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"An Intense Level of Self-regulation": Technological Opportunities and Limitations of Online Intergroup Dialogue

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Abstract: Nationwide, postsecondary institutions are seeing the need and searching for ways to prepare their students for life in an increasingly complex and often polarized society. Since its development in the 1980s, intergroup dialogue (IGD) has become a nationally prominent social justice pedagogy that brings together small, diverse groups of college students to dialogue on topics related to diversity, equity, belonging, and social justice. Though IGD has traditionally been an in-person experience, the COVID-19 pandemic required colleges and universities to facilitate IGD online. Given this sudden and unprecedented transition to online delivery, as well the resulting possibility that IGD (along with other similar efforts) could become increasingly online going forward, it becomes important to discern the technological opportunities and limitations that come with such online delivery. In this study, we interviewed 16 college students who had participated in IGD via Zoom regarding their online IGD experience, illuminating a variety of opportunities and limitations related to students' use of cameras, microphones, and the chat feature; the physical spaces in which students experienced their online IGD; the online display of students' IGD peers; students' engagement in multi-tasking during IGD sessions; students' experiences of small group activities in "breakout rooms"; and how the online delivery of IGD promoted and constrained students' sense of equity and equality throughout their IGD experience. Implications of these findings for IGD practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords: intergroup dialogue, online learning, digital learning, social justice education, college teaching

Preparing college students to promote equity and justice in an increasingly diverse and complex world has long been a focal point in college and university mission statements (Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Devies et al., 2023) and national reports designed to revisit, stimulate, and augment the purposes of higher education (e.g., Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2023; The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). One dimension of such preparation is helping students become both willing and able to navigate and help resolve the kinds of conflict and polarization that can occur among the various social groups that comprise our society (Craig & Loehwing, 2021; Rahko, 2021). Such preparation is increasingly important in an age of unprecedented technological capacity that, on the one hand, increases our ability to share our thoughts and feelings instantly (along with prejudices and misinformation) (Correa & Hall, 2021; Stephan, 2008) and, on the other hand, decreases our ability to be unaware of contentious social issues and related tragedies, many of which either take place or find place within college campuses as sources of intergroup conflict (Mora, 2021). Students most often arrive at college with minimal preparation to successfully navigate such conflict (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; King & Kitchener, 1994), meaning that higher

education's efforts to prepare students for life in an increasingly complex world may first depend upon its ability to prepare students for life on its increasingly complex campuses.

There are many approaches that higher education institutions take to provide such preparation, which often center on students engaging in a range of activities (e.g., reading, watching, writing, talking, listening) and experiences (within and outside of coursework) that inform the conclusions students draw, how they form those conclusions, and how they share their conclusions with others (King & Kitchener, 2015). Some of the more common approaches include offering study abroad programs (Bennett, 2008; Nalani et al., 2021), requiring a diversity-related course as part of an institution's general education curriculum (Bowman, 2010; Zabala Eisshofer, 2022; Nelson Laird et al., 2005), or engaging students with diversity-related organizations on campus or in the nearby community (Kuehl, 2021; Zúñiga et al., 2007). In recent years, helping students develop information and media literacy has been a focus in higher education, given the growing need for society members to be able to effectively and critically take in the vast amounts of information that crosses their path via a myriad of formats (Bridges, 2021; Correa & Hall, 2021; Jackson, 2021; Powell et al., 2021). College students are also given opportunities to reflect on how they, themselves, form and share their own conclusions and convictions with others (e.g., Edwards, 2021 and Gordon, 2021), along with personal biases they unknowingly maintain and perpetuate (e.g., Briscoe & Lough, 2021). Institutions also create opportunities for students related to talking and listening, enabling students to practice productive debate (Mabrey III et al., 2021), empathetic listening (Hanners & Tietsort, 2021), dialogue across difference (Zwart, 2021), finding common ground (Eikenberry & Sellers, 2021), and other dimensions of interpersonal communication (Gurin et al., 2013).

One prominent approach to refining students' ability to engage with and communicate across difference is intergroup dialogue (IGD), a dialogic pedagogy that has been implemented at hundreds of postsecondary institutions since its development at the University of Michigan in the late 1980s (Maxwell & Thompson, 2017) and is the focus of this study. Though there are numerous ways in which formal dialogues can be facilitated (see Devane & Holman, 2007; Hernandez-Gravelle et al., 2012; McCoy & McCormick, 2001; and Parker, 2006 for examples), IGD is arguably the most thoroughly studied and commonly practiced approach to dialogue in higher education (Gurin et al., 2013; Jackson, 2021). This "Michigan Model" of IGD (described in greater detail hereafter) brings together small, diverse groups of students to dialogue on a variety of topics related to equity, belonging, and social justice over multiple weeks (Zúñiga et al., 2007; Hurtado, 2001). The unique features of this approach to dialogue (e.g., small group sizes, co-facilitation, structured interactions, sequential phases of dialogue taking place over time) differ from other social justice efforts in which deep and dialogic interactions can be difficult to facilitate (e.g., in large general education diversity courses) or ensure (e.g., in more loosely structured programs, such as study abroad or residential life, in which students can more easily decide to not opt into such conversations and engagement with difference) (Gurin et al., 2013). For decades, IGD had been understandably perceived as an exclusively in-person experience; however, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities were required to offer IGD online for the first time.

Given this sudden and unexpected shift to implementing IGD online, as well the possibility that IGD (and other social justice pedagogies, generally) could be offered online to greater extent in the future (McCarron et al., 2020; Yeakley, 2020; Powell et al., 2021), this study was designed to illuminate and more fully understand the various opportunities and limitations that can come with the online implementation of IGD. Guided by decades of IGD research and theory, the present study centers on the experiences and perceptions of online IGD students. In the following sections, we describe IGD in greater detail and provide a review of the IGD literature that informed the development of our primary research question: *What technological opportunities and limitations emerged in conjunction with the online nature of students' IGD experience?*

Intergroup Dialogue in Practice

IGD is an experience in which small, diverse groups of college students (ca. 8-15) dialogue on matters of equity, belonging, and social justice, often centering on a specific social identity (e.g., gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, citizenship, ability). Groups meet weekly throughout a semester, and these meetings are led by two facilitators whose identities are representative of both the IGD topic and the social identities held within the group (Maxwell et al., 2011). The focus of IGD on lived, identity-based experiences related to the IGD topic distinguishes *dialogue* from *debate* (proving/disproving claims) and *discussion* (exchanging ideas and insights) (Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003). In the decades prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, IGD was thought of as an in-person experience (Gurin et al., 2013), and there were only a few instances of IGD being facilitated online (Yeakley, 2020).

