ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: THE IMPACT OF A PEER MULTICULTURAL
DIALOGUE LEADER TRAINING PROGRAM ON
COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE
STUDENTS AND OVERALL LEARNING:
AN EVALUATIVE CASE STUDY

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This study was a formal case study evaluation of college students' learning

associated with participation in the Peer Multicultural Dialogue Leader training program

in the Common Ground Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland. Outcomes of

interest were the impact of the training program on cognitive development as defined by

Perry's (1968/1970) theory of intellectual development, understanding of multiple

perspectives, the nature of experiential learning, and the dialogue leaders'

characterizations of their overall learning.

The research questions were studied through an evaluative case study. The

primary unit of analysis was the Spring 2005 training program and the embedded units of

analyses were eight sophomore students in the training program. Explanatory,

descriptive, and exploratory case study methods were used (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003a)

that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Data were collected

from five sources: the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) (Knefelkamp, 1974; Widick, 1975), participant interviews, e-mail reflections, observations of training sessions, and a focus group with five program alumni. Techniques for data analysis included pattern matching (Yin, 2003b) and interpretive analysis (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

The results and findings from this study revealed that the training program was a developmentally powerful learning environment for the dialogue leaders. Participation in the program was found to promote and enhance cognitive development, encourage understanding of multiple perspectives, provide opportunities for experiential learning, and promote additional learning in the categories of knowledge acquisition, skill development, self-awareness, and integrated transferability. MID results indicated that six of the eight participants showed positive change in cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory during the training semester, with five of the six showing positive change of at least half a position.

Three themes emerged as especially significant. The findings suggest that (a) intentionally teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory to undergraduate students promotes cognitive development, (b) teaching concepts of "process" and "content" promotes cognitive development, and (c) requiring students to be "neutral facilitators" results in listening, self-reflection, and increased understanding of self and others.

Several implications of the findings are discussed. These include implications for theory, the dialogue program, and undergraduate multicultural teaching and education.

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by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A Renewed Emphasis on Student Learning in Higher Education

Throughout the past several years there has been a growing demand for societal institutions, especially educational and governmental institutions, to demonstrate and justify their effectiveness and efficiency in meeting the needs of the public. For higher education in the United States, one of the implications of this emerging mandate for increased accountability has been a national call for a renewed focus on undergraduate student learning in higher education (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Blimling, 1999; Kellogg Commission, 1997; "Spellings Report," 2006; Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence, 1984; Wingspread Group, 1993; Woodard, Love, & Komives, 2000). Colleges and universities have been called upon to develop priorities and initiatives that put student learning first in order to create a nation of learners who can successfully navigate the increasing complexities of a rapidly changing world (Wingspread Group, 1993). Barr and Tagg (1995) describe this as a need for a shift away from the "Instructional Paradigm" (p. 1) that had become dominant in higher education and toward a new "Learning Paradigm" (p. 2) that

> …opens up the truly inspiring goal that each graduating class learns more than the previous graduating class [and] envisions the institution itself as a learner – over time, it continuously learns how to produce more learning with each graduating class, each entering student. (p. 2)

In 1994, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA, now known as ACPA – College Student Educators International) responded to this call by gathering a distinguished group of student affairs scholars and practitioners to consider the implications for college and university educators. Their culminating report was the *Student Learning*

Imperative (SLI) (ACPA, 1994), which urged educators to "reexamine the philosophical tenets that guide the professional practice of student affairs…to help students attain high levels of learning and personal development" (ACPA, 1996, p. 118).

Throughout the remainder of the 1990s and into the new century, various associations and organizations within the higher education community in the United States published several additional reports about the importance of a renewed emphasis on undergraduate student learning. In 1997, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities released a report entitled *Returning to our Roots: The Student Experience* in which they emphasized the importance of institutions becoming "genuine learning communities" (Kellogg Commission, 1997, p. 2) that are "student centered" (p. 2) and stress the importance of "a healthy learning environment that provides students, faculty, and staff with the facilities, support, and resources they need to make this vision a reality" (p. 2). The following year, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), ACPA, and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) worked together to publish a joint report entitled *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (AAHE et al., 1998) in which they described a "vision of equipping all our students with learning deep enough to meet the challenges of the post-industrial age" (p. 1) that would "serve as a "powerful incentive to do our work better" (p. 1).

In 2002, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) also recognized the importance of emphasizing student learning. In a publication called *Greater Expectations*, they called for a "dramatic reorganization of undergraduate education to ensure that all college aspirants receive not just access to college, but an education of

lasting value" (p. 1). AAC&U also emphasized that undergraduate education should "promote the kind of learning students need to meet emerging challenges in the workplace, in a diverse democracy, and in an interconnected world" (p. 1). In 2004, NASPA and ACPA collaborated again to produce *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* (2004) in which they argued for "the integrated use of all of higher education's resources in the education and preparation of the whole student" (p. 1). They also advocated for "new ways of understanding and supporting learning and development as intertwined, inseparable elements of the student experience.…that places the student at the center of the learning experience" (p. 1).

More recently, in 2005, U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings formed the Commission on the Future of Higher Education for the purpose of recommending a national strategy for reforming higher education (Field, 2006). The commission's report, released in September of 2006, was highly critical of higher education and called for improvements in the areas of overall quality, accessibility, affordability, and especially accountability to various constituency groups ("Spellings Report," 2006).

Prompted in part by these calls for a renewed emphasis on student learning in higher education, many scholars have engaged in research dedicated to developing a greater understanding of student learning, including ways in which learning occurs and environments that promote learning. Specific areas of scholarly study have included variations in students' learning styles (Claxton & Murrell, 1987; Kolb, 1981), theories of typology, such as vocational and personality types and their relationship to learning (Holland, 1985; Myers & Myers, 1980), the connections between environments and learning (Lewin, as cited in Upcraft & Schuh, 1996; Love & Love, 1995; Pace & Stern, as

cited in Strange, 1996), and learning patterns and needs of students from a variety of different identity groups (e.g. Banks & McGee Banks, 2005; Evans & Wall, 1991; Fassinger, 1998; hooks, 1994; King, 1996; King & Baxter Magolda, 1996; Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994; Rhoads, 1994; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989; Schoem, 1993; Schoem, Frankel, Zuniga, & Lewis, 1993; Smith, 1989; Tatum, 1992; Thorne, 1989). There is also a well-established body of research in the higher education literature that has demonstrated that students achieve optimal learning when they are involved and engaged in the curricular and co-curricular activities of their institution (e.g. Astin, 1984, 1996; Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991).

Scholarly studies such as these, in combination with the calls from the field for a renewed emphasis on student learning, prompted the development and proliferation of many new innovative undergraduate initiatives designed to enhance opportunities for student learning. As such programs have grown, researchers have also conducted an increasing number of studies to assess their effectiveness, their impact, and the learning associated with students' participation. For example, there have been a growing number of studies on the impact of participation in living and learning programs on various outcomes for college students (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Inkelas et al., 2006; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006; Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Pike, 1999; Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997; Schroeder & Mable, 1994), and a new and emergent body of literature on learning associated with participation in undergraduate dialogue programs ("Experiments in Diverse Democracy," 2005; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001).

Increasing Student Diversity and Educational Implications

While colleges and universities in the United States have sharpened their focus on student learning, they have also been encouraged to reflect on how well their programs meet the needs of a student population and society that is becoming increasingly diverse along multiple and continuously emerging dimensions of identity (Bowen & Bok, 1998; El-Khawas, 2003; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999; KewalRamani et al., 2007; King, 1999; Woodard et al., 2000). This trend toward increasing diversity has not only had profound implications for the demographic composition of the student population, it has also changed the ways in which college and university educators think about such concepts as inclusion, representation, equity, accommodation, and limits.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 67% of the population of the United States in 2005 was White and 33% were members of racial minority groups. Of this 33%, Hispanics made up the largest group at 14%. African Americans were the next largest group at 12%, followed by Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders at 4% and American Indians/Alaska Natives at 1%. It is predicted, however, that the percentage of people from minority racial and ethnic groups in the United States will increase to 39% of the total population by the year 2020 (KewalRamani et al., 2007).

In colleges and universities in the United States, the total enrollment of students from racial minority groups increased by 50.7% between 1993 and 2003. In 2003, students of color made up 27.8% of the nearly 17 million students on college and university campuses, a figure that rose from 21.8% in 1993. The largest increase was in the enrollment of Hispanic students, which was up 68.8% over that ten-year period. During that same time, enrollment rates for Asian Americans rose by 43.5%, African Americans

by 42.7%, and American Indians by 38.7%. In 2003, this translated into 1.6 million Hispanic students, 1.9 million African American students, 987,000 Asian American students, and 117,000 American Indian students for a total minority enrollment of approximately 4.7 million students (American Council on Education, 2006).

While the increasing diversification of American society has had a profound impact on the educational system as a whole, it has had important and specific implications for higher education. To meet the needs of a changing and increasingly diverse student population, colleges and universities have engaged in a critical examination of issues of access and climate for students from a variety of different identities and backgrounds. These include not only differences in race and ethnicity, but also numerous other dimensions of identity such as gender, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, ability and disability, age, and citizenship (El-Khawas, 2003). For many campuses, these examinations have included intentional efforts to develop a deeper understanding of historical legacies of inclusion and exclusion in higher education for students from different identity groups.

The implementation of affirmative action policies designed to remedy the present effects of past discrimination with regard to race and ethnicity is one example of an outgrowth of this kind of examination (Orfield, 2001). Yet affirmative action policies have also prompted heated and divisive national debates about the fairness of using race as a factor in college and university admissions and scholarships. These debates were elevated by the controversy surrounding two high-profile court cases on affirmative action, *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), that were filed against the University of Michigan in 1997 and decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003. In

defending its use of race as a factor in admissions, the University of Michigan argued that a racially diverse student body creates a climate of optimal learning for all students (Gurin, 1999). Arguing on behalf of Michigan, Gurin said, "Students learn more and think in deeper, more complex ways in a diverse educational environment" (Summary and Conclusions, p. 1).

Prompted in part by the sense of urgency created by these and other high-profile court cases that challenged the use of race and ethnicity in admissions for the purpose of diversifying student populations, a new area of scholarship emerged in the higher education literature with the goal of documenting educational outcomes and benefits associated with racially diverse college and university learning environments (e.g. Antiono et al., 2004; Appel, Cartwright, Smith, & Wolf, 1996; Gurin, 1999; Hurtado et al., 1999). For example, researchers began to find that the presence of diverse peers in the learning environment is related to numerous positive outcomes for college students such as enhanced ability to engage in complex and critical thinking, improved ability to consider multiple perspectives, and improvements in intergroup relations and understanding (Hurtado et al., 1999).

Changing societal demographics have also raised questions about how to recruit and retain students from diverse identities and backgrounds. In particular, concerns about retention of students of color have prompted widespread reviews of college and university climates, academic offerings, student support services, and resources made available to students (Chan & Wang, 1991; Hernandez, 2000).

Together, these two major trends in higher education – a renewed emphasis on student learning and the increasing diversity of the student population – have also

prompted a new emphasis on understanding student learning associated with campus

multicultural programs, environments, and interventions (Baird, 2003). While diverse

learning environments and intentionally structured multicultural programs have been

associated with a variety of positive outcomes for college students, one of the areas in

which there has been growing interest is the relationship between multicultural

experiences and their impact on cognitive development. Several researchers such as

Adams (2004), Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997), Adams and Zhou-McGovern (1994),

Baird (2003), Kogler (2004), and Smith et al. (1997) have suggested a positive

relationship between multicultural learning experiences and increased development of

cognitive complexity. For example, King and Shuford (1996) describe a connection

between multicultural education and the development of reasoning and analytical skills,

which are related to increased cognitive complexity. Kogler also describes a relationship

between multicultural education and cognitive development. In his view,

> In order to provide the highest quality education for today's students, we need to understand especially the ways in which multicultural courses support cognitive, and not just moral or social, development in students. I suggest that the actual thought practices provoked and unleashed by multicultural teaching can be seen as instantiations of deeper cognitive mechanisms. (p. 2)

Moore (2004b) suggests that there are four fundamental goals of American higher

education: "critical thinking and analysis, ability to work with others and an appreciation

for diverse perspectives, connection-making and integration of learning, and involvement

in one's own learning process" (p. 1). In addition, he notes the importance of learning

that is *transformative*. In his view, this occurs through engagement that includes not only

exposure to content knowledge, but also to experiences and processes that encourage and

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stimulate cognitive transformations, or increasingly complex ways of thinking, that students will take with them into all aspects of their lives and experiences.

<p style="text-align:center">The Common Ground Dialogue Program</p>

One example of a multicultural program designed to promote complexity in thinking and exposure to multiple perspectives is the Common Ground Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland. The Common Ground program results from a collaboration between the Department of Resident Life and the CIVICUS Living and Learning Program, a two-year academic citation program dedicated to principles of civic engagement and civil society.

The Common Ground Dialogue Program is an analytical, task-oriented approach to dialogue that provides structured opportunities for diverse groups of 12 to 15 undergraduate students to engage in peer-led dialogues about serious issues that have important implications for twenty-first century American multicultural society. Key elements of the program include a three-credit class called Leadership in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301 that is taught each fall and required of sophomores in the CIVICUS program, and a three-credit Peer Dialogue Leader training program that is offered each spring for a select group of CIVICUS students who have successfully completed the class and show aptitude and interest in being trained as multicultural dialogue leaders.

The primary goals of the Common Ground program are to provide undergraduate students with opportunities to learn how to engage in dialogue in order to increase their ability and willingness to engage in the future with people who have views or perspectives that are different from their own, and to demonstrate the importance of working toward common ground through a consensual decision-making process that

highlights mutual understanding in the midst of potentially irreconcilable points of view. Additional goals of the program include providing students with a better understanding of the complexity of a current multicultural issue or dilemma, helping them to learn how to ask questions of each other in order to elicit greater personal and group understanding, helping them to develop a better capacity for viewing an issue through the eyes of another person, and encouraging them to test their own views and beliefs through exposure to multiple perspectives.

