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**SHARING STORIES, HEALING HURTS, AND BECOMING
ALLIES FOR CHANGE:
NCBI INTERGROUP DIALOGUES PILOT PROGRAM**

By

Amie Thurber

B.F.A. The University of Montana, 1999

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

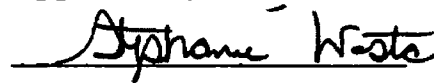
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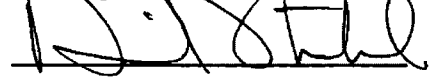
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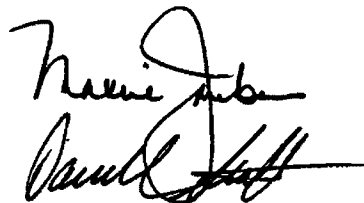
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Sharing Stories, Healing Hurts, and Becoming Allies for Change: NCBI Intergroup Dialogues Pilot Program

Chair: Stephanie Wasta



This action research project designed and evaluated the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues pilot program offered during fall 2001 through the UC MultiCultural Alliance at The University of Montana. The stated objectives of the program were for participants to 1) develop their own ethnic and cultural identity; 2) identify information and misinformation learned about other groups; 3) increase their understanding of the impact of oppression on group interaction; and 4) increase ally behaviors. These objectives were each met to varying degrees. Most students experienced changes in their identity development over the course of their participation. All students reported reducing their prejudicial attitudes, as well as learning new information about the impact of oppression. In addition, most participants increased both their commitment to diversity and comfort reaching out to diverse peoples. Some demonstrated new skills of intervention, as well. Increases in actual ally behaviors proved challenging to identify with the research methods used and could not be assessed. The changes that did occur for participants in each of these areas resulted from both the facilitated exercises and the experience of validation and connection among the group participants. In addition to the stated program goals, the program proved meaningful to participants in two other key ways. First, it provided participants with an opportunity to develop close relationships, particularly with individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds than themselves. Second, it offered participants the chance to share their feelings with others.

This research fills a gap in existing prejudice reduction research by offering an effective model of prejudice reduction. Further, the present study strengthens current research that indicates a positive relationship between achieved identity and lower levels of prejudice. For some participants, identity development proved integral to their reduced prejudicial attitudes, increased commitment to diversity, and increased comfort interacting with members of diverse backgrounds. Close intergroup relationships proved equally important to these gains in reduced prejudice, comfort, and commitment. This points to the strength in combining methods of identity development and social contact, a topic unexamined in current research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the fall of 2001, the UC MultiCultural Alliance piloted an Intergroup Dialogues program designed to move diversity work to the next level at The University of Montana. I approached the design and evaluation of this program as an action research project. The following account of the research methods and findings aims to illustrate the effectiveness of this program at reducing prejudice and building co-existence among diverse groups, as well as ways this model could be improved. While this research addresses one prejudice reduction program on our campus, diversity work does not exist in a vacuum. Thus, it is appropriate to provide a context for understanding diversity efforts on college campuses.

Prejudice reduction work represents an offshoot of both multiculturalism and social justice education, with theoretical roots in Freire's (1970) call for revolutionary liberatory education. In this model, students and teachers engage in dialogue together. "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other"(1970, p. 72). Liberatory education aims at empowering the disempowered to question reality, heal from the effects of internalized oppression, and take transformative action. Prejudice reduction work emerges from Freire's theoretic tradition, and has strong roots in our recent U.S. history of combating oppression, sparked in many ways by the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Largely in response to the efforts of the civil rights, women's, and gay right's movements (to name a few), the growing fields of social justice education and multicultural education have sought to provide people with skills to better understand themselves and others, while working to create a more just and equitable society. These fields serve as evidence of the cross-curricular belief that as Americans our lives are inextricably tied to all other citizens of this country (and increasingly, the world), and that our experience is made richer, our understanding deepened, through learning about and engaging with people who are different from ourselves.

Definitions of Key Concepts

Multiculturalism

Definitions of multiculturalism abound. James Banks, a leader in the educational movement, has defined multicultural education in terms of educational equity among students of diverse cultural, ethnic, and economic groups (1993). Others have broadened this charge. A team of educators from the University of Michigan describe the movement as "an opportunity to develop and implement a new vision of society in which power and participation are shared equally and broadly, and in which there is appreciation for other perspectives and respect for groups different from one's own in terms of membership, practice, process, and values" (Schoem, Frankel, Zuniga, & Lewis 1993, p.7). More concretely, the National MultiCultural Institute (as cited in Geranios, 1997) has outlined four objectives to multiculturalism: 1) to increase the sense of one's own cultural identity; 2) to heighten awareness of one's own cultural perspectives and the impact of those on individuals from other groups; 3) to develop knowledge of and practice in using

an effective strategy for interrupting culturally offensive remarks; and 4) to develop and build alliances with people who are culturally different from each other. This paper adopts this broadened definition of multiculturalism, which brings us to articulate a definition of culture.

Cultural Sensitivity and Managing Diversity

As multiculturalism has roots in both the American Civil Rights movement and Freire's call for a liberatory education, there is good reason to link the movement with social justice education. That link forms the approach of the project outlined herein. With that said, there are some scholars of multiculturalism who rather than focus on issues of justice, emphasize fostering understanding of cultural differences.

Throughout history, and particularly since the 1970's, the language used to talk about culture has undergone several shifts. A majority of scholars of the 1970's defined culture in terms of race, social class, and gender identity. The 1980's brought new cultural trends. Culture became linked with nation-states; the study of intercultural relationships became a comparison of cultures (Moon, 1996), more specifically, a comparison of countries. This shift reflected the growth of international business, and a new wave of cultural sensitivity and diversity management trainings abounded. These training models served essentially as cookbooks for intercultural interaction, providing mostly white American trainees with behavioral do's and don'ts for surviving abroad.

Though some of this information might be helpful, the differences approach proves problematic in several key ways. As communications scholar Dreama Moon noted: "the outcome is that diverse groups are treated as homogenous, differences within

national boundaries, ethnic groups, genders, and races are obscured, and hegemonic notions of 'culture' are presented as 'shared' by all cultural members" (1996, p.76). This approach to managing diversity often creates misinformation and stereotypes, as opposed to breaking them down. There lies a critical assumption that there exists a set of knowable characteristics about a group, which, once studied, allow a person to navigate smoothly through their different culture (Razack, 1998). Further, this orientation keeps the focus of the training on the "other," as opposed to encouraging participants to explore their own cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions.

Equally problematic is the lack of social and historical context provided within the diversity management approach. Freire writes, "Education as the practice of freedom... denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world...(1970, p.81). When people obscure from view the very real history of anti-Semitism or racism, they allow themselves to believe that history has no implications on their present time interactions. If this belief proved true, one would simply need to study the cultural differences between groups (i.e., eye contact, concepts of time and family) in order to build working relationships with others. As Sherene Razack writes, the "emphasis of cultural diversity too often descends, in a multicultural spiral, to a superficial reading of differences that makes power relations invisible and keeps dominant cultural norms in place" (1998, p.9).

With the birth of critical feminist and race theory in the late 1980's and 1990's came new suggested orientations to culture. Many, including bell hooks (1984), encourage the revisioning of culture to address the interlocking identities (i.e., race, class, and gender) that shape each of our lives. This new definition of culture views all persons

as implicated in the social hierarchies that structure our experience and instructs individuals to notice the ways that they re-produce these hierarchies. This paper adopts this latter understanding of culture, one not defined by nation-states, but by the complex interlocking experiences of identity within society.

Statement of Problem

Changing Demographics- Changing Pedagogy

Nationwide, campuses are become increasingly diverse. Contrary to what one might believe, an integrated school setting does not in and of itself lead to greater intergroup understanding and respect. In fact, research indicates the contrary: that self-segregation limits intergroup interaction, and students' stereotypes often harden in the absence of intentional interaction (Zuniga & Nagda, 1993; Geranios, 1997).

Consequently, increased conflict and tension seem an inevitable result of our increasing diversity.

Tension offers both seeds of growth and destruction. While often intergroup friction exists as an underground current, prejudicial attitudes can and do translate into violent behaviors. In the last fifteen years bias motivated crimes have increased, the vast majority of which being committed by college-age men (Prutzman, 1994). Bias crimes frequently target people on the basis of perceived religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. The recent murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming serves as only one painful example; in the last year, three Montanans were assaulted due to their sexual identity, one, a student at Carroll College.

Prejudice reduction work aims, at the very least, to keep individuals safe from bias motivated attacks. Its vision extends much farther than that, however, to build welcoming and inclusive communities where people of different backgrounds, cultures and perspectives can fully engage with, learn from, and support one another. Advocates working to reduce prejudice, while acknowledging the conflict diversity may present, embrace its potential for transformation.

The University of Montana Steps Up to the Challenge

Ten years ago The University of Montana created a diversity plan which outlined the university's goals and objectives regarding diversity on campus. The plan included issues relating to the recruitment and retention of students of color, the development of multicultural curriculum, and creating a welcoming climate for all students on campus (UM, 1990). While the university has done much to meet these goals, there is clearly further work to be done. A recent survey of UM freshman found them less open to diversity than their peers nationwide (UCLA CIRD Survey, 1999). Students continued to report experiences of prejudicial attitudes on campus, from both classmates, as well as faculty and staff.¹ As reported on campuses nationwide, contact among students of differing social and cultural groups remains limited (Geranios, 1997).

National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI)

One of the strongest campus programs working to impact our organizational culture by reducing prejudice and promoting intergroup dialogue is our UM affiliate to

¹ As staff member with the UC MultiCultural Alliance at The University of Montana, I regularly hear claims of incidents of both unintentional and intentional mistreatment.

the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI). NCBI is a non-profit leadership training organization dedicated to reducing prejudice worldwide. There are now affiliates on over 60 U.S. campuses, which facilitate peer led experiential Prejudice Reduction workshops for their campus communities. NCBI's methodology emphasizes developing a positive identity, assisting people in healing from the effects of oppression, hearing personal stories of mistreatment, and empowering students with concrete skill training. The strength of NCBI's campus program lies in its dual emphasis of creating dialogue between diverse students while empowering students to make changes in their campus communities. Cherie Brown, founder and executive director of NCBI International writes, "...it was only when we placed activism and not just dialogue as a central cornerstone in our campus leadership program did we see real co-existence on the campus...take place" (1998, p.4). She continues, "Healing the wounds of oppression and then reclaiming the power to be activists and allies for one another are the two most fundamental tools we in NCBI impart to every member of the campus community" (1998, p.5).

There exists limited research examining the effectiveness of NCBI's methods. However, one study at Oregon State University found that the workshop increased participants' self-confidence and belief that they can make a difference in standing up against discrimination, and indicated that participation increased participants' belief that others would accept them (Nelson, 2001).

The UM NCBI affiliate, started in 1999, has had a strong presence on campus; the trained corps of over 15 leaders facilitated workshops for over 600 students, staff, and faculty in academic year 2000-2001. In addition to leading workshops, NCBI leaders

respond to critical events in the community. On September 11 and the days that followed, NCBI leaders set up a listening project in the student union to respond to the isolation and grief many students were experiencing. Yet, the bulk of NCBI's campus work in Missoula takes the form of classroom workshops. A limitation appears to be lack of depth and reflection allowable in the one-day format of the workshops.² It was with this limitation in mind that UM NCBI leaders investigated the intergroup dialogue model.

Intergroup Dialogues

Credited with first offering intergroup dialogues on college campuses, The University of Michigan Program in Intergroup Relations and Conflict (IGRC) complements a strong academic classroom experience with face-to-face meetings between members of two historically conflicting groups (i.e., Blacks and Whites, Jews and Christians). In the typical dialogue group, trained peer facilitators lead a group of 8-18 student participants through six weekly sessions, exploring issues of identity, group similarities and differences, and conflict (Schoem, Frankel, Zuniga, & Lewis, 1993).

Several universities have modeled intergroup dialogue programs after the Michigan program; research indicates that these programs yield significant positive cognitive and affective outcomes (Geranios, 1997). In addition, students report an increased commitment to social justice resulting from their participation (Nagda, Spearmon, Holley, Harding, Balasonne, Moise-Swanson, & De Mello, 1999).

² Though the NCBI Prejudice Reduction Workshop is a full day workshop model, on campus it is often shortened to 1-3 hours to fit into class schedules.

Statement of Purpose

NCBI Intergroup Dialogues Pilot Program

This research is concerned with creating and evaluating a new campus prejudice reduction program by bringing together NCBI's methodology with the intergroup dialogue format. This project addresses both micro- and macro- level concerns. At the macro level, there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of particular models of prejudice reduction, and this study aims in part to fill that gap. At the micro level, this research is concerned with creating an effective prejudice reduction program at The University of Montana, providing data regarding the effectiveness of the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program at reducing prejudicial attitudes.

Guided by the principles of action research, this study asks: **What is the effectiveness of the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program at reducing prejudice and building intergroup relationships?** Under that broad question are more specific concerns, including: How does/doesn't the program meet its objectives? What are the experiences of the program participants? How can this information inform future intergroup dialogues?

Significance of the Study

In bringing together NCBI's methods with the intergroup dialogue format, this study explores a previously unexamined model of prejudice reduction. As an action research project, the evaluation of the Intergroup Dialogues program not only fills a gap in current research, but also importantly assists the dialogue group coordinator in enhancing the effectiveness of future dialogue groups at The University of Montana. It

provides key insights into how attitudinal change happens for individuals, and the critical relationship of both identity development and intergroup contact to prejudice reduction.

PART I
OVERVIEW

CHAPTER II

PREJUDICE REDUCTION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

What is Prejudice?

Prejudice acquisition lies at the roots of prejudice reduction. The more clearly educators understand how prejudice is acquired, the more effective our strategies at undoing it will be. Oddly, prejudice acquisition has not been the topic of much consolidated research, and so there is not a clear picture of what causes people to become prejudiced toward others. What is known is that prejudice is not a singular phenomenon; it has cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, all of which must be addressed in an effective prejudice reduction model (Pate, 1995).

The cognitive dimension encompasses a person's knowledge base and thinking system (Pate, 1995). Most often, prejudice is seen in cognitive terms. Common statements such as "she's just ignorant," or "he just makes those jokes because he doesn't know better," reflect this view. Understanding prejudice in solely cognitive terms is premised by thinking that, when provided accurate information about a different person or group, the misinformation will be replaced, and the prejudicial attitudes will dissipate.

The affective dimension refers to the non-cognitive component of a person's mental orientation, encompassing their feelings towards themselves and others (Pate, 1995). Examples of affective dimensions of prejudice might include a store-owner's discomfort when seeing a group of youth enter her shop, or a person's anxiety about walking past a gathering of people of a different ethnic group at night. Taking an

affective approach to prejudice reduction often includes fostering empathy toward members of different groups, as well as developing a healthy racial identity for one's self.

The most overtly expressed dimension of prejudice is behavioral; it encompasses the kind and quality of a person's actions. Behavioral dimensions of prejudice include obvious acts such as participation in separatist group, and more subtle gestures, such as the way one carries her body, or facial expressions (Pate, 1995). Prejudice reduction work on the behavioral level might include role-playing effective strategies for intervening when one hears a prejudicial remark.

