.5%	12
Extremely uncomfortable	2.0%	1
answered question		**51**
skipped question		**1**

5. Before taking this class, how comfortable were you in leading a small-group discussion?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Very Comfortable		21.2%	11
Comfortable		23.1%	12
Somewhat Comfortable		**38.5%**	**20**
Uncomfortable		13.5%	7
Very Uncomfortable		3.8%	2
	answered question		**52**
	skipped question		**0**

6. What is your current grade point average?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
1.0-2.0 (D or lower)		1.9%	1
2.1-2.5 (C)		9.6%	5
2.6-3.0 (C+)		28.8%	15
3.1-3.5 (B)		26.9%	14
3.6-4.0 (B+ or higher)		**32.7%**	**17**
	answered question		**52**
	skipped question		**0**

7. What grade do you expect in the class you took that incorporated the IF process (small-group, student led discussions)?		Response Percent	Response Count
A range		41.7%	20
B range		**47.9%**	**23**
C range		8.3%	4
D		2.1%	1
F		0.0%	0
	answered question		**48**
	skipped question		**4**

8. What is your year of study?		Response Percent	Response Count
Freshman		0.0%	0
Sophomore		13.5%	7
Junior		28.8%	15
Senior		**57.7%**	**30**
Graduate Student		0.0%	0
	answered question		**52**
	skipped question		**0**

9. Are you male or female?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	14.9%	7
Female	**85.1%**	**40**
answered question		**47**
skipped question		**5**

10. Are you the first in your family to go to college (a "first-generation college student")?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	39.6%	19
No	**58.3%**	**28**
Don't know	2.1%	1
answered question		**48**
skipped question		**4**

11. How would you best describe your racial/ethnic identification?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0
Black (African-American, Afro-Caribbean, African immigrant, etc.)	31.1%	14
Latino/a or Hispanic	24.4%	11
Native American	2.2%	1
White/Caucasian	**46.7%**	**21**
Other (please specify)		1
answered question		**45**
skipped question		**7**

12. Since you've started university, has your grade point average:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Gone up		**45.1%**	**23**
Gone down		13.7%	7
Remained about the same		41.2%	21
N/A-- this is only my second semester		0.0%	0
	answered question		**51**
	skipped question		**1**

13. Do you feel a part of your school community?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Very much so		23.1%	12
Sometimes		**46.2%**	**24**
Not very often		25.0%	13
Not at all		5.8%	3
	answered question		**52**
	skipped question		**0**

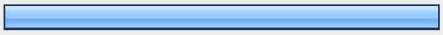
14. How likely are you to stay at your school and graduate?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Very likely		88.5%	46
Fairly likely		5.8%	3
Not sure		3.8%	2
Until I have enough credits to transfer to another university		1.9%	1
Not at all likely-- I'm researching or applying to other schools right now		0.0%	0
	answered question		52
	skipped question		0

[Survey results continue on next page]