These goals are pursued through a four-session peer-led dialogue group that meets once a week for four consecutive weeks. In each session, the group considers different elements of a deliberative question designed to elicit complex and critical thinking about a current multicultural issue. The approach is task-oriented and analytical in that the group is encouraged to approach the dialogue through the framework of a different defined task each week. These tasks include (a) identifying multiple dimensions of the issue or controversy, (b) identifying options for action in response to the issue, (c) discussing actions the group can come to consensus on, and (d) discussing consequences of these actions, including intended and unintended consequences.

This four-session design is the original format for the program and is referred to as the "Common Ground" format. A newer format is a "one-session" design in which a topic or a current news event is selected and the dialogue group meets once to discuss the question, "What is the meaning of (this topic) to me?" While many of the goals of the one-session groups are similar to those for the four-session groups, the overriding purpose of the one-session format is to provide students with an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of an issue across differences of perspectives and identities.

One of the most distinctive features of the design of the four-session Common

Ground format is that it is an analytical and task-oriented approach to dialogue. This is

different from many of the other dialogue programs in colleges and universities around

the country. Most tend to offer "intergroup dialogues" that focus on history,

relationships, issues of conflict, and communication between students from two or more

specified identity groups for the purpose of engaging them in dialogue to improve

understanding between and among the groups (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001). In contrast,

the purpose of the Common Ground program is to bring individual students from diverse

identities together to discuss a specific multicultural issue or dilemma.

Another distinctive aspect of the Common Ground program is that all of the

dialogue groups are facilitated by trained undergraduate peer dialogue leaders. While a

few college and university dialogue programs also utilize undergraduate students as

dialogue leaders ("Program on Intergroup Relations," University of Illinois, 2007;

"Program on Intergroup Relations," University of Michigan, 2007) a review of the

literature revealed that most college and university dialogue programs utilize trained

graduate students, professional staff, or faculty members as leaders or co-leaders.

One of the theoretical frameworks used in the conceptualization and development

of the Common Ground program was William Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive

development. Perry describes nine ways of thinking, or "positions," that fall within four

primary categories. The aspects of the theory that are most relevant to the thinking of

traditional-aged college students are *dualism*, in which people demonstrate an absolute,

either/or view of the world, *multiplicity*, in which they begin to see multiple perspectives

but are generally unable to evaluate or prioritize them, and *contextual relativism*, in

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which the person demonstrates a new and complex acceptance of the uncertainty of knowledge and an understanding of multiple perceptions of truth. Perry's theory informed and inspired many design elements of the Common Ground program including components that promote and encourage critical thinking, consideration of the complexity of multicultural dilemmas, and exposure to multiple perspectives.

Given all of these characteristics, the Common Ground program is unique among college and university dialogue programs. The analytical and task-oriented approach, the bringing together of a diverse group of students to discuss a multicultural issue or dilemma, the intentional emphasis on demonstrating the possibilities for seeking common ground across potential irreconcilable elements, and the exclusive use of undergraduate peer dialogue leaders makes the program a unique case worthy of further study. A complete overview and description of the Common Ground Dialogue Program as the case for this study is presented in Chapter 3.

To fully disclose my role and perspective as researcher for this study, I have been involved in the development, co-teaching, co-training, and administration of the Common Ground program since it began in 2000, first as a doctoral student and currently as a full-time staff member in the Department of Resident Life at the University of Maryland. Although my prior experience with the program has been valuable in many ways to my role as researcher for this study (Yin, 2003b), these dual roles of program administrator and researcher also created several potential biases that presented threats to subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988). As these issues necessitate further consideration, the potential impact of these conflicting roles as well as strategies I developed and utilized for addressing them throughout the study are discussed in Chapter 4.

Statement of the Problem

Through my experience teaching the Leadership in a Multicultural Society class, training the Peer Dialogue Leaders, and listening to their accounts of leading their dialogue groups, I have spent a great deal of time engaging in reflection and discussion about how the Peer Dialogue Leaders are impacted by the experience. In particular, my colleagues and I have often speculated that some of the most important learning associated with the program for the dialogue leaders involves a new understanding of the multiple perspectives that exist on various multicultural issues and dilemmas and new insights into the complexities of human perceptions, interactions, and experiences. All are insights associated with enhanced cognitive development and complexity consistent with Perry's (1968/1970) theory.

We have also speculated that much of the dialogue leaders' learning occurs as a result of their training in which they are instructed to remain as neutral as possible when they are leading the dialogue groups and to not reveal to the group participants – at least not until the group is completed – their personal views or beliefs about the issue being discussed. Over the years I have come to wonder if this neutrality, which is a position they most likely would not have assumed in multicultural conversations before the training program, forces the dialogue leaders to listen to views and perspectives in ways that are different from how they might have listened before. For all of these reasons, one of the hypotheses I developed prior to this study is that the overall experience of participating in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has a positive impact on the cognitive development of the dialogue leaders.

While extensive data about the experiences of the student participants in the dialogue groups have been collected though participant evaluation forms, there has never been a formal study of the Peer Dialogue Leaders' learning from participation in the Common Ground program. Further, while much anecdotal information has been collected over the years about the Peer Dialogue Leaders' perceptions of their learning, the dialogue leaders have never been asked to formally reflect on how they would characterize their overall learning from the training program.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to engage in a formal case study evaluation of learning for the undergraduate students who participated in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program within the Common Ground Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland. There are three primary research questions for this study all relating to the learning and experiences of the undergraduate students who participated in the dialogue leader training program during Spring 2005:

1. What is the impact of the training program on (a) cognitive development and (b) understanding of multiple perspectives?

2. What is the nature of the experiential learning that occurs through participation in the training program?

3. How do the dialogue leaders characterize their learning from the training program?

Research Design

To study these questions I conducted an evaluative case study (Stufflebeam, 2001; Yin, 1992, 2003b) in which the primary unit of analysis was the Peer Dialogue Leader training program during Spring 2005 and the embedded units of analysis were eight undergraduate Peer Dialogue Leaders in the training program that semester who agreed to participate in the study. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were incorporated. Data were collected from multiple sources including two administrations of an instrument designed to assess cognitive development, participant interviews, observations of selected training sessions, and participant e-mail reflections. Multiple procedures for data collection and analysis were used. In addition, to enrich the data from the case study, a separate sub-study was conducted utilizing a focus group with five alumni from the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. All of these methods are detailed in Chapter 4.

Definition of Terms

Key terms and constructs used in this study are defined as follows:

The Peer Dialogue Leader training program is part of the Common Ground Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland. It occurs each spring semester. The purpose of the three-credit internship program is to train undergraduate students to lead multicultural dialogues with diverse groups of 12 to 15 undergraduates on various issues and dilemmas that have important implications for twenty-first century multicultural society in the United States.

Cognitive development in this study is defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development. It is also informed by several other cognitive development

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theories including Baxter Magolda's (1992) epistemological reflection model and King and Kitchener's (1994) reflective judgment model. In general terms, cognitive development is defined as changes in *how* people think and make meaning (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

Understanding of multiple perspectives is defined as an increased understanding of the complexity of different perspectives or points of view that exist on a given topic, including one's own and those that are different from one's own. It is also informed by the literature on cognitive development.

The "preparation phase" and the "leading phase" of the training program refer to the two distinct phases in the semester-long Peer Dialogue Leader training program. The initial phase, the *preparation phase*, starts at the end of January and continues for seven weeks until Spring Break. During the preparation phase, the dialogue leaders are oriented to the program and participate in training designed to prepare them to lead multicultural dialogue groups. Training topics during the preparation phase include introduction to the program and foundations; basic Peer Dialogue Leader skills including listening skills, recognizing hot buttons, and dealing with comfort zones; participant behaviors in dialogue groups; advanced dialogue leader skills; and role plays and simulations. In the *leading phase*, which begins immediately after Spring Break, the newly trained dialogue leaders (who are judged by the trainers to be ready) co-lead a four-session Common Ground group that runs for four consecutive weeks. Throughout the leading phase, the dialogue leaders also engage in weekly consultation and feedback sessions with the trainers.

After they have completed the training semester, many of the Peer Dialogue Leaders remain affiliated with the Common Ground program throughout their undergraduate careers and continue to co-lead dialogue groups as their schedules permit. All aspects of the program that occur beyond the initial training semester, however, are beyond the scope of this study.

Learning was defined in this study by the Peer Dialogue Leaders themselves as they responded to open-ended questions about how they would characterize the new thinking, insights, connections, and skills they acquired as a result of their participation in the dialogue leader training program.

Overview of the Literature and Theoretical Frameworks

There are multiple theoretical frameworks for this study. For the conceptualization of the research questions, I have drawn primarily from the literature on theories of college student development and specifically the literature on cognitive development of college students. In addition, I have drawn from the wide body of literature on educational outcomes associated with diverse learning environments (e.g. Astin, 1993a; Gurin, 1999; Hurtado et al., 1999; Smith et al., 1997) and the smaller body of literature on multicultural dialogue programs in colleges and universities in the United States and learning associated with these programs (e.g. Adams, 2004; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001). This literature is presented in Chapter 2.

The theoretical frameworks for the research design of this study are case study methodology and program evaluation models. For case study methodology, I have drawn primarily from Yin (2003a, 2003b) and Merriam (1998), and I have also been informed by Stake (1995). Merriam's work was important for providing overall guidance relating

to the application of case study methodology to educational research. Yin's work was especially influential in informing the research design of this study, which included both quantitative and qualitative methods. For program evaluation, I have drawn from Yin's model of case study as a tool for evaluation (1992, 1993), program theory-based evaluation models as discussed by Bickman (1990), Chen (1990), Greene (2000), Stufflebeam (2001), and Weiss (1972, 1998), and mixed-methods evaluation models as described by Stufflebeam (2001). A complete description of each of these frameworks is presented in Chapter 2.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

This study contributes to the research literature in several ways. First, because the Common Ground program is a unique dialogue program and therefore a unique case, an in-depth study of the experience of the undergraduate student dialogue leaders in the program adds to the literature on multicultural programs for undergraduate students and associated learning. Second, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the relationship between undergraduate multicultural learning experiences and cognitive development. Third, whereas there is some research in the literature on educational outcomes associated with participation in dialogue groups, there are very few if any studies in the literature on the impact of participation in dialogue programs on the dialogue leaders themselves. This study helps to fill that gap.

This study also has several important implications for practice in higher education. First, it has significant implications for the continued development and refinement of the Common Ground Dialogue Program. The findings from this study offer valuable feedback to the program administrators for further development and

improvement of the program. Second, this study provides useful guidance and insight to educators with existing dialogue programs on their campuses and for those wishing to develop new ones; the lessons learned from this study are informative to anyone seeking a better understanding of the possibilities associated with undergraduate student learning through participation in a dialogue program.

This study also has several implications for college teaching and pedagogy, staff training and development, and the broader arena of undergraduate multicultural education. For those who teach undergraduate students, it offers several ideas for incorporating developmentally appropriate pedagogical strategies in classrooms and programs that promote students' learning and cognitive complexity. For those involved in training and development, it offers the same ideas for enhancing learning and helping staff and students to more effectively navigate multicultural contexts. Finally, for the larger arena of undergraduate multicultural education, this study has several important implications for the broader ways in which multicultural programs are conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE, REVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS,

AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE STUDY

A review of the literature related to the research questions for this study is

presented in this chapter. It includes a review of the theories of cognitive development

for college students and methods of assessment, a review of student learning associated

with multicultural programs and environments, and a brief overview of current dialogue

programs in colleges and universities around the country. This chapter also includes a

broad discussion of case study methodology and program evaluation models. The

theoretical frameworks for the study that were introduced in Chapter 1 are restated in the

last section of this chapter.

Review of the Literature

Development, as defined broadly by Sanford (1967), is "the organization of

increasing complexity" (p. 47). College student development, as conceptualized by

Rodgers (as cited in Evans et al., 1998) is defined as "the ways that a student grows,

progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in

an institution of higher education" (p. 4). Rodgers also observed that student

development is "a philosophy that has guided student affairs practice and served as a

rationale for specific programs and services since the profession's inception" (Evans et

al., p. 4).

Student development theory is a collective term for the growing number of

theories and models of college student development that have guided and informed

practice in student affairs and higher education for several decades. These theories help

scholars and practitioners to understand and explain the experiences of college students, plan programs and services that effectively meet their needs, and facilitate their overall learning and development.

As practice in student affairs and higher education has evolved and new theories have emerged, several taxonomies have been developed to organize and categorize them. Knefelkamp, Widick, and Parker (1978) developed one of the early frameworks for categorizing the existing theories of student development by grouping them into five categories: (a) psychosocial theories, (b) cognitive developmental theories, (c) maturity models, (d) typology models, and (e) person-environment interaction models. Evans et al. (1998) considered new theories that had emerged, the current status of the literature, and contemporary application of student development theories and collapsed these five categories into four: (a) psychosocial theories, which describe the various developmental stages or tasks people confront over the course of their lives that change their "thinking, feeling, behaving, valuing, and relating to others and to oneself" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 2); (b) cognitive-structural theories, which describe changes in *how* people think and make meaning; (c) typology theories, which describe various patterns of differences between and among individuals in how they think, relate to others, and view the world; and (d) person-environment theories, which focus on the interactions between a person and his or her environment and the associated impacts and outcomes.

McEwen (2003) presented another way of conceptualizing the developmental theories in a model that represents "the relationships among the subsets of developmental theories and how developmental theories come together in developmental synthesis" (p. 155). The categories in this model are (a) psychosocial theories, which include

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theories of adult development and career development; (b) cognitive-structural theories; and (c) social identity development theories, which "address the ways in which individuals construct their various social identities" (p. 162) such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, ability/disability, and religion. The social identity development theories also address "the intersection of these multiple identities" (p. 162). The framework McEwen presents is an integrative model emphasizing synthesis of the various developmental theories and a holistic view of student development.

One of the ways educators and practitioners have sought to promote college student development has been to design and provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful dialogue with their peers, in both informal and formal settings ("Experiments in Diverse Democracy," 2005; "Model Intergroup Dialogue Programs," 2004; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001; Xuniga, 2004). As described later in this chapter, several of these dialogue programs with different structures and goals have evolved in institutions around the country.