Throughout the IGD experience, a variety of activities (e.g., completing social identity profiles, participating in "gallery walks" and "uncommon ground" activities, writing and sharing testimonials) offer opportunities for personal reflection and dialogue between students (Gurin et al., 2013; Zúñiga et al., 2007). As part of such activities, the co-facilitators help students make sense of the activity and dialogue with each other about their thoughts, feelings, lived experiences, and what they learned about themselves, the group, and societal status quos (White et al., 2019).

Together, the weekly sessions of IGD are designed to guide students through four empirically grounded, sequential phases, with multiple sessions dedicated to each phase: (1) forming relationships, (2) exploring differences and commonalities, (3) talking about controversial topics, and (4) alliance building and action planning (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Zúñiga et al., 2007). In phase 1, students get to know each other, learn about what "dialogue" is, create guidelines as a group that will guide their IGD experience together, and participate in other related activities. In phase 2, students learn about social identity, oppression, privilege, and they discern differences and commonalities that exist within their group. In phase 3, students talk with each other about controversial topics associated with their broader IGD topic. In phase 4, participants crystallize together what they will take away from their IGD experience and identify practical actions they can take within their own spheres of influence to promote belonging, equity, and social justice.

Intergroup Dialogue Research and Theory

Decades of research on IGD (see Dessel & Rogge [2008] and Frantell et al. [2019] for reviews) have illuminated a range of pedagogical, communicative, and psychological processes and outcomes associated with the effectiveness of IGD (Jackson, 2022). Building on this research, IGD researchers developed the critical-dialogic theoretical framework of intergroup dialogue (Gurin et al., 2013), which describes how IGD promotes a variety of interconnected intergroup processes and outcomes (see Figure 1). In the present study, this theoretical framework was central to the refinement of our research question, the development of our interview questions, and our analysis of the resulting interview transcripts (as described hereafter).

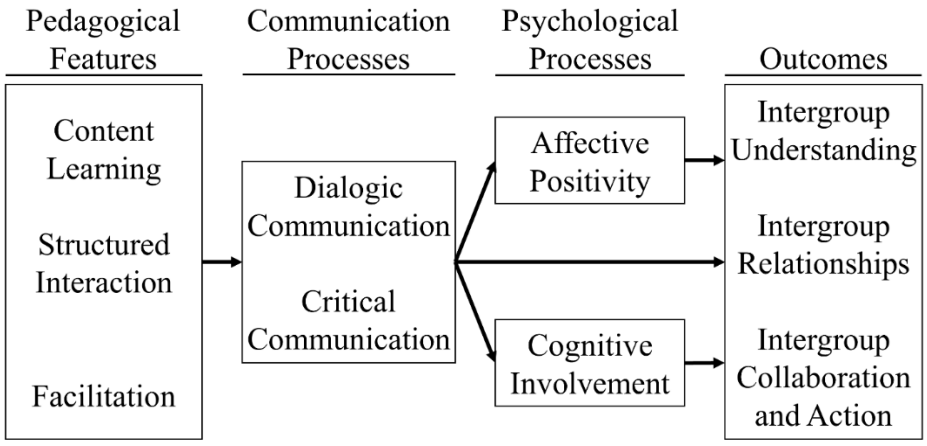

Figure 1. A Critical-Dialogic Theoretical Framework of Intergroup Dialogue.
Note. Adapted with permission from *Dialogue across difference: Practice, theory, and research on intergroup dialogue* (p.76), by P. Gurin, B. R. A. Nagda, and X. Zúñiga, 2013, Russell Sage Foundation. Copyright 2013 by the Russel Sage Foundation. Permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

As shown in Figure 1, researchers have found the pedagogical features of IGD (e.g., co-facilitation, structured interactions, academic content) to prompt communication between students that is both dialogic (i.e., personal in nature and focused on students' lived experiences) and critical (i.e., focused on improving societal status quos) (Nagda, 2006). In turn, these two forms of communication prompt students to experience positive emotions and engage in various forms of cognitive involvement (e.g., reflection and analysis related to identity, societal norms, and the experiences and perspectives of others) (Nagda et al., 2004). Collectively, these communicative, affective, and cognitive processes have been found to promote intergroup understanding, relationships, collaboration, and action (Gurin et al., 2013; Gurin-Sands et al., 2012; Nagda et al., 2009; Sorensen et al., 2009).

Of course, this framework and the scholarship that guided its development are grounded in and assume a traditional (in-person) implementation of IGD. Thus, while the interview questions we developed for the present study centered on various technological features of the online IGD experience, the underlying purpose of these questions was to identify ways in which such technological features promoted and/or constrained the various pedagogical, communicative, and psychological processes and outcomes that comprise the critical-dialogic theoretical framework of intergroup dialogue (see Figure 1).

An Emerging Scholarly Conversation on Online Intergroup Dialogue

In reviewing the IGD literature as part of this study, we found two publications that center on online IGD specifically (Bodon, 2021; Nagda et al., 2021), and both of these publications focus mainly on the reflections of facilitators. Bodon (2021) describes how she created and implemented an online IGD on the topic of immigration, including her thoughts on how students experienced her course. Nagda and colleagues (2021) provide a compilation of similar reflections in their own accounts of transitioning from in-person to online IGD facilitation. Overall, both of these sets of authors provide their online facilitation experiences primarily as cases that can inform the work of other IGD professionals, particularly those who might facilitate IGD online.

The present study was designed to build on these publications by focusing on students' perceptions and experiences of online IGD, thereby illuminating (a) practical steps that can be taken to enhance online IGD and (b) directions for future online IGD research. Towards these ends, we recruited and interviewed college students who had recently participated in online IGD, as outline in the sections that follow.

Methods

Research Paradigm and Design

We conducted semi-structured interviews for this qualitative, phenomenological study. Phenomenology centers on the exploration of a particular phenomenon (in this case, online IGD) "with a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 76). By providing students opportunities to share their experiences of online IGD in response to our interview questions, our study was grounded in social constructivism, a paradigm in which meaning and knowledge are developed via the diversity and complexity of people's lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moring, 2001).

Sample

Given the need to interview students who had experienced online IGD, the sample in this study was purposeful. Students were invited to participate through a survey they had completed as part of a previous IGD study (i.e., after completing that survey, they were asked if they would like to participate in this study as well). This led to interviews with 16 undergraduate students from one of 3 U.S. postsecondary institutions who had completed online IGDs that were either fully online or blended (i.e., some of their sessions were online, and some were in person). Although variations across different courses and facilitators are unavoidable, the three institutions included in this study utilize the same "Michigan Model" of IGD (described previously), helping ensure that the participants in this study had experienced the same overall dialogic pedagogy and approach. Additional information for the sample is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Select Sample Demographics.