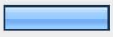
15. Rate your current communication skill level/abilities (listening, public speaking, writing, reading, etc.)						
	Very difficult for me	Difficult for me	Fairly easy for me	This is one of my strengths	Rating Average	Response Count
Reading and understanding complex information	2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)	**62.5% (25)**	27.5% (11)	3.15	40
Facilitating small-group discussions	0.0% (0)	19.5% (8)	**53.7% (22)**	26.8% (11)	3.07	41
Asking questions to get key information	0.0% (0)	7.1% (3)	**52.4% (22)**	40.5% (17)	3.33	42
Actively participating in social conversations	0.0% (0)	14.3% (6)	**50.0% (21)**	35.7% (15)	3.21	42
Using visuals to communicate my ideas	0.0% (0)	7.3% (3)	**65.9% (27)**	26.8% (11)	3.20	41
Communicating non-verbally	2.3% (1)	14.0% (6)	**58.1% (25)**	25.6% (11)	3.07	43
Resolving conflict within a group	0.0% (0)	17.1% (7)	**53.7% (22)**	29.3% (12)	3.12	41
Achieving consensus in difficult situations	0.0% (0)	17.5% (7)	**72.5% (29)**	10.0% (4)	2.93	40
Networking	2.4% (1)	31.0% (13)	**59.5% (25)**	7.1% (3)	2.71	42
Interviewing for a job	0.0% (0)	26.2% (11)	**52.4% (22)**	21.4% (9)	2.95	42
Responding to a crisis	0.0% (0)	23.8% (10)	**47.6% (20)**	28.6% (12)	3.05	42
Communicating across cultures	2.4% (1)	21.4% (9)	**52.4% (22)**	23.8% (10)	2.98	42
Following complex information	2.4% (1)	9.5% (4)	**64.3% (27)**	23.8% (10)	3.10	42
Creating excitement with your communications (writing, presentations)	0.0% (0)	19.0% (8)	**50.0% (21)**	31.0% (13)	3.12	42
Actively listening during conversations	0.0% (0)	6.7% (3)	35.6% (16)	**57.8% (26)**	3.51	45
Making presentations in front of a small group	0.0% (0)	13.6% (6)	**56.8% (25)**	29.5% (13)	3.16	44
Making presentations in front of a whole class	6.5% (3)	**34.8% (16)**	32.6% (15)	26.1% (12)	2.78	46
Writing clear memos, emails, or short summaries	7.1% (3)	2.4% (1)	**52.4% (22)**	38.1% (16)	3.21	42

Speaking and writing using correct grammar	2.3% (1)	9.3% (4)	**51.2% (22)**	37.2% (16)	3.23	43
Thinking about complex ideas	0.0% (0)	13.0% (6)	**45.7% (21)**	41.3% (19)	3.28	46
					answered question	**48**
					skipped question	**4**

16. The communication skills listed in Question #1, above, are very important for my success in the 21st Century workplace.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree		**77.3%**	**34**
Agree		20.5%	9
Disagree		2.3%	1
Strongly Disagree		0.0%	0
Don't know		0.0%	0
	answered question		**44**
	skipped question		**8**

17. Almost all of my university classes help me to develop many of the skills listed above (in question #1, above).

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree		**50.0%**	**22**
Agree		31.8%	14
Disagree		18.2%	8
Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
	answered question		**44**
	skipped question		**8**

18. How could your classes better help you to develop your communication skills?		
		Response Count
		22
	answered question	**22**
	skipped question	**30**

19. The IF classroom, where students get to direct their own discussions and learning in small groups, potentially contributes to student learning in many ways. Based upon how things went in the IF class that you took, how much would you agree with each of the following statements? (NOTE: If you took more than one IF class this semester, answer the questions on this page by thinking about just one of those classes. You will have a chance to answer questions about the other class later.)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
This method of student learning, where students directed their own learning in small-group discussions worked very well in my class.	21.1% (8)	**57.9% (22)**	13.2% (5)	5.3% (2)	2.6% (1)	2.97	38
I was more interested in attending this class because (or when) it included small-group, student-centered discussion.	18.4% (7)	**52.6% (20)**	21.1% (8)	5.3% (2)	2.6% (1)	2.86	38
I felt more connected to my classmates when working in small groups.	23.7% (9)	**60.5% (23)**	7.9% (3)	5.3% (2)	2.6% (1)	3.05	38
I felt more comfortable raising controversial issues in small-group than I did in front of the whole class.	23.7% (9)	**52.6% (20)**	15.8% (6)	5.3% (2)	2.6% (1)	2.97	38
Raising controversial issues in small group helped me feel more comfortable talking about these issues in front of the whole class.	28.9% (11)	**44.7% (17)**	18.4% (7)	5.3% (2)	2.6% (1)	3.00	38
I read more when I knew that I would be discussing the readings in small-groups.	10.5% (4)	**63.2% (24)**	21.1% (8)	2.6% (1)	2.6% (1)	2.84	38
I talked much more in this class than I do in other classes.	28.9% (11)	**42.1% (16)**	21.1% (8)	2.6% (1)	5.3% (2)	3.03	38

