

Week 4 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

This week, facilitators reported that groups are seeing a healthy level of conflict as students connect the political to the personal, and explore their differences constructively. The majority of facilitators have also reported good or excellent dynamics in their sessions, and that students are now more open to discussing controversial / emotionally charged topics, which is great to see. However, a few groups had to cope with recurrent absences of their group-mates that made their group dynamics average.

The majority of groups did the Life Stories activity this week, in which they discussed the main influences / moments that have shaped their perspective in general, and their interactions with people from other cultures, in specific. For these groups, this activity helped students get to know each other better, and allowed them to explore the lens with which each student views the world. Conversations flowed smoothly and students went to explore the main issues that came out of the stories shared, and as a result- students explored themes such as the origins and causes of commonly-held stereotypes, how different environments and personalities shape students' perspectives and how to encounter differences/similarities in various cultures. At this point, students seem to fully understand that this not only an excellent opportunity to learn about different cultures and share commonalities, but also the perfect environment for them to tackle sensitive topics and understand the other side's perspective on them. Groups who opted to do the Speaker/Listener activity also developed engaging conversations about topics related to cultural conflicts and the reasons why such conflicts occur. This activity helped them build their empathy skills, as evidenced by them recognizing the similarities between their challenges and that of their partners, as well as their cross-cultural communication skills as they noted the utility of focusing on listening and understood its importance in dialogue.

Attendance & Technology Update

This week we had a slight increase in absence level due to Easter and spring breaks which will hopefully improve next week. In the meantime, if your university is on holiday, please encourage students to login remotely for their sessions if they can, and contact our tech team if they anticipate any technical difficulties. We're also happy to report that technical logistics in students' groups continue to improve, with less than 15% of students experiencing technical difficulties, more than half of which were resolved in-session. Therefore, if your students are struggling with technical issues and are not logging in from their University lab, please encourage them to do it for their sessions, and keep in touch with our tech team if they face any technical difficulties.

Next Week

Next week students will have the opportunity to dig into one or two issues they identified as global challenges in greater depth, compare and contrast the different ways they perceive these issues, and the ways in which their personal perspectives / bias enrich and drive the dialogue. Also, students will engage in conversations, where they start asking one another questions and listening carefully to responses to more deeply explore differences and to re-examine where their positions come from. We hope students will continue to reflect on their own perspectives to gain greater awareness of the assumptions and values underlying their views, discuss the best ways to understand and engage with perspectives different from their own, and think critically about how they address differences and conflict.