A study assessing the relative importance of each of these dimensions found that though there was a relationship between the three dimensions, the cognitive dimension played a relatively minor role in predicting prejudicial beliefs, and the affective dimension played a much higher role in such predictions (Haddock, 1991). This research has significant implications for prejudice reduction models, most of which have been focused at the cognitive domain. Interestingly, this study also found that depending on the target group subjects were faced with, the predictor determinant varied. This finding reinforces Pate's (1995) claim that a singular approach to prejudice reduction is incomplete, and thus ineffective. The following sections highlight two theoretical approaches to prejudice reduction that have proved successful, Social Identity Development and Intergroup Contact.

Positive Social Identity Development

One approach to prejudice reduction focuses on social identity development.

While early identity development theories focused on race, more recently, Hardiman and

Jackson (1997) have created a generic social identity development theory. They write, “Social identity development models...describe developmental processes by which a person’s internalized stereotypic and negative beliefs about self can be brought to surface, analyzed, and transformed into an identity that is not dependent either on subordination or domination” (Hardiman and Jackson 1997, p.39).

Hardiman and Jackson (1997) present a five stage developmental model.³ Their model is unique in that it is not group specific. Rather, it applies to both members of “agent” groups, such as white, Christian, and male, and “target” groups, including people of color, Jews, and women. They caution that the model serves as a guide for understanding development, not a means of assigning people to particular developmental stages. People do not move through stages linearly, rather, individuals may move back and forth through these stages over their lifetime, or inhabit more than one stage at any given time.

The first stage (Naïve/ No Social Consciousness) lasts from birth to early childhood. During this time, agents and targets are unaware of social norms, operate from own needs and interests, and are naturally interested and curious about those different from them selves. Transition to stage two (Acceptance) occurs with socialization from family, education system, peers, religious organizations, media, community norms, laws, and social structures.

In the acceptance stage, both agents and targets have learned and internalized, to varying degrees, codes of appropriate behavior. Most agents live in passive acceptance, that is, generally unaware of having privileges, or of internalized beliefs of superiority.

³ See Appendix IV for a table summarizing Hardiman and Jackson’s (1997) identity development model.

They assume their own experience is “normal.” Agents in active acceptance seek out organizations that promote supremacy, like the KKK.

The situation for targets in “Acceptance” differs in that they have internalized conflicting messages- both the negative messages about their own group from the dominant culture, as well as, positive group messages received from family and peers. Targets in “passive acceptance” are unaware of how internalized oppression impacts their thoughts and behaviors. Those in “active acceptance” overtly identify with the beliefs of the dominant group, for example, a black person who refuses care from a black doctor, assuming their incompetence or lack of education.

For agents and targets in stage three, (Resistance) experiences and information that contradict the dominant ideology lead to paradigm shifts. Agents attain a new awareness of the existence of oppression and one’s own group’s role in oppressive society. Agents begin to see societies role in shaping their own identity. Feelings of anger and guilt often accompany this stage; while agents develop a new understanding of their identity, it is often negative.

Targets in “Resistance” begin to question the superiority of agents and to identify how oppression impacts all aspects of their lives. Feelings of anger, pain, and hurt accompany this stage, and target’s identity in this stage is often defined in opposition to the dominant, oppressive society.

Stage four is “Redefinition”. At this point, agents begin to redefine their identity separately from oppressive systems and do not define self by dominance over targeted groups. This new identity includes developing pride in one’s own group and culture. Similarly, targets shift attention toward members of their own group also interested in

questions of “who am I?” Agents often see targets in redefinition as separatists, though more accurately they are on a quest for a positive identity.

The fifth stage is “Internalization.” During this state, agents internalize and integrate their new identity into all aspects of life. New behavior patterns become increasingly spontaneous. Targets also internalize group pride, and have new appreciation of other groups targeted by oppression, including those in relation to whom they are agents.

Considerable research focusing on ethnic and social identity development links achieved identity with higher self-esteem and lower levels of prejudice (Bidell, 1994; Hardiman and Jackson, 1997; Pate, 1995). While attitudes toward other groups are not specifically part of ethnic identity, there appears a positive relationship between achieved identity and lower levels of prejudice. However, there is limited research indicating specific processes that promote identity development, that is, what happens to move individuals toward a more developed identity.⁴

Jean Phinney (1989, 1996), a leading scholar in the field, suggests that identity development can be promoted through engaging in reflection and exploration of one’s own identity, or through experiences that help a person reexamine attitudes and beliefs. In examining the effectiveness of a particular model at increasing identity development, the present research hopes to help fill the gap between theory and practice by exploring the role of identity development in NCBI’s prejudice reduction work.

⁴ Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (1992), in their work with addictive behaviors, have proposed a transtheoretical model of change which is of particular interest to this discussion as the five-stage theory appears to relate closely to the social identity development model. See appendix IV.

Social Contact

Gordon Allport's 1954 intergroup contact hypothesis is the second theory underpinning the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program model. Allport hypothesized that when people from different groups interact with one another under certain conditions, they can develop a more positive attitude toward each other. The four conditions include: equal status within the group, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and support of authorities, law, or custom.

There are many studies validating the social contact theory of prejudice reduction. Scott and Damico (1983, as cited in Pate, 1995) found a correlation between interracial contact in high school and interracial contact in college. In an experimental study by Cook (1972, as cited in Pate, 1995), white students who had previously indicated prejudicial attitudes toward blacks worked in teams on management tasks requiring interdependence. With many of Allport's conditions met, the results indicated a reduction of prejudicial attitudes toward blacks. Stephan and Stephan (1996) also found that stereotypes might be replaced through direct, structured interaction with group members.

However, some research points to possible limitations of the social contact theory. A study by Miracle (1981, as cited in Pate, 1995) observed a high school football team with 20 percent black players. Over the course of three years, it was observed that while the teammates had high levels of interaction during practice and games, their positive interactions did not carry over into non-school activities.

Yehuda Amir (1972, as cited in Pate, 1995) made a number of generalizations regarding social contact. He noted that while evidence suggests that contact between members of different groups produces attitudinal change, the direction of that change

depends on the conditions of contact. Favorable conditions (as outlined Allport) tended to reduce prejudice, while unfavorable conditions may actually increase prejudice. Such conditions that increased prejudicial attitudes were competition, involuntary contact, or contact when members of a group are experiencing frustration (1972, as cited in Pate, 1995). Amir also noted that changes in attitude may be limited to a certain area, such as work situations, but do not necessarily overflow into all areas of the person's life (1972, as cited in Pate, 1995). While people may be able to form a favorable relationship with the individual, their attitudes toward the group to which the individual belongs remained hostile.

On this point, research on social contact produced conflicting results. In some cases, research has found inter-group relationships to be predictive of future inter-group relationships. In other cases, these relationships were found to be limited to a particular context, and were not predictive of future behaviors. Pettigrew's (1998) more recent review of Allport's intergroup contact theory provides several critical observations relevant to this apparent contradiction in the research.

Pettigrew laid particular emphasis on the process of generating affective ties in positive intergroup interaction, citing abundant research that indicated "optimal intergroup contact requires time for cross-group friendships to develop" (1998, p.76). In his assessment, affective ties were central enough to securing positive intergroup interaction that it warranted inclusion as a fifth condition of contact: "*The contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to become friends*" (1998, p.76). Zuniga and Nagda's (1993) finding that unintentional intergroup contact on college campuses can in affect deepen prejudices indicates that the conditions for positive social

contact are not being met at most universities, and programs are needed that create conditions for optimal intergroup interactions.

Though Social Contact Theory has long served as a keystone for prejudice reduction work, there has been a dearth of research exploring the relationship between identity development and intergroup contact. Accordingly, this project is interested in how structured intergroup contact might encourage reflection and exploration of identity, and the importance of that identity exploration in the reduction of prejudicial attitudes. The present research bridges theories of identity development and social contact by exploring the relationship between these two critical theoretical frameworks while assessing a particular prejudice reduction model.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Action Research: A Process to Create Change

This project aims to create a lasting and effective NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program at The University of Montana. As action research intends at its core to create change, it provides an effective scaffolding to build and evaluate this program. This study incorporates the principles of “look, think, act” (Stringer, 1996) on two levels. First, as action research suggests collaborative processes for developing and evaluating new programs, and has been used in many organizational and educational contexts, it provides an appropriate approach for the program design and evaluation (Stringer, 1996).

Additionally, the core characteristics of action research - that it is democratic, equitable, liberatory, and life enhancing - mirror those of the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues (Stringer 1996). Dialogue is in fact central to action research. One leader in the field of participatory action research writes that dialogue “[makes] it possible for participants to create a social space in which they can share experiences and information, create common meanings, and forge concerted actions together” (Park, 2000, p.2). Thus the philosophical orientation of the research method aligns closely with the orientation of the Intergroup Dialogues program.

The guiding question of this study is:

What is the effectiveness of the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program at reducing prejudice and building intergroup relationships?

Under that broad goal are more specific questions under examination:

- How does/doesn't the program meet its objectives?
- What are the experiences of the program participants?
- How can this information inform future intergroup dialogues?

Program Design

In designing the program, a focus group of NCBI trainers met to evaluate the current prejudice reduction work at The University of Montana. The focus group created a descriptive account of the work currently being performed, including the identity of the participants, the content of the workshops, the scope of the program's impact on campus, the purposes of the program, and the program's strengths and struggles (see appendix I). The focus group then created an interpretive account to further identify why some strategies seem to work and others do not (see appendix I). With that information in mind, the focus group crafted the design and objectives of the pilot NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program (see appendix II).

Using NCBI's methodology and theories, the dialogues aim to offer a next step for students who have attended a prejudice reduction workshop or are interested in issues of identity, prejudice, and social justice, with particular regard to ethnic diversity.⁵

Meeting two hours a week for six weeks, the increased time and sustained nature of this program was designed to allow students to meet the following outcomes:

- Develop their own ethnic and cultural identity;
- Identify information and misinformation learned about other groups;
- Increase understanding of impact of oppression on group interaction; and

- Increase ally behaviors.⁶

The Intergroup Dialogues pilot took place in the fall of 2001. Participants gathered weekly over pizza and juice to share their diverse experiences and work to build relationships across group lines. The group met in the university center, though our exact location changed, with varying levels of privacy. Wherever we met, we gathered in a circle of chairs, spending the first fifteen minutes or so informally checking in, gathering our two slices of pizza, and settling into the group.

The six weeks built upon one another sequentially; each session included a number of experiential exercises, usually done in pairs, as well as facilitated group discussion⁷. The first session began to build a foundation of trust within the group, introducing participants to the program and one another. The second week focused on individuals' group identities, using the exercises Internalized Oppression and Pride. The third session examined misinformation learned about each other's groups through an exercise called First Thoughts. Over the fourth and fifth weeks, each participant shared a personal story, or Speak Out, about experiences as members of their particular ethnic groups. In addition, the fifth week the group explored ally relationships through a Building Allies exercise. The last session continued dialogue about being allies, and participants made ongoing commitments to one another.

⁵ In the future, I hope to offer Intergroup Dialogues with other identity groups as a focus, such as gender or sexual orientation.

⁶ Ally behaviors include, but are not limited to, taking initiative to learn about another group's experience or history, building relationships across group lines, interrupting offensive comments or behaviors, and challenging oppressive institutions.

Sample

Seven UM students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds participated. There were two European American students, three students of Native American background, one Mexican American student, and one student from Kenya.⁸ Four of the participants were males, three female. I recruited students from past NCBI workshop lists, as well as by referral from professors and other participants; each individual received one credit for participation. Two of the seven participants were newly trained NCBI leaders. Four of the students attended all six sessions, two missed one session, and one student missed two sessions, as he joined at week three.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participant Observation

Throughout the duration of the project, group participants and the facilitator were engaged in various evaluative processes. As the facilitator and researcher, I led each session and was a participant observer. Though group sessions were not tape-recorded, I typed extensive notes within 24 hours following each session and e-mailed them to group participants to check for omissions or alterations. Three of the students regularly returned my notes with their comments, all of which helped me build a more accurate account of our sessions together.

⁷ See Table I for syllabus; a full set of lesson plans is available upon request. Exercises are to be used only with permission from NCBI International.

⁸ In referring to these students' ethnicity throughout this paper, I use the terms indicated above, as well as using participant's own terminology, for example: Native, Indian, and white.

Journals and Program Evaluation

Participants were required to complete outside journals each week reflecting on group content and process. Some weeks I gave particular questions for them to address; other times I simply asked students for their reflections and learnings from the week's meeting. The length and depth of journals varied considerably; one student turned in five pages of single spaced writing each week; another consistently wrote just four or five sentences; one student failed to turn in any journals at all. In addition, six of seven participants completed a general evaluation of the NCBI intergroup dialogues at the close of the course.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured, pre-, post- (at week six), and follow-up (five months post group) interviews addressing the specific objectives of the project with each participant. Many questions related to their ethnic identity: how they identified themselves, the degree of pride they felt towards their group, their interest in knowing about their background, and the way they felt around members of their own groups. Other questions related to their comfort reaching out to and interacting with members of different ethnic groups. In addition, some questions explored their responses to scenarios involving offensive comments or jokes. All participants were pre- interviewed, which averaged about an hour and fifteen minutes. Six of seven were available for post - interview, which averaged forty-five minutes. I tape-recorded and transcribed all pre- and post- interviews. The follow-up interviews took about a half hour and were not recorded.

Content Analysis

Content analysis served as the primary method of analysis in this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Bergman, 2001). Strauss & Corbin write that this method serves to “provide the grounding, build the density, and develop the sensitivity and integration needed to generate a rich, tightly woven, explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents” (1990, p.57). The combined data from interviews, field notes, and journals provided text for analysis. I approached the data with predetermined topics to reflect the program objectives under evaluation. The master list of topics included the following: identity development, participant learnings (which included the second and third stated program objectives), ally behaviors, and meanings. I then combed through the data, identifying categories with respect to each topic area. In the area of identity development, for example, characteristics of participants’ identity development became categories, such as shame towards own group, confusion about identity, and pride towards own group. Once these categories were established, I was able to explore common themes, similarities, and differences between and among participants.

Limitations

The methods present several limitations to this project. As the intention of the project is to build a prejudice reduction program to meet The University of Montana’s needs, it is not necessary or intended that the work be transferable to other campuses. Because participants essentially self-selected, those students do not represent the mainstream of campus life, and one might say do not even accurately represent our campus. This is true; the participants in the study – as well as those in future dialogue

groups- will necessarily be students already interested in and, to varying degrees, committed to diversity issues. In leading diversity work, NCBI leaders have found that mandatory trainings are far less effective than voluntary participation. It is the intent of this program to mandate dialogue groups to all UM students. Rather, the campus NCBI Affiliate aims to bring opportunities for individual growth and relationship building to those who want it. If these opportunities prove useful to students, word will spread, and the program will reach an increasing number of students.

The fact that the lead researcher on this project also served as the group facilitator also presents a concern. As an NCBI trainer, I have a bias toward the model and a particular investment in the success of the program that could affect my ability to see the project clearly. Having said that, my experience and commitment strengthens and is essential to the program. My investment leads me to want to identify what works in this model and what does not. With an eye towards improving practice, two other NCBI trainers participated in the dialogue group and provided their own insights throughout the process. In addition, I reviewed data and emergent themes with peers and professors on several occasions for outside feedback.