Whereas dialogue programs can focus on many aspects of development and identity, the Common Ground Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland was intentionally designed as an analytical, task-oriented dialogue experience among a diverse group of peers. As described in Chapter 1, the primary goals of the program include providing students with an opportunity to learn how to engage in constructive dialogue, and demonstrating the importance of working toward common ground and mutual understanding in the midst of potentially irreconcilable points of view. In addition, it is hoped that the experience increases complexity in thinking by exposing students to multiple perspectives on important multicultural issues and by providing them

an opportunity to gain insight into views or positions that are different from their own. The cognitive aspects of the Common Ground program were drawn primarily from Perry's (1968/1970) theory of intellectual and ethical development of college students that describes a sequence of cognitive development in which students move from a dualistic, categorical view of the world to increased complexity of thinking and a more complex understanding of the nature of knowledge and learning.

The research questions for this study focus on the impact of the dialogue leader training experience on the Peer Dialogue Leaders' cognitive development and also on their own perceptions of their learning from the training program. Therefore, this review of the literature includes several sections related to these themes. These include an overview of the cognitive development theories, including a more extensive presentation of Perry's (1968/1970) theory, a discussion of various instruments that have been designed and used to assess cognitive development in college student populations, a discussion of the literature on student learning associated with multicultural learning experiences, and an overview of contemporary undergraduate dialogue programs in colleges and universities around the country.

Cognitive Development of College Students

Theories of cognitive development focus on how people think, reason, make decisions and connections, view knowledge, and create meaning. Whereas some cognitive development theories suggest predictable or sequential stages of development in which people move from simple ways of thinking to modes that are increasingly complex, others suggest ways of thinking that are not necessarily as sequential and may be related to various aspects of identity such as gender. The unifying characteristics

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across all of the theories of cognitive development, however, are the descriptions and patterns they describe about the ways in which people take in and process information and knowledge and apply it to the world.

Overview of Cognitive Development Theories

This section provides an overview of several of the best known and widely used theories in the literature on cognitive development of college students. They are Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1952), Perry's theory of intellectual and ethical development (1968/1970), Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's women's ways of knowing (1986), Baxter Magolda's epistemological reflection model (1992), King and Kitchener's reflective judgment model (1994), and Kegan's orders of consciousness (1982, 1994).

Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Most of the contemporary theories of cognitive development are grounded in the work of Piaget (1952; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) who was among the first to advance the idea that the human mind has cognitive structures, or schemata, that allow people to gradually acquire new knowledge and apply it to their environments and the world around them. Piaget suggested that as new knowledge is acquired and applied, cognitive structures change, expand, and become increasingly complex. In Piagetian terms, this acquisition of new information into existing cognitive structures is called *assimilation*, and the gradual modification of cognitive structures in order to allow for increased complexity is called *accommodation*. Piaget also suggested that this cognitive development occurs in predictable stages over the course of a person's lifetime. These are the *sensory-motor stage* (from birth to approximately 18 months), the *preoperational stage* (18 months until about six years

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old), the *concrete-operational stage* (age six to puberty), and the *formal-operational stage* (adolescence and adulthood).

 Perry's theory of intellectual and ethical development. Building on the work of Piaget (1952), William Perry (1968/1970, 1978, 1981) sought to develop a better understanding of human cognitive development specifically in the periods of adolescence and adulthood by conducting an in-depth study of cognitive development that occurs among students during the college years. The resulting theory of intellectual and ethical development, also known as the "Perry scheme," describes a pattern of increasing cognitive complexity that occurs primarily during the traditional-age college years from late adolescence to early adulthood. Because he was one of the first researchers to focus specifically on the intellectual development of college students, Perry's theory is considered one of the foundational theories of student development.

 Perry (1968/1970) derived his theory from a longitudinal study in which he conducted a series of open-ended interviews with over 400 undergraduate students primarily at Harvard in the late 1950s and into the 1960s. The interviews were almost completely unstructured; Perry and his research team began by asking the students "What stood out to you over the past year?" and then allowed each interview to unfold naturally depending on what the student wanted to talk about.

 Through extensive analysis of the interview data, Perry (1968/1970) discovered nine distinct "positions" of intellectual and ethical development that can be grouped into four primary categories: *dualism*, *multiplicity*, *contextual relativism*, and *commitment in relativism*. The theory suggests sequential development through the stages as the

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person's thinking, processing of information, view of knowledge, and approach toward commitments becomes increasingly complex.

The use of the term *position* is unique to the Perry's (1968/1970) theory and is defined in the glossary of the 1999 republication of his book, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*, as "that structure representing the mode, or central tendency, among the forms through which an individual construes the world of knowledge and values at a given time in his [or her] life" (p. 287). In other words, a person's "position" can be conceptualized as the primary point from which they "view the world" (Moore, 2004b, p. 2).

The first two positions in Perry's (1968/1970) theory, Positions 1 and 2, are in the category of *dualism*. These positions are characterized by absolute, either/or thinking. Students in dualism believe that all knowledge is either known or knowable and they believe that "authorities" (such as instructors, supervisors, or parents) should provide answers and "truths." Authorities who fail to provide what the student perceives to be truths or who provide contradicting possibilities or explanations can be frustrating to dualists, who might dismiss them as bad or uninformed (Moore, 2004b). In general, students in dualism are relatively free of conflict because they do not see nuances or shades of gray; they view knowledge is either true or false, right or wrong. Perry (1968/1999) referred to Position 1 as "the simplest set of assumptions about the nature of knowledge" (p. 66). In Position 2, the student begins to acknowledge the existence of diversity and complexity, but it is perceived as "alien" (p. 81) or unreal. Both positions are characterized by the absolute, dichotomous thinking described above.

The second category of the theory is *multiplicity* and includes Positions 3 and 4 (Perry, 1968/1970). Students in multiplicity begin to understand that multiple viewpoints exist, yet it is extremely difficult for them to evaluate the relative merits of these differing viewpoints. Therefore, they are apt to become confused, frustrated, or overwhelmed by the sheer number of options they see before them. In an attempt to resolve this confusion, they might rationalize that every opinion or perspective is just as good as any other. In addition, students in multiplicity accept that some knowledge is unknown but they view this state of unknowing as temporary until the "truth" can be found. In early multiplicity, this is manifested as "all knowledge is knowable." In later multiplicity, this may evolve to a "certainty that there is no certainty (except in a few specialized areas)" (Cornfeld & Knefelkamp, 1979, p. 1). Students in multiplicity still look to authorities for "truth," although they may credit authorities who do not provide clear answers as doing so intentionally in order to make them think. They may also become focused on trying to determine what authorities (such as teachers) want in order to be able to respond accordingly.

The fifth position in Perry's (1968/1970) theory, Position 5, represents the highest position of cognitive development. It is called *contextual relativis*m. This position involves new acceptance of the uncertainty of knowledge and recognition of multiple perceptions of truth. People in contextual relativism understand that all knowledge is contextual. They are able to assimilate new thinking, think contextually, prioritize, weigh evidence, and engage in systematic evaluation of various points of view. They tend to view authorities as resources and collaborators in the continual search for knowledge rather than experts, and they value the mutuality of learning between student and teacher.

They also have the capacity to engage in "meta-thought," or thinking about their own thinking (Moore, 1990; Perry, 1981).

As "contextual relativism" is such a critical concept in Perry's (1968/1970) theory, it is important to distinguish Perry's use of the term from other ways in which the term "relativism" has been defined, discussed, and debated in numerous fields such as philosophy, the philosophy of science, ethics, theology, and epistemology (Bagnall, 1991) and anthropology, history, linguistics, and the social sciences (Knorr-Cetina, 1982). According to Bagnall, this conceptualization of relativism may be defined as "the view that human knowledge is relative to – is an expression of – the individual constitution or the sociocultural context of those persons who identify with it" (p. 61). In other words, relativism from this perspective is the idea that human experience and perception is generally subjective and dependent on context, and it questions the existence of objective "truths." In this view, a relativistic understanding of knowing could be that because views, perspectives, and opinions are derived from personal experiences, all are equally valid (or invalid) and therefore none should be judged. When applied to education, this concept of relativism has provoked varied and often opposed reactions (Bagnall, 1991).

When considered through this philosophical lens, Perry's (1968/1970) use of the terms "multiplicity" (which refers to a cognitive approach in which the person generally acknowledges but equates multiple perspectives) and "contextual relativism" (which refers to a higher order ability to prioritize and contextualize knowledge and understanding) can be confusing. For the purposes of this study, I am using the term "contextual relativism" as Perry conceptualized it. Further, the addition of the word

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contextual implies higher order cognitive thinking that involves prioritizing, evaluating, and the consideration of evidence and contexts.

Knefelkamp (1999) addresses the confusion about the meaning of the term "relativism" in Perry's (1968/1970) theory in her introductory chapter to the republished edition of his book. She describes Perry as having been "vexed" (p. xix) by the persistent misunderstandings about the term that occurred throughout the years. According to Knefelkamp, he would say, "Relativism…means relative to *what – to something – it implies comparison, criteria, and judgment!*" (p. xix, emphasis in the original). She also emphasizes that to address the confusion, she and Perry were deliberate in later years about using the phrase *contextual relativism* as opposed to *relativism*. In her words,

> [This] would help make the point that contextual relativism, far from being anchorless, was in fact a position that required a great deal of cognitive complexity and intellectual moral courage to investigate and compare things and to make judgments about adequacy or inadequacy, appropriateness or inappropriateness. (p.xx)

The overall pattern of cognitive and ethical development described by the first five positions of Perry's (1968/1970) theory implies "significant qualitative changes in the learners themselves" (Moore, 2004b, p. 2). Moore offers an example of how one student characterized the transformative nature of this kind of development as a result of a class experience:

> The class transformed my attitudes of myself as a student. I no longer played the role of a recorder of my prof's knowledge. I had the ability to go out on my own and seek knowledge although many times I needed guidance from the prof…The professor encouraged us not only to learn the material but to think it over and integrate it into our lives. (p. 2)

The first five positions of Perry's (1968/1970) theory describe increasingly complex cognitive approaches, with Position 5 representing the highest position of

cognitive development. This is the "intellectual" component of Perry's theory. The last four positions of the theory, Positions 6 through 9, represent the "ethical" component of the theory. Collectively, these positions are called *commitment in relativism*. Individually, they are *commitment foreseen* (Position 6), *initial commitment* (Position 7), *orientation in implication of commitments* (Position 8), and *developing commitment(s)* (Position 9). According to Knefelkamp (1999), these "post-contextual positions" are "more likely to be reflected in value questions and decision dilemmas than in a particular approach to learning" (p. xx). Development in these later positions of the theory involves continually working through the processes and challenges associated with acceptance and internalization of points of view that an individual has developed. It also involves making commitments to various aspects of one's identity and the paths that one's life will take, including career, partner, and lifestyle, and developing "synthesizing solutions" (Moore, 2004b, p. 8) to the consequences of these commitments. This is not to say that a person does not wrestle with ethical considerations until he or she enters Position 6. Rather, the earlier positions in Perry's theory (Positions 1 through 5) refer to cognitive development and the ways in which a person approaches learning and knowing, whereas the later positions (6 through 9) relate to ethical development in the sense of making meaning, grappling with value questions, making decisions and commitments, and understanding the implications of those commitments.

There has been great deal of research over the years focused on establishing the movement of typical undergraduate college students through Perry's (1968/1970) theory during the college years, especially through Positions 1 through 5 relating to dualism, multiplicity, and contextual relativism (Moore, 2004b). While Perry found in his original

research that many of the traditional-aged students in his study, meaning those who were generally between the ages of 18 to 22, had already reached Position 5, contemporary research indicates that students generally enter college at Positions 2 or 3 (in late dualism or early multiplicity) and leave college somewhere between Positions 3 to 5 (multiplicity to contextual relativism) (Love & Guthrie, 1999).

According to Moore (2004b), contemporary research also suggests that few traditional-aged undergraduate students reach Positions 6 through 9, the upper positions of the model. Therefore, little research has been done on these positions and much less is known about them because the only way to study them is through qualitative interviewing.

As one of the specific outcomes of interest in this study is cognitive development, the first five positions of Perry's theory are the sole positions of interest. Therefore, I focus exclusively on cognitive development in Positions 1 through 5 in the categories of dualism, multiplicity, and contextual relativism.

In her introductory chapter to the reprinting of Perry's (1968/1970) book, Knefelkamp (1999) discusses that there has been much confusion over the years about the labels for the Perry positions. She suggests that some of this confusion resulted from a chart published in the original edition 1970 of the book in which Positions 1 through 5 were labeled as *basic duality* (Position 1), *multiplicity pre-legitimate* (Position 2), *multiplicity subordinate* (Position 3), *multiplicity correlate* or *relativism subordinate* (Positions 4a & 4b), and *relativism correlate, competing, or diffuse* (Position 5). In acknowledging the confusion these terms created, Knefelkamp offered alternative terms for each of these positions.

For the purposes of this study, I have used Knefelkamp's (1999) description of the first five Perry (1968/1970) positions as a guideline, but have modified them slightly. Knefelkamp refers to Positions 1 and 2 together as "strict dualism." I am labeling Position 1 as "basic duality," a term from the original Perry book, and Position 2 as "dualism" in order to differentiate the two. For Positions 3, 4, and 5 in this study, I am adopting Knefelkamp's terms directly.

Figure 1 provides a depiction of the terms I am using in this study to describe Positions 1 through 5 of Perry's (1968/1970) theory.

Figure 1. Terms Used in this Study for Perry Positions 1 – 5

_____

1	2	3	4 (a & b)	5
Basic Duality	Dualism	Early Multiplicity	Late Multiplicity	Contextual Relativism

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It is also important to note that I am not differentiating between Positions 4(a) and 4(b) as Perry (1968/1970) did in his original work. Given the research goals, design, and purpose of this study, that degree of differentiation is not necessary. Therefore, any discussion of Position 4 in this study will be referred to as "late multiplicity."

