

Developing a Mid- to Long-Form Structure for Conflict Transformation and Reduction Dialogue Utilizing Campaign Appropriate Games

This presentation will focus on providing guidance on how to develop tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG) dialogue programs that take place over a minimum of 7-10 weeks. Such structure is derived from that used by the Center of Student Belonging at American University and expanded upon based on education received from Abdul Aziz Said, Hrach Gregorian, John Paul Lederach. The presentation will include discussion on the advantages of using TTRPGs to invoke the benefits of dialogue while also emphasizing the usefulness of avatarization by participants to generate both deeper and more meaningful dialogue through the act of play. Discussion about the benefits of challenge or shared adversity will also be present in the presentation, as these benefits are implied and demonstrable through the use of TTRPGs in general, and particularly emphasized when structured into a dialogue program. The presentation will walk through actionable methods to develop different dialogue formats, depending on desired participants and other invested parties in the program. These methods are informed by the Reach-Out Roleplaying Games format developed for this purpose, but are not designed to be proscriptive to the use of that specific modality. They are instead designed to be flexible, but structured, to ensure an effective goal is met through the dialogue. One of the concerns around post-dialogue interventions is the perceived lack of demonstrable benefit to the reduction of conflict. It is our theory, emboldened through the development of these forms of program, that incorporating the shared virtual hardship of a TTRPG campaign, creates a more perceivable reduction in conflict resurgence. The presentation will include a call to action, encouraging participants to develop their own programs or projects.

Bio

Josh Heath is the Chief Operations Office of High Level Games where he runs Reach-Out Roleplaying Games (RORPG) as a program to incorporate dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution into tabletop roleplaying games. He has a MA in International Peace and Conflict Resolution with a focus in Security and Ethnic Conflict from American University and a BA in Political Science with a focus in Ethnic Conflict. He has been running dialogue sessions using the RORPG method since 2016. During the day he works in emergency management where he incorporates his academic expertise in marketing communications and outreach work. He has previously presented on this topic at TAGGs and Save Against Fear (run by the Bodhana Group).