Talking more in this class has made me more confident to talk more in other classes.	23.7% (9)	**44.7% (17)**	23.7% (9)	2.6% (1)	5.3% (2)	2.94	38
I felt I learned a great deal from this class.	**44.7% (17)**	42.1% (16)	7.9% (3)	5.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	3.26	38
I have developed or deepened friendships with fellow students thanks to this class.	16.2% (6)	**56.8% (21)**	16.2% (6)	2.7% (1)	8.1% (3)	2.94	37
It was valuable to my learning to hear other students' points of views.	42.1% (16)	**50.0% (19)**	2.6% (1)	5.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	3.29	38
The diversity of other students' experiences was especially valuable to hear.	**50.0% (19)**	42.1% (16)	2.6% (1)	5.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	3.37	38
					answered question		**38**
					skipped question		**14**

20. What was the name of the teacher and/or class that you took this semester?

	Response Count
	35
answered question	**35**
skipped question	**17**

21. Share your impressions of your teacher's skill in conveying the IF process.

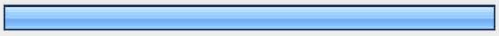
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
My teacher was very effective in helping us to learn the IF method of small-group, student-led discussion.	**53.8% (21)**	30.8% (12)	5.1% (2)	10.3% (4)	3.28	39
S/he encourage us to develop our discussion and facilitation skills.	**59.0% (23)**	25.6% (10)	10.3% (4)	5.1% (2)	3.38	39
My teacher did a good job of not interrupting us when we, the students, were talking in small groups.	**51.3% (20)**	30.8% (12)	10.3% (4)	7.7% (3)	3.26	39
My teacher allowed students the time and space to explore and develop their ideas.	**57.9% (22)**	26.3% (10)	5.3% (2)	10.5% (4)	3.32	38
				answered question		**39**
				skipped question		**13**

22. Describe how you would define the role of the professor in an IF (student discussion-centered) classroom. What should a professor be doing or not doing in an IF classroom?

	Response Count
	27
answered question	**27**
skipped question	**25**

23. Any other thoughts/comments on this course and this method?

	Response Count
	20
answered question	**20**
skipped question	**32**

24. Did you take more than one IF class this semester?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		12.8%	5
No		87.2%	34
	answered question		39
	skipped question		13

[Survey results continue on next page]

25. The IF classroom, where students get to direct their own discussions and learning in small groups, potentially contributes to student learning in many ways. Thinking about the other IF class you took this semester, how much would you agree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
This method of student learning, where students directed their own learning in small-group discussions worked very well in my class.	0.0% (0)	**100.0% (4)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.00	4
I was more interested in attending this class because (or when) it included small-group, student-centered discussion.	0.0% (0)	**80.0% (4)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (1)	3.00	5
I felt more connected to my classmates when working in small groups.	0.0% (0)	**100.0% (4)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.00	4
I felt more comfortable raising controversial issues in small-group than I did in front of the whole class.	0.0% (0)	**75.0% (3)**	25.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.75	4
Raising controversial issues in small group helped me feel more comfortable talking about these issues in front of the whole class.	0.0% (0)	**50.0% (2)**	**50.0% (2)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.50	4
I read more when I knew that I would be discussing the readings in small-groups.	0.0% (0)	**75.0% (3)**	25.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.75	4
I talked much more in this class than I do in other classes.	0.0% (0)	**50.0% (2)**	**50.0% (2)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.50	4
Talking more in this class has made me more confident to talk more in other classes.	0.0% (0)	**75.0% (3)**	25.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.75	4
I felt I learned a great deal from this class.	20.0% (1)	**80.0% (4)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.20	5
I have developed or deepened friendships with fellow students thanks to this class.	0.0% (0)	20.0% (1)	**80.0% (4)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.20	5
It was valuable to my learning to hear other students' points of	25.0% (1)	**75.0% (3)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.25	4