Since its publication, the Perry scheme (1968/1970) has become one of the most influential and best-known theories in the literature on college student development. However, critical questions have also been raised about its usefulness and applicability to a diverse student population because of the narrow and homogenous sample from which it was derived. Although Perry interviewed men from Harvard and women from

Radcliffe for his study, he developed and validated his theory almost exclusively from the interviews with the Harvard men who were predominately White, traditional aged, and mostly from upper class backgrounds. Even though he later incorporated the interviews with the women into the theoretical framework he had established, persistent questions have remained about whether or not the theory accurately describes and accommodates the cognitive development of diverse groups of students including women, people of color, and students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, or whether it forces them into a framework that does not fit. However, in responding to this critique, Knefelkamp (1999) strongly encourages contemporary scholars and practitioners to consider the growing body of research on "tens of thousands of students at all types of American colleges and universities" (p. xv) that has shown that the model is useful and applicable to students from a wide range of diverse identity groups. According to Knefelkamp, "Its efficacy remains strong, and there continue to be studies that extend the range of students for whom the general characteristics of intellectual development are accurate and valid" (p. xvi).

Knefelkamp (1999) also speculates that Perry's contribution through his work on the concept of *positions* anticipated the later rise of constructivist models and standpoint theory which incorporate the concept of "positionality," or "one's stance with respect to knowing, making meaning, and making commitments" (p. xii). These later theories have been intentionally inclusive of experiences and perspectives of groups that that have been historically overlooked in educational institutions such as women, people of color, and people from different socio-economic backgrounds.

As mentioned previously, Perry's (1968/1970) theory has been the subject of a wide body of scholarly research spanning more than three decades. There have been so many studies that a comprehensive review of them is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a discussion of a few illustrates the diversity and breadth of this body of research.

Stevenson and Hunt (1977) developed a first-year college course using principles of Perry's (1968/1970) theory and found that students in the course showed greater positive movement in cognitive development than a control sample. Taylor (1990) explored the question of whether students' tolerance for diversity was related to intellectual development and found significant differences in scores on an instrument designed to assess positions on the Perry scale between seniors and first-year students, and also between juniors and first-year students. Another very important component of Taylor's study was that her sample was large enough to conduct a statistical analysis of the scores of Black and White students. As a result of this analysis, she found no differences between the groups, which provides important evidence that the Perry scheme has validity for Black as well as for White student populations. Pavelich and Moore (1996) studied a cross-sectional sample of first-year, sophomore, and senior students in engineering classes at the Colorado School of the Mines and found evidence that the students' cognitive levels increased one Perry position over the course of their four years as undergraduates. As a final example, Marra, Palmer, and Litzinger (2000) conducted a cross-sectional, longitudinal study of project-learning courses at Penn State University and found that intellectual development along the Perry scheme was positively related to

participation in an intentionally designed course that incorporated team-based project learning and problem solving experiences.

Perry's (1968/1970) theory has also provided a foundation for numerous adaptations to models and programs with various applications for practice in higher education. For example, Knefelkamp (1981) drew from Perry's theory as well as Sanford's (1966) concepts of challenge and support to develop a model of instructional design called Developmental Instruction, which "assumes the need to deliberately design environments that are facilitative to students and to their intellectual growth" (Knefelkamp, 1981, p. 30). In addition, Knefelkamp and Slepitza (1976) adapted the Perry scheme to design a cognitive-based model of career development that describes various levels of thinking about career options, career counseling, and career decision-making. Stonewater, Stonewater, and Allen (1983) explored the use of developmental theory and particularly Perry's theory in planning and conducting a parents' orientation session.

Several colleges and universities have also used Perry's (1968/1970) theory to develop and assess programs that create and encourage "collaborative learning environments" (Moore, 2004b, p. 1). According to the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, an organization that has conducted extensive research on the use of Perry's theory in higher education settings, "collaborative learning" is defined as "an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students or students and teachers together; usually groups of two or more students mutually search for understanding, meaning, or solutions or create a product" ("Assessment Handbook," 2004, p. 1). For example, The Evergreen

State College and several community colleges in the state of Washington have developed learning communities based on principles of Perry's theory. According to Moore (2004b), research initiatives at Evergreen have included a large-scale, longitudinal study of the cognitive development of 165 students involved in learning communities in which researchers found favorable gains in cognitive development according to the Perry scheme by the end of the students' first year in college and also at the conclusion of their senior year. For almost a quarter of the sample, the gains observed were larger than would typically be expected among college students of the same academic years.

Several other institutions have created collaborative learning programs, initiatives, and environments for students using principles of Perry's (1968/1970) theory, and many have conducted assessments on their impact and effectiveness. Examples include Fairhaven College, where significant gains in development according to Perry's theory were found using "student self-evaluations" (Moore, 2004b, p. 5) from a sample of 200 students taken from the beginning, middle, and end of their college experience; Daytona Beach Community College, where researchers used an essay prompt to assess an interdisciplinary learning community and found significant gains in cognitive development among the students in their program; the University of New England, where researchers used a Perry instrument to assess a biology learning community and found a trend toward improvement in cognitive development in the third year of the program; and California State, Dominguez Hills, in which a large, federally funded study of students involved in cooperative learning experiences was conducted (Moore, 2004b). Alverno College has also received numerous awards and national recognition for its innovative approach to student learning called "student assessment-as-learning" that involves

course-based, faculty, and student self-assessments on various criteria that are consistent with development according to Perry's theory ("About Alverno," 2004).

Women's ways of knowing. Drawing upon the work of Perry (1968/1970) and Carol Gilligan (1982), who was among the first to suggest that women's voices had not been adequately studied and included in existing human development theories, Belenky et al. (1986) developed a theory of cognitive development called "women's ways of knowing" that focuses on the primary ways in which women tend to think and make meaning. In paying tribute to Perry's work before them, Belenky et al. wrote that his work was very important to them because it "stimulated our interest in modes of knowing and provided us with our first images of the paths women might take as they develop an understanding of their intellectual potential" (p. 10). However, because they knew that a potential limitation of Perry's theory was that it had been developed primarily from interviews with Harvard men, Belenky et al. sought to focus specifically "on what else women might have to say about the development of their minds and on alternate routes that are sketchy or missing in Perry's version" (p. 9).

For their study, Belenky at al. (1986) conducted in-depth interviews with 135 women and were intentional about including women of "diverse ages, circumstances, and outlooks" (p. 13). Ninety of the women in the study were college students enrolled in a variety of different kinds of academic institutions and 45 were from family agencies that provide parenting assistance. They began each interview with the question, "Looking back, what stands out for you over the past few years?" (p. 11) and gradually continued on to questions involving "self-image, relationships of importance, education and learning, real life decision-making and moral dilemmas, accounts of personal changes

and growth, perceived catalysts for change and impediments to growth, and visions of the future" (p. 11).

Through these interviews, Belenky et al. (1986) found that many women have different ways of "knowing" than men. However, the authors are also clear to emphasize that these different ways of knowing do not necessarily apply solely to women; rather, they suggest that their theory depicts a gendered style of cognitive and intellectual processing that tends to apply to women but can also include men.

"Women's ways of knowing," includes five primary "perspectives" (rather than "stages") that characterize the cognitive development of women. The first is *silence*, in which the person experiences self as mindless, voiceless, disconnected, and obedient. The second is *received knowledge*, in which the person has an ability to listen to the voices of others and a capability of receiving and reproducing knowledge, but does not have an ability to create it. The third is *subjective knowledge*, which is characterized by the finding of an inner voice and an ability to see truth and knowledge as coming from within. The fourth, *procedural knowledg*e, is also called "the voice of reason" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 87) and involves an ability to be objective and to take different perspectives, and the desire to seek out new ways to learn and communicate knowledge.

Within procedural knowledge, Belenky et al. found that two distinct styles or preferences. These are called *separate knowing*, which emphasizes questioning, doubting, and critical thinking, and *connected knowing*, which emphasizes empathy and knowledge that is derived from sharing personal experiences with others.

The fifth way of knowing in the theory is *constructed knowledge*. This final perspective involves a contextual view of knowledge, an ability see oneself as a creator

of knowledge, and the capacity to integrate both subjective and objective strategies of knowing.

According to Belenky et al. (1986), traditional-aged college students, especially those who are high achieving, are most likely to fall into one of the two categories of procedural knowledge; they tend to be either connected knowers or separate knowers. As students, connected knowers are likely to enjoy and gain most from classroom discussions and interpersonal interactions, whereas separate knowers are more likely to appreciate logical analysis. One example of how this theory can be applied to practice is creating intentional learning experiences that provide challenge and support (Sanford, 1966) for both types of knowers. Overall, however, Belenky et al. emphasize the importance of modeling connected knowing in order to best reach women students.

A decade after *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986) was published, the four authors collaborated again to develop a follow-up book entitled *Knowledge, Difference, and Power* (Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996) for the purposes of reflecting on how their theory had been used, criticized, and discussed over the past decade and to bring it up to date with new data and thinking. In this second volume they noted the wide range of disciplines in which the theory had been used since it was first published. They addressed confusion about whether or not they intended to convey that the "ways of knowing" were unique to women and did not apply to men (they did not), and also responded to criticism that the theory may not have adequately included the voices and experiences of women of color. In addition, they addressed persistent confusion about whether or not the five "ways" represent stages of development and if some of the stages or perspectives are to be viewed as "superior" (p. 13) to others. In responding to this last

issue they said, "the debate continues on the definition and superiority of constructed knowing," and "its value and ideality depend on who is doing the valuing and setting the definitional standards – and to what end" (p. 13).

Baxter Magolda's epistemological reflection model. Baxter Magolda (1992) was informed by the work of Perry (1968/1970) and Belenky et al. (1986). Through her work on her doctoral dissertation on cognitive development, she became especially interested in gender-related patterns of cognitive development and whether or not Perry's theory provides an adequate and complete framework for assessing the cognitive development of women. Specifically, she began to realize that some of the voices in the study for her dissertation, particularly those of several of the women, didn't seem to fit.

As Perry's (1968/1970) theory had been derived from interviews with men, and as Belenky et al. (1986) had conducted the interviews for their study only with women, Baxter Magolda (1992) sought to bridge this apparent gap in the research literature by developing a study with the goal of constructing a model of epistemological development through interviews with both men and women. This led to a longitudinal study in which she interviewed 101 college students (50 men and 51 women) at Miami University in Ohio over a period of five years in the late 1980s. The theory she developed from the data that emerged from the study was the epistemological reflection model.

The epistemological reflection model focuses on cognitive development primarily in the context of the college classroom. It includes four stages of development in which students' perspectives about the role of learner, role of peers, role of instructor, evaluation (testing or assessment in class), and the nature of knowledge are described.

Baxter Magolda (1992) did find gender-related differences in the first three of the four stages of the model (1990, 1992). Although both men and women fit in all of the stages, two distinct patterns emerged in the first three stages of the model, one that applies primarily to the cognitive style of women and the other that applies primarily to the cognitive style of men.

The first stage of the epistemological reflection model, *absolute knowing*, is similar to Perry's (1968/1970) dualism in that students in this stage perceive knowledge as existing in an absolute form, authorities as having all the answers, and tests and evaluations in class as providing an opportunity to reproduce for the instructor the knowledge the student has acquired in order to verify its accuracy.

The two patterns found within absolute knowing are (a) *the receiving pattern*, and (b) *the mastery pattern*. *The receiving pattern* is a more private approach to the acquisition of knowledge. In this pattern, students believe that listening and recording are their primary roles in class, they do not expect to interact with the instructor, they view peers as a support network, and they prefer tests that offer them the best opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. They also view differing opinions on an issue as a dispute over the facts rather than legitimate multiple perspectives and prefer to resolve such disputes privately rather than consult an authority. In terms of gender differences, Baxter Magolda found that women use the receiving pattern more often than men.

In contrast, students in the second pattern within absolute knowing, *the mastery pattern*, value a more public approach to the acquisition of knowledge. They tend to participate in discussions in order to demonstrate their knowledge, expect interchanges with teachers, view peers as partners for debate and quizzing each other, and value tests

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and feedback from the instructor that will help them improve. They are also more likely to appeal to authorities when there is a dispute about knowledge. Of the two patterns of absolute knowing, Baxter Magolda found that men use the mastery pattern more often than women.

The second stage of the epistemological reflection model is *transitional knowing*. This stage is similar to Perry's (1968/1970) *multiplicity* in that students have begun to realize that some knowledge is uncertain and that authorities do not have all the answers. Students in this stage expect instructors to do more than simply provide information and they are most satisfied when they feel that the instructor has helped them to understand and apply knowledge. They also prefer tests and evaluation processes that allow them to demonstrate their understanding of the material as opposed to simply demonstrating their acquisition of information.

The two patterns within *transitional knowing* are (a) *interpersonal knowing*, and (b) *impersonal knowing*. *Interpersonal knowing* is used more often by women and is characterized by involvement in learning through intentionally seeking out others' ideas in order to gain exposure to new thoughts and perspectives. This pattern is characterized by enjoyment from intellectual interactions with peers, a desire to develop a rapport with instructors, and a preference for evaluations that take individual differences into account. The second pattern, *impersonal knowing*, is used more often by men. Students in this pattern enjoy being forced to think, welcome debates with peers and instructors, expect to be challenged, value evaluation that is fair and practical, and resolve uncertainty through the use of logic and research.

The third stage of the epistemological reflection model is *independent knowing*. In this stage, students have come to believe that knowledge is mostly uncertain. They feel that differences in the opinions of various authorities represent the wide range of views possible on any given issue and begin to see themselves as equal to authorities and as having equally valid opinions. They value instructors who promote independent thinking and the exchange of ideas, view peers as a legitimate source of knowledge, and stress the importance of open-mindedness.

The two patterns within independent knowing are (a) *interindividual knowing*, and (b) *individual knowing*. The first pattern, *interindividual knowing*, is used more often by women and is characterized by a dual focus on thinking for oneself as well as considering the views of others, a preference for sharing views with peers, an expectation that instructors create opportunities for students to share their ideas, and a view of evaluation as a collaborative process between the student and the instructor. The second pattern, *individual knowing*, is used more often by men and is characterized by a preference for individual thinking and a general expectation that others should think independently as well.

