

Week 7 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

Facilitators continue to report great dynamics in all groups this week, with many adding that their students are demonstrating the skills they've acquired over the semester. They report that students are being increasingly honest, are willing to raise controversial issues and are challenging each other in respectful, constructive ways. Students are also learning to work through the tensions without prompting from their respective facilitators and are actively engaging critical thinking skills in their discussions.

This week, discussions branched out in two ways: some groups discussed students' video projects and students shared their insights on the process of media production, the difficulty in choosing specific interviews and relaying the 'majority opinion' within the limited time frame; other groups moved directly into free-flowing discussions on topics students identified as important to them. Discussions on their individual projects then lead to larger discussions about media bias, censorship, stereotypes, the role of media in politics and perceptions of freedom of speech in different societies. Groups that opted for free-flowing discussions branched out into a variety of topics, both personal and political, with the most popular ones being: Israel / Palestine and the role of third parties, electoral and political processes in different countries, current events in Syria and Ukraine, dating and marriage in different cultures, and music / movies that different students favored.

Attendance & Technology Update

The technology in groups continued to be steady, with very few tech issues disrupting the sessions. This past week unfortunately saw another dip in attendance, due to holidays in different countries for Easter, and session time conflicts with students' exam schedules. **Because the last week is critical in cementing their experience, and providing the full arc of the dialogue they've engaged in throughout the semester, we'd like to request that you strongly urge your students to do their best to attend their final sessions this week.**

This Week

Students will be using the final week of sessions to discuss any topics they have not had a chance to raise over these past seven weeks. Facilitators have asked students to reflect independently on the pressing issues and questions they would like to explore with their groupmates before the program ends, and we expect that this will bring a colorful and varied range of discussions in the group meetings.

In addition to that, facilitators are working to pull together what the students have learned through their online dialogue process. Most groups will be engaging in two different activities:

1. **Youth Empowerment activities:** Students will be talking about what they think needs to change to improve the relationship between Western and predominantly Muslim societies and then grappling with the question, "what can we – as young people – do to promote this change."
2. **Reflections & Recognitions:** Each group will take some time to reflect on the discussions and what they have learned throughout the past seven weeks. The Recognitions activity will allow students to recognize fellow group members for a variety of things- from who made them laugh the most, to whose input they most appreciated. This activity has been very successful in the past, in rounding out the students' experience and providing them with a measure of closure to the semester.