Pseudonym	Gender	Race(s)/ Ethnicity(ies)	IGD Semester	IGD Format	Institution
Amber	Woman	African, African American	2021 Fall	Blended	C
Angela	Woman	White, Latinx	2021 Fall	Blended	C
Avery	Woman	Asian American	2021 Spring	Fully Online	C
Bailey	Genderqueer/ nonconforming	White, Middle Eastern	2021 Spring	Fully Online	A
Crystal	Woman	Black	2021 Fall	Blended	B
Daniel	Man	Asian, Asian American	2021 Fall	Blended	B
Jessica	Woman	White	2022 Spring	Fully Online	B
Justin	Man	African, African American	2021 Spring	Fully Online	C
Kayla	Woman	White	2021 Spring	Fully Online	C
Molly	Woman	White	2022 Spring	Blended	B
Nicole	Woman	White	2021 Spring	Fully Online	C
Robert	Man	White	2022 Spring	Blended	C
Talia	Woman	White	2021 Fall	Blended	C
Tara	Woman	Asian	2021 Spring	Fully Online	C
Tyler	Woman	White	2022 Spring	Fully Online	B
Whitney	Woman	White	2021 Spring	Fully Online	C

Note. $n = 16$.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each participant in this study was interviewed by the lead researcher. The interviews were semi-structured, 45-60 minutes in length, and guided by an interview protocol that centered on students' perceptions of the technological opportunities and limitations of the online delivery of their IGD experience. Given that each of the participant's IGD experience took place via Zoom, the purpose of the interview questions (and emerging follow-up questions) was to discern ways in which aspects of the Zoom platform (i.e., breakout rooms, chat, cameras, microphones, audio and video glitches, and how their devices displayed the Zoom application and its various components) fostered and/or hindered the pedagogical, communicative, and psychological processes and outcomes that comprise the critical-dialogic theoretical framework of intergroup dialogue (Gurin et al., 2013; see Figure 1). We also asked participants about how the ability to engage in other activities while in an online IGD (e.g., viewing other webpages or applications, working on other tasks), as well as the characteristics of the

physical location(s) they chose for their online IGDs (e.g., their bedroom, a campus location), influenced their IGD experience. In addition to asking participants directly about these technical aspects of Zoom, we also asked them questions about other aspects of the IGD experience that have received attention in the IGD literature (i.e., the role of emotion, trust, and the co-facilitators; navigating conflict as a group; students' engagement in dialogue, discussion, and debate) (Gurin et al., 2013; Jackson, 2021, 2022; Nagda et al., 2004; Nagda, 2006; Sorensen et al., 2009; Zúñiga et al., 2007) as a more indirect, complementary way to discern the technological opportunities and limitations associated with online IGD.

Open, axial, and selective coding were used to analyze students' interview responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which facilitated "a cyclical and evolving data loop in which the researcher interacts, is constantly comparing data and applying data reduction, and consolidation techniques" (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 47). Throughout this iterative coding process, we identified and interpreted themes that emerged in students' responses, as guided by this study's research question and theoretical grounding. In the open coding phase, we coded student responses individually. Then, we had a series of meetings in which we shared and discussed what themes were emerging until saturation was reached as part of the axial coding phase. Thereafter, we coded all the interview transcripts using a selective coding approach. We also met consistently to discuss these selected themes and coded excerpts to ensure consistency between the three researchers.

To establish reliability and trustworthiness in our data collection and analysis, we triangulated our coding and analysis processes by involving each research team member in both the coding process and the cross-checking of codes (Patton, 2015). In addition, we have provided rich, thick descriptions (along with interview excerpts) in the reporting and discussion of our findings hereafter (Creswell & Miller, 2000). We also used member checking as a way of both establishing trustworthiness and reinforcing the collaborative, co-construction of meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Author Positionality

In research and the overall consumption and production of knowledge, researcher identity and positionality are important considerations. In this study, one of the researchers is a cisgender, white, male, faculty member who has years of experience as an IGD participant and facilitator. On the one hand, this background was helpful in the design of this study, the interviews that were conducted, and the subsequent analysis of students' responses. On the other hand, we also recognized how such a background could bias his work on this study, which highlights the importance of taking steps to ensure reliability and trustworthiness (as described previously). Another researcher conducting this study is an international, cisgender, white, female doctoral student. Although she is well-versed in and committed to social justice, this research project was her first introduction to IGD pedagogy and research, which enabled her to offer perspectives throughout the study that were new and complementary in nature. The third researcher who conducted this study is a cisgender, white, female, faculty member with expertise in digital learning settings, educational technology, and adult learning, though this study was likewise her first experience with IGD pedagogy.

Findings

In this study, students discussed a variety of ways in which the technological aspects of online IGD helped promote and constrain the various pedagogical, communicative, and psychological processes and outcomes that comprise the critical-dialogic theoretical framework of intergroup dialogue (Gurin et al., 2013; see Figure 1). Specifically, students discussed ways in which participating in online IGD through a camera, experiencing IGD at a physical location of their choice, and other salient Zoom

features (microphones, breakout rooms, chat) enhanced and hindered the overall flow and verbal exchanges associated with normal conversation, along with students' willingness and ability to engage in deeper forms of dialogic and critical communication. In addition, there were a variety of ways in which these technological opportunities and limitations promoted and hindered equality within their groups, a condition that has been found to be necessary for positive intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) and, therefore, a focal point of the initial development and ongoing implementation of IGD (Jackson, 2022). These themes are described in greater detail in the following sections.

Cameras and Display in Online IGD

In an in-person IGD, groups typically sit in a circle, making it possible for each participant to see each other member of the group, along with the facilitators. Respondents in this study discussed a few ways in which participating in IGD online (via Zoom, specifically) made it easier and more difficult to see the rest of their group.

For example, on the one hand, Jessica shared that she was unable to display her group of 17 (including her 2 facilitators) on her screen. Tyler recalled that there were some people whose faces they "never ended up learning . . . because they never ended up coming on to my screen." On the other hand, among those who were able to display their entire group, respondents appreciated the ability to see everyone at once (along with their names) with minimal use of peripheral vision. This differs from the in-person IGD experience that requires participants to turn their heads to focus on different portions of the participant circle (relying on peripheral vision to see other group members, if they can see others at all). Thus, although participants described a decreased ability to see and interpret others' overall body language, participants also described an enhanced ability to see and interpret faces and facial expressions.

At the same time, respondents discussed how being able to see everyone all at once can be helpful, but it can also make it easier to be distracted. For example, Angela felt that the nice thing about [online IGD] was you're able to see everyone's faces at once. When you're in a classroom, you have to turn around because you're usually in a circle. That did help. It can be, though, distracting if someone on the screen isn't paying attention, or that you can tell they're talking to someone off screen.