The fourth stage of the epistemological reflection model is *contextual knowing*, which is characterized by an ability to view knowledge as contextual, an ability to make judgments based on evidence, and the capacity to integrate and apply knowledge in context. According to Baxter Magolda (1992), this stage reflects the convergence of the gender-related patterns evident in the first three stages of the model and therefore does not separate out into two distinct gender patterns.

As for students' progression through the model during the college years, Baxter Magolda (1992) found that most first-year students demonstrate the first stage, absolute knowing (68%), and the remainder (32%) are in the second stage of transitional knowing. Sophomores are nearly evenly split between absolute knowing (46%) and transitional knowing (53%) with only a very small percentage (1%) demonstrating the third stage of independent knowing. Juniors overwhelmingly demonstrate transitional knowing, the second stage (83%), while some are still absolute knowers (11%) and a few have achieved the third stage of independent knowing (5%) and the fourth stage of contextual knowing (1%). By the senior year, most students remain at the second stage, in transitional knowing (80%), although a few (2%) still fall in the absolute knowing category, 16% are in independent knowing, and 2% demonstrate the fourth stage of contextual knowing. Although contextual knowing is rarely evident among traditional-aged college students, Baxter Magolda did find that 12% of the participants in her study had become contextual knowers when they were surveyed in the year following their graduation.

While Baxter Magolda's (1992) study was rigorous and comprehensive, one of the potential limitations of this study is its applicability to diverse student populations, especially students of color and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (McEwen, 1994). Of the 101 students interviewed for the study, all but three were White. Further, the site of the study, Miami University, is known as a fairly elite and expensive public institution that tends to attract students from more privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. Baxter Magolda acknowledged this potential limitation and cautioned against "the transfer of insights for one set of students to another" (p. 190). Instead, she

suggested that her findings create "working hypotheses" (p. 191) that can inform researchers who wish to apply them and the epistemological reflection model to different populations, settings, and institutions.

In the mid-1990s, Baxter Magolda (1999) extended her work on the epistemological reflection model by conducting a follow-up study in which she spent a semester observing college classes in zoology, math, and education at Miami University of Ohio and conducting interviews with both students and faculty from the classes. Out of this more recent study, she developed practices that educators can use to accommodate students' various ways of knowing and ultimately to enhance their learning and help them develop "self-authorship" (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 1999) through "constructive-developmental pedagogy" (1999, p. 7). Examples of these practices include validating students as knowers, employing methods that encourage the mutual construction of knowledge, situating learning in students' experiences, and using narrative processes and storytelling.

King and Kitchener's reflective judgment model. King and Kitchener (1994) were influenced by several scholars who studied and considered the evolution of human thinking and reasoning including Dewey (1933), Piaget (1952), and Perry (1968/1970). One of King and Kitchener's specific interests was in reflexive thinking, a concept from Dewey referring to an aspect of critical thinking that focuses on how people solve "ill-structured" or complex problems (King & Kitchener, 1994, p.11). To study this, they interviewed more than 1700 people ranging from 14-year old high school students to people over the age of 65 and explored the central question, "How do people decide what they believe about vexing problems?" (p. 2).

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The resulting theory was the reflective judgment model (RJM), a stage model of cognitive development consisting of seven stages describing how people approach thinking about complex issues and dilemmas. To simplify the presentation of the model, King and Kitchener (1994) grouped the seven stages into three general levels: (a) the *pre-reflective level*, which includes stages 1, 2, and 3; (b) the *quasi-reflective level*, which includes stages 4 and 5; and (c) the *reflective level*, which includes stages 6 and 7.

At the *pre-reflective* level, individuals do not necessarily find complex problems to be vexing or perplexing because they view knowledge as certain. Therefore, they believe a correct answer exists for any problem and the way to solve a complex problem is to find the "correct" solution. Within the pre-reflective level, Stage 1 thinking is the "epitome of cognitive simplicity" (King & Kitchener, 1994, p. 50) in which knowledge is viewed as absolute and believed to be true only if the person has had the opportunity to see it or experience it directly. King and Kitchener say that this type of thinking is "probably only typical among young children who are unable to articulate responses to the issues posed" (p. 51). In reality, adults do not demonstrate Stage 1 reasoning and it exists in the model as an abstract concept to provide a theoretical foundation for the other stages.

In Stage 2 of the pre-reflective level, knowledge is believed to be certain but the individual acknowledges that it may not always be accessible or known by everyone. Stage 2 is very similar to Perry's (1968/1970) dualism in that authorities are viewed as all-knowing and alternative views are seen as wrong. In Stage 3, knowledge is still seen as certain, although the person begins to acknowledge that there may be some areas in which truth is still unknown. The person also begins to believe that some personal beliefs

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are legitimate although they value evidence for those beliefs and often demand that it be provided.

At the second level of the reflective judgment model, the *quasi-reflective level*, individuals begin to recognize the uncertainty of knowledge (King & Kitchener, 1994). They are able to see some situations as complex and difficult to solve and begin to argue that some problems may not be solvable at all because it is too difficult to evaluate the various proposed solutions. Opinions are seen as equal because it is difficult to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. The two stages within the quasi-reflective level are Stage 4, in which knowledge becomes uncertain, and Stage 5, in which the person begins to develop an awareness of the existence of multiple perspectives based on different kinds of evidence and begins to view knowledge as contextual and subjective.

At the third and final level of the reflective judgment model, the *reflective level*, individuals acknowledge the uncertainty of some knowledge but are able to make judgments about what they perceive to be the "best" solutions to complex problems based on informed consideration and interpretation of evidence and opinions (King & Kitchener, 1994). Stage 6 represents the beginning of reflective thinking. Stage 7, the most complex stage, is characterized by a mature ability to interpret, synthesize, and organize evidence and provide cohesive rationales for potential solutions to multifaceted problems.

King and Kitchener (1994) describe numerous studies that have been conducted with the reflective judgment model, including longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. They also offer several applications to educational practice. These include familiarizing educators with the basic stages of development, incorporating the study of complex

problems as critical and essential aspects of undergraduate education, creating multiple opportunities for students to consider various points of view on any given issue or problem, and being intentional about providing both challenge and support (Sanford, 1966) to students in various levels of development. Critiques of the reflective judgment model have included the need for further research on gender differences, and also the need for further research on the relationships between reflexive judgment, race and ethnicity, and other aspects of diverse identities (Evans et al., 1998).

Kegan's orders of consciousness. Kegan (1982, 1994) describes the evolution of consciousness and the making of meaning over the human life span through consideration of both cognitive and affective components. Kegan considered himself to be a neo-Piagetian, which is consistent with his interest in providing a model that spans birth through old age and also why his theory is usually categorized with the theories of cognitive development (Evans, 2003; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

Kegan first introduced his theory in 1982 and expanded it in 1994 to focus on the mental demands associated with the "curriculum of modern life" (1994, p. 5). The theory includes five "orders of consciousness" which are "principles of mental organization that affect thinking, feeling, and relating to self and others" (Love & Guthrie, 1999, p. 67). Although the orders are not meant to be considered as a strict hierarchy, they do progress from a simpler way of thinking to a more complex mode of consciousness and making of meaning.

The *first order of consciousness* in Kegan's (1994) theory involves thinking that is concrete and self-absorbed. This is the way of thinking that is characteristic of young children. The *second order* is characterized by a beginning ability to relate concrete

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concepts. The *third order* involves a beginning ability to engage in abstract thinking and

self-reflection and to focus on relationships. The *fourth order* is characterized by an

ability to relate abstract concepts. The *fifth order*, which Kegan considered to be rare,

emphasizes an ability to engage in systems thinking in which the person is able to

synthesize ideas of both self and others.

Although Kegan's (1994) theory does not apply as readily to college students as

most of the other cognitive development theories discussed in this chapter because of its

broad focus across the human life span, his work does provide important concepts that

hold promise for useful applications to educational practice in a higher education setting.

These include the concepts of coaching, developing an understanding of environments,

and bridge building (Love & Guthrie, 1999) which means "educators and peers as both

playing an important role in providing a bridge for students between old and new ways of

making meaning of their worlds" (Evans, 2003, p. 189). Kegan (1994) is also credited

with the term *self-authorship*, which he defines as "an internal identity…that can

coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations,

ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states" (p. 185). In self-

authorship, these elements become a part of a new whole that "achieves a personal

authority" (p. 185). Baxter Magolda (1999) extended Kegan's idea of self-authorship and

placed it at the center of a book about developing constructive-developmental learning

environments for college students.

Significance of cognitive development theories. All of these theories provide

useful guidance for understanding factors that promote college students' cognitive

development. They can be important tools for helping educators describe and predict

changes over time, and they can enhance understanding of how people think, learn, incorporate new information, and make meaning of the world around them. Whereas some are stage models and others emphasize cognitive differences related to identity, all provide educators with valuable guidance for creating intentional learning environments that enhance critical thinking skills, promote self-reflection, and encourage students to try out new and different views that can promote, stimulate, and enhance the overall complexity and quality of their thinking.

Methods of Assessing Cognitive Development

Several instruments, measures, and techniques have been developed to assess cognitive development as defined by many of the cognitive development theories presented in this chapter. The available measures incorporate a wide range of methods and techniques including open-ended interviews, semi-structured interviews, written essays that focus on decision-making and problem-solving processes, and objective instruments that utilize techniques such as sentence-completion. An overview of several of these instruments is provided in this section.

The Measure of Intellectual Development (MID). The Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) (Knefelkamp, 1974; Widick 1975) was one of the first instruments designed to assess cognitive development according to Perry (1968/1970) positions and remains one of the most frequently used measures. The MID is a qualitative paper and pencil instrument that utilizes open-ended essay prompts to assess development along the first five positions of Perry's theory (Mines, 1982; Moore, 2004b). It yields numerical scores, thereby making it appropriate for quantitative research purposes and also for giving feedback to educators about students' cognitive growth in their classrooms or in

other educational settings (Mines, 1982). It is particularly useful for studies in which the researchers wish to conduct pre- and post- evaluations of change in cognitive development over time or as a result of a specific intervention or program. The MID is maintained and administered by the Center for the Study of Intellectual Development (CSID), an organization dedicated to research on Perry's theory.

Several reliability studies have been conducted on the MID (Mines, 1982). Correlations ranging from .73 to 1.00 have been reported for agreement on the dominant positions in the Perry (1968/1970) scheme (Evans et al., 1998). With regard to validity, the MID has been shown to detect developmental changes over time and has also been shown to have fairly good correlation with other instruments measuring similar constructs ("Student-Affairs Related Outcomes Instruments," 2004). Complete versions of the four essay prompts available for the MID through CSID are in Appendix A.

In addition to the MID essay prompts, CSID has also developed structured interview formats designed to assess cognitive development according to Perry's (1968/1970) theory for those wishing to conduct qualitative interviews ("Structured Perry Interview Format," 2002). The Center provides a standard interview format as well as a suggested alternative interview protocol. These interview formats are in Appendix B.

The Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER). There have been several techniques designed to assess cognitive development as it has been conceptualized by some of the later theorists such Baxter Magolda (1992). The best known of these instruments is the Measure of Epistemological Reflection, or the MER, which was developed by Baxter Magolda and Porterfield (1985) to assess development according to Baxter Magolda's (1992) epistemological reflection model. Like the MID, the MER also

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utilizes an essay format to measure the first five positions of Perry's (1968/1970) theory. The MER differs from the MID, however, in that it focuses on six domains relating primarily to six areas of intellectual development in a classroom context: (a) decision making, (b) the role of the learner, (c) the role of the instructor, (d) the role of peers, (e) evaluation, and (f) the nature of truth. Students provide written responses to a series of short answer essay questions for each domain, and the responses are scored and assigned to a cognitive development position using a standardized rating manual. Baxter Magolda and Porterfield (1985) reported a correlation coefficient of .80 for interrater reliability for the MER, indicating a moderately high degree of reliability. They have also provided evidence that the MER has good validity, citing that students in the same educational levels ranging from first-year students to graduate students who were randomly selected at a large state university scored similarly to each other, and that the MER put students in Perry positions comparable to findings from previous research using the MID.

Baxter Magolda (2001) continued to refine her work on the MER by revisiting the instrument several years later. In light of the gender-related patterns of cognitive development that had emerged in the years since the instrument was first developed, she wanted to see if the MER adequately matched some of the constructivist assumptions that had guided her original development of the epistemological reflection model. For Baxter Magolda, these constructivist assumptions mean that "reality is multiple and dynamic, that to know it adequately requires interaction of the knower and the known, and that understanding a phenomenon (in this case, a student's cognitive development) requires understanding of the context in which it occurs" (p. 524). In addition, Baxter Magolda

acknowledged in this later work that the original construction of the MER "did not attend to other dynamics such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and sexual orientation [which are] dynamics that affect development when it is socially constructed" (p. 524).

After conducting this "constructivist revision" of the MER (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 520), Baxter Magolda suggested a five phase qualitative constructivist interpretation process for researchers to follow: (a) develop an adequate understanding of the process of cognitive development; (b) identify central reasons in the respondent's thinking; (c) interpret ways of knowing from the central reasons; (d) extend this interpretation to include additional dynamics such as consideration of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation; and (e) engage in dialogue with the respondents to check their perceptions of the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations.

The Learning Environment Preferences (LEP). The Learning Environment Preferences (LEP) is another instrument that was developed to assess cognitive development according to Perry (1968/1970) positions. The LEP was developed by Moore (1989) who observed that most of the instruments available at that time, especially the MID, utilized qualitative methods of assessment. He felt that there was a "critical need…for a solid, heuristic, objective, instrument assessing the Perry scheme" (p. 502). To fill that gap, he developed the LEP. The LEP is an objective, recognition-style paper and pencil instrument specifically designed for use with college students. It consists of five sentence stems that require students to rate a series of possible completion statements relating to ideal learning environments. In validation studies, Moore (1989) reported reliability coefficients from .72 to .84 for the LEP, although the concurrent validity with the MID was .36.

