

# PERSONAL ACTIVITY: PART 1

## INTERRACIAL DYAD

Figure 8.2 is a transcript of an actual conversation on race that took place in one of our Courageous Conversation seminars. The moderator used a process of constructivist listening to guide three people through an exercise called “15-Minute Race.” Participants use specific prompts and parameters to investigate their own racial perspective in contrast to their partner’s. The participants included one White female educator and one Black male educator—Person A and Person B, respectively—and one White female observer. Person A and Person B responded to prompts given by the facilitator. The observer’s directive was to listen and, at the conclusion of the conversation, help Person A and Person B recognize their differing styles of conversation known as White Talk and Color Commentary.

Study this Courageous Conversation closely, and identify the process that takes place by following the directions at the top of each column:

- Underline any prompts, parameters, or directions that you find.
- Identify and describe all examples of White Talk or Color Commentary.
- After studying this conversation, respond to the prompts that follow.

**Figure 8.2    15-Minute Race Dialogue**

Participant [Describe actions of participants]	Dialogue [Underline prompts, parameters, and directions]	White Talk Versus Color Commentary [Describe the White Talk or Color Commentary]
Moderator:	<p>This process is called constructivist listening and is made up of pairs of one White person and one person of color. We are going to give timing and prompts. When A is speaking I'll say, "A, you have so many minutes to talk on . . ." and I will give you the prompt. When A is speaking, B is completely silent. This isn't a conversation in a normal way. B completely listens. Then I'll give B a prompt and a time, and A completely listens. There is no exchange. This is called constructivist listening, and it is designed with a purpose.</p> <p>So A, you are going to have one minute to share the first words that come to mind when you think about race. A, one minute, go.</p>	

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Person A (White woman):	The communities people live in, how communities deal with difference. I think about school, how school deals with differences. I think about color, did I say that? I do think about people's color, and how that makes people see them. That's about all I can think of.	
Moderator:	Stop. B, you have one minute to say to your partner how you define racism. B, one minute, go.	
Person B (Black man):	The institutionalized practices of a particular racial group to disenfranchise, discriminate against, or in various other ways marginalize another racial group based solely upon that person's race. And I'd have to add that there is a certain power component to racism. You can have the subordinate disenfranchise and marginalize the dominant group, but it's not racism. It's something else, because that power component's missing.	
Moderator:	Stop. Take 30 seconds for silent reflection. Think about what A said, think about what B said. . . .  A, you get to start again. This time you'll have two minutes, and you are going to share with your partner one experience you have had with racism and how you responded. Two minutes, go.	
Person A (White woman):	Well, fortunately—or unfortunately—I haven't had too many. We were kind of talking about one eating with somebody who's another ethnicity at lunch. But that is not so much my experience. But I would say for me, ah, two Black women were having a conversation about their children, and I was . . . it was at the end of a meeting, and it was kind of naturally, we were standing there, and definitely I was not included in this conversation. And it was made really clear by body language that they wanted to have the conversation without me. It was kind of a freeze-out kind of a thing. So I can't think of many experiences which tell me much, you know, about this whole conversation for us.  I haven't always lived, I mean, I have lived in a lot of different places and been in a lot of different areas and still I can't think of any.	

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Person B (Black man): <i>Interjecting outside of the prompt while time is still available</i>	Well, I think the definition that I gave doesn't allow for that. I'm talking about race and power. If we are all African American in this closed group, it doesn't work. Could you have discrimination based on something else or marginalization within the community, oh certainly! We can go on for a while about that. But it's the dyad. You have two different ethnic groups, and one is the "dominant" one in society. That's what is kind of driving that.	
Moderator:	B, you have the same prompt, one experience you have had with racism and how you handled it. Also two minutes, go.	
Person B (Black man):	All right, oh, it's a bad one. It's really kind of small, it's minor, it's petty, but that is the definition of them. I went to a department store at the Sun Crest Mall. I guess I wanted to buy some shirts and—I mean, you've heard the stories—well, there's someone following you around to see if you're going to steal anything. Well, I could not get someone to help me.	
Person A (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	Oh, you had the opposite experience of me.	
Person B (Black man):	Yes, I had to literally confront a salesperson to help me on finding sizes, and she was very reluctant to help me.	
Person A (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	Do you think she thought you weren't going to buy something? You have no idea.	
Person B (Black man):	The impression that I got was that she really couldn't be bothered. On the other hand, last Christmas in the same department store, I was looking for some jewelry for my wife. I'm walking down the display case and the salesperson—who happened to be British—wouldn't even greet me. These two guys come in from the street, they walk up to the display case, and she's greeting them.	
Person A (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	Different race?	