Lastly, my identity as a white, middle class, 25 year-old mixed heritage Jewish woman also presents a possible limitation, as the facilitator of an ethnically diverse dialogue group around issues of identity and prejudice. Real barriers to establishing trust exist between people- particularly between students of color and a white facilitator. Identifying and wrestling with these barriers was, in fact, the work of the dialogue group. With this limitation in mind, I worked to build individual relationships with each participant, in some cases checking in with them throughout the week, to build rapport

and trust. When demonstrating exercises in the group, I frequently partnered with one of the participants of color. In sum, I brought to the dialogue group my collected experience of eight years intensive study, learning, and leading prejudice reduction work, as well as my commitment to continue my own growth in this area.

The following sections discuss the findings of this research. As my primary aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues model and identify directions for improvement, I have organized the finding to address each of the identified project outcomes: identity development, identifying misinformation and understanding the impact of oppression, and ally behaviors. Though presented for purposes of clarity as distinct chapters, a relationship exists among these concepts that will hopefully surface throughout the discussion. An additional section explores the meaning of the dialogue group experience to the participants.

PART II.
FINDINGS

CHAPTER IV

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In facilitating dialogue around issues of ethnic identity, diversity, and prejudice, the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program aimed to foster growth in participants' identity development. In four of the seven participants, I observed (and individuals expressed) changes in their identity development. In the case of at least one other student, I noted identity exploration as well. What happened for folks in terms of their identity differed. Themes emerged in the data regarding identity development for the two European American students, the two mixed heritage students, and the three students of color who entered the group with the strongest ethnic identity. In addition, there were some processes of change that did not appear to be group specific. The following sections explore these thematic processes of change.

Overcoming Shame of Whiteness

The two European American students, Flo and Chris, entered the group with the least achieved ethnic identity of the seven participants; they expressed a lot of shame about and lack of connectivity towards their ethnic heritage. This is consistent with the findings of research; whites typically have less developed identity (Phinney, 1992, 1996). Hardiman and Jackson (1997) describe this stage in identity development as "resistance," wherein individuals recognize their own group's role in perpetuating oppression. While feelings of guilt and shame are an inherent part of the identity development process for

European Americans, without the opportunity to develop a healthy and positive white identity, white peoples often 'get stuck' in this stage, feeling bad about themselves, cultureless, and powerless to change. However, over the course of the six weeks, the data suggests that both Flo and Chris felt less overwhelmed by shame and guilt, and began to create a more positive definition of their identity.

During the pre-interview, I questioned participants about their degree of pride in their ethnic heritage. Flo replied, "I don't really identify with anything to be proud of for being white...I always identify being white with being the oppressor. That's something I've worked not to be- that definition." Chris answered the same question, saying, "I don't often. I've heard it spoken of with disdain as white guilt; I don't understand why that's such a bad thing for a lot of people...would you rather that I wasn't aware and didn't care, and didn't want to change? I'm not proud of us as a race..." Neither Chris nor Flo felt pride in their identity as white people. Yet, while both shared negative in-group feelings, what they faced in overcoming their shame differed.

Flo- Searching for Belonging

Over the course of the dialogue group, Flo began to explore her feelings about being white for the first time. In our second week together, facilitated discussion revolved around the question: "How did you learn what you were?" Flo shared learning she was white by having a best friend, Amy, who was Indian. As a child, she envied the closeness of Amy's family and community, and wanted "desperately" to be Indian. She recalled playing dress up with her friend, describing a childhood scene of Amy applying eyeliner around Flo's eyes to make her look more Indian, and saying, "your mouth kinda works,

but your skin's too light- let's get some of my mom's makeup." "Even to this day," Flo remarked, "I straighten my hair." In remembering this story, Flo began to articulate her search for identity and belonging.

With Flo's identity struggle in mind, I led a discussion week five around white people's desperation to belong. Patterns of European immigration and assimilation have left many European Americans without a strong sense of history, culture, or identity⁹. In my experience, many white people yearn for a feeling of connection, a feeling they perceive (with varying accuracy) people of color have within their ethnic groups. This desperation can lead to what bell hooks (1984) calls the "desire to eat the other," a desire to consume and become like that which we perceive as having culture. This can take the form of appropriating the dress, style, mannerism, and music of particular ethnic groups, and can look in addition to feel like a lot like imperialism. Importantly, underneath this oppressor pattern is a longing to belong.

This discussion set the stage for a powerful Speak Out from Flo week five about her experiences as a white woman. She described being obsessed with the holocaust as a child; at one point she never went anywhere without her copy of Anne Frank's biography.¹⁰ Embarrassed and confused about her feelings, she cried as she told the group, "I wanted to find suffering and genocide in my history. You all have your cultures to fall back on...what do I have?"

In recalling these incidents, Flo realized that throughout her life she has unconsciously sought a self-identity other than white. She tried to distance herself from

9 There are exceptions to this, of course. In Montana, for example, people of Irish heritage tend to have a strong sense of ethnic identity.

10 Flo's paternal grandfather was Jewish and married a Protestant woman. As a result, his family ostracized him, so Flo did not grow up with a connection to the Jewish family, culture, or traditions

the oppressor group, while finding a sense of belonging by becoming Indian or Jewish (ironically, something that she already is). In her mind, she has two strikes against her as a white woman: first, white people are oppressors and therefore 'bad,' and second, white people do not have the kind of connection, culture, and, particularly, suffering as people of color.

In the journal entry following her Speak Out she wrote, "I walked away from our first meeting feeling like I didn't have anything to say or share and I didn't add up to anyone else. Nothing's that broken...how many times have I isolated myself because of this?" Flo has felt silenced by her lack of experiences of oppression and by her membership to an oppressive group. In discussions as well as journals, Flo expressed feeling that her experiences as a white middle class woman do not count, that her story does not have value. Though she was one of two participants who was also an NCBI leader, she approached the group believing she could listen and learn, but had nothing to share. This feeling has kept her from exploring her identity in the past.

The very nature of this ethnically mixed dialogue group brought Flo's feelings of not belonging to the surface, presenting her with an opportunity for growth. The dialogue group provided a vehicle to explore her identity and reflect on her longing to belong. Once she identified this longing, Flo was able to consciously take on her search for identity, instead of unconsciously trying to become something outside of her self. In her post interview, she remarked:

White people carry a lot of shame and loathing about being white and there's a feeling of no heritage. It is almost like white people define their heritage in terms of political association, their religious associations, their work. That's the only thing they have to cling to. They don't have anything inside themselves- it's all external...I think it was good, especially for me, to realize that I don't have to join

something to have a heritage. It's all there, just waiting for me to claim it. And I need to realize that I can't keep looking outside anymore.

The exercises around identity, coupled with the group experience, helped Flo move from distancing herself from an identity she was ashamed of to proactively taking on a healthy search for identity. For Chris as well, the group provided a vehicle to begin to overcome his shame of whiteness.

Chris – Fighting for Self-Acceptance and Forgiveness

Much of Chris' shame as a white man stems from his experiences as a Gulf War veteran. In fact, it was on September 11 that he turned from a television in the University Center watching the collapse of the twin towers, to a table advertising the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues. The likelihood of a U.S. military response sparked his desire to get involved in something positive, and he decided to join the group. At our first group meeting he shared that he had been out of the military for ten years, remarking, "I've spent the last ten years trying to unlearn all that the military taught me." He later wrote, "The military is nothing if not racist."

Throughout the six weeks, Chris used the group to explore his experiences in the military. During Internalized Oppression, an exercise designed to assist participants in uncovering and healing from the negative messages people have internalized about their own groups, Chris chose to work with his feelings towards white veterans. Participants were paired up with the direction of saying 'what they can't stand' about their group. In his session, Chris showed his rage at the dehumanizing effects of the military on soldiers, particularly as a veteran of combat.

The partner exercise to Internalized Oppression, Pride, requires participants to share what they love about their groups. At this point, Chris was at a loss. It was challenging for him to think of anything as a white veteran to be proud of. However, in his journal following this session, he remarked that the exercise showed that “the effects of internalizing these prejudices...can be debilitating and hurtful.” He went on saying, “I think I have internalized my prejudices to the point that I have a hard time seeing the good,” by which I believe he refers to the good in veterans, and more importantly, the good in himself.

Week four I discussed how internalized oppression, people’s negative feelings about themselves, makes them vulnerable to accumulating prejudice towards others. With Chris in mind, I talked about how institutions, including the military, can brutalize people into being the enforcers of racism, and that healing from our own experiences of mistreatment is a way of working through the prejudice we may carry. Chris volunteered an example, sharing his experiences of being broken down and dehumanized in basic training. He realized that he took out his resentment on the local people while stationed for a one-year tour in Korea. He shared having been a “bigoted person” and “terrible racist” during his tour, treating the locals badly and writing graffiti in bathrooms. I encouraged him to share more about his own experiences of mistreatment, and gave him the opportunity to speak back to those who had attacked him in basic training. In this powerful session, Chris was able to unleash some of the rage and terror that has been with him over the last decade.

A dam broke for Chris that night, and what followed each of the last two weeks were five single-spaced pages of journals, testimonies typed through fear and tears. He

was able to show not only his rage toward the military, but also how badly he felt about himself. In one of these journals he wrote, “I feel like keeping people out is a way of protecting them from me. I hate myself for what I have done. I hate the army for making me what I am- I can’t even be comfortable being me because I have done such awful shit that I feel like I do not deserve love.”

The group exercises were a medium for Chris to work on his internalized oppression, the places where he believes he is “toxic” as a White man. In our post interview, I asked Chris what it was like for him to explore his own identity. He replied,

...It’s forced me to look at issues that I hadn’t looked at in a long time, because I had given up hope. It brought back memories that had been repressed successfully, and I hope it doesn’t stop, because I think the key to healing me is to get it all out. It has given me a much clearer picture of me. Which doesn’t mean I still don’t identify as a veteran, it just means that I’m not disempowered by that identification. I’ve realized that I’m not a captive to my self-identity...there is more to me than I was allowing myself to know.

Chris found that validation from other group members was as much a catalyst for his learning as the exercises. When asked what triggered the changes in his self-identity, Chris replied, “The knowledge that I had people to talk to that cared, and everybody just kept coming back week after week no matter how emotionally painful the prior week was...” These healing sessions gave Chris, as he put it, “an audience, a reason to speak, instead of keeping it bottled up...an opportunity to feel emotion again...It gave me a piece of my humanity back, that had been gone for almost eleven years.”

Reclaiming Pride

In the same way that the group itself brought Flo’s feelings of inadequacy and desire to belong to surface, the exploration of identity in a supportive, diverse group

environment allowed Chris the opportunity to face his deepest fears and beliefs about himself, that he has no value, that he is toxic. Through the care of the group, he was able to begin reevaluating these false assumptions about himself. Though neither Chris nor Flo have completed their formation of a new, positive self-identity, they are on the road now. An excerpt from Chris' journal speaks to the inevitable contradictions that arise in the process:

I guess that, when push comes to shove, it is better to know yourself and to be confused as hell about what that knowledge means, than it is to not know yourself, and live in confident, even arrogant ignorance. I am confused by my status as a person who sees social injustice at every turn and who is the product of an affluent white family that came into its money through the same social injustice...It's hard to reconcile the feelings of guilt with the feelings of innocence.

Wrestling with feelings of guilt and innocence presents challenges for many European American people. Importantly, both Flo and Chris are now wrestling with their identity, actively digging into what it means to be white. And equally important, they both emerged from the group feeling empowered about themselves and their place in improving the world around them. This tentative move towards pride will prove critical to their ability to look at their own biases. As one leader in prejudice reduction writes, "reclaiming pride prepares people to face their discriminatory patterns" (Brown, 1998, p.4).

Integrating Identities

Several members of the Intergroup Dialogues were of mixed ethnic heritages. Like Chris and Flo, their personal stories differ, but there were some commonalities in the process of identity integration that occurred for them over the six weeks. Two women

in particular, Ava and Ellen, came into the group having spent a good deal of their lives exploring parts of their ethnic identity. Both experienced mistreatment as young people as a result of looking different, being brown skinned people in predominantly white communities. Consequently, both had to battle through internalized oppression to claim pride in the non-white parts of their heritage. In addition, as people of mixed heritage they have struggled with feeling not fully accepted or welcome among either white people or people of color. An achieved identity for people of mixed heritage requires fully claiming and integrating all aspects of one's heritage. The dialogue group allowed Ava and Ellen to continue to address their internalized oppression and assisted them in further integrating their dual identities.

Ava- From Half Breed to Biracial

One of the most significant changes for both Ava and Ellen was in the language they used to describe their identity. Ava, a mixed heritage Inuit woman with a tough exterior, described her ethnic identity during her pre-interview, saying fiercely, "I'm a half breed, and I like that term. I'm a half-breed Eskimo from Spokane, Washington ghetto. And I'm OK with that, I guess." As I say in workshops, those last two words are not a "throw away." From the start, a tentativeness showed through Ava's edge.

In the pre-interview and again over the course of the group, Ava shared having despised being part white for much of her life. As young as five, she hated her white father for abandoning her family. As Ava learned more about racism and the scars it left on her people, and her mother in particular, the more her distrust and dislike of white people grew. She remarked, "I was treated like shit through high school because I wasn't

white, upper class, with money and a car..." As a teenager though, she began to claim her biracial identity. She now has a good understanding of the strengths and struggles of both Indians and white people, and though she has gained critical insights, she says her ethnicity has made her "a loner, even from the Indians, even from the white people." Asked where she feels pride as a mixed heritage woman, Ava replied, "I've never really felt proud. I feel proud of being Indian and proud of being White, but I have to compare them to each other to feel proud." She continued, "I guess I do feel proud that I can communicate better with both than anyone else who's not a half breed. I can stand in both worlds. I guess I'm proud of that. I'm a bridge." In just answering this question, Ava is wrestling with her sense of identity and the value of her identity as a mixed heritage woman.

Before coming into the group, Ava had accepted being white and Indian, which is clear by her identification as a "half breed." Still, she struggles to integrate these identities; she feels connected with Indians most when she feels "angry against white people," and conversely feels connected with being white when she feels like "the Indian people are being stupid." She came into the group reaching for a sense of pride in the wholeness of her identity.

The group sessions presented an opportunity for Ava to face her dissonance and internalized oppression as a mixed heritage woman. Week three we were joined by a latecomer, a male Native American student who was in search of a single credit. His presence in the group brought up feelings for Ava that neither she nor I was aware of at the time. During our post interview she explained:

When Garret showed up I had all this shit come up, like 'oh my god I have to be really Indian now'...When I'm around an Indian who looks really Indian I feel

that, like I have to prove that I'm really Indian... When Garret showed up I fell into being the Indian, just the Indian...that was the hardest part for me. That's my internalized oppression as a half-breed, and it's really strong. That's the part I'm dealing with now, not so much the White issues or the Indian issues, but my own issues of being bi-racial...