Additional instruments to assess Perry positions. Other instruments that have been developed to assess Perry (1968/1970) positions include the Learning Context Questionnaire (Griffith & Chapman, as cited in Moore, 1989), the Allen Paragraph Completion Instrument (Allen, as cited in Stonewater, Stonewater, & Hadley, 1986), the Scale of Intellectual Development (SID) (Erwin, 1983), and the Parker Cognitive Developmental Inventory (Parker, as cited in Moore, 1989). However, there has been relatively little research on any of these instruments and concern has been expressed regarding a lack of validity for each of them as adequate Perry measures. For example, Baxter Magolda (1987) raised questions about the validity of both the SID and the Parker Cognitive Development Inventory in measuring cognitive structures, and King (1990) criticized the SID for its lack of inclusion of multiplicity as a cognitive position.

The Reflective Judgment Interview (RJI). Through their longtime work on the reflective judgment model, King and Kitchener also developed an assessment measure called the reflective judgment interview (RJI) (Kitchener & King, 1981). The RJI is a semi-structured interview that provides the interviewer with a set of standardized probe questions designed to assess the stages of reasoning as suggested by the reflective judgment model. The RJI consists of four dilemmas, each "defined by two conflicting and contradictory points of view on an issue" (p. 104) in the content domains of science, current events, religion, and history. King and Kitchener (1994) reported interrater reliability coefficients for the RJI in the .70s and test-retest reliability of .71. However, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) caution that because the RJI is an interview approach, most of the research has been conducted in studies with small samples.

Assessment of integrative complexity. Researchers in other fields have also studied cognitive and intellectual development of college students using different conceptual frameworks and constructs from the student development theories presented earlier in this chapter. For example, Antonio et al. (2004) conducted a study of the impact of racial diversity on complex thinking in college students and found that racial diversity in discussion groups had positive effects on the "integrative complexity" (p. 507) of members of the group. For this study, the researchers used Suedfeld, Tetlock, and Struefert's (1992) construct of integrative complexity (IC), which refers to "the degree to which cognitive style involves the differentiation and integration of multiple perspectives and dimensions" (Antonio et al., 2004, p. 508). They describe low IC as simple or single-dimension (e.g. good-bad) reasoning, intermediate IC as recognition of the existence of alternative perspectives, and high IC as the "recognition of the trade-offs among perspectives and solutions" (p. 508). Antonio et al. assessed IC by requiring students to write two short essays describing their support for or opposition to a particular social issue. Through procedures established by Suedfeld et al. (1992), they used three independent judges to rate each essay for IC. For the data gathered in their study, they reported interrater reliability ranging from .66 to .70.

Student Learning Associated with Multicultural Learning Environments

One of the three research questions for this study relates to the Peer Dialogue Leaders' perceptions and characterizations of their overall learning as a result of their experience in the dialogue leader training program and their involvement in leading dialogue groups about current multicultural issues. Therefore, another important area of

the literature for this study is student learning associated with multicultural learning environments.

There is a large and well-established body of research demonstrating that students achieve optimal learning when they are involved and engaged in the curricular and co-curricular activities of the institution (Astin, 1984, 1996; Kuh et al., 1991; Tinto, 1975, 1993). For example, Astin (1984, 1985) found that students learn best by becoming involved in the campus community and associated academic and co-curricular activities. He developed a theory of involvement suggesting five basic postulates: (a) involvement requires investment, (b) involvement is a continuous concept, (c) involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features, (d) the amount of learning or development is directly proportional to the quantity and quality of involvement, and (e) the effectiveness of educational policies or practices is directly related to their capacity to induce student involvement (Astin, 1985). While this overall body of research demonstrates positive outcomes associated with involvement for all students, there is also a great deal of research in the literature on the impact of involvement on various outcomes for diverse student populations including women (Smith, Morrison, & Wolf, 1994), students of color (Allen, 1992; Turner, 1994), and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students (Love, 1997).

There is also a large and growing body of research on the positive outcomes associated with participation and involvement in learning environments that are diverse (e.g. Astin, 1993a; Gurin, 1999; Hurtado, 2004; Hurtado et al., 1999; Smith et al., 1997). This line of research has focused on learning environments as a whole, such as an entire campus community, and also on small subsets of the environment such as specialized

classes, groups, or programs within the campus community. While the interactions

between multiple dimensions of students' identities and their perceptions and experiences

on campus are complex, this area of research has helped to clarify the benefits associated

with student involvement in diverse learning environments and has had important

implications for higher education practice as well as policy.

General outcomes that have been shown for students in diverse learning

environments include improved relationships, academic success, and overall satisfaction

with the college experience. In addition, when students believe that the campus

demonstrates a broad commitment to diversity, these perceptions have been shown to

have a positive impact on their satisfaction with the institution and their commitment to

improving understanding across diverse identity groups. The perception of a supportive

campus has also been shown to increase recruitment and retention of students from

traditionally underrepresented groups (Humphreys, 1998; Smith et al., 1997).

A growing number of researchers are also finding that diverse learning

environments have a positive impact on cognitive development of college students

(Gurin, 1999; Smith et al., 1997). Kogler (2004) suggests that "multicultural education

advances cognitive capacities that enable students to understand different cultural

perspectives, develop a reflexive understanding of themselves, and represent structures

shared by individuals in different experiential contexts" (p. 1).

Many of the studies in the literature about the relationships between diversity and

cogniticual development have focused on the impact of a multicultural or diversity

curriculum or *program* on cognitive development and not necessarily on the impact of

the presence of peers of diverse identities in the learning environment. These studies of

multicultural classes or programs are informative though because many of them were conducted in fairly diverse settings. For example, Adams and Zhou-McGovern (1994) administered the Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER) (Baxter & Porterfield, 1985) among a number of other measures to 165 undergraduate students enrolled in a racially diverse multicultural education course. The students were in their second, third, or fourth years of college; approximately 80% were White and 20% identified as African American, Asian American, Latino/a, or Native American. The researchers found that the students' experiences in the course had a significant impact on their cognitive development as measured by the MER. Specifically, the students entered the course in transition from dualism to multiplicity but "left the course firmly in command of multiplistic thinking" (Adams, 2004, p. 3).

While there is a great deal of speculation and some support in the literature for a positive relationship between diverse learning environments and cognitive development of college students, there are also several limitations associated with this literature and some areas of confusion. For example, there are still persistent questions about which aspects of the learning experience – the curriculum, the program design, the presence of diverse classmates, the instructors, an interaction of these factors, or perhaps additional factors – are responsible for changes in cognitive development. Studying the impact of multicultural learning experiences on cognitive development is further complicated given that multicultural and diversity-related courses and programs are conceptualized, organized, taught, and administered in countless different ways and from a wide range of theoretical and philosophical perspectives.

A final limitation of this area of the research is that the term *diversity* is defined in so many different ways. Although many researchers speak of conducting studies on the impact of diverse learning environments, a review of the literature quickly reveals that with a few exceptions, most are really speaking about racial/ethnic diversity and in some cases, gender diversity. In order to develop a clearer understanding of learning outcomes associated with diverse learning environments, researchers should be more intentional and specific about stating the dimension of identity (or identities) they are studying. For example, if the study is primarily about racial/ethnic diversity, it should be identified that way, if not in the title of the work at least very early in the description of the study. Referring to "diversity" in the generic sense and really meaning a specific kind of diversity minimizes the importance of other dimensions of identity, confuses the meaning of the term "diversity," confounds understanding of the impact of diverse identities in learning environments, and risks alienating those who connect strongly with other dimensions of identity as part of their complex and multi-faceted experiences.

Dialogue Programs for College Students

People in the United States have engaged in the practice of bringing groups together to discuss issues, make decisions, and attempt to resolve areas of conflict throughout the history of the country. Although there has always been dialogue, Schoem and Hurtado (2001) suggest that the practice of intentionally bringing people together for dialogue has "gained acclaim and renewed interest" (p. 1) as the nation has entered a new century. As evidence they cite the numerous education, community, and business leaders who have developed and facilitated increased opportunities for dialogue during the past decade between and among many different groups. They also cite the renewed media

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interest in national dialogue and discourse partly as a result of the town hall meetings and public discussions President Bill Clinton held as part of his "Initiative on Race" in the mid-1990s. Schoem and Hurtado (2001) suggest that such efforts have prompted the continued development and proliferation of dialogue programs in both public and private organizations and institutions across the country.

In speaking to the promise that dialogue holds for healing some of the divides that currently exist in the diverse, multicultural society of the United States, the Center for Living Democracy (2004) says, "The challenge in the millennium is for Americans to engage in community-based dialogue as a means of bridging America's racial divide. To re-create a pluralistic, participatory democracy – a truly interracial democracy – America's multiracial population must engage in interracial dialogue" (p. 1).

Examples of College and University Dialogue Programs

The Common Ground Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland is one example of a program designed to bring diverse groups of college students together to engage in dialogue about deliberative questions related to multicultural topics. Several other colleges and universities have also recognized the value of developing programs that create opportunities for diverse groups of students to dialogue with one another in structured group settings. However, a review of the literature reveals that a majority of these programs are "intergroup dialogues" with a primary focus on history, relationships, issues of conflict, and communication between two or more specified identity groups (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001).

One of the earliest and best-known intergroup dialogue programs is the Program on Intergroup Relations (IGR) at the University of Michigan. Created in 1988, the IGR

program was "designed to advance students' understanding of deeply rooted intergroup conflicts and to increase their skills in addressing issues related to conflict and community on campus or in their lives beyond college" ("Model Intergroup Dialogue Programs," 2004, p. 1).

In the "Intergroup Dialogue" component of the IGR program at Michigan, dialogues are "carefully structured to explore social group identity, conflict, community, and social justice" ("Program on Intergroup Relations," University of Michigan, 2007, IGR Courses, Intergroup Dialogues section, ¶ 2). Dialogues are generally set up around two self-identified social groups that are "defined by race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin" (¶ 2). To ensure that each of the two identity groups is adequately represented, a balanced number of student participants from each identity group are included in the dialogue, usually 5 to 7 students from each identity group. Examples of past dialogues in the IGR Program include groups on gender and sexual orientation, Blacks and Jews, Native Americans and Other U.S. Citizens, and International Students and U.S. Students. The dialogues in the IGR Program are facilitated by undergraduate student facilitators, one from each represented identity group in the dialogue, who are trained in topics such as dialogic communication, group building, and conflict surfacing and de-escalation ("Program on Intergroup Relations," University of Michigan, 2007).

Additional examples of college and university dialogue programs based on the University of Michigan's model are the "Difficult Dialogues" and "Inter-Religious Dialogues" programs offered through the Intergroup Relations Center (IRC) at Arizona State University ("Intergroup Relations Center," 2007; Trevino & Ewing, 2004), and the

Program on Intergroup Relations (PIR) at the University of Illinois ("Program on Intergroup Relations," University of Illinois, 2007). Like Michigan, one of the components of the program at the University of Illinois is the opportunity for undergraduates, called PIR Educators, to be peer dialogue facilitators. However, each PIR Educator at Illinois co-facilitates a dialogue group with a professional staff facilitator who also supervises them ("Program on Intergroup Relations," University of Illinois, 2007).

Another similar intergroup dialogue program is the Words of Engagement (WE) program offered by the Office of Human Relations Programs at the University of Maryland. Words of Engagement "brings together groups of students from various social identity groups with a history of tension or conflict between them" ("Words of Engagement," 2007, About Words of Engagement section, ¶ 1). Examples of past dialogues in the WE program include Interfaith/Secular, Intra-Asian, Socio-Economic Class, and Women of Color/White Women groups. Most of the facilitators in the WE program are graduate students, staff, or faculty who are "trained and experienced in the practice of dialogue facilitation and have impressive expertise in content areas relevant to their dialogues" (About Words of Engagement, FAQ section, ¶ 11).

Several other institutions also offer programs with similar dialogue components ("Inter/Intra Group Relations," 2004). Examples include St. Lawrence University, which offers an Intercultural Studies Project in which intergroup dialogue pedagogy is used to engage faculty and students in the study of diversity, Spelman College, which offers faculty/student forums through a program that provides monthly opportunities for faculty and students to meet and discuss issues related to diverse identity groups such as people

with disabilities, lesbian and gay issues, and issues related to religious identity, and Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles which has an Urban Engagement and Civic Responsibility Program that encourages students to organize debates and public forums about various civic issues. A final example is the Pluralism and Unity Program at Swarthmore College that is funded by a private grant and provides weekly discussion groups for students ("Inter/Intra Group Relations," 2004).

There has been some research in the literature on educational and interpersonal outcomes associated with participation in intergroup dialogues. For example, researchers have found that intergroup dialogue programs can reduce prejudicial attitudes among students (Zuniga, Nagda, Sevig, Thompson, & Dey, 1995) and may also enhance communication and understanding among college students from diverse backgrounds (Nelson, 1994). A large-scale study currently underway is the "multi-university collaboration" led by the University of Michigan and involving eight additional institutions with intergroup dialogue programs. These researchers are seeking to study the educational effects associated with participation in an intergroup dialogue and the processes that occur within the dialogues that help promote educational outcomes ("Experiments in Diverse Democracy," 2007).

In summary, there are several established dialogue programs for undergraduate students in colleges and universities throughout the United States. However, a majority of these programs are based on the intergroup dialogue model similar to the IGR Program at the University of Michigan. A review of the literature revealed no other programs, other than the Common Ground program at the University of Maryland, that utilize a task-based approach in bringing diverse groups of students together from a variety of

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different identities to engage in peer-led dialogues about multicultural questions and dilemmas.

Programs that Utilize Peer Dialogue Leaders

Peer interaction has consistently been identified as one of the most critical factors associated with change in college (Astin, 1993b). Further, the effectiveness of programs that utilize peer leaders, mentors, or teachers has been well established in the literature (e.g. Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Astin; 1993b; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; "Peer Education and Diversity Training," 2004). This body of literature helped to inform one of the most distinctive design elements of the Common Ground program, the exclusive use of trained undergraduate students as peer dialogue leaders.