In addition, respondents appreciated how Zoom allowed facilitators and participants to share their screen, with some participants suggesting that this approach to displaying (and co-creating) content was more effective than displaying slides on a screen or wall inside a classroom. Further, some respondents felt that, if the IGD had been in-person, the information would have not been shared visually at all (i.e., it would have only been shared via explanation), making it more difficult to understand and retain. At the same time, respondents discussed how the sharing of content via Zoom's "share screen" feature often made it so that participants could not see the rest of their group. Along these lines, Crystal discussed how she had to participate in the IGD using her phone, further limiting her ability to see others:

> On my phone, when they were showing the videos and the PowerPoint or the videos and the websites, I can only see those videos or those websites and one of the facilitators, like, whoever was talking last. So, I can't really see the students [or] myself . . . . I had to make the extra effort to move in between the screens just to see everybody.

A few respondents also discussed how the speaker view only allowed them to see the speaker and a few other group members, not the entire group. This prompted them to switch to gallery view, though one participant discussed this as an issue she experienced throughout her entire IGD, suggesting that she did not know that she could switch to another view within Zoom.

Students' Physical Location and Related Multi-tasking

Being able to participate in IGD from the comfort of their own homes or a space of their own choice emerged as another area of opportunities and limitations for online IGD. On the one hand, participants shared how being accessing Zoom at home or elsewhere was more comfortable than being in the same room as their IGD peers. For example, Amber, who participated in a blended IGD, felt that:

> In person, it just made the experience more classroom-esque . . . . People feel more comfortable sharing their feelings when their environment supports that, and when the environment is a comfortable place. In this class, [the classroom] was really small and kind of tight, and it was kind of hard to move around, which is ironic because the class is about size and appearance. And, so, even for someone that's smaller, like me, it's difficult sitting in these chairs. And then, it's like, cold. I just feel like being online, that is all eliminated. People can be in the comfort of their own homes, of their rooms, places where they find peace. And I think that calls for a more candid experience rather than in a classroom.

Being in an environment that supports dialogue was seen as helpful by other interview participants as well. Justin pointed out that the time the dialogue class was scheduled may not match the individuals' productivity and engagement window. Having the class online gave him the opportunity to create a relaxed space, which ultimately increased his dialogue capacity. He said that "it felt natural to me because I don't stand up and be super proper or whatever. I'm just, you know, coming to the class to talk to people. It's early in the morning. More relaxed." Kayla echoed the positive effects of feeling comfortable as well, saying that she valued "having privacy" and being able to be in her own room "was definitely a good place to becoming a good dialogue participator."

Another opportunity of being able to choose one's physical location for the dialogue emerged as the increased vulnerability people were willing to show in the online format, as compared to an in-person setting. Avery shared that:

> Because I'm at home, like I'm used to like, you know, feeling relaxed at home and everything. If I were in a different environment with new people, then I'd feel more tense and, I guess, less willing to open up.

Whitney echoed Avery's experience, stating that she prefers "to be by myself in a room because . . . the things you were talking about were very personal. So that was definitely easier when I was in a room by myself."

On the other hand, there were ways in which participating from home hindered the IGD experience. The students often implicitly described the phenomenon referred as "context collapse" (boyd, 2002), which has been used to describe experiences of using social media to engage audiences that come from various contexts. Some people are intentional in how they manage their multiple identities that collapse within the digital contexts. However, as it was the case with our participants, at times, there was no intentionality in how individuals managed the different contexts they were a part of as an online IGD participant, which can be referred to as "context collision" (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014). Throughout the interviews, we observed at least two forms of context collision. First, there was a clash of identities that the students had at home with the identities and narratives they were sharing in class. Second, there was the collision of being a student in a relaxed and personal environment with that of being a student in a classroom (i.e., in need to engage and pay attention to the two contexts the students found themselves in).

For example, Tyler had her online class at a friend's house who would also be in the kitchen at the same time. Tara was at home and did not want her parents to hear what she was saying. Angela shared housing with five roommates and, with "the walls . . . relatively thin," she was "less likely to share some things." Nicole also had "a small house with thin walls" that she shared with three other people. A few other students noted that, although there would be no one in the actual room they were in, they were "hesitant" to "get too far into conversations" if their roommates were around (Whitney). Robert shared that his roommate and him had an agreement not to listen in on whatever each of them would be saying, but still he would "halt [him]self . . . from saying something that [he] wouldn't want to be heard by anybody." Clearly, students' personal contexts and their online dialogue became orthogonal, and it appeared that the students were not explicitly aware of how they could potentially manage this form of context collapse.

Many students also noted that they were less likely to engage in a conversation emotionally. Justin remembers: "If you don't feel comfortable about something, you don't have to [speak] . . . [it's] a lot easier to float by if you really don't want to say something." Sometimes, this was simply because "people feel more pressure to talk when we're in person" (Molly), or because "it was . . . easier to be lazy and . . . had something else to channel . . . energy into" (Tyler), or because "[online] you have the option to speak, but in person there is an expectation for you to speak" (Crystal). To Kayla, to overcome this tendency and to "go deep," the students needed to "physically be together." Robert noted that he could feel what other people were feeling when he was physically close to them, but not on Zoom. Similarly, Crystal observed online discussion being "less passionate." Avery thought she could express her personality in person, whereas this was more of a struggle over Zoom. Emotions, similarly, seemed to be easier to convey in person. Nicole reflected this by saying, "If we were all together in a room, you can really just sense the vibes, whether it's tension or peaceful, quiet, versus on Zoom, we don't really know what everyone is thinking or feeling in their own little rectangles."

Another manifestation of the context collision would stem from being at home and being in class at the same time. Students mentioned home distractions, and many were convinced that the others in the class multitasked. Tyler exclaimed: "Oh, 100%. I bet everybody in that room did it at some point." Indeed, students spoke of doing other things while being in class because sometimes it would get boring (Whitney), the conversation was not engaging (Angela), the dialogue became repetitive (Kayla), or when they struggled to pay attention or stay awake (Nicole). Jessica said that she would multi-task when she "had a lot of work that day and a lot of stress . . . it wasn't out of boredom." In an in-person IGD, similar experiences might lead students to engage in mind-wandering, but when at home, they could now slip into other activities rather than shift their attention back to the IGD experience.

Indeed, many noted that multi-tasking was tempting. Daniel said that notifications to email distracted him, prompting him to answer emails. Talia said that she was sliding into other things unconsciously: "Oh, I needed so-and-so from Amazon. I jump on Amazon, and I'd be like, 'Oh, wait, I'm in class, I should not be doing this.'" Kayla's summary, perhaps, is most telling: "Having all the distractions so easily accessible . . . I fed into [the idea of] 'Oh, there's a moment of silence. I have to do this other task, like, I have to get this done.'"