...But I recognized it- that I was trying to be Indian. I slowly did recede into what I felt was me, tried not to let fear affect me, but it took me up until the last time for me to feel comfortable again...being of two races, being outspoken when I wanted to be fucking outspoken, and not hiding, not trying to be quiet like an Indian would...but I am Indian even if I do speak up...just because I'm not like every other Indian I still have value, I still have value to my culture...it's been really nice to be in a safe place to be able to recognize those things.

Garret's presence in the group stirred up Ava's feelings of inadequacy as a mixed heritage woman.¹¹ Because the group had established trust and was in itself an exploration of identity, Ava was able to use this situation as an opportunity for growth. It pushed her to once again carve out and reaffirm her value as a mixed heritage woman. It was not the first time, nor will it be the last, as identity development proves to be an ongoing process of remembering and reclaiming who we are (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997).

Affirming her self-value corresponded with a change in her language; in our closing interview she referred to herself as a half-breed, then corrected herself and said biracial, commenting, "I'm trying to get away from that." Over the course of the dialogue group Ava went from identifying as a half-breed with little pride, to identifying as biracial, and beginning to see the strength in that identity. Once again, a convergence of elements made this growth possible: a safe space, ongoing exercises and dialogue about

¹¹ Though Ava was initially put off by Garret, they went on to form a strong bond, referring to each other as sister and brother. Their relationship remains complex however, as Garret's presence continues to 'kick up' Ava's feelings of self-doubt.

identity, the perceived identity of participants¹², and Ava's willingness and readiness to change.

As the facilitator, I should note that I was aware in the weeks following Garret's arrival that Ava was more reserved, though I did not make a connection. She was struggling with other family related issues at the time, to which I attributed her change in mood. Though she did acknowledge in our closing interview that these had in fact been factors for her, I wish I had noticed the correlation between Garret's arrival and her mood change. Had I been more aware of the situation, I would have facilitated the group in a way to surface these issues deliberately. For example, I might have introduced for discussion relationships between "rez Indians" and "urban Indians" or lighter and darker skinned people.

Ellen- From Mexican American to Biracial

Ellen, a mixed heritage Latina, also underwent a significant shift in the way she experienced and articulated her ethnic identity. When asked to describe her identity during our first interview, she laughed nervously, laid her head in her hands, then pulling herself together began: "Well, I do identify as Mexican American, but my mom is from England so I do struggle with it a lot because I didn't grow up with the Mexican culture." She went on to talk about the confusion she feels and that others express, around her identity: she is a mixed heritage Latina with a Polish last name, an English mother, and an unknown Mexican father. Without access to her father, and growing up in Montana

¹² Perceptions are illusive; Garret also has felt like he doesn't belong with Indians or White people. He spoke openly about this in our interviews, but it didn't come up in the group until the last week.

isolated from other Latinos, she has spent a good deal of her life searching out Latino culture.

Ellen entered the group feeling proud of being Mexican, and her interest in her Mexican identity has been multifaceted. It is the part of her heritage most visible to other people and she says, “I like knowing things if someone asks me- a lot of my life I haven’t been able to answer any questions.” She also feels a draw towards the unknown, the part of herself she was not raised with, but as she put it, “is what I see in the mirror.” Her identification as Mexican also seems to be a way of distancing herself from white identity, similar to what Flo expressed. Ellen remarked, “I’d much rather feel oppressed than guilty...I’d rather be part of the group fighting for rights than those taking them away.”

Beneath her strong identity as a Mexican American, Ellen feels insecure. During the pre-interview, she remarked that around other Latinos she sometimes feels “super intimidated, like they have expectations of me that I can’t live up to.” After the second week’s session focusing on internalized oppression and pride, she journalled:

The simple yet very complex question of identity haunts me on a daily basis...I always romanticized Mexican people...at the same time, I possess a fear of inadequacy when I am around people of Mexican heritage. I am afraid that I will not live up to their expectations and may be even considered too ‘white.’

This fear of inadequacy or not belonging proved to be a theme for both mixed heritage participants. In Ellen’s case, the need to be accepted as Mexican seemed to play a role in her resistance to claiming her white heritage. Week four Ellen shared a powerful Speak Out about being a mixed heritage Mexican woman. She talked about not liking her white side as much, and her “desperation” to belong to her Mexican heritage, saying,

“when I get around real Mexicans I’m afraid I’ll be discovered as a fraud.” I gave her the direction of saying to the group, with complete pride, “I’m fully Mexican, completely Mexican.” My own sense as the facilitator was that the way to move Ellen towards integrating her white identity was by affirming her Mexican heritage; as her hold on her Latina identity becomes less tenuous, I presumed she would feel more confident embracing all of who she is. In her journal following the Speak Out, she wrote:

Tonight I gave a testimony on what it was like to be biracial. The issues I struggle with most are believing that I am a fully Mexican person even though I was never raised around the culture and also thinking of my white heritage in a positive light. I expressed that I love my mother, who is white, so much, and sometimes I feel guilty when I don’t fully claim my white heritage. Now that I think about it, I think it is weird that I don’t claim the culture that I was raised in, but I identify most with the culture I am unfamiliar with. This chosen identity comes from the fact that I have always longed to know the Mexican side of me.

Following this session, Ellen naturally began to reflect on and reevaluate her identity and her resistance to claiming her white heritage. Two Speak Outs from other group members also resonated with her. After listening to Dylan, an Indian, speak about what he needs from an ally, Ellen reflected, “when he said ‘to be my friend’, he didn’t say, you have to be Indian, he said, ‘you have to gain my trust, and I have to gain your trust.’” Ellen realized that without a strong grounded identity, she has felt like a “chameleon,” and that this group helped her to find her own identity and not try to connect with others by becoming another group. In addition, much of Flo’s Speak Out about being white resonated with Ellen, prompting her to keep reaching for a clearer sense of her European heritage.

During our last session together, Ellen shared an old faded picture of herself and her mother. Beaming up from the old photo was an adoring mother of pale pink skin,

curly blonde haired and blue eyes, and a joyful brown skinned daughter, her thick straight unruly black hair framing her delighted face. In sharing this photo, Ellen invited us to see all of her and for the first time articulated her identity as biracial and not only Mexican. In our post interview, she reflected on the changes she saw in her self-identity over the six weeks:

At the first meeting, I said 'I am Mexican,' and by the last meeting I was like, 'no, I am biracial.' Even in six weeks my whole concept of myself totally changed...I mean this is the first time I've accepted being biracial, in terms of my heart, really embracing that idea and being OK with it. I really gained an appreciation of my mom, and what her ancestors gave to me.

Ellen was not the only one to notice this shift. Ava observed Ellen, "recognizing her biracial experience, because before she didn't...she finally fused them, finally recognized she could be both at one time...you can see in her eyes that she's more comfortable." As with Ava, the convergence of group exercises, self-exploration, and learning from participants pushed Ellen to claim her identity as a mixed heritage woman and to integrate the various aspects of that heritage. For both Ava and Ellen, the group experiences provided the impetus for this identity development to naturally occur.

Achieved Identity

Of the seven participants, three entered the group with what appeared to be a highly achieved sense of identity: Garret, a Crow man who grew up on and off the reservation, Dylan, a Blackfeet, who grew up on the reservation "not really knowing white people existed," and Ben, an exchange student from Kenya. Their identity was achieved in the sense of having a strong connection and sense of belonging to their heritage, and pride in their ethnic identity. Though an active group member in terms of

discussion, Ben did not turn in any journals and was unavailable for post and follow-up interviews. As a result, I have little information from him about the meaning of the dialogue group experience in general nor the impact of the group on his ethnic identity in particular.

Garret and Dylan both expressed gaining a lot from their participation, though not specifically in terms of identity. Garret expressed that the group affirmed and cemented his identity, but didn't change the way he saw himself. When I asked Dylan if and how the group affected his identity, he replied simply, "No. I already knew." Though unavailable for post-interview, my sense is that Ben's reply would be much the same. The apparent lack of identity development among these three participants could be interpreted in different ways: It could be that participants were so achieved in their identity that they had nothing to work on; it may be that the Intergroup Dialogues model failed to reach them in their developmental stage; or that their socialization around showing emotion as men limited their expression in group, and perhaps I simply failed to capture, in my observations and questioning, the nuanced development that took place for these participants. Likely, a combination of these occurred.

Both Dylan and Garret have strong ethnic identity: Dylan's seems to result from being raised immersed in his Blackfeet culture, and Garret's seems connected both to his experiences growing up around his culture, as well as undergoing an intensive search for identity earlier in his life. Though both men feel great pride in who they are, both have had experiences with prejudice, and expressed some degree of internalized oppression. In particular, as Indian men pursuing college educations, both expressed feeling under pressure to "make it," given the stereotypes that Indian men do not leave the reservation

or try to better themselves. Both men also have some white heritage, yet since they have such strong identities as Indians, they do not often reflect on that part of their heritage. Though they entered the group with seemingly healthy sense of self, my observations indicate that they could move further in their identity development.

While these men did not believe the group affected their identity, I did see some movement over the weeks. After witnessing a Speak Out session week five, Dylan wrote about its impact:

When Ava talked about how she hated the white in her and she don't trust them it got me thinking about how I feel about the little white in me. I hate it and some days I wish I was never part white. So I am 23/32 Blackfeet. What is the rest, to me I consider it nothing.

In this journal entry Dylan articulates for the first time, in group, his feelings towards his European heritage; clearly the group sparked some new exploration of his identity.

In retrospect, I see that I could have spent more time in session examining internalized oppression for Native Americans and tried to surface those feelings more deliberately. This proves less a limitation of the model than a limitation of my leadership. The model requires a leader who can feel out the internalized oppression or "hurts" in the group and surface them so that they can begin to be reevaluated and healed. In the case of these two Indian students, the internalized oppression was less apparent to me.

It may also be that models of identity development incompletely explain identity development for people, such as Native Americans, who might grow up immersed in their culture and in isolation from mainstream American culture. Jean Phinney a leading scholar of identity development writes, "for ethnic minorities of color identity formation has to do with developing an understanding and acceptance of one's own group in the

face of lower status and prestige in society and the presence of stereotypes and racism” (1996, p.144). The process, as she describes it, is one of coming to accept and value oneself in a world that does not value your people. For Native people who grow up on a reservation, they may in fact have a high acceptance of their group as a result of being isolated from individual experiences of racism, not constructed in the face of such prejudice. Though reservations are clearly in and of themselves products of institutional racism, they have also served in some cases to minimize intergroup interaction and conflict.

It could be that for reservation Indians, the identity development process that happens more or less spontaneously for other ethnic minorities coming to grips with their identity in an often-hostile world is postponed until they leave the reservation. Clearly, reservations cannot and do not keep oppression at bay, nor eliminate its internalization, so this is not a question of Native Americans being naïve to or untouched by racism. Yet, there does seem to be a different process of identity development that occurred for at least two students who grew up with strong ties to their Native heritage. Exploration of identity development among Native people growing up on the reservation requires further study to better understand.

Identity Development Processes Across Group Lines

While there were identity development processes specific to the white participants, the participants of mixed heritage, and those participants with achieved identity, there were some processes that occurred across group lines. In each case of identity development, the participants learned more about their own identity through

listening to one another's identity explorations. It was the stories shared by others in the group that brought up Flo's feelings of being cultureless, and Flo's discussion of her white identity which triggered Ellen to reflect on her own European heritage. Dylan, after witnessing a demonstration with Ava, reflected on his white heritage as well. In addition, many, if not all, were sparked to explore their identity by the directions I offered as the group facilitator. Identity development therefore seems to be an individual process that can be aided, or the learning curve steepened, by a group process.

Another theme that emerged across group lines related to participants' explorations of other aspects of their identity. Though the group focused on ethnic identity, several participants began to reflect issues of gender, for example. Over the course of the six weeks, Colin began to articulate the intersection of his experiences as a white person with his experiences as a man. He identified his internalized oppression around not showing emotion and fearing closeness with other men. In a final journal, he wrote about wanting to comfort a man who was crying in the group:

I didn't know how to react to his tears. I wanted to reach out to put my hand on his shoulder...but I couldn't...My issues with guys and my issues with what it means to be a man got in my way. This personalizes my oppression and brought it to my attention- like right all up in my face.

In our closing interview, Ava also reflected on how the group had affected her sense of herself as a woman. When asked if she noticed any changes in her behavior over the last six weeks, she remarked, "I'm trying to be a lot more comfortable with myself." She spoke about feeling like "the fattest Eskimo around," and how hard it is not to internalize societal messages about how women should look. She went on:

being in this group, having you around...I've been trying to be like, 'it's OK to feel good about yourself.'...It's been really healthy for me to realize that my attitude

about myself is connected to how I feel about my race which is also connected to my daily life. Now, when I feel bad, your faces run through my head.

Conclusion

The NCBI intergroup dialogue encouraged participants to look at their ethnic identity: what they liked about their groups, the negative things they had internalized about their groups, the ways they had been hurt as a member of that group. These processes allowed participants to reflect on, and for some, re-evaluate the way they made meaning of their identity. Identity development can and does happen for many of us spontaneously over the course of our lives. Participating in the dialogue group, however, was a vehicle for some of the participants to dive into identity exploration in new ways, accelerating the process, and affecting the way they saw themselves. This proved particularly true for the white and mixed heritage students, populations shown to have lower levels of identity development (Phinney, 1990). For those who came to the group with an already achieved identity, the group seemed to have less impact on their sense of themselves.

Extending the length of time the group meets and drawing greater emphasis on internalized oppression might increase the effectiveness of the program at stimulating identity development. The ability for the leader to notice and draw out internalized oppression greatly enhances this dialogue process for all participants. The more clearly the leader can identify signs of internalized oppression, the more effective she will be at facilitating the group in ways that allow these negative feelings to be surfaced and reevaluated. This can of course happen without outside leadership, though a little skillful nudging can accelerate the process.

Theories of prejudice reduction often fall short of practice. Neither identity development nor social contact theories account for how individual identity development may be affected by intergroup contact and the relationship between that individual development and one's feelings towards others. In this case, the group format accelerated many students' identity development; gaining access to one another in turn gave them access to new parts of themselves.

CHAPTER V

PARTICIPANT LEARNINGS

Two related objectives of the Intergroup Dialogues program were for participants to identify information and misinformation they have learned about other groups, and to increase their understanding of the impact of oppression on group interaction. As the following sections illustrate, these objectives were met. In addition to actual new information learned, I was particularly interested in whether participants became increasingly open to reevaluating preconceptions and internalizing new information through their participation, as well as what initiated both their openness and their learning.

Identifying Recordings of Misinformation

Early in the life of the group, I introduced the concept of “recordings.” A record is misinformation learned about another group, or in other words, a prejudice. The word choice of “records” is intentional; not only is this concept less threatening and thus more accessible than the term prejudice, it offers a useful analogy. Well-meaning adults in families, schools, churches, or the media often communicate to children misinformation about people who are different. These messages form records inside people that play when they see members of particular group.¹³ As a result, records of fear, distrust, or disgust often get in the way of building authentic relationships with people from different backgrounds than themselves.

¹³ In addition to learning records from those around us, particularly painful or traumatic experiences with members of a different group, when left unhealed, can create records as well.