Based on a review of the existing college and university dialogue programs throughout the country, only a few utilize undergraduate peer dialogue leaders. Examples in addition to the Common Ground program include the University of Michigan's IGR program, in which groups are co-led by undergraduate students ("Program on Intergroup Relations," University of Michigan, 2007), and the University of Illinois, where trained undergraduates are paired with professional staff members to lead the dialogue groups ("Program on Intergroup Relations," University of Illinois, 2007).

Although there is a growing body of research in the literature about the impact of dialogue programs, especially intergroup dialogues, on various outcomes for the student participants, I found no studies in the literature about the impact of the dialogue group experience on the *dialogue leaders*. In addition, there were no studies in the literature about the impact of leading a dialogue group of *peers* on undergraduate student dialogue leaders. Given the growing popularity of dialogue programs as multicultural initiatives on

college and university campuses, and the increased emphasis in higher education on understanding educational outcomes associated with multicultural learning initiatives, this is an area in which additional research would be very beneficial.

Distinctive Aspects of the Common Ground Dialogue Program

Based on a review of the existing college and university dialogue programs, there are no others that approach dialogue in the same way as the Common Ground program. It is an unusual program because it is one of only a very few in which the dialogue groups are led exclusively by undergraduate peer dialogue leaders, and it is unique in its emphasis on bringing together a diverse group of students from a variety of different identity groups to engage in structured, task-oriented dialogues about multicultural questions and dilemmas. Further, the primary goal of providing students opportunities to learn *how* to engage in dialogue, as opposed to exposing them to specific and pre-determined content agendas, is distinctive. Although other programs incorporate some of these elements, the overall design of the Common Ground program is unique.

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Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

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The purpose of this study is to engage in a formal case study evaluation of the experience of the undergraduate students in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program in the Common Ground Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland. Additional purposes of this study are to assess the impact of the training program on the students' cognitive development, to develop an understanding of the nature of the experiential learning that occurs through the program, and to explore the ways in which the students characterize their learning as a result of their participation in the training program.

This study adds to the literature on college student development, multicultural learning initiatives, and college and university dialogue programs in several ways. First, it contributes to the existing literature on the relationship between multicultural learning experiences and college students' cognitive development. Second, it sheds light on learning associated with intentional exposure to multiple perspectives in a multicultural setting. Third, it contributes to knowledge about learning that occurs in an experiential context in which students have an opportunity to assume a position of leadership. Fourth, it provides specific insights into learning associated with being a peer leader for an undergraduate dialogue group. Fifth, it contributes to a better understanding of undergraduate multicultural dialogue programs specifically and overall learning associated with participation in multicultural programs more generally.

This study is also important because the case for the study, the Common Ground Dialogue Program, is unique in its design and its exclusive use of undergraduate peer dialogue leaders. While there are a growing number of studies in the literature on learning associated with being a participant in a dialogue group, there is almost no information in the literature about the impact of participation in dialogue programs on undergraduate student dialogue leaders.

Review of Research Methods

This section of this chapter provides a broad overview of the literature on case study methodology and evaluation models that I have used to develop the research design for this study. It includes an overview of case study methodology, a history of case study, contemporary approaches to case study, a discussion of whether case study methodology is qualitative or quantitative, and my orientation to that question as

researcher. Since this case study is also a program evaluation, this section also includes a discussion of the use of case study in evaluation research and an overview of program evaluation models. The specific research methodologies and design for this study are presented in Chapter 4.

Case Study Methodology

Case study is "an essential form of scientific inquiry" (Yin, 2003a, p. xi) and has become a common research methodology because of its versatility, adaptability, and capacity to provide researchers, interested stakeholders, and the public alike with in-depth understandings and meanings of phenomena that might not otherwise be understood. Case studies are useful for a variety of different kinds of research questions and can be adapted to virtually any setting in both public and private sectors. They are used extensively in social science research in disciplines like psychology, sociology, and anthropology, and also in practical fields such as public administration, social work, and education. They are appropriate to study institutions, programs, processes, policies, decisions, and outcomes in such diverse arenas as business, government, and schools (Yin, 2003b). In addition, they can be used effectively in large and complex settings or with smaller groups such as families or co-workers. They can even be used with individuals. Case study research has applications in public policy, organizational development, program assessment, and group dynamics, and it also provides a method for researchers to gain deeper insight into any unique or unusual situation, person, event, organization, or program.

While the use of case study methodology has increased in recent decades across many disciplines, it has grown a great deal in educational research. Merriam (1988,

1998), Bogdan and Biklen (1998), Goetz and LeCompte (1984), and LeCompte, Preissle and Tesch (1993) all provide extensive discussions of the use and applications of case study methodology in educational research.

Case study has also become commonplace in recent years as a useful method for evaluation research (Stake, 1983; Yin, 1992, 1993, 2003a, 2003b). Case studies are conducted in order to understand and evaluate organizational processes and they are also used increasingly to evaluate the impact and outcomes of programs (Yin, 2003a).

History of Case Study Methodology

The term "case study" has changed meanings several times throughout the history of methodological thought in the United States (Platt, 1992). With regard to the origin of the term, some of the earliest references refer to the "case histories" or "case work" developed by social workers. Although the term appeared in research methodology textbooks with some frequency in the 1920s and 1930s, the references at that time were almost always linked to social work. As the 1950s and 1960s progressed, the term nearly dropped out of the textbooks and in the occasional instances when it did appear, there were differing ideas about how to define it and no consistent or agreed upon methods. For example, in 1969, Simon (cited in Platt) said, "The specific method of the case study depends upon the mother wit, common sense, and imagination of the person doing the case study. The investigator makes up the procedure as he goes along…" (p. 267). Instead of viewing case study as a distinct research method, researchers of that era tended to view it as an "optional part of exploratory work in early stages of the complete research process" (p. 18). Throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s, many researchers continued to view case study as a non-rigorous way to explore various

phenomenon in order to clarify the variables, constructs, or relationships in preparation for the "real" studies.

According to Platt (1992), case study did have some early proponents in the 1950s who were committed to establishing it as an accepted research methodology. These advocates were especially vocal in the University of Chicago's renowned Department of Sociology. However, the new generation of scholars that succeeded them in the late 1950s and into the 1960s did not carry it forward. Platt suggests that one of the reasons for this may have been the fundamental shift that occurred in thinking about research methods in the United States as a result of World War II.

During the war, many of the leading academics, scholars, and researchers came out of the graduate schools and entered work in governmental and agency research that emphasized a new tradition of "survey methods" that enabled researchers to study large numbers of people, especially soldiers, all at one time (Platt, 1992). The survey method yielded results that could be disseminated to the public quickly, which was an especially desirable feature during wartime. Platt argues that when the war was over and these researchers and scholars began returning to the graduate schools, they brought this new survey tradition with them and made it a dominant paradigm in academia for many years to come.

In the late 1960s, this trend began to shift and there was a revival in writing about qualitative research methods, including case study research (Platt, 1992). Platt speculates that this can be partly attributed to the publication of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) seminal book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, which prompted many scholars to reconceptualize their view of research. Instead of remaining bound to the reigning

positivist paradigm that emphasized empirical research methods, Glaser and Strauss helped open the door to a new and different research paradigm of interpretivism. Heshusius and Ballard (1996) offer a collection of several personal stories of scholars who experienced this transformation from a positivist to an interpretivist research orientation, a shift they described as "so deep and radical that it would have had to be accompanied, as in our case, by impulses of deep visceral, somatic, and emotive knowing" (p. xiii).

As qualitative and interpretive research methods began to receive more attention in the methodology textbooks, so did discussion about case study. Platt (1992) documents several chapters in textbooks in the 1970s and 1980s in which case studies or case study methodology were referred to or discussed. These include sections about single group case studies, the appropriateness of case studies to retroactively understand unique or unexpected events such as tornados, case study as an element of field research, and the use of participant observation and qualitative observation in a case study approach. It is also noteworthy that many of the researchers in the 1980s were sociologists writing about case study applications in sociology. This highlights the continued importance of the fields of sociology and social work in the development of case study methodology (Platt, 1992).

Three Contemporary Approaches to Case Study

Scholarly thought about case study as a research methodology continued to grow and evolve through the 1970s and 1980s. A critical turning point was the 1984 publication of Yin's textbook, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Platt, 1992). An experimental psychologist by training, Yin envisioned a rigorous approach to case

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study methodology that followed a more positivist than interpretive tradition. He explicitly described case study as "an empirical inquiry" (1994, p. 13) and emphasized the importance of the research design, multiple sources of evidence, and empirical methods of data collection. Perhaps his most defining idea, however, was his view of case study methodology as a deductive process as opposed to an inductive one that should allow for and even encourage the use of theoretical principles to develop research questions and plan data collection procedures (Platt, 1992). Although Yin was clear to clarify that data can come from both quantitative and qualitative sources, his overall orientation toward the nature of research was positivist and in the tradition of the experimental method. In reflecting on the impact of his book on scholarly thinking about case study methodology, Yin acknowledges this contribution by saying that he "definitively dissociated the case study strategy from the limited perspective of doing participant-observation (or any type of field work)" (Yin, 2003b, p. 13).

Yin (1984, 2003a, 2003b) remains widely recognized today as one of the leading experts on case study methodology. However, his empirical and quantitative view of case study methodology stands in sharp contrast to other leading and well known contemporary scholars such as Merriam (1988, 1998) and Stake (1994, 1995, 2000) who are strong advocates of approaches that are much more qualitative in orientation and emphasize induction in the research design, interpretation in the data analysis, and narration as a primary method of conveying findings.

As Merriam, Stake, and Yin are three of the leading contemporary authorities on case study research methodology, each of their approaches deserves further elaboration.

Merriam's approach. In her widely read book, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, Merriam (1988, 1998) conceives of case study methodology as grounded firmly in the qualitative research tradition. While she acknowledges Yin's view that case studies can be quantitative and can be used to test theory, she believes that in many disciplines, especially education, they "are much more likely to be qualitative" (1998, p. 19).

Merriam (1998) defines case study as follows: "A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 27). She also notes that case studies are different from other kinds of qualitative research because they are "intensive descriptions and analyses of a *single unit* or *bounded* system…such as an individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community" (p. 19). While each of the elements in this definition is important, the notion of a case as a bounded system is especially significant. Merriam writes, "In the ten years since the first edition of this book, I have concluded that the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case" (p. 27). In other words, it is critical that the researcher define with as much specificity as possible the primary unit of analysis and any sub-units of analysis for the study. These include the specific aspects of the case being studied (and perhaps a clarification of aspects *not* being studied) and also a clearly defined period of time in the life of the individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community of interest.

Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) provide a definition of case study that is consistent with Merriam's (1998) but emphasizes the term *phenomenon* in defining the overall scope of the case study. In their view, a phenomenon is anything a researcher has interest

in studying such as a program, a person, an event, or a process. However, "a *case* is a particular aspect of the phenomenon" (p. 545). They elaborate by providing an example of a researcher interested in studying school-university partnerships. While school-university partnerships would be the phenomenon of interest in this example, a specific aspect of the phenomenon the researchers might be most interested in studying could be a Teacher in Residence (TIR) program that grew out of a partnership between a local university and a local school district. In this example, school-university relationships would be the phenomenon and TIR, a focused aspect of the phenomenon, would be the case. This example provides a useful clarification of the difference between "phenomenon" and "case," and it also provides a good illustration of how a case can be "bounded" (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) also suggests several different ways of characterizing and categorizing qualitative case studies. First, she cites three special features characteristic of all qualitative case studies. They are (a) *particularistic*, meaning they "focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon" (p. 29); (b) *descriptive*, meaning that "the end product of a case study is a rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 29); and (c) *heuristic*, meaning that they "illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p. 30).

In terms of categories, Merriam (1998) describes qualitative case studies as falling into one of four types: (a) *ethnographic case studies*, which focus on seeking an understanding of the culture of a group or organization; (b) *historical case studies*, which can include chronological histories of an event or program as well as analyses of context and impact; (c) *psychological case studies*, which use concepts, approaches, and theories

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from the field of psychology; and (d) *sociological case studies*, which utilize principles from sociology related to understanding social groups, society, and socialization.

Merriam (1998) also categorizes qualitative case studies based on the overall intent of the study. In her view, these three types are (a) *descriptive case studies*, which are atheoretical, present a detailed account of the case, and provide a rich, thick description; (b) *interpretive case studies*, which "are used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering" (p. 38); and (c) *evaluative case studies*, which are used to evaluate a program for the purposes of description, explanation, or assessment of impact or outcomes.

In Merriam's (1998) descriptions of case studies and case study research, an important concept – *thick description* – is mentioned several times and merits elaboration because it appears so frequently in the literature on case study methodology and qualitative research. This is a term that is originally attributed to Geertz (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and has become a common element of many kinds of qualitative writing (Creswell, 1998; Denzin, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Patton, 1990, 2002; Stake, 2000). According to Denzin (1989),

> A thick description …does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p. 83)

Another key aspect of case study methodology according to Merriam (1998) is the type of design of the study. *Single-case designs* focus on one case (or bounded system) that is the unit of analysis, although single-case designs might incorporate subunits or subcases embedded within the design (such as students in a school, in which the school would be the case and the students would be the embedded units). In *multiple case designs*, more than one case is incorporated into the design (such as several different schools). Multiple case designs are also often called *collective case studies*, *cross-case studies*, *multicase* or *multisite studies*, or *comparative case studies*.

Merriam (1998) notes Miles and Huberman's (1994) observation that one advantage of a multiple case design is that researchers can "strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29). Merriam also notes that an equally appropriate rationale for selecting a single case design is because of the uniqueness of the case and what can be learned from intensive study of an unusual phenomenon, individual, group, program, policy, event, or outcome. Therefore, both multiple case and single case study designs have important places in case study research.

As for data collection and analysis, Merriam (1998) says, "any and all methods of gathering data, from testing to interviewing, can be used in a case study, although certain techniques are used more than others" (p. 28). Specific techniques for data collection include interviews, observation, and review of documents. For data analysis, Merriam focuses primarily on qualitative processes that are "highly intuitive" (p. 156) such as ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and the constant comparative method.