However, it should also be noted that multi-tasking can be "on task" and beneficial to students as well, though this was only discussed by two students. Nicole mentioned how she would "pull up a little side tab" where she could take notes from the class and write down "talking points if I was getting ready to say something later on in the class," and Kayla discussed multi-tasking as "my own way that I deal with my anxiety." In sum, students being able to choose where they will be during the IGD (e.g., at home), what they will do during the IGD (e.g., multi-tasking or not), and why they do it (e.g., to engage more or less with the IGD experience) represents a significant collection of opportunities and limitations associated with online IGD.

Muting and Unmuting Microphones

Another set of technological opportunities and limitations emerged related to students' use of microphones. Students mostly found them to be an inconvenience that hindered the IGD experience, though there was one notable benefit to having to use microphones.

For example, Tyler found it inconvenient "to physically un-mute the microphone and speak," suggesting that everyone was, therefore, "on their best behavior" and tried not to get into deep topics. In addition, negotiating who speaks was reported as hindrance, further exacerbating this process, as described by Robert:

> Two people on mute. And then there's that second of awkwardness and they're like, "you go, you go" . . . . Sometimes I would almost see people going to unmute and then just decide to not unmute myself because I didn't want to deal with that hassle.

Thus, communicating with each other naturally was more difficult as they struggled to read body language. Talia described her challenge in getting social cues on Zoom: "I hate when . . . you're waiting to talk, and you don't know if you can talk, and then people wait, and then you interrupt each other." Whitney observed that "people were not so sure when to speak, or if another person was done speaking and didn't want to be rude and say something." Angela noted that "when in a room full of people you're sitting with, you can see when someone's about to speak." This problem tended to be solved by stacking student contributions into a queue. Robert said that such conversations tended to become "a string of monologues" in which people would take turns making statements, rather than building on what each other has said, making conversations feel less authentic.

On the other hand, the practical need to unmute before speaking (and to be mindful of others as one unmutes) facilitated reflection in students that can enhance the IGD experience. For example, Daniel felt that "the action of having to unmute myself to speak . . . I took it as a chance to think a bit more before I spoke." Similarly, Tyler observed that muting and unmuting processes "makes it more visible when someone's oversharing." Similarly, Nicole remarked that:

> What it came down to is just being willing to talk about whatever you thought you had to talk about or whatever you had to say without fear of being judged and just being willing to unmute and speak your mind, even if it's not fully formed, if you don't really know where you're going.

Like Daniel and Tyler, Nicole refers here to a level of reflection and self-awareness of what one thinks as they go through the step of having to unmute themselves. Thus, we can see how the muting and unmuting aspect of online IGD made it more difficult to communicate with each other in natural ways, but it also provided students an opportunity for reflection and greater awareness at the individual and group level.

The Experience of Digital "Breakout Rooms"

The breakout rooms were described by many participants as virtual spaces allowing for more private, conversational dialogic exchanges than the main Zoom room with all participants. Bailey mentioned how the smaller group size in the breakout rooms made the interactions feel "a little bit less formal and a little bit less like a classic classroom setting." Kayla echoed this sentiment, stating that the intimacy of a smaller group "made it feel more personal." Overall, the breakout rooms presented an opportunity for online relationship building. Whitney, for example, shared that it was

> definitely good to actually get to know people individually, and they did [breakout rooms] a lot in the beginning so that we could talk to each other and have individual conversations with people that we wouldn't have been able to speak to in the big main room.

Nicole shared similar feelings regarding the less formal environment of the breakout rooms, which she felt promoted open, conversational reflections:

> I think they gave us an opportunity to work more closely with one another and have sort of a level of intimacy that would not happen if it was just all seven people, partially because you have more of an opportunity to talk. It's more like a normal conversation versus trying to give everyone a chance and like waiting for your turn and the formality that comes with having that many people unmuted in the room.

As Nicole explains, those breakout room interactions tended to be more intense, and there was an increased willingness and expectation among participants to be vulnerable "because you were really asked to be more vulnerable and to come up with a response also to other people's reflections." In addition, Angela highlighted how breakout rooms can help people interact with a greater variety of people:

> I think there's more chance to interact with a variety of peers because you're in the breakout rooms and you don't, like, even when you're in a dialogue, sometimes you just gravitate to sit by people, the same people every time. Those are the people you end up turning and talking to when they ask to discuss a question. When you're in a Zoom room, you don't have any of that.

Besides providing a virtual environment that allowed for less formal, more conversational interactions, being in a smaller group within the breakout rooms (often without a facilitator) provided a sense of privacy that enhanced interactions between students. Angela shared how she felt more comfortable sharing her experiences and opinions within the safety of the breakout room, as compared to the main Zoom room:

> I think breakout rooms are great because they allow you to have privacy sometimes that you don't have when you're in an in-person class, when you're talking with a peer like, you know, other people can hear you. And even though you're not probably trying to conceal what you're saying, I think when you're just in the Zoom breakout room with one other person in your room, it's easier to be more open and talk a little more than if there's, like, you're in a loud, noisy room with other students.

While Angela felt more comfortable opening up in the breakout rooms, Crystal emphasized that she also felt like the breakout rooms provided a sense of accountability, "really calling us to identify with the opinions that we have and just talk about it more." Breakout rooms often provided a space for the participants to interact without facilitators present, which was perceived as supportive of a more open and uninhibited dialogue process. Justin, for example, mentioned that even though the facilitators were not necessarily hindering the conversations, he experienced their absence in the breakout rooms as promoting more open exchanges:

> Even though facilitators are also students, they still have that title being facilitators that will kind of make you have a perception of them as being like an adult . . . you can't necessarily say

> whatever you want to say in their presence. So, I think that was really cool to just be with other students because you could really share whatever you want to.

While the opportunity to speak freely and without facilitator supervision offered some general benefits, the breakout rooms also provided an important space for minoritized students. For example, Talia pointed out that, specifically for Black students, the breakout rooms created a space for them to have a more comfortable environment for conversations around their experiences:

> I do think that using the breakout room feature was a good thing because we were able to have conversations, like, I don't think it mattered as much for the white kids, but from what I was hearing from the people or the students of color was that they felt more comfortable, like, having certain conversations only with students of color, which makes sense.

Similarly, in describing her group's caucus group experience (in which students organized themselves into two groups of higher and lower socioeconomic status), Whitney emphasized that "if you're talking about something personal like that, you don't exactly want the whole class to be talking to."