[Question 25 continues on next page.]

views.							
The diversity of other students' experiences was especially valuable to hear.	40.0% (2)	**60.0% (3)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.40	5
						answered question	**5**
						skipped question	**47**

26. What was the name of the teacher and/or class that you took this semester?

	Response Count
	4
answered question	**4**
skipped question	**48**

27. Share your impressions of your teacher's skill in conveying the IF process.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
My teacher was very effective in helping us to learn the IF method of small-group, student-led discussion.	25.0% (1)	**50.0% (2)**	25.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.00	4
S/he encourage us to develop our discussion and facilitation skills.	25.0% (1)	**75.0% (3)**	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.25	4
My teacher did a good job of not interrupting us when we, the students, were talking in small groups.	25.0% (1)	**50.0% (2)**	0.0% (0)	25.0% (1)	2.75	4
My teacher allowed students the time and space to explore and develop their ideas.	20.0% (1)	**60.0% (3)**	0.0% (0)	20.0% (1)	2.80	5
					answered question	**5**
					skipped question	**47**

28. Any other thoughts/comments on this course and its use of the IF method?		
		Response Count
		2
	answered question	2
	skipped question	50

29. Any other comments you would like to add?		
		Response Count
		11
	answered question	11
	skipped question	41

[Individual student comments begin on next page]

STUDENT COMMENTS (exactly as submitted):

How could your classes better help you to develop your communication skills?

1. I'm much more confident speaking in public and small groups because of my class discussions. Opening up in class and getting positive feedback boosts my confidence.
2. more interaction between professor and student rather than lectures.
3. Encourage individual thought
4. More small groups like we had in this class where there is a speaker and a note taker and ideas being developed
5. by having more open discussion so that I may learn to effectively express what I want to say
6. I think it would be a great help if professors could meet on an individual basis with their students.
7. providing informational reading materials and suggestions
8. Provide more opportunites to lead group discussion and do class presentations.
9. I really liked discussion/dialogue about the topics or issues we discussed in class. Therefore, I believe discussion is very important in most classes to help develop communication skills.
10. Do more projects like the present one we are doing which is facilitating and discussing
11. My classes are helping me to better communicate and feel more comfortable giving presentations in front of small groups, as well as, large groups.
12. The professors need to interactive and have class discussions with the class.
13. If possible more students will not only share their experience in the social groups that are a part of but also find some way to understand what there classmates go through as well.
14. have test trials
15. Classes could be more challenging intellectually for me. Mostly they are very easy basic concepts to understand which I believe should be mastered before going to college.
16. More practice at interviewing and being asked questions on the spot, when giving presentations. I wish I could think on my feet better.
17. Require more feedback from classmates after or during a presentation.

18. more open listening, more encouragement for participation, letting ideas generate before they are shut down
19. I believe that we could have developed more communication skills by having a lot more open ended class discussions.
20. None. Everything was excellent in improving my communication skills.
21. encourage more participation from students and group presentations

Describe how you would define the role of the professor in an IF (student discussion-centered) classroom. What should a professor be doing or not doing in an IF classroom?

The professor should raise the topic for discussion and allow the students to discuss the issue. The professor should interject at certain points and add feedback.

he should be bringing up interesting topics to discuss in groups and guiding the students to have smart conversation.

I believe that they should be going around the classroom asking questions to help us develope our ideas. They should be the facilitators.

If the discussion gets stuck, the professor should help move it along.

I feel the role of the professor is to assist the students in comprehending and communicating the information they are studying, and to genuinely listen to their thoughts and concerns regarding the topic they are learning about.

The professor should provide the students with the necessary resources for the discussions.

Well my professor came around to every group and just listened to their conversations.

Giving instruction on the group discussion, allowing the students to discuss and then facilitating the discussion.
The professor she start the disscussion and let the students express themselves. Then the professor can also be involved in the discussion and express her opinion too of course.