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Person B (Black man):	Yeah, OK.	
Person A (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	So then what do you do? What do you say?	
Person B (Black man):	Ah, two things: Do you want to fight over it and confront the person? Or you can say, "OK, fine, this is how you are. I will do something else."	
Person A (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	(Referring to earlier discussion:) So when we talked about those micro-aggressions?	
Person B (Black man):	Yeah.	
Person A (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	That is definitely. . . .	
Person B (Black man):	You can always point to one or two of them every day. I mean. . . .	
Person A (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	Every day, seriously?	
Person B (Black man):	Every couple of days.	
Moderator:	<p>Stop. I want you to think about the observation. I want you to think about how hard it is to stay just a listener. I want you to reflect on what A said and what B said, and on how hard it is to be the listener. 30 seconds. . . .</p> <p>B, you are going to start this time, and you are going to have two minutes to share one feeling you have about dealing with racism. One feeling, two minutes. B, go.</p>	
Person B (Black man):	I expect it. At some point every couple of days, I expect to have some sort of a thing where I am, you know, kind of shaking my head, saying, "Well, what was that all about?" And again, every so often, my wife and I will be leaving some place, and I'll look at her and say, "What was that?" And she'll look at me and say, "I don't know." Or she'll say sometimes, "You know what it was." You	

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	expect it; you deal with it as best as you possibly can. Also, it's kind of hard to figure out—at least for me—is this person just being really, really rude? Or is it that they are rude to everybody? Or is it that they are just rude to me? And if it is just me, it's a very short step to go from that to “Oh, it's because of race.” I don't know; it slows down how I react to it. I am kind of looking for ways to say, “Well, if it is based on race, do I have to do something, respond in some way?” I don't know.	
Observer (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	How often is it that the thoughts come to you, “Is it just that this person is rude and ignorant, or is it just me?”	
Person B (Black man):	Well, whenever it happens.	
Observer (White woman): <i>Interjecting</i>	Every time?	
Person A (White woman): <i>Answering for the Black man</i>	Every time.	
Person B (Black man):	That is the first thing.	
Moderator:	Stop. B, stop. A, you have the same prompt. You have two minutes. Share one feeling you have about dealing with racism. A, go.	
Person A (White woman):	I don't expect it. When you said that, it makes me sad because I just assume that they are rude or a jerk, you know. I mean, I never, I don't expect it at all, even if the person is another race than me. I don't expect that it has anything to do with it. You know, I just think they have had a bad day. I don't personalize it. And I can't think of a time that I have even gone back over it and thought, “Gee, what was that about?” You know, I assume more that it's maybe my age, or that I'm a woman, or I don't know what. But I never go there, never, really. I really don't. Not with me personally, my own personal experience. Sometimes with	

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	<p>students I do. Sometimes with students I definitely feel like that they're looking at me as the White teacher, you know? And they don't see me as a person. Especially near the beginning of the year. But usually that disappears fairly quickly for me. I think for them I'd have to ask them. But you know what I mean? I can't assume that just ever completely disappears because we are just such a power, you know, in the classroom. But, yeah, when it says, if we're talking about keeping it personal and I'm not getting into the racism of the world, um, I don't expect it at all. I don't get into the car and think, "OK, what's going to happen today?"</p>	
Moderator:	<p>Thirty seconds to silently reflect. What did A say? What did B say?</p> <p>All right, Observer, we are going to ask you to share what you heard.</p>	
Observer (White woman):	<p>The person that was not of color mentioned her experiences as far as racism which was directed at her because she was not of color. I thought it was interesting; she was not of color, but she had a circumstance that she felt uncomfortable in because it was two Black women that excluded her from a conversation. And the person of color said that he expected racism to happen every day. And the person not of color never expected it, never. You know, it wasn't that they got in the car and expected it to happen that day. I had a hard time with my own personal experiences popping up in my head, and I wanted to talk.</p>	
<i>Moderator: Commenting to entire group</i>	<p>Now, one of the things that's clear is that A and B are engaged, OK. And you all are going off on your conversations now. You had a systematic input into the conversation, which we don't typically suggest is so structured and rigid, since it is really hard. But what we do suggest is that you monitor the real parameters or conditions of the conversation. That is to say that you don't just walk out into US society and find people just breaking out into effective racial conversation. You know, it just doesn't happen for us yet, OK? Maybe one day we will see that, but it's not now.</p>	