First Thoughts

Week three, in an exercise called First Thoughts, dialogue group participants examined the records they carry about groups other than our own. First Thoughts is designed to help participants identify their unconsciously carried assumptions and stereotypes. It is a powerful and often challenging exercise for participants in that it is designed to surface beliefs that most of them wish they did not carry, and to share those ideas aloud when many of them would rather no one knew they had those thoughts.¹⁴

The exercise has two key components. First, pairs of participants take turns offering their unedited first thoughts in response to an identity group. One person names a group, like Native American, and the partner responds with his/her first thought. In this example, the first thoughts may include words like: tipi, braids, spiritual, or depressed. This component aims to bring participants' records to the surface, particularly those they may not know they carry. The second component of the exercise is to share the first thoughts within the large group and to hear from members of each ethnic group what it is like hearing words about their people. This piece allows participants to learn the impact of oppression.

Individual Records

First Thoughts provides a tool for participants to begin noticing and challenging the records they carry, first in the group, but hopefully outside the group as well. During the dialogue session, pairs identified their first thoughts to several groups, including

¹⁴ The description of First Thoughts here is not intended as a guide for replicating the exercise. All NCBI exercises are copyrighted and may not be used without permission of NCBI International.

Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, and European Americans. For many students, the records they identified were unknown to them before the exercise. Garret remarked in his post interview, “First thoughts really let me know how I think and feel towards white people- I learned I do have biases and preconceived ideas.” In Chris’ journal following the exercise, he wrote, “Every time Amie said the words, the same negative recordings came out of my mouth. All I wanted to do was censor myself, make myself say positive things even though the first words to come to mind were negative.” He continued, “This exercise really opened my eyes to the negative recordings that play inside my head.” Another participant, who is a powerful ally to Native people on campus wrote, “After our meeting, I was so upset that I still contained some negative stereotypes of Native American people. I said words like lazy, wastes money, violent, dependent, and bad communicators.” She went on to write about all her Native friends who are not these things and concluded, “I think I had all these stereotypes before I met these people, and somehow never erased them from my mind.” These examples illustrate the exercise’s effectiveness at helping participants identify the records they carry, as well as the frustration participants feel when realizing they have stereotypes.

While the exercise was challenging for many students, for one Native American student in particular, identifying first thoughts to whites provided a positive release.

Dylan wrote of this exercise:

When all us Indians [got] together to talk about the whites my first response was you can’t trust them. I can’t trust a lot of white people because of that. After I shared with the group what I had said I felt really good. This exercise really touched me in the heart. I felt really good when I left. It just took a lot of weight with it.

Identifying and articulating his preconceptions about white people was validating for Dylan. Further, in identifying this recording, Dylan realized he wanted to make a change. In his post interview, Dylan remarked that learning he carried recordings about white people was new information to him, noting, “it makes me want to change them [recordings]...they make me see the bad in things.”

Continued Reevaluation

Recognition of records did not stop when the First Thoughts exercise ended. In the weeks that followed, students continued to notice their records. During a later dialogue session, Garret realized he was carrying a recording about white male athletes. In his journal that week, Garret reflected, “I took a look back at myself and realized I was holding a grudge towards my past coach for not picking me...because I was Indian. I took my anger and bitterness out on...the ‘jock guys’ in high school...I see how the racial lines were drawn by me and what happened to me.” He noticed how even today when he sees the UM Grizzly players working out in the gym, he feels a mix of bitterness and envy. Garret’s experience of racism from his white coach reinforced a record of distrust that has kept him from building relationships with white athletes, something he now wants to change.

In her post-interview, Flo described an increased self-consciousness that has emerged as a result of the work on records. “It’s made me more self conscious. Like I was talking to Tara one day, and I said something about my tribe, and I was like oh, shit, did I just say that, and I immediately started stammering for an apology.” She went on to say, “But at the same time, you also have to be aware that that uncomfortableness is kind

of a good thing- you can learn from it, you can use it to try not to offend people and find an alternate way of expressing..." Though Flo initially felt her self-consciousness was inhibiting, she realized that it was in part a natural result of her increased awareness.

In giving participants tools to identify their own recordings, the skills of meta-cognition, participants became able to challenge and unlearn these recordings. The examples provided by Garret, Flo, and others, indicate that these skills, introduced through a particular exercise, can be internalized and replicated outside of the group setting. In a journal reflecting on key learnings from the group sessions, Chris reflected back on First Thoughts. He wrote,

I have learned that I, too, have internal recordings. This came as quite a shock to me. However, once the initial guilt faded, I found that I was able to recognize them when they kick in. Specifically, when I see someone who looks or acts different, they kick in. This is not something new. What is new is that I now know what they are and I consciously tell myself, 'that's a recording.' I realize that it has only been a week and a half since the exercise, but I can already see a reduction in the recordings. I know they will not go away any time soon, but it is starting.

Externalizing Records

In addition to helping students identify their own records, First Thoughts allowed students to differentiate between people and their records. This process of externalization allows participants to identify one's own prejudices as problematic without seeing themselves as the problem. As Americans, we hold a cultural value that stereotyping is wrong, and as "good people," we should take everyone at face value. As a result, few people see themselves as prejudiced; to acknowledge this would leave people feeling bad

about them selves.¹⁵ Yet, clearly stereotypes pervade our culture. One need only turn to the nightly sitcoms to see caricatures of people of different ethnic backgrounds, religions, classes or sizes. It has been said that racism is like a tea bag steeping in a cup of boiling water, and *we* are all the water. Not one of us has been untouched by prejudice; we all carry recordings of misinformation about groups other than our own.

The challenge, then, is to create opportunities for students to acknowledge and take responsibility for their recordings while understanding that none of us chooses to carry them. The First Thoughts exercise, when skillfully facilitated, makes this possible by allowing participants to externalize their prejudices. Flo described this process of externalization in a journal where she wrote:

I feel like when I am in the circle I get to temporarily remove my record player and look at it from the outside like a science project. I feel like we all get to do that, and at the end of the night when the record player gets put back in it's not the same.

By acknowledging their own recordings of misinformation about other groups, participants realized that likely other "good people" carry records, too. Ellen reflected about hearing Chris's first thoughts on Latinos, "I think another reason I didn't feel so offended is that I know that Chris is such a compassionate person and that these stereotypes are not a product of his own thinking." In his own journal, Chris remarked,

...I should not write people off because they are, in actuality, probably unaware of why they are having the feelings they are having. I myself had no conscious idea the recordings were still playing, so I can't really look down on those who are unaware. I can, however, try to help them see it and reevaluate themselves.

¹⁵ A limitation of many diversity trainings is the emphasis on making individuals of dominant groups feel bad about how their groups have mistreated others. One scholar noted, "one reason why many white students seem to resist learning about racism is that such learning challenges their current racial identities without offering them positive alternatives" (Bidell, 1994, p.9).

As this quote illustrates, separating the person from the recording proves significant to empowering people to respond effectively to oppressive jokes or remarks, which will be explored in greater depth in chapter VI.

Learning the Impact of Oppression on Group Interaction

In addition to learning what misinformation they carried, the dialogue group provided participants the opportunity to learn new information. The diversity of the group and the discussion format allowed for a rich exchange of stories and experiences through the course of the six weeks. Of primary interest to this paper is the way the dialogue group experience affected participants' understanding of the impact of oppression – specifically racism- on group interaction.¹⁶

Sharing stories of participants' experiences as people of color and European Americans, both through formal exercise and informal discussion, served as the core activity of the dialogue group. The expectation was that through hearing one another's stories, participants would not only gain empathy, but also develop a more nuanced understanding of the forces that shape interactions between diverse groups of people. As the following examples illustrate, many participants found this sharing to increase their understanding of the impact of oppression on group interaction.

Indian/Non-Indian Relations

As racism towards Native Americans is a critical issue in Montana, several group exercises specifically aimed at exploring the dynamics at work in relationships between

¹⁶ Participants also noted learning about identity groups other than ethnicity through their participation, in particular learning about experiences of men and veterans of war.

Indians and non-Indians. These exercises included First Thoughts and Speak Outs, both described in earlier sections, as well as Building Allies, described below. I facilitated First Thoughts twice, the first time letting pairs choose the identity group with which they wanted to work. The second time I asked the Native students to partner together, identifying their first thoughts about white people and everyone else to work on first thoughts on Native Americans. In the discussion following the exercise both groups shared their own first thoughts, as well as their responses to hearing the first thoughts about their own group. Central to the discussion was the distrust and rage many of the Native students felt toward whites and the guilt the white students carried.

In his journal following the exercise, Garret wrote, “I see how the white group sees Indians and how the Indian group sees whites on a small social scale...I see there is a lot of bitterness on the Indian side and a lot of shame and guilt on the white side.” As Garret keenly noted, bitterness, distrust, and shame often accompany individuals into intergroup interactions. This dynamic can set people up for difficulty. Yet, understanding this dynamic offers potential for relationship building.

Another exercise designed to explore and begin to heal the impact of racism on group interaction is Building Allies. Week five I introduced the concept of allies, explaining that an ally is someone that we trust, who is committed to helping us heal from the scars of oppression, and to ending the mistreatment of our group in society. The Building Allies exercise is designed to do two key things. First, it gives people the opportunity, in a safe space, to consider welcoming as an ally someone who is a member of a group that has traditionally mistreated one’s people; in the case illustrated below, a Native American student worked on opening herself to trust a white student as her ally.

Second, it gives people who want to be allies an opportunity to hear where an individual struggles to trust and to see the impact of oppression on his or her interactions with others.

I led the exercise with Ava, and she chose Chris as someone she'd like to have as an ally. I asked Ava to share with Chris what has interfered with her completely trusting white people. Ava spoke with great emotion, sharing through tears how her family has been impacted by racism. She talked about her mother's health waning from a lifetime of smoking, drinking, and battling external and internalized racism, saying, "She wouldn't have ever smoked if it weren't for white people. She wouldn't of ever drank if it weren't for white people." Ava showed her rage toward the suffering Native people have endured at white people's hands. She shared having hated, for much of her life, being part white and stated that as a child, "I'd wish I wasn't born so that there wouldn't be white people."

After Ava had finished, I asked her to try saying to Chris, "I'd like to be able to trust you. I'd like to be able to let you in." Finally I asked her to share with Chris anything he might do that could enable her to trust him more, at which point she asked for and received a hug.

This exercise gave Ava the chance to attempt to trust an individual white person (not white people in general) by really showing him where she struggles to feel safe with white people. In our post interview, Ava talked extensively about the allies exercise with Chris, noting that it offered a powerful contradiction to her past negative experiences with white people in general, and her father in particular:

... Like when I was talking about my shit against white people, what I needed after I said all that, was for a hug from Chris. It felt really good to be hugged by a white guy, who I have hated most of my life...It was really cool to have a white guy just sit there and look in my face and deal with me. Not be like, oh you're

dramatizing, or oh it's not that bad, or fuck you, you bitch... That's the way it has always been... So that was really healthy for me, because the experience I had with my dad was so bad... you know when I was five I was telling people that I hate white people, that my dad was dead- when he wasn't- I would say that I was full blooded Indian when obviously I'm not- but you know people are stupid- ... I would tell them [kids] that I was an Indian princess, tell all these stories because I wanted to make sure everybody knew that I wasn't white, because my experience up to that point was that all white people were hurt people, all white people ruined your life, took over your life and did whatever they wanted with it, no matter how it affected you. People didn't listen... all those experiences did not bode well for my outlook toward white people... Obviously, that's been taken care of before, but not so symbolic... It wasn't like me actually hugging a white guy, who I hadn't known very long, don't have a really deep relationship with. ... When I walked away, I was like, I'm not even going to think about this for a couple of weeks, because I know it's so big for me.

In Ava's words, the exercise with Chris became a symbol of healing, which she carries as "proof" that there is at least one white man she can trust, and possibly others.

The experience for Chris was equally moving. In his weekly journal he wrote, "ever since our meeting, I've felt stronger anger, grief, and guilt than I ever have before. Looking into Ava's eyes while she listed off all the ways in which white American imperialism/racism/class-ism... has affected her life was the hardest thing I have ever endured." In our post-interview, he declared the exercise was, "life changing," explaining that the impact resulted in part from having had five weeks to get to know and care about the group members. He recalled, "to have to look into those eyes, tears rolling down her cheek when she talked about what my group- not me- but what my group had done, and how she felt about my group, was heartbreaking."

Hearing his friend's story, Chris gained a more accurate picture of what Ava faces in building a friendship with him. For those seeking to be allies, an understanding of how challenging it can be to trust someone who is a member of an oppressive group enhances their resiliency as allies. With this information, along with an understanding of their own

goodness, allies can keep reaching across group lines, even when those they reach for are unable to reach back.

It is also worth noting that in Chris' mind, his relationship with Ava developed over the course of the group increased the impact of her story. This revelation supports Pettigrew's (1989) assertion that generating affective ties with someone of a different social group is key to reducing prejudicial attitudes. Other group participants were affected by testimonies like Ava's, as well.

Ellen, who works on campus serving largely Native students, spoke in our post interview about the opportunity the dialogue group offered to deepen her relationships with the Native members of our group. She was struck by both a heightened understanding of the mistrust many Indians feel towards non-Indians, while at the same time experiencing the openness and generosity of the Indian group members:

I still learned more about Native culture, Native people. It was really really good for me because sometimes I've felt really angry, or nervous, or scared, because I felt like they were really closed off, but this experience taught me and showed me that everybody wants to connect. There are Native people who are willing to build bridges, and I think that every living person is willing to build a bridge... but I think that there is so much hardness, there are so many walls built around their heart to protect them, and that those need to be somehow just loved so much that they are melted away. And that just takes time. There's no other answer except for time and genuine connection with somebody else.

In addition to providing the opportunity and time to better understand the impact of racism on Indians, the dialogue group provided participants of color the opportunity to witness the impact of oppression on white people. As agents of oppression, many white people carry feelings of shame and alienation that can shape their interactions with people of color. This can take many forms: acting disinterested, nervous, or afraid around

people of color, as well as trying to act like people of color.¹⁷ The dialogue group allowed participants of color to become more aware of some of the feelings influencing the behaviors of their white peers. Ava reported gaining new insights into the guilt and longing that some white people carry through hearing Flo's Speak Out, where she shared her feeling of being cultureless. Ava commented:

It is good, especially for the Indians in the group, to really look at a white person, and her experience of not having a culture... That is such an educational process, to get us away from thinking all white people are the same, all white people are bad... it wasn't like [Flo was saying] I'm not bad, it was, I wish I had something to make me feel bonded to people. You know, that's really what she was saying, I wish I had a culture, and I wish was bonded and had a common pain that I could feel...

Relationships Between Black Men and White Women

Another intergroup interaction that became a point of discussion among participants was the relationships between black men and white women. In several group sessions, Ben shared his experiences of coming to America as a Kenyan man, but being perceived here as a black man, and thus becoming a target of American racism. He realized that though he has only been here several years, he is beginning to internalize some of that prejudice.