My class is a small group, therefore, there was no need to divide the class into small groups. As long as the professor continues to lecture and allow his/her students to express their opinions is fine.

Gave us great discussion questions. Helped keep the conversation going. Knew what she was talking about.

Both of my professors were extremely helpful, they sometimes led us, start our own open topic conversations or they would begin one for us. The roles were shared equally as student and teacher in the classroom

They should be facilitating group discussions and jumping in when needed.

My professor performed a good job being the mediator of her students talking on different views of social groups and classes. She was able to the buffer sort of speak between her students.

the professor would encourage small-group students in discussions at the same time providing help where needed. I think it would be better to provide theories and material and allow the student to then apply that information in course objectives.
they should give little written exercises to do and discuss with class. like a survey of some sort.

The professor should contribute ideas for discussion and help facilitate and encourage these student.s The ideas of the professors contribute as much as the ideas of the students.

Helping students to guide disscussions. Providing insight and personal experience.

In the IF classroom, our professors took on the roles of reporter, large-group facilitators, and small group task managers - helping us to stay on topic.

The prof. should participate in the group discussion if they feel the students are going off topic or are moving in a direction that doesn't apply to what is being discussed. The professor should not jump in if the students point is incorrect but should advise the students on why it may not be the right way to go.

i think the professor should help the discussion

The professor was mor of a mediator and guidance when the students would get off track with the discussion or build a more intense discussion. In this type of classroom environment, it is necessary to have mediators to keep the class in order.

I believe that the professors should allow their students to begin a discussion based on topics that relate to the course. They should give suggestions to begin a discussion and let the students continue without many interruptions.

A professor should let the students generate ideas and develop their own process of understanding information, and only contributing a suggestion if the students are stuck.

A professor in an IF classroom should sit back and let the class share dialogue amongst each other. A professor wouldnt impose their own views on the class.

She should check and see if everything is running smoothy.

Any other thoughts/comments on this course and this method?

I thought it was a good couse.

I just think that this method is very effective.

Keep it going.

I thought it was effective because it let us the students hear from our professors as well as the students

I would suggest that this not be applied to other classes taught by dr. _____

It was a really good course

Very insightful I would take the course all over again!

I love the IF courses. I wish students were held more accountable for the readings though. We would cover such great topics, but most of class we just talked about what the article said, rather than talk conceptually about policies, laws, etc. I wish it could have been at a higher level of thinking.

I thoroughly enjoyed the class

The IF format of teaching probably should be used in a course where there is a greater amount of information that needs to be covered or where the type of information is much more "heavy" than others. the information in my class could be discussed in small group settings but it would need to be broken down before hand.

IT WAS AWESOME!

Dr. _____ was critical and condemning of us during this course. Her attitude effectively shut down students' desires to share their thoughts, as we feared how she might respond. The atmosphere in the classroom could not have been further from one of mutual collaboration and learning from each other. I was extremely disappointed in this class.

It is a very helpful method on getting students more involved in the class topics.

The students need to feel comfortable that their ideas will not be shut down by the professor before they are able to be explored

i wish more teachers would use it, its very valuable part of our education

Any other comments you would like to add?

Dr, _____ did a great job! The information I learned from the course gives me a greater understanding of the world - society and inequality as a whole. My thinking is no longer limited in this area because of the course.

I honestly feel, classes such as the one I have taken provide a lesson for students that they can take to the "real world". IF classes provide teachings that are more hands on and understanding of other people's feelings and cultures. Allowing the student to be prepared for what the world has to offer once they leave Saint Francis.

This was more harmful than helpful when applied to the course that I took and feel discouraged comletely to take another course with the same instructor or subject matter

This is a valuable class setting for students to learn and grow. I think Trinity should implement this type of learning and make it a part of the curriculum at Trinity!

Overall, it was a wonderful experience.

Our class size was too large, to accommodate this type of activity. Also, I know the professor was frustrate at the lack of work ethic in some of the students, maybe a pre-requisite should be required for the class.