In terms of providing structure to online IGD, breakout rooms were perceived as an effective tool to "warm up" before diving into the group dialogue experience. Robert shared that he particularly enjoyed the breakout rooms:

> At the beginning when, as I mentioned, nobody really knew each other yet. So that helped give some of the interactions a more personal feel . . . . You felt like you have less eyes on you . . . . It was definitely easier to share in those instances. So, yeah, I think I think it facilitates more personal connections and as a result allows people to share more openly.

In these ways, breakout rooms can serve as a way for students to make connections and form relationships, though some limitations of breakout rooms also emerged in students' discussion of them. We also found that these limitations were ones that can apply to in-person group work in general, but become more nuanced as students are more tangibly "alone" in the kinds of breakout rooms that Zoom provides. For example, Molly suggested that:

> When you go into a breakout room on Zoom, you kind of answer the question, and then you look at each other, and you wait for the little pop-up saying, "60 seconds left." And I feel like, in real life, you would have maybe kept the conversation going. And that definitely happened in person.

Here, Molly highlights a situation in which students might decide to simply do something else on their computer, given the convenience of those other activities, as opposed to working through the silence they experience. She also highlights how the facilitators are unable to see that a given conversation has died down, so they are limited in their ability to intervene.

On a related note, Avery pointed out that "when the conversation dies between two people, sometimes it could be reignited by the conversations [people are] having next to you, but there is nothing like that [in Zoom breakout rooms]." Thus, in addition to facilitators' limited ability to guide students through instances of silence, Avery's observation highlights how other students' breakout room conversations are likewise unable to have the influence they might have in person. Of course, facilitators do have the ability to check into their students' breakout rooms one-by-one, similar to how facilitators might "float" around the room as small groups talk in a classroom. However, entering a

Zoom breakout room is different from "floating" by a group (i.e., facilitators are "in" the breakout room as opposed to just being near the group), which can more strongly influence students' responses to facilitators' presence. Kayla described such an instance:

> It was more often that we were without a facilitator, and when the facilitator came in, it kind of stopped the good flow of the conversation, and people would just be like, "this is what we're doing" [to the facilitator], and then the facilitator would leave and we'd be like, "OK, let's get back to it, OK?"

In person, as facilitators approach a small group, it is possible for them to get a sense of how their approaching is going to influence the group, and they can respond accordingly (e.g., keep approaching and engage with the group or just keep moving along). Kayla's observation highlights how Zoom generally offers facilitators two options: be completely in the group or leave the group completely to themselves.

Using the Chat Feature

Similar to the breakout rooms, which allowed students to be completely alone in small groups, Zoom's chat feature provided students opportunities for interaction that are difficult to replicate in person. For example, students discussed how the chat feature allowed them to make quick interjections or offer positive affirmations that would have been difficult or impossible in an in-person setting. Nicole summarized the convenience the chat feature provided, mentioning its application to give input and feedback without having to unmute:

> Definitely, I think it was good, especially if you had a little question to ask or just a little comment that you didn't necessarily need to interrupt someone to say what you just wanted to put out there. It was also super helpful for sending links and things, the facilitators did. Another way I liked it was for positive feedback for each other. Sometimes, some would say something that, you know, was really hard for them to say. It took a lot of vulnerability . . . or . . . just like a random opinion, [it] didn't even have to be [about the IGD topic], could just be about what they did that day or food. And someone would always follow up and start a cute little casual-sized conversation that just made the group feel much more, not necessarily informal, but more connected.

Improved connectedness and comfort via the chat function was enhanced by the fact that typing in the chat "wouldn't disrupt the flow of the conversation at all" (Avery). Another opportunity of the chat feature was that it provided an alternative platform for more introverted and shy individuals who may not always feel comfortable speaking up. Tyler stated that:

> People would use it to kind of chime in, and I think that was helpful because, again, it just lets people who are quieter or shyer be able to say something, or even people who just don't feel like speaking on camera. And that also was helpful because it let there be more like springboards for us to go off for more discussion.

The option to send private messages to individual group members was also described as a way to show appreciation, empathy, or simply connect with the group members on a more personal level (even more so than would be possible in the group chat). Bailey shared that she:

> Was directly messaging people occasionally to say . . . "I really appreciate what you just said," "thank you for sharing that," or "that was a really interesting point, thank you for bringing it up" or things like that. And those moments were honestly the ones where I felt like there was the most opportunity for connecting with people on a more personal level.

Especially in situations where the participants wanted to merely make a short comment or give affirmation to an individual without disrupting the dialogue, the chat feature was perceived as a great tool "if you had a little question to ask or just a little comment that you didn't necessarily need to interrupt someone to say what you just wanted to put it out there" (Nicole). Some even saw it as an opportunity to make up for the lack of interaction outside the dialogue: "It's definitely a little bit more of a way to kind of have little side conversations or things that you wouldn't have had in the beginning or the end of class" (Whitney).

Overall, the chat feature was viewed as an essential opportunity for relationship building among the dialogue participants, fostering relationships both at the individual and group level. Talia shared that, in the chat conversations, she was able to have lighter, less formally structured interactions, which helped her bond with her dialogue group. She stated that the chat feature made things a little bit lighter because:

> We'd be talking, and then someone would make a joke [in the Zoom chat box] . . . and I think that that kind of brought us back from the serious[ness] because there were a lot of times we were like, "okay, we're not going to be able to do a lot about these issues. Like, this is something that all we can do is teach others." And I think that the jokes that people would make in the chat helped us bond more and also just kind of provided some light material that was useful.

As for limitations associated with the chat feature, Bailey highlighted how it led to "an intense level of self-regulation" as she "agoniz[ed] over the phrasing of what [she] was saying, especially if [she] was messaging a student of color." On the one hand, using the chat feature seems to have prompted Bailey to be thoughtful in her communication to her peers, which represents a positive aspect of the chat feature. On the other hand, Bailey also suggested that carefully crafting such messages required significant amounts of time and, by extension, some disengagement from what others were saying as she "agoniz[ed] over phrasing."

Thinking beyond this potential for temporary disengagement as one crafts a chat message, it is not difficult to imagine other ways in which the chat feature could hinder the online IGD experience (e.g., students producing an inappropriate quantity or quality of chat messages). However, in this study, students did not report that such possibilities occurred in their online IGDs, and (with exception of Bailey's discussion of "agonizing over phrasing") they spoke only positively about the chat feature.

Equity & Equality Among Online IGD Participants

Integral to positive intergroup contact is equality among the groups and group members (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998), and students illuminated a variety of ways in which the technological aspects of the online IGD experience both promoted and hindered equity and equality among IGD participants. For example, Kayla felt that:

> Having access to the internet and access to a device to do our readings and to do all the other things that we needed to do as part of the class, I think that put us all in an equal standing.