Early in his stay in this country, a white man in a bar commented, "You black guys are all after our women." Since then, he has had many opportunities to discover the prevalence and weight of the stereotype of black men as sexual predators. His current landlord is a single European American woman, and he remembers her neighbors and relatives being afraid for her safety when informed that her new tenant was a black man. As a result of these experiences, Ben has found that he limits his interaction with white

¹⁷ White identity development is explored in greater depth in Chapter IV.

women. He shared with the group, “With white women, a wall goes up. I feel like I’m walking on eggshells- aware of what others are going to say about a black guy talking with a white woman.” He went on to say to Flo, with whom he had gotten to know over the course of the dialogue sessions, “You are the first white woman I feel like I’ve connected with in a real way.”

Several participants commented about this session, unaware of both the existence and the power of the stereotype expressed to Ben. In the following excerpt, Chris examines his initial response to hearing Ben’s story:

I remember being shocked to find out that Ben was so affected by the comment... I remember thinking to myself ... ‘why has this statement shaped the way Ben, a very intelligent person, sees his role in black/white relationships?’ However, as I sit here writing this, I wonder ... why was I so shocked to see the implications of this type of thinking on Ben’s life. — I think that maybe my reaction to Ben’s reaction is symptomatic of my not ever having to deal with the issue of being a minority. I have always been a part of the “majority” group, so I have never had to think about what it would be like to be a minority. I mean, I am in a minority as far as my veteran status goes. However, people don’t go around dragging Vets behind their trucks just because they were interacting with a white girl. I guess I always thought that if a person were intelligent, s/he would be able to just chalk it up to ignorance and let it run off his or her back like water off a duck. However, this line of thinking does not take into account how the minority feels on a personal level nor how the implied threat affects the minority’s perception of her or his personal safety. How would my life be different if I always had to think about whom I was with, more specifically, about the race of the person I was with?

In this journal entry, Chris deepens his understanding of the impact of oppression, realizing why prejudiced remarks might not “run off” one’s back “like water off a duck,” as the stakes – the brutal violence that racial comments breed- have been and continue to be high. Through this, Chris gains a sense of not only how racism affects Ben’s feelings about himself, but also, how he relates to whites. Further, Chris’ exploration of Ben’s

story leads him to examine his own status as a person of privilege in society, and the assumptions he brings to his interactions with Ben.

Conclusion

The dialogue group presented participants numerous opportunities to identify their own misinformation and to learn new information from their peers about their diverse experiences. As the previous examples illustrated, this learning was highly individualized; different exercises or stories struck each participant at different times throughout the six weeks. Though not everyone learned the same things, no one emerged from the six weeks unchanged. As the sharing of stories related to ethnicity was the work of the group, learning from one another occurred spontaneously and continuously as participants experienced, reflected, and shared.

A significant component of this learning was identifying the preconceptions that everyone carries, often unwarily. First Thoughts aimed to surface these unaware recordings of misinformation, allowing participants to examine and re-evaluate them. Central to the effectiveness of this exercise was making the distinction between a person and his/her records. This separation allowed participants to look critically at their own records without seeing themselves as inherently bad for having them. By extension, participants began to change the way they perceived others' records of misinformation, which will be explored further in the next chapter. First Thoughts stirred a level of self-reflection and meta-cognition that continued beyond the duration of the exercises as participants continued to examine their preconceptions and assumptions.

In addition to identifying misinformation, participants learned new information about the experiences of their peers through the dialogue group. The emphasis of the group was examining cultural diversity; much learning was on this theme, though students reported learning new information about the experiences of other groups as well, including men and veterans of war. In addition, participants increased their understanding of the impact of oppression on group interaction. This occurred from the formal and informal sharing of stories about their diverse experiences as people of color and European Americans.

Through exercises and open dialogue, the group surfaced feelings that can shape the outcome of interactions across group lines, including bitterness, shame, fear, and longing. Through this process, students gained greater self-awareness as well as empathy for one another. In showing each other where they struggled to reach for one another, participants experienced what was for many a previously unachieved level of authenticity interacting with people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Further, the open sharing of the group validated for participants that many people, despite the challenges, desire connection with people who are different from them selves. The insights gained from hearing one another's struggles allowed participants a deeper understanding of how oppression keeps people separate from one another, and offered the opportunity to bridge that separation.

Building relationships across group lines requires that individuals enter with a degree of both knowing and not knowing. Knowledge and understanding of what another person may be experiencing can ease the relationship building process. Yet, people must simultaneously remember that what they think they know may not be truth for this

particular individual, and/or may be based on preconceptions. The dialogue group aimed to work both ends of this skill, teaching participants to identify their own recordings of misinformation, while giving them opportunities to gain insights about others' struggles as members of particular ethnic and cultural groups.

CHAPTER VI

ALLY BEHAVIORS

The fourth objective of the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues pilot project was to increase participants' ally behaviors, which might include such actions as taking initiative to learn about another group's experience or history, building relationships across group lines, interrupting offensive comments or behaviors, and challenging oppressive institutions. Ally behaviors reflect interrelated issues of commitment, self-confidence, and empowerment – the belief that one can make a difference. Given this, I was interested in changes in participants' sense of responsibility or commitment to diversity issues, as well as, changes in behavior in two directions. First, I hoped to see an increase in participants' comfort and willingness to reach out to members of different ethnic and cultural groups. Second, I was interested in participants' willingness and ability to effectively respond to people who make offensive comments, jokes or slurs. Being an ally means being able to do both things: ally with targets of oppression, as well as, ally with agents of oppression in order to help them shift their attitudes.¹⁸

As a result of their participation in the group, most students reported an increased commitment to issues of diversity, as well as greater comfort reaching out to people different than themselves. In addition, some students demonstrated new skills interrupting offensive comments, jokes, and slurs. However, assessing actual changes in behavior proved difficult.

Because each student entered the dialogue group with varying degrees of commitment and comfort to reaching out to others or taking a stand, the degree to which

participants changed differed, as was the path participants took to those changes. As with identity development, themes emerged among the experiences of the students of color who had had a high level of intergroup interaction, as well as between the two white students. The experience of Dylan, who grew up without significant intergroup contact, was distinct from that of other group members. For each of these three groups of students, the following sections examine changes in their commitment to diversity and their ability to reach out to members of different ethnic and cultural groups. An additional section explores participants' changes in ability to respond effectively to offensive comments, which did not seem to differ along these same lines.

Commitment to Diversity and Comfort Reaching Out to Diverse Peoples

Ava, Ellen, and Garret

Commitment to Diversity and Social Justice

As one might expect, all participants entered the group with an established commitment to issues of diversity. However, this commitment varied, largely along ethnic lines. With the exception of Dylan, who had had little contact with non-Indians prior to coming to campus, the students of color reported a higher level of commitment to diversity issues than did white students. This could be expected, as day-to-day inequalities can affectively shape the lives of people of color. As Ava noted in her pre-interview, diversity issues are “part of my everyday life. It’s not something I separate from myself. If I hear someone make an ignorant comment, I’m going to say something. As a person who knows, it’s my job to say something.” Ellen and Garret also described in pre-interviews their high commitment to diversity issues, offering numerous examples of

¹⁸ NCBI theory regarding ally behaviors will be explored later within this chapter.

how they've expanded their own learning of other cultures and gotten involved in cultural events and activities.

Yet, even with this solid foundation, each of these students reported solidifying their commitment to social justice as a result of their participation in the dialogue group. In her post interview, Ava commented that having participated in the group “makes it a lot easier to go out into the world and be a person who says no prejudice...like I feel really good, like our group really made a difference to each other. When you feel that, you feel empowered...I feel juiced up again, energized, fueled up.” For Ava, the group experience provided fuel to continue to fight against injustice by offering needed support and encouragement.

Ellen explained that the group affected her commitment to diversity issues “in that it keeps me open to keep talking to people. It reaffirmed what I already felt, that talking to people in this way, totally open and valuing their experiences, is so so valuable...” The group served as a reminder of the kinds of interactions she wants to have as she moves through the world. For these students who already had a deep seeded passion for social justice, the group offered support, motivation, and an added reminder of the potential value of interaction between diverse groups.

Ally Behavior: Reaching Out to Others

This reminder of the value of intergroup interaction correlated with an increase in Ava's, Ellen's, and Garrets' comfort in reaching out to members of groups other than their own. Just as each of these students reported a high level of commitment to diversity entering the group, each initially claimed a high level of comfort reaching out to diverse

people. Ellen remarked in her pre-interview, “I really love talking to people and finding out who they are...I have friends from all over the world.” Garret reported feeling like he had a lot to offer people of different backgrounds saying, “It feels good to reach out to people who aren’t Native American. We as Native American people are so much more in tune with nature, for the most part we’re a more spiritual people, we have a lot of good ways of helping.” Ava also described herself as being “very comfortable” reaching out to others, giving numerous examples of when she has built bridges between diverse groups of people.

The exercises and experiences within the dialogue group provided these three students with opportunities to extend their comfort reaching out to others even further. For Ava, the Building Allies demonstration with Chris (described in the previous chapter) affected her comfort particularly around white men. In the post-interview, she explained:

I’m going to reach out to white men a little more. I might not actually act on it, but I might mentally act on it...I’m trying to make it so symbolic to me that it becomes reality- fake it till you make it- I don’t know if that’s going to necessarily feel right to me for a long time, but at least I have the symbol. I have the proof that I know one white man that I didn’t know very much or very long, and I trust him...I have the proof, and I’ll have that in my heart and in my mind to be able to say well here’s a white guy and he’s probably not bad. At least I could say that instead of just looking at them and looking away, and never looking again- which is what I do a lot... That’s probably what has changed the most.

As Ava understands it, her comfort around and trust of one white man has opened up potential space for developing relationships with others. What began as a symbol may translate into changes in behavior.

As with Ava, Ellen’s desire to reach out to others was affected by the close relationships developed between group members. By the close of the six weeks, Ellen had noticed changes in her behavior, commenting, “I am more willing to take time with people...because of the emotions I’m left with from the group, I feel like I have so much

more to learn by making time with people.” In addition, she reported feeling increasingly comfortable reaching out to others. When asked what influenced this change, she remarked,

I think it goes back to that whole helping me with my own identity. Being a little more grounded in how I feel about myself just helps me be more comfortable talking to other people, asking them questions about who they are, and knowing that I don't have to try and be like them.

Her work around claiming her bicultural identity interrupted what she identified as a patterned “chameleon” response, allowing her to be more relaxed and authentic in her interactions with others.

Garret also reported feeling more comfortable reaching out to others as a result of the group, though he commented that within the group, “it was easy to reach out.” He was not the only student to notice that the safety of the dialogue group was frequently unmatched in interactions outside of group.

Flo and Chris

Commitment to Diversity and Social Justice

The two white students entered the group with a strong value of diversity and social justice, though unlike Ava, Ellen, and Garret, they had taken fewer steps in their life to work on behalf of these goals. In his pre-interview, Chris commented, “part of me would say I'm real committed [to diversity], but I haven't done anything about it...” For both students, the group greatly deepened their commitment. At the end of the six weeks, Chris reported, “I think I'm infinitely more committed now...I feel like I'm in a better place now to actively participate instead of just sitting back and griping.” When I asked him what had changed, he answered, “The desire to search out a place where I can help,

instead of just pissing and moaning about how crappy things are. Maybe it's time for me to proactively work to change things I don't like..." Not only does Chris feel more committed, he has a sense of direction, and feels empowered to get involved to better his community. This shift from a place of static negativity to a feeling more active and empowered mirrors Chris' gains around his identity development through the course of the group (explored in chapter IV).

Flo's increased commitment also appeared related to her gains in identity development. In her post-interview, she explained that her commitment to issues of diversity and social justice "feels more deeply rooted. I've always felt that's not fair, that's not right, that needs to be fixed. Now I feel that even more, I've taken it even further inside self." When asked what in particular deepened her commitment, she responded, "I think claiming myself as a white person, definitely. Just for the first time realizing why my being white was getting in the way. And hearing what other people have in the way..." In identifying as a white person, Flo acknowledged what she brings to her interaction with people of color, what she identified as feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. This self-reflection, coupled with her increased understanding of what others face in interacting with her as a white person, illuminated some of the barriers to intergroup understanding. With these barriers brought into focus, Flo found new potential for working with them. These insights gave her hope and encouragement to continue exploring her own identity, as well as build relationships with others of backgrounds different from her own.

Ally Behaviors: Reaching out to others

Upon entering the dialogue group, both Flo and Chris expressed some tentativeness interacting with people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds than themselves. Chris commented in his pre-interview, “It sucks to say that I’m not very comfortable,” noting that he doesn’t have any interaction with people of color outside of classes. In her pre-interview, Flo commented, “I feel comfortable, but there’s also since I’m the white person I have to tread this very sweet line... I feel self-conscious about it, like I can’t really be me.... I don’t connect with people as closely as I could if I’d just get rid of that self-consciousness.” Though she grew up with a close Native American friend, Flo realized that she has not built any relationships with people of different ethnic backgrounds for some time.

Participation in the diverse dialogue group gave both Flo and Chris opportunity to attempt to reach out to others in a safe environment. Both felt that this resulted in an increased comfort reaching out, though residual tentativeness in doing so remained. Chris reported in our post interview, “I think there’s still some discomfort. I think it’s much less.” When asked what affected this change, he explained:

There has been a significant reduction in my need to keep my private life private...And since I realized that I can tell people these things, I think I’m freer to be available for people to do the same to me. I realized that I said some horrible things, and people didn’t run away from me; I certainly have the strength to do the same.

For Chris, the experience of sharing stories – in particular, stories about where participants have struggled with their prejudices- influenced his ability to connect with people of different backgrounds. The group served as a model for talking about intimate and challenging subjects and not abandoning one another when they struggled. As a

result, Chris felt a greater comfort building relationships with people where such challenges may arise. Follow up is needed to determine whether this change in comfort translates into a change in behavior. Though their increased confidence is significant, so too is the tentativeness Chris and Flo still feel.

In Flo's post-interview, she reported that while she was more comfortable now than before reaching out to members of a different group, "I'd like to have an ally of that group standing behind me saying, 'go girl, you're doing it right.' I need to get to the point where I don't feel like I need an ally to connect with someone." This reflects Flo's continued insecurities about her ability to connect with people of color as a white person. My sense is that continued work on her own identity will decrease the unease that she feels.

While the dialogue group offered participants the opportunity to build relationships with a diverse group of students, it is unclear without additional follow-up with the white students how that may translate into interactions with people of color outside of the group.

Dylan

Commitment to Diversity and Social Justice

Dylan was the one student who did not articulate an especially strong commitment to diversity issues at the start of the group. Growing up on the Blackfeet reservation, his experience with people from different backgrounds was limited, yet he entered the group with a fundamental value that no one person is better than another. At the close of the group, he spoke about the relevance of his learnings from the dialogue

group to life on his reservation. When asked about his commitment to issues of diversity, he commented, “at first I didn’t care so much, but our reservation has gotten really diverse.” Participating in the group helped him see the relevance of issues of intergroup understanding and interaction to his life.

Ally Behavior: Reaching Out to Others

Before the dialogue group, Dylan’s interaction with people from other backgrounds had been fairly limited. He commented that for a long time he did not know that white people existed. Since coming to The University of Montana and living on campus, his interaction across group lines has necessarily increased. When asked in the pre-interview about his comfort interacting with people of different ethnic groups, he commented, “sometimes I don’t want to.”