Merriam (1998) also provides extensive discussion of *internal validity* (how well the research findings match reality), *reliability* (the extent to which the findings can be replicated), and *external validity* (the extent to which the findings can be applied to other situations) in case study research. However, she also acknowledges the longstanding and on-going debate in the research community about the appropriate use of these terms in qualitative research and criteria for assessing reliability and validity. Many qualitative researchers argue that these specific terms come from a traditional, positivist orientation and should be replaced by other terms that are a better fit with the qualitative paradigm and are more reflective of qualitative methods such as *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) or *credibility*, *transferability*, and *dependability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In defending her use of the terms "reliability" and "validity," Merriam cites Guba and Lincoln (1981) who acknowledge that while it is difficult to talk about reliability and validity in qualitative research as a whole, in case study, "One *can* talk about the validity and reliability of the instrumentation, the appropriateness of the data analysis techniques, the degree of relationship between the conclusions drawn and the data upon which they presumably rest, and so on" (p. 378).

In a deeper discussion of the term "reliability," Merriam (1998) concedes that in qualitative studies, "achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible" (p. 206) because qualitative studies are usually multifaceted, complex, uniquely designed to fit the context of the particular study or case, and subject to different researchers' own previous experiences, biases, and worldviews. However, she argues that an inability to replicate the findings from one study to another "does not discredit the results of the original study" (p. 206). In acknowledging that the term reliability is

"something of a misfit when applied to qualitative research" (p. 206), she concludes by sanctioning the use of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) terms *dependability* or *consistency* instead. In Merriam's view, this switch in language changes the central question from whether the findings can be replicated or found again to the important question of "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam, p. 206).

With this overall context established, Merriam (1998) offers several specific strategies for enhancing validity, dependability, and consistency in case study designs. For enhancing internal validity (how well the research findings match reality), she describes six basic strategies: (a) *triangulation*, which involves using multiple investigators, sources of data, or methods of data collection and data analysis to corroborate the findings; (b) *member checks*, which involve continuously taking the data and the researcher's preliminary interpretations back to participants in the study and soliciting their reactions about the accuracy of both the data and the interpretations; (c) *long-term observation*, which involves gathering data over a long period of time and making repeated observations; (d) *peer examination*, which involves seeking on-going reactions from colleagues about the researcher's findings; (e) *participatory or collaborative modes of research*, which encourage the involvement of participants in all aspects of the study, from the conceptualization phase to the writing of the research findings; and (f) *clarifying the researcher's biases*, which encourages the researcher to engage in self-reflection in order to identify and clarify his or her own assumptions, theoretical perspectives, prior experiences, and biases that might impact his or her work on the study.

Merriam's (1998) three specific strategies for enhancing dependability, or the consistency of the results with the data, are (a) *clarifying the investigator's position*, which requires that the researcher explain the theory and assumptions that drive the study and his or her position and views with regard to the case being studied; (b) *triangulation*, as described earlier; and (c) *establishing an audit trail*, which involves keeping detailed records and notes of the case that can be audited or followed by an independent judge.

In all, Merriam's (1988, 1998) work provides a significant contribution to scholarly thinking about case study research methodology. It has been especially important in advancing understanding about case study applications in contemporary educational research.

Stake's approach. Stake's popular textbook, *The Art of Case Study Research*, was published in 1995 although he began writing about case study methods and educational evaluation in the 1960s. In addition to this textbook, he is the author of two widely cited chapters on case study that appeared in both editions of Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Stake, 1994, 2000).

In contrast to Merriam's (1998) discussion of the multiple ways of designing a case study for the ultimate purpose of creating an "intensive, holistic description and analysis" of the case in question, (p. 27), Stake (2000) views case study as "not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 435). As further illustration of this view, he provides the following definition: "Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995 p. xi). In other words, *the case* is the most important aspect of the study, more important than the methods of inquiry or even the

overall research paradigm. While the case may be simple or complex, the case itself is the central focus. This notion of "inquiry into the single case" (p. xii) is a defining element of Stake's work.

Like Merriam (1998), Stake (1995, 2000) emphasizes the importance of defining the case as "a bounded system," noting that its "boundedness" makes it "a specific One" (2000, p. 436). Further, bounding a case can then draw "attention to it as an object rather than a process" (1995, p. 2). He also describes the case as "an integrated system" (p. 2), pointing out that people and programs are therefore good prospective cases because they are clearly integrated systems, whereas events and processes might be more difficult to study because they do not fit this criterion as clearly.

According to Stake (2000), researchers may draw from any or all of the following sources in studying and developing the case: (a) the nature of the case; (b) the case's historical background; (c) the physical setting; (d) other contexts (e.g. economic, political, legal, and aesthetic); (e) other cases through which this case is recognized; and (f) those informants through whom the case can be known.

As for Stake's (2000) view of the nature of the research paradigm in case study, he is clear to say that case studies can be either qualitative or quantitative or include elements of both. While he acknowledges approaches such as Yin's (1984, 1994, 2003b) that are more empirical and quantitative in nature, like Merriam (1998) he clearly leans toward a qualitative orientation.

Stake (1995, 2000) also offers a framework for categorizing case studies. In his view there are three different types: (a) *intrinsic case studies*, which are undertaken because the researcher has some intrinsic interest in a case and wants a better

understanding of it; (b) *instrumental case studies*, which are cases that are designed to provide insight into an issue or phenomenon; and (c) *collective case studies*, which include multiple units of study rather than just one and are typically "instrumental case studies extended to several cases" (2000, p. 437).

One way Stake (1995) departs somewhat from Merriam (1998) is in his view of how data should be collected. Whereas Merriam emphasizes participant interviews as one of the richest potential sources of data in case studies, Stake's view of case study is that it should be "…noninterventive and empathic. In other words, we try not to disturb the ordinary activity of the case, not to test, not even to interview, if we can get the information we want by discrete observation or examination of records" (p. 12). Therefore, Stake's preferred methods of data collection are those that disrupt the case as little as possible such as observation and analysis of existing documents.

For data analysis, Stake's (1995) view is that the primary purpose of case study research is coming to understand the case, and he describes data analysis as a way of capitalizing "on ordinary ways of making sense" (p. 72). Three specific strategies he discusses are direct interpretation, aggregation of instances, and searching for patterns, all of which require observation and intuition and sometimes call for the researcher to develop themes and categories from the data.

Additionally, one of Stake's (2000) most important goals for interpretive study is "seeking out *emic* meanings" (p. 440), which are the perspectives held by the participants in the case. Gall et al. (1996) call this kind of qualitative analysis *interpretational* analysis, or "the process of examining case study data closely in order to find constructs, themes, and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being

studied" (p. 562). Specific elements of this process include developing a database for the data, identifying categories, coding the data, revisiting the categories, and drawing conclusions. While Stake and Merriam (1998) do not use this exact term, their view of data analysis in qualitative case studies is consistent with this definition. Hultgren (1989) also equates interpretation with the development of understanding, noting that "understanding and interpretation are essentially the same thing" (p. 49).

Finally, similar to Merriam (1998), Stake (1995) discusses issues of reliability and validity in case study research primarily in the context of triangulation. This is the important component of case study methodology that calls for the use of multiple sources of data, multiple methods of data collection, and multiple methods of data analysis in order to establish the credibility and dependability of the findings. Many other writers also discuss the importance of triangulation in case study research such as Denzin (1970), Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), Goetz and LeCompte (1984), LeCompte et al. (1993), Miles and Huberman (1984), Patton (1990, 2002) and Yin (1984, 1993, 1994, 2003a, 2003b).

A complete discussion of the steps taken in this study to address issues of reliability and validity is presented in Chapter 4 in the section entitled "Trustworthiness."

Yin's approach. As mentioned previously, the first edition of Yin's book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* was published in 1984. Since then it has been updated in a revised edition (1989) and two subsequent editions (1994, 2003b). With the publication of the second edition of the textbook, he developed a companion book called *Applications of Case Study Research* (1993) that has also been updated in a second edition (2003a).

In contrast to Merriam (1988, 1998) and Stake (1995), Yin's (2003b) perspective on case study methodology is much more positivist, empirical, and quantitative. In Yin's view, although data in case studies can come from both quantitative and qualitative sources such as interviews, participant observations, and document analysis, case study research must "be done in conformity with science's goals and methods" (p. x).

Yin's training as a PhD in experimental psychology and his background in the experimental method influenced his view of how to conduct case study research (2003b). He disagrees with other authors who describe case study exclusively as a qualitative research methodology and place it in the same category as other qualitative methodologies such as grounded theory and ethnography. As an illustration of this, Yin describes one of the purposes of the most recent edition of his *Design and Methods* book as "disentangling the case study as a research tool from …qualitative methods" (2003b, p. xiv) as well as from case study as a teaching tool, ethnography, and participant observation. Although he refers to qualitative methods as "closely related" to case study (Yin, 2003a, p. xi), "the essence of the case study goes beyond all of these" (Yin, 2003b, p. xiv). In his view, the "truly distinguishing features of the case study method" (p. xiv) occur throughout the entire research process: in problem definition, design, data collection, data analysis, and composition and reporting. He calls this emphasis on attending to all the design elements of the project, from start to finish, the "logic of design" (p. 13).

As for appropriate research questions for case study methodology, Yin (2003b) says that case study is often best for addressing "how" and "why" questions. In contrast to other research methodologies such as experiment, survey, and historical research that

can answer these same questions, case study is distinctive because it allows the researcher to focus on contemporary events without requiring experimental control over behavior or any other aspect of the case. Therefore, as a formal definition of case study, Yin offers the following two-part definition: (a) "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003b, p. 13), and (b) "The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (pp. 13-14).

In categorizing the different types of case studies, Yin's (2003a) typology is different from Merriam's (1998) and Stake's (1995). According to Yin, there are three basic types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. *Exploratory case studies* are designed to study a program, phenomenon, or event for which the researchers have no theory or hypothesis to guide the development of research questions before the data are collected. Therefore, in exploratory case studies researchers conduct fieldwork and data collection before finalizing the research questions and the questions evolve as the data are analyzed. In general, exploratory case studies are best used for defining the questions and hypotheses for another study to be conducted in the future or for determining whether or not certain research procedures are feasible. *Descriptive case studies* are designed to develop a complete description of the case within its context. In contrast to exploratory case studies, descriptive case studies may incorporate the use of

theory to help researchers guide the development of their description. *Explanatory case* studies are designed to study cause-effect relationships and provide explanations for why an event or outcome occurred the way it did. Further, the use of theory is appropriate in developing research questions and designs for explanatory case studies.

Yin (2003a) describes two primary design types for case studies. These are *single-case studies*, which focus on a single case only, and *multiple-case studies* that include two or more cases in the same study. Therefore, in Yin's view case studies can be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory with either a single-case or a multiple-case design.

This discussion of exploratory and explanatory case studies points to one of the most distinctive aspects of Yin's (2003a) view of case study research: the use and appropriate role of theory in developing hypotheses and research questions to guide the study. This element is clearly consistent with Yin's orientation in positivism and empiricism. It also helps to clarify why he feels so strongly that case study should not be categorized with other qualitative research methodologies such as grounded theory and ethnography that follow a more interpretive and inductive paradigm. In these qualitative methodologies, researchers allow patterns and theories to emerge from the data and then seek out relevant literature to make connections with the findings; they generally do not use theory to develop predetermined hypotheses about relationships between variables before any data are collected.

Further, because the use of theory in either explanatory or descriptive case studies guides researchers to an analysis of relationships between variables, Yin (2003a) asserts that it is appropriate to conceive of the variables in the case study as *independent* and

dependent (also see Gall et al., 1996). This is very different from most qualitative strategies of inquiry that call for an emergent design in which insights evolve from the data (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

According to Yin (2003a), a renewed interest in the 1980s in using theory in evaluation research (e.g. Bickman, 1990; Chen, 1990) coincided with a similar renewed interest in using theory in designing and conducting case studies. While the use of theory in research studies using qualitative methods is debated in the research literature, in Yin's view, the use of theory can help case study researchers in the following ways: (a) in selecting the cases to be studied, whether the study is a single-case or a multiple-case design; (b) in specifying what is being explored when conducting exploratory case studies; (c) in defining a complete and appropriate description when conducting descriptive studies; (d) in stipulating rival theories when conducting explanatory case studies; and (e) in generalizing the results to other cases.

Yin (2003a) clarifies that "theory" means more than just the causal theories that might be used to explain relationships between variables. For him, theory has a broader meaning involving "the design of research steps according to some relationship to the literature, policy issues, or other substantive source" (p. 5).

Consistent with Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995), Yin (2003b) also strongly emphasizes the importance of using multiple sources of data or evidence in case study research in order to develop "converging lines of inquiry" that result in "triangulation" (p. 98) of the data. While data can either be quantitative or quantitative, multiple sources are critical in case study research for the purposes of enhancing the reliability and validity

of the findings. According to Yin (2003b), specific kinds of quantitative and qualitative data that are commonly used in case study research are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations in which the researcher may assume a variety of roles within the case itself and may even participate in the events being studied, and physical artifacts.

Yin (2003b) describes several techniques for data analysis. Prior to discussing each specific technique, however, he discusses three general strategies for data analysis that should be used in almost all case studies except exploratory case studies: (a) *relying on theoretical propositions*, which instructs the researcher to follow the theoretical propositions that led to the study in developing the design and the research questions; (b) *thinking about rival explanations*, which encourages the researcher to identify and define plausible rival hypothesis and, if possible, to test rival explanations; and (c) *developing a case description*, which means writing a "descriptive framework for organizing the case study" (p. 114).

In addition to discussing these three general strategies for data analysis, Yin (2003b) describes five specific analytic techniques for case study research. Given his quantitative and empirical orientation and his view of the a priori role of theory in developing the design of the study, these strategies are technical and detailed in comparison to the data analysis strategies described by Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995). Each is designed specifically for use with particular research designs. They are (a) pattern matching, (b) explanation building, (c) time-series analysis, (d) logic models, and (e) cross-case synthesis.

In *pattern matching*, the researcher compares a pattern generated by the case study data to a pattern derived from a theory or theoretical predispositions (Yin, 2003b). If a pattern in the case study data corresponds to a pattern that would be predicted by the theory, then grounds for a causal inference are established. In Yin's view, pattern