Further, participants also shared how the online format allowed everyone to access the dialogue experience from a location of their choice. Crystal (a commuter student) talked about the advantages of not having to come to campus to participate in the IGD:

> It allowed me to be more flexible and just come with more of an open mind, I guess. I'm not thinking about where my car is parked, how long it would take to get there, or whether I can stop by somewhere to grab something to eat, or if a place is closed. So, I was pretty much able to be focused, like, a lot of my distractions that are normally there were eliminated.

Along similar lines, disadvantages of not owning a car were mitigated with the online format because participants "could just have [the IGD] online in my room, just at my fingertips like that" (Justin).

Another way in which the online dialogue promoted equality was the regulating effect the format had on how many people could talk at the same time and potentially interrupt each other: "It's harder for people to talk over each other because no one would be able to understand what anyone was saying. So, everyone has to go one by one" (Avery). Jessica stated that unmuting was a "signal that you wanted to say something, and then the facilitators would make sure that you had your chance to say something. While, in person, it might just be harder. People might not hear you when you're trying to break in."

The participants also discussed how the online modality promoted equality in terms of how much and how long people spoke in the dialogue. In a classroom setting:

> Certain personalities might be more dominant or . . . talk a lot more and command a lot more attention, and I feel like it's not like as much of an issue in your head when you're on Zoom, because we're all . . . just like little squares talking to one another (Justin).

Similarly, Angela talked about how this virtual fluidity of space and the conscious effort of having to mute and unmute ultimately led to more equitable interactions: "Mostly, I think it enhanced equity because there was more equal opportunity for sharing between everyone. I think everyone's really conscious of how many times they're unmuting their microphone and sharing."

In addition, students also discussed ways in which they felt that the technological aspects of online IGD hindered equity and equality. For example, there were students in the online class who did not have access to reliable Wi-Fi (Talia), who struggled with audio quality (Robert), and had no power to charge devices (Tara, Justin). For those who experienced such constraints, these struggles seem to have influenced both how others perceived them and how they acted. Robert admitted that, for those with poor sound quality, he "found it easier to just maybe tune out what they were saying." Other students suggested that these limitations almost certainly impinged on the classmates' eagerness to participate: "We kept telling them, like, we can't hear you, then obviously they'd probably be less likely to speak" (Tara).

Discussion

In this study, we interviewed students who had participated in online IGD to illuminate technological opportunities and limitations associated with the online delivery of such a pedagogy. These interviews, along with our analyses of students' responses, were grounded in our review of the IGD literature, the critical-dialogic theoretical framework of intergroup dialogue (Gurin et al., 2013), the research that informed its development (e.g., Gurin-Sands et al., 2012; Nagda et al., 2004; Nagda, 2006; Nagda et

al., 2009; Sorensen et al., 2009), and scholarship on online IGD that has begun to emerge as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Bodon, 2021; Nagda et al., 2021).

One of the foundational findings of this study was that the various technological aspects of online IGD (e.g., breakout rooms, chat, cameras, microphones) can be seen as providing both opportunities *and* limitations to the IGD experience, depending on multiple factors, thus highlighting the nuances associated with implementing IGD online. The various opportunities and limitations reported in this study have a range of implications for IGD practice and future research, as discussed in the sections that follow.

Implications for Intergroup Dialogue Practice

The findings of this study can prompt facilitators of online IGD to consider how they might take advantage of the opportunities afforded by online platforms while also avoiding or overcoming the limitations of such platforms. The recommendations we make here may seem tedious or trivial, and this is perhaps especially the case if they are only considered individually and in isolation (e.g., a minor instruction given to students regarding chat features). However, in hearing and analyzing students' experiences in online IGD throughout this study, it became evident that even the most basic of practices, when implemented together, can collectively (a) optimize the physical and digital spaces that students inhabit as they participate in online IGD, (b) prompt students to engage in productive multi-tasking (and avoid unrelated multi-tasking), (c) minimize the disruption of flow that can be caused by the muting and unmuting of microphones, (d) enhance the use of breakout rooms throughout the IGD experience, and (e) weave the chat feature into spoken dialogue in ways that help students overcome their physical distance and develop relationships with each other.

Considering Students' Physical Spaces

Though there are many ways in which students' IGD experience was influenced by the *digital* space in which it happened, the physical spaces where students chose to connect to their online IGD was influential as well. On the one hand, students shared that being at home was more comfortable than being in a classroom, which they felt increased their willingness to share and be vulnerable. On the other hand, students also discussed the distractions of their physical environments, the lingering worry that they (or their IGD peers) will be overheard by others in their physical spaces (e.g., roommates, parents), and how not being physically together with their group made them less invested and, overall, less motivated to engage emotionally and practically.

Early on in students' online IGD experience, perhaps in announcements that are made prior to the first session, facilitators can invite students to identify a few different places where they can optimally connect with their group throughout the IGD. Such places would be quiet, free of distractions, and places where students can be alone and unconcerned with being overheard (or accidentally divulging the comments of their IGD peers to others nearby). Facilitators can also list a few places where such spaces can be found on campus (e.g., study rooms at the library), which can be helpful for students who live near campus but would not want to attend IGD sessions at their home (where there may be roommates, distractions, etc.).

Discussing Related vs. Unrelated Multi-Tasking

Online IGD makes it possible for students to engage in other tasks during their IGD sessions. As illustrated in this study, these other tasks can be related to the IGD experience (e.g., taking notes about what they are learning, jotting down something they want to share later) or unrelated (e.g., answering

emails, working on other schoolwork, or shopping), thus enhancing or hindering individual- and group-level experiences.

In the first IGD session, facilitators can express understanding for the busy and full lives that students lead and empathize with the desire to engage with other matters during online gatherings. As part of such a conversation, facilitators can lead students in a discussion of listening, active listening, and the importance of listening and body language in IGD. They can invite students to keep their focus on the IGD, to only "multitask" in ways that enhance the IGD experience, and facilitators can offer examples of how that can be done (e.g., taking notes on content or personal reflections, looking up related terms and definitions). Facilitators can also lead a discussion on how group members have felt in the past when they got the sense that others were multi-tasking in online gatherings and the impact that such feelings can have throughout a multi-week IGD experience that focuses on personal, lived experiences. Finally, at the beginning of each IGD session, facilitators can invite students to close all applications on their devices that are not related to their shared IGD experience.

Microphone Norms

Perhaps one of the more unexpected themes that emerged from our interviews was the influence that microphones could have on the IGD experience. On the one hand, having to take an extra step before speaking (unmuting oneself) prompted people to reflect on what they were going to say, how they might say it, and the extent to which they might be dominating the conversation. On the other hand, having to unmute can also lead students to hesitate or decide not to speak, and students often felt unsure if other people were unmuting at the same time and, therefore, if it was their turn or the other person's turn, thus hindering the natural flow of conversation.