Exploring this question at the close of the dialogue group, Dylan commented that living on campus he’s “grown comfortable.” In his mind, his increased comfort interacting with others resulted from his increased experience living in a diverse environment. He reported valuing the interaction within the group and the people he met, though when asked how that might affect any future interaction, he replied simply, “don’t know yet.”

For each student, it remains difficult to assess the long-term impact of the dialogue group, in part because of limited follow-up, and in part because each participant continues to have experiences that affect his/her comfort and willingness to reach out to others. The following section examines findings with regard to specific changes in behavior.

Responding Effectively to Offensive Comments

A hallmark of NCBI's models is teaching a set of skills to effectively respond to offensive comments and slurs. NCBI's approach is based on a core belief in people's inherent goodness and the knowledge that all people carry recordings of misinformation. Further, it is often the places where people have been hurt that make them vulnerable to carrying prejudice towards others.¹⁹ Knowing this, NCBI teaches skills designed to get to the "ouch" underneath the comment, so that we can not only interrupt people's offensive behavior, but more importantly, help them shift their attitudes.

Ideally, I would have liked to identify changes in the frequency and manner in which participants responded to offensive comments. However, I had to rely on participant's recollection of their responses in such situations, as well as their projection of how they might respond to such incidents. In both pre- and post- interviews, I offered participants a scenario where someone made an offensive comment, asking them how they would feel hearing that comment, how they were most likely to respond, and how they would like to respond. In the follow-up interview, I asked for examples of times participants had (or had not) intervened upon hearing an offensive comment.

Changes in thinking

Through the use of these scenarios, it appears that most participants by the end of the six weeks were thinking differently about how to respond to offensive comments than when they entered the group. Chris provides a clear example of this shift. Hearing a scenario in the pre-interview about a racist comment made in class, he responded, "I

¹⁹ Chris' story in Chapter IV serves as an example: after being "broken down" and dehumanized in basic training, he took out his rage on the locals when he was stationed in Korea. Chris expressed this anger through racist comments and graffiti.

would be extremely angry...I'd tell that person that was the most racist comment I'd ever heard anyone say, and try and point them at a piece of literature." Though there are strengths to this approach, namely (and not insignificantly) that Chris would take action, attacking and shaming people are rarely effective at shifting their attitudes.

As the dialogue group progressed, Chris began to rethink his reaction to oppressive speech and actions. In one journal after a session examining his own recordings of prejudice, Chris wrote, "I used to be fairly critical of people who make generalizations about other groups. However, I now know it is a result of how they were raised. It is a learned behavior that can be unlearned..." He also recognized that his intense reaction to hearing offensive comments might be a way of distancing himself from his own oppressive patterns. After hearing Ben's story about being targeted with a racist comment by a white man, Chris wrote:

About the white guy — I think that I have so little tolerance for people like this because I have seen the effects of racism played out to the extreme. War is, after all, nothing, if not racist. I also realize that I have been made a victim by this type of thinking and I have worked very hard to get it out of me. So, I am always disappointed when I see it. I find that I have a hard time forgiving people who show that they have been subjected to the same kind of thinking. What's up with that? You would think that I would be more sympathetic (not accepting), not less. This is something that I need to work on. Maybe it's a sign that I have not forgiven myself yet. So, I need to work on that as well — probably where I need to start, actually.

In our post-interview, I offered a new scenario of walking past a homeless person with a friend who comments, "they're all just a bunch of drunk Indians." Chris' response this time differed greatly from the pre-interview, demonstrating more creative thinking about the situation, as well as an internalization of the NCBI skills of getting underneath prejudiced comments to the feelings driving the attitude. He believed he'd likely bring it

up in conversation, “not all in your face, but I’d try and find out what it is that makes them uncomfortable.”

Other students demonstrated shifts in the way they perceived they would respond to offensive comments as well. The dialogue group seemed to affect the way they thought about people who make prejudiced comments, and the way they would like to respond to such situations. Participants seemed more willing to see a person making an offensive comment as a good person who has a not so good pattern, rather than writing off the person all together. In terms of participants’ effectiveness at responding to offensive remarks, this change in attitude is an important shift. Yet, it is unclear how the dialogue group affected participants’ abilities to take action in these situations.

For at least one student, increasing confidence proved as essential as skill training in equipping her to respond effectively to offensive comments. In her pre-interview, Ellen responded to the scenario of the racist comment in a classroom by first acknowledging the difficulty of speaking up in such situations, and saying that she would “probably be very quiet, and then say something.” Through the course of the dialogue group, Ellen realized that she tends to react passively to potential conflict. Week three she shared a story of being targeted with racism toward Latinos. After sharing the story, I offered her the opportunity to vent, to speak back to the person who had made the offensive remark. I encouraged Ellen to do this without smiling, which proved challenging. In her journal that week, she wrote:

The fact that I was smiling the entire time I was telling a story that hurt me taught me a lot about myself...I think I take quite a passive-aggressive approach to problem solving. This does not lend itself well to being an ally to other people. There are times in life where I need to learn to stand up for myself and others.

Ellen made the connection between her conflict avoidance pattern and her ability to act as an ally. Building her own confidence and assertiveness will increase her ability to stand up to injustice. In her post-interview, Ellen seemed much more confident in how she would respond to the scenario presented of a friend making a derogatory comment about a homeless person. Without hesitation she offered a creative and thoughtful response: “The way I would like to handle it is just enter into dialogue, what does it mean for us to see this person, let’s bring ourselves to a time when we felt that desperate...” It seems that her confidence in responding to these kinds of remarks increased over the six weeks, though behavior changes remain to be seen.

Though many students demonstrated new skills in role-playing responses to offensive remarks, they also expressed concern about their ability to intervene effectively. In her post interview, Flo remarked, “this is the part I’m most uncomfortable with...how do you interject, and open someone’s eyes. The theory is to look what’s inside that person...what is it that’s causing that reaction in them. But it’s hard to think of how I would go about saying that.” Other students shared Flo’s concern, demonstrating the need for expanding this piece of the dialogue group curriculum. Offering participants more experience practicing the skills using real time situations and reporting back each week on successes/failures may be one approach to enable future group members to put the skills of intervention into action.

Conclusion

As a result of their participation in the Intergroup Dialogues, the students, to varying degrees, increased or solidified their commitment to diversity. For those students

who were veterans of the cause- in this case all students of color- the group served to refuel and recharge their passion, reminding them of the good that can come from connecting with people from different backgrounds. For the white students, who had yet to become as involved in diversity issues, the group empowered them to do so. For the white students, as well as one of the students of color, validating their ethnic identity seemed key to their increased commitment. Finally, for one student, seeing the dialogue group mirror the struggles of intergroup interaction within his own community brought the issues of diversity home for him in a new way.

At the close of the dialogue group, most students reported an increased comfort reaching out to people of differing backgrounds than themselves. The white students seemed to retain a higher level of tentativeness than the students of color in this area. As a whole, participants' increased comfort seemed to result from both the opportunity to develop relationships with diverse individuals and the work around identity development. Increasing the length of the group session may allow for more work around identity development and deepening the intergroup relationships, resulting in increased comfort around others.

By the close of the six weeks, some students demonstrated new skills and/or increased confidence at responding to offensive comments. Several experienced significant shifts in the ways they perceived people who make offensive comments and learned appropriate ways to intervene. These changes are significant in improving their ability to respond in such situations in ways that move the conversation and relationship forward, so that real change in attitude can occur. How these new skills will be put to action remains to be seen, and some participants expressed concern about their ability to

use the skills effectively. Extending the length of the dialogue group and designating more time to the practice of intervening in the face of oppression would strengthen this component of the program.

The research design did not adequately allow for identifying changes in behavior, either in reaching out to others, or in interrupting offensive comments. Additional follow up is needed to determine whether or not participants' increased interaction with members of different ethnic and cultural groups extended beyond the dialogue group and whether they have an improved ability to respond to offensive comments, jokes, and slurs.

CHAPTER VII

MEANINGS

I entered the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues pilot with identified outcomes by which to gauge its effectiveness; these have been discussed in the previous three chapters. These outcomes reflect the key goals of the program, yet the students involved found the experience to be meaningful on other levels as well. This chapter explores what the Intergroup Dialogues experience meant to the participants. These meanings prove in many ways to be the intangibles- how people felt with and around one another. A final section addresses group process, which served as the glue that held the eight of us- participants and researcher- together for the dialogue group experience.

Connection

Student journals and interviews overflowed with praise for the gift of human connection received through the Intergroup Dialogues. Several students commented that few places in their lives, and rarely in their experiences on campus, are they able to build relationships with the depth and honesty they found in the group. Ellen explained, “That’s why I think NCBI is so important here...it’s an extracurricular thing that comes into people’s lives and helps them connect with other people, because we’re not getting that everyday in our classes.”

The dialogue group was meaningful for participants in that it offered an opportunity to develop close friendships. Though the aim of the group in particular was to build relationships across group lines, students seemed hungry for close relationships

in general. When asked during our exit interview what the group had meant to him, Chris replied, “Everything, literally. It gave me a piece of my humanity back that had been gone for almost eleven years. It gave me friends; it gave me an audience; it gave me a reason to speak- instead of keeping it bottled up. It gave me an opportunity to listen, and to feel emotion again.” In her post-interview, Ellen commented,

What we did in our group is what I live for-that total connection, that deep deep appreciation for other human beings, no matter what their past is, or where they come from, and just really appreciating that diversity and the gifts that it brings to my life. Honestly, I felt so alive after every meeting.

Connection Across Group Lines

In particular, several students articulated the benefit of building relationships with a diverse group of students. In Garret’s post-interview he appreciated having the opportunity to know people from such diverse backgrounds, commenting “on campus and in classes you don’t have that type of interaction with other groups...there’s a barrier there.” In her post-interview, Flo noted this as well, stating that her participation allowed her to build “bridges between all the different people in the group- people that I probably would have never come to know and like and want to spend more time with had I not been in the group.”

Connecting with Other Indians

For the Indian students, another strength of the dialogue group was the opportunity to deepen their relationships with one another and connect around both their strengths and struggles as Native Americans. On several occasions in group activities, one of the Native students shared that his/her highlight of the session was getting to

connect with other Indians. Dylan was especially thankful for Garret's arrival to the group week three, welcoming him by saying, "two of us can't tell what it's like on the reservation, but maybe three can." NCBI's emphasis on constituency work, that is its emphasis on creating space for people of similar backgrounds to share experiences, has been highlighted in recent nationwide evaluations as a best practice (Lee, 2001).

Acceptance

Connection among students was made possible by the acceptance they offered one another. Many students articulated the power of this validation. Ellen wrote in a journal midway through the six weeks, "I look forward to the group every week because I know that I will be in a place for two hours where I can be completely myself without being judged." The acceptance allowed for a high level of honesty within the group. Chris shared that "the knowledge that I had people to talk to that cared, and everybody just kept coming back week after week no matter how emotionally painful the prior week was..." allowed him to take risks and challenge himself in new ways.

Hearing One Another's Stories

The depth of friendship that developed among participants resulted from hearing one another's personal stories. Students appreciated talking and hearing about "things that really matter," namely issues of identity, difference, and prejudice. Exploring issues of oppression in a very personal setting deepened the experience for participants. Ava commented in her post interview, "we got to be together, we got to know each other, we got to know each other's pains and joys, and that led to a much deeper recognition of

oppression and racism.” After hearing Speak Outs from many group members about their experiences of mistreatment, Flo wrote, “for as long as I live those stories will be a part of me, and I will pass them on to others in the simple way I will look at and treat people differently because of them.” Ellen also commented about the power of sharing stories: “more than anything, listening to other people sparked so many ideas within myself that I carry with me throughout the week, that I still carry with me.” A saying among NCBI leaders is that “we don’t change people’s minds, we change their hearts.” Stories, especially those of people we have grown to care about, touch and change our hearts.

Hearing one another’s stories included both testimonies from targets of oppression, as well as, agents of oppression. For students of color, seeing white peoples willingness to work on their own racism was striking. After the First Thoughts exercise, Ben commented, “I wish people would always be so open. We need to know where we are starting from.” In her post interview, Ava commented on this as well, saying: “it’s so good to see that other people had the opportunity to recognize oppression in themselves, or against other people, and be able to deal with it. . .” The more the white participants demonstrated their willingness to look at their own prejudices, the more students of color were able to trust them.

Student comments suggest that they are hungry for connection and closeness. Though racism has left particular barriers that make it challenging for European Americans and people of color to build relationships across those lines, students express a much broader lack of connectivity as well. The acceptance within the group supported participants to share honestly and openly with each other. These shared stories deepened their friendships and deepened their awareness of oppression.

Healing the Scars of Oppression

A second theme that emerged from participants' journals and interviews was the value of the emotional sharing and healing work within the dialogue group. From early in the group, participants commented that the group felt like a "safe space" to share their feelings. Many of the exercises are designed to assist participants in healing from painful experiences, by giving them opportunity to express their feelings and validating their inherent worth and value. For some students, expressing emotions publicly was more comfortable than others, though nearly all commented about the benefits of this sharing.

Dylan, in particular, came to really value the emotional work within the dialogue group, though it was not something that came easily for him. After seeing a tearful Speak Out by Chris week four, Dylan wrote, "I envied him because he was able to show all his feelings. It took a lot of strength." As weeks passed, Dylan progressively shared more of his own stories. After doing the First Thoughts exercise about white people, he wrote, "it felt good to get that stuff out." He later remarked in group, "I don't trust a lot of white people. Being able to talk like this- it's something I usually only do with my family." When asked during his post interview what the dialogue group experience meant to him, Dylan commented, "I got some of my feelings out there- it felt good to do that."

Other students emphasized the importance of the emotional sharing. In his post-interview, Garret commented, "I want to live life happily without letting racism ruin my life," explaining that having a chance to express his anger and bitterness at past incidents of mistreatment helped him to refrain from taking his feelings out on white people in

general. Ava, too, discussed the importance of venting, describing a time when instead of discharging her grief about racism she turned it inwards. She explained:

I felt so sick and tired in my heart. Physically, mentally, I was incapable...and I recognized...that's the way I have to heal...that venting piece is so important to heal. I've found that this racism thing you just got to vent a lot. You don't just vent once and it's all OK.

Clearly there are significant psychological benefits to expressing our feelings, and the particular experience of having a witness to one's grief and anger can be especially healing. Ellen commented on this in her post-interview, after noticing that while group members were different from one another in many ways, they were similar in that they had all experienced pain:

...Even if you are balanced, it's not a guarantee that you're not going to experience loneliness, or isolation, or not fitting in, or feeling like you're not good enough, or any of those things. But it's also so simple... just talking about it, just knowing that for those two hours you'll be here with those six other people who really care to just listen to you and tell you that it's OK to feel how you feel, and that we love you and we support you, heals so much in such short amount of time.

Group Process

In discussing the processes of change in the previous three chapters, there was much that went unsaid. Invisibly supporting these processes was a web of trust, without which the group could not have been effective. Much went into building this web, which is largely the role of the group leader and facilitator.