There are a few ways facilitators can help mitigate these potential issues with microphones. For example, some groups in this study simply did not mute their microphones unless there was noise or distractions in their background. Facilitators can also consider taking advantage of the "raise hand" function in Zoom, which allows participants to place a hand icon next to their name in the participants list to indicate that they want to speak. Finally, it can be helpful to simply name this possibility on the first day of the IGD, which can help normalize what can otherwise be awkward moments of people not knowing who should speak first. Along with this naming, facilitators can invite students to, overall, do their best to not let this technical limitation hinder the IGD experience.

Utilizing Breakout Rooms

The importance of breakout rooms was evident in this study, with students describing how these small-group opportunities provided a sense of privacy, were more conversational than the large group experiences, helped students be vulnerable and develop relationships, enabled students to interact with a wider range of people, raised the expectation that people should speak up, and provided a sense of solidarity for members of minoritized groups. In in-person settings, clear and sufficient instructions related to how long small groups will have to interact, what they are to do (and not do), and what roles might need to be determined among the group (and how they should be determined) are important, and such instructions become all the more important in digital spaces where instructors are unable to "keep an eye on" their small groups in the same ways that they can in person. Given that Zoom requires facilitators to either be completely in or completely out of a small group, it is important that facilitators thoughtfully prepare and share instructions related to the breakout rooms they facilitate. For example, given the proximity that students have to other tasks on their devices and in their physical spaces that are not related to their IGD experience, facilitators might advise students as to how they can use any extra time they feel they have in their breakout rooms.

Of particular interest in online settings is the transparency that facilitators provide as to how groups were formed and whether they will be "visiting" each of the groups. Though not a prominent theme in our interviews, Jessica shared her perception that breakout rooms that are randomly generated by software (in this case, Zoom) "wasn't as personal as it would have been in person," making it important for facilitators to share, if only briefly, why groups will or will not be randomly assigned. This way of helping students understand "the why behind the what" stands to positively influence their engagement in breakout rooms. Similarly, facilitators letting students know whether they will or will not be visiting the breakout rooms (and why) can help ensure that the sudden appearance of a facilitator does not have a negative influence on the conversations in progress, as described by students in this study.

Chat Feature Guidelines

In this study, students appreciated how the chat feature in Zoom enabled them to make quick interjections, whether that was to ask a clarifying question or to offer words of affirmation to their peers. At the same time, there was also an acknowledgement of how crafting a chat message can take considerable time and potentially distract students from the conversations taking place in real-time.

In the first IGD session, facilitators can discuss the benefits of the chat feature with their students. To help ensure that the chat feature does not become a distraction or replace verbal exchanges, facilitators can also encourage students to be thoughtful about what they chat to their peers, how often they use this feature, and whether something they want to share is best shared in the chat or aloud to the group. Facilitators can also invite students to be thoughtful about how much time they are spending crafting chat messages and what they can do when chat messages are taking more time than anticipated. For example, students can be encouraged to briefly note what they would like to chat and then finalize the chat message at a later time.

Directions for Future Intergroup Dialogue Research

While the findings of this study have a variety of implications for the implementation and facilitation of online IGD, they also direct our attention to future research that would further refine our understanding of online IGD and other similar online endeavors. Going forward, it will be important to study other Zoom features not considered in this study, Zoom features that will be developed in the future, other online platforms through which IGD can be facilitated, and how IGD facilitators perceive and experience the technological features of the platforms through which they facilitate.

Indeed, while participants in this study were asked questions about a wide range of Zoom features, they were not asked about all of them, so our knowledge of the opportunities and limitations of Zoom's other features remains limited. For example, Zoom's captioning feature may make the IGD experience more accessible for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Saving Zoom's captioning (and/or recording an IGD session using Zoom's recording feature) may be helpful to individuals and groups when students miss an IGD session. Though one participant in the present study mentioned the benefits of co-creating content online as a group (e.g., via Jamboard or Zoom's digital whiteboard), this was not a focus of this study, but represents a promising area of future research, given the prominent role of co-construction in IGD pedagogy (Zúñiga et al., 2007). Again, it is possible that all of these features can be beneficial to and hinder the IGD experiences, but these remain empirical questions.

It is also important to remember that (a) Zoom will continue to evolve as a platform over time and (b) there are other online platforms through which IGD can be implemented (e.g., Google Meet, BlueJeans, Blackboard Collaborate, Skype). As new features are developed in Zoom, and as other

online platforms are used to implement online IGD, ongoing research in these areas can further refine our understanding of the opportunities and limitations of such features and platforms.

In addition, as a complement to the present study (which focuses on the perceptions and experiences of students), future studies can focus on how facilitators used and experienced the various technological features of the platforms through which they facilitate online IGD. On the one hand, facilitators might align with and affirm the ways in which students felt that technological aspects of their online platform represented opportunities or limitations; on the other hand, facilitators might offer different perspectives given their different role in the IGD experience, their deeper understanding of IGD and its intended outcomes, and their ability to observe dynamics among IGD students that students may not be able to see in themselves.

Limitations

Although this exploratory study is useful in discerning future directions for IGD practice and research, a few limitations should be acknowledged. First, participants in this study had IGD experiences that varied slightly. Some students were in IGDs that were fully online, and other students were in IGDs that consisted of a blend of online and in-person sessions. Furthermore, although students experienced the same "Michigan model" of IGD, the number of weekly IGD sessions varied across institutions. Second, our sample was comprised mainly of women (12 of 16 participants) at a relatively small number of institutions (3). In addition, our interview protocol was designed to explore a variety of topics salient in IGD research, theory, and digital learning, thus illuminating initial, "first steps" for future IGD practice and research (as opposed to more in-depth considerations of particular facets of online IGD). As discussed, future studies of online IGD can help address limitations of this exploratory study, thereby helping enhance what may become an increasingly common approach to offering IGD within postsecondary institutions.

Conclusion

Since its development in the late 1980s, (in-person) IGD has brought together thousands of students and professionals to dialogue on topics at the heart of many of the conflicts that permeate our national and global societies. In thinking about online IGD, specifically, the technological opportunities and limitations illuminated in this study can prompt online IGD facilitators to, on the one hand, strive to make the most of the opportunities provided by online platforms, while, on the other hand, striving to avoid or mitigate their limitations.

To that end, we have offered a variety of recommendations for both online IGD facilitation and future online IGD research, which can help higher education professionals further discern how IGD facilitators, programs, and students can optimize the online experience of IGD. Thinking beyond IGD alone, and in considering other IGD-like experiences, such practical and scholarly efforts can increase our understanding of how to best prepare students (via online means) for lives in a society that is not only increasingly complex and diverse, but increasingly online as well.

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