As the facilitator, I held out each and every person's goodness from the start, and refused to be confused, for even an instant, about whether they or their stories mattered. I affirmed each participant inside group and out, checking in with students throughout the week after sessions where they seemed withdrawn or particularly vulnerable. In addition

to validating the individuals, I affirmed people's feelings, and was never afraid or disappointed by what participants shared or did not share.

Within group, I paid attention to speaking order and encouraged equal participation by making space for each student to share her or his stories. During group discussions, I consciously asked the youngest students and students of color for comments first, in an attempt to interrupt the racist and adultist patterns that can emerge in intergroup interactions. It should be said that this particular group had a good deal of self-awareness in this regard- none of the participants had particularly dominating personalities.

In addition, I modeled each exercise, demonstrating not only the process, but also a high level of self-disclosure. I shared my own struggles and strengths as a white middle class mixed heritage Jewish mother and aimed to lead without the pretense of having either, on the one hand no struggles, or on the other hand nothing worthwhile to teach. I was a participant-facilitator, leading the group while learning along side the other participants.

Through the process I offered as facilitator, I helped create an environment of trust and safety within the group. Yet, each participant held a strand in this web of trust as well. Each, to varying degrees, made a decision to trust, or at least to act as if they trusted. They also made a decision to show themselves, to take risks. With a little leadership, together we built an environment in which it was possible to do the work we did, that of searching within ourselves and reaching to build authentic relationships across group lines. The structured interaction accelerated natural processes of relationship

building. Some might call the setting artificial, though by all accounts what happened in our two hours together each week was refreshingly, and at times, painfully real.

CHAPTER VIII

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Program Objectives

This research aimed to design, implement, and evaluate an NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program at The University of Montana. The stated objectives of the program were for participants to 1) develop their own ethnic and cultural identity; 2) identify information and misinformation learned about other groups; 3) increase their understanding of the impact of oppression on group interaction; and 4) increase ally behaviors. As chapters four through seven discussed, these objectives were each met to varying degrees. Most students experienced changes in their identity development over the course of their participation. All students reported reducing their prejudicial attitudes, as well as learning new information about the impact of oppression, as a result of hearing each other's stories. In addition, most participants increased both their commitment to diversity and comfort reaching out to diverse peoples. Some demonstrated new skills of intervention, as well. Increases in actual ally behaviors proved challenging to identify with the research methods used and could not be assessed. The changes that did occur for participants in each of these areas resulted from both the facilitated exercises and the experience of validation and connection within the group. Experiencing the exercises outside of group would not have affected the same changes in students; the intimate relationships developed and stories shared among this diverse group of students proved central to their learning.

In addition to the stated program goals, the program proved meaningful to participants in two other key ways. First, it provided participants with an opportunity to develop close relationships, particularly with individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds than themselves. Second, it offered participants the chance to share their feelings with others. Participants' strong appreciation of these components indicates both a desire and a need for increased connection among students and opportunities for students to share their emotions with one another.

Extending the Research

This research extends current theories of prejudice reduction in several key ways. First, it puts the theories of social contact (Allport, 1958; Pettigrew, 1998) and identity development (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997) to work by evaluating a particular model of prejudice reduction built from their theoretical foundations. Limited research exists that examines particular models of prejudice reduction; in examining the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues model, the present study fills that gap. By combining NCBI's methodology and the intergroup dialogue format, this research presents a new model that educators can use to reduce prejudice and build intergroup relationships. However, NCBI does not offer a surefire recipe for identity development or relationship building.

The methods are, in many ways, a soul-less scaffolding into which the group leader and participants breathe life. Identity development and relationship building are, after all, natural processes that individuals are essentially built to experience. The dialogue group provided a forum for participants to explore their feelings about their identity by stirring them up. Participants were able to express their longing, their

isolation, their confusion, and ultimately, their humanness, and were met in return with human connection and kindness. To provide a recipe for this proves challenging, though the act is simple.

In addition to offering an effective model of prejudice reduction, the present study strengthens current research that indicates a positive relationship between achieved identity and lower levels of prejudice. For some participants, especially, though not exclusively European Americans, identity development proved integral to their reduced prejudicial attitudes, increased commitment to diversity, and increased comfort interacting with members of diverse backgrounds. Close intergroup relationships proved equally important to these gains in reduced prejudice, comfort, and commitment. This points to the strength in combining methods of identity development and social contact, a topic I have yet to find examined in the research.

Using NCBI's methodologies, which emphasize identity development, and the dialogue group format, which in turn encourages relationship building across group lines, this project draws on the strengths of both theories of identity development and social contact, and finds both components to be vital to prejudice reduction. Several examples serve to illustrate this point.

Flo entered the group with a relatively weak ethnic identity, and corresponding discomfort interacting with members of different ethnic backgrounds than her own. In her own analysis, it was claiming her identity as a white woman that enabled her to recognize how that identity kept her from connecting with members of other groups. Conversely, Dylan entered the group with a relatively achieved ethnic identity, and yet a high level of distrust for white people. This resulted from the historically damaging relationship

between Indians and non-Indians, but also from his limited contact with white people. For Dylan, intentional contact with the white participants proved essential to his building of trust and reduction of prejudices toward European Americans.

For still other participants, identity development and intergroup contact seemed equally essential to the reduction in prejudice. For example, Ellen spoke strongly about the value of her own identity exploration in increasing her ability to connect with members of different backgrounds. She also spoke of the value of building relationships with diverse group members in contradicting her preconception that members of particular groups did not want to connect outside their group.

As these examples illustrate, identity development alone does not eliminate prejudice, nor, as research has shown, does intergroup contact (Zuniga & Nagda, 1993; Geranios, 1997). Bridging NCBI's methodologies with the intergroup dialogue format provided a model that offered benefits from both identity development and positive intergroup contact. Because of their unique backgrounds, students responded differently to the dialogue group experience. However, the dual emphasis promoted prejudice reduction for all participants.

Key Learnings / Directions for Improvement

Assessments of the Intergroup Dialogue program from participants and myself as the facilitator identify several key structural components to the dialogue group, as well as directions for improvement.

Incorporating Journals

For purposes of assessing changes among participants' attitudes, I required weekly journals from group members. This outside reflection proved key for participants to continue processing the weeks' events. Further, it provided me as the facilitator with critical information about individual students. I found that although the syllabus for the six weeks was established prior to the group, I framed each week's session largely with insights gained through student journals. This medium allowed me to see where students were struggling, if they needed more time to process a particular concept, or if they had a story that needed telling. In future dialogue groups, I would continue to require weekly journals.

Extending Length of Time

The six-week format of the dialogue group presented a significant improvement over one day (or shorter) NCBI workshops in allowing students greater opportunity for self-evaluation, reflection, and relationship building. However, extending the dialogue group to eight weeks would allow still more depth in exploring internalized oppression and the ally skills of intervention. Expanding these areas would strengthen the program as a whole. Students, as well, reported wishing the group had lasted longer. For several students, six weeks was a short time to begin sharing intimate details of their lives. Extending the group for an additional two weeks allows greater time to build trust and relationships among participants.

Facilitator Training

Other concerns for replicating this program relate to facilitator training. The NCBI Training of Trainers prepares individuals to lead the one-day Prejudice Reduction workshop. All active NCBI trainers participate in monthly chapter meetings where they further develop their leadership skills. However, specific additional training around small group facilitation would be necessary for leaders of future NCBI Intergroup Dialogues. A next step for building this program at The University of Montana is creating a curriculum and training program for dialogue group leaders. To insure the sustainability and viability of the program, coordination of the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues program also needs to be incorporated into the stated responsibilities of classified staff position of the UC MultiCultural Alliance.

Closing Thoughts

At some point in nearly every diversity workshop I lead, someone makes the comment, “the people who really need this aren’t here.” While I believe that making prejudice reduction work accessible to “nonbelievers” is essential, on this point I see no harm in preaching to the choir. In fact, I have yet to find one among us who has emerged unscathed from living in an oppressive society, or who has nothing to benefit from self-reflection and hearing stories of diverse experiences. Clearly, every participant in the NCBI Intergroup Dialogues entered with a commitment to diversity issues, and clearly they all had something to learn about themselves and from one another. Unlearning prejudice proves a lifelong task, and healing the scars that keep people separated is work for us all.

The NCBI Intergroup Dialogues pilot program offered a powerful testimony of human beings' inherent desire to connect with one another, despite what can at times feel like impossible chasms to cross. The dialogue group allowed participants to "take on" issues of oppression with honesty and rigor, while at the same time reaching for one another across the lines that have served to divide us. NCBI's model of prejudice reduction keeps the goodness of all people at its core, and does not turn away from the painful, complex, and triumphant history that has shaped who we are as individuals. It seeks to build bridges and relationships between people to provide opportunities for real communication.

It has been said that we are all born innocent, and though systems of racism permeate our lives, not one of us would have chosen to be part of those systems had we the choice. No person of color would choose to be oppressed, and certainly, no European American would choose to enforce that oppression. The dialogue group gave participants the chance to notice how systems of domination have hurt us all, keeping us from benefiting from the rich friendships and understandings that result from diverse interaction. The group experience gave participants a taste of what we have waiting for us as we work to eliminate systems of oppression. It offered hope, inspiration, and empowerment that we can in fact become agents of change to build the world of which we dream.

Table 1:

NCBI Intergroup Dialogues Syllabus

Week and Theme	Technique:	Process:	Outcomes:
Week One- Introductions, Identity Development	Introductions (box) Up-Downs Pairs Overview program and expectations	Lay foundation for successful participation of dialogue group. Focus on group formation and bonding. Introduce tools of active listening, concept of social identity and multiplicity of group identities. Overview goals, expectations, hopes and fears. Brainstorm ground rules.	-Increased skills of active listening -Increased understanding of program goals -Increased knowledge of personal and social identity
Week Two – Identity Development	Internalized Oppression Pride	Examine ways group membership affects our lives. Focus on developing group pride. Introduce concepts of oppression, recordings. Emphasis-people born good.	-Increased understanding of internalized oppression -Increased group pride and social identity development
Week Three- Recordings	First Thoughts	Examine recordings learned about each other, and impact of recordings on target group. Emphasis on open and honest dialogue.	-Increased awareness of recordings about other groups -Increased awareness of impact of oppression on group interaction
Week Four-Impact of Oppression	Speak Outs	Hear personal stories of mistreatment; learn more of impact of oppression on targeted group.	- Increased awareness of impact of oppression on individuals and on group interaction
Week Five- Impact of Oppression/ Becoming Allies	Speak Outs Building Allies	Hear personal stories of mistreatment; learn more of impact of oppression on targeted group.	- Increased awareness of impact of oppression on individuals and on group interaction -Increased ability to build bridges
Week Six- Becoming Allies	Building Allies Goals & Commitments Appreciations	Focus on empowering participants, building resiliency, and affirming each other. Make commitments to one another.	-Increased commitment to change

Table II.

	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III	Stage IV
Social Identity Development (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997)	Naive- Agents and targets are unaware of social norms, operate from own needs and interests, and are naturally interested and curious about those different from them selves.	Acceptance- Agents internalized codes of appropriate behavior. Passive Acceptance: Generally unaware of having privileges. Targets internalized negative messages about own group, while also internalizing positive group messages received from family and peers.	Resistance- Agents gain awareness of existence of oppression and one's own group's role in oppressive society. Feelings of anger and guilt often accompany this stage. Targets question superiority of agents. Feelings of anger, pain, and hurt accompany this stage, and target's identity often defined in opposition from oppressor.	Redefinition- Agents redefine identity independent from oppressive. Developing pride in own group and culture. Targets shift attention toward members of own group similarly interested in questions of "who am I?" Often seen as separatists by agents while on quest for positive identity.
Readiness to Change (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Nocrass, 1992)	Precontemplation- No intention to change thinking or behavior, unaware of how living in an oppressive society impacts their life. Resistant to recognizing something other than internalized social norms.	Contemplation- Becoming aware of oppression in society and the impact of it on own life, thinking and experiences. Concerned about the issues, without having made a commitment to take action.	Preparation- Intention is set in motion; individuals intend to take action in recent future, and have taken some action within last period. This is the decision-making stage.	Action- At this stage individuals alter their thinking and behavior. They are following through on their decisions, and making significant effort to change.

Appendix I.

UM NCBI Affiliate: Collaborative Descriptive Account

NCBI has been leading prejudice reduction workshops on The University of Montana campus since fall 1998. What began as a two-person team is now a team of eight active trainers and many more supporters. Campus trainers have noticed the following about NCBI's work on campus: NCBI's primary aim has been to reach as many students as possible with the prejudice reduction workshop; consequently, the campus team has never turned down a request (no matter how large or small the group, or how little amount of time provided).

With the exception of several joint campus/community full day workshops a year, most of the campus workshops are 50 minutes. The team also leads a handful of 3-hour workshops. Again, with the exception of a small number of workshops, the campus NCBI affiliate does not pro-actively schedule open workshops; rather, it responds to calls from faculty and staff for training. Most workshop participants are students, and the workshop is part of class or extracurricular group. Thus, for most, attendance is mandatory.

Strengths of NCBI's work from the leaders' assessment and written participant evaluation seem to be: developing empathy and awareness, stimulating identity development, empowering individuals to take leadership, and providing opportunities for people to heal from painful effects of oppression.

Struggles in NCBI's work seem to be: Limited depth achieved in short workshops, varying degree of skill among trainers at engaging large, mandatory audiences, and lack of follow up.

Appendix II.

NCBI: Joint Interpretive Account

The strength of the UM NCBI campus Affiliate is having an enthusiastic core team of trainers committed to each other and the work, and maintaining the integrity of the well-crafted NCBI model. NCBI trainers make the relationships with one another a priority, and meet regularly to practice leading the model and assist each other in our own development. NCBI trainers are confident of our selves and in the work, and our hopefulness has proved contagious. With a solid program and team in place, the NCBI team is excited to look at the limitations of our current model so we can continue to build our work.

While NCBI leaders present workshops to groups ranging from sorority members, to UM coaches, to peer educators, the typical audience is a class of 20-60 students meeting during their class time. This requires reformatting the full day workshop into a workshop that can be presented in anywhere from 50 minutes to three hours. The shortened time frame limits the amount of theory that can be presented, the depth of dialogue, and the chance to practice skills. The size and type of group (e.g. mandatory v. self selecting) creates additional limitations, particularly in that people are not able to truly build relationships with participants different from themselves in an hour or two.

In addition, while NCBI believes that one-time diversity programs do not work, the affiliate has yet to develop a perfect method of following up with interested participants, and furthering the relationship building that is started in the workshop. As NCBI leaders rarely see the same group twice, it remains up to the participants to follow up with one another. Though encouraging intergroup interaction outside the workshop is

ultimately the goal of our efforts, the Affiliate would like to better empower students in this area.

In the current NCBI program, there is little room for discussion or reflection. The workshop is participatory and fast-paced, particularly when done in three hours or less. The lack of reflection seems to limit participants' ability to integrate the new ideas and experiences into their lives. The full lives of students are not conducive to reflection, and it sometimes seems like our work gets lost in the whirlwind of experiences on campus (particularly for freshman, as new students).

In sum, the campus NCBI trainings often succeed in generating student interest in issues of identity, diversity, and social justice. The next step for the team appears to be further guiding that interest and supporting student development by providing more long-term, in-depth opportunities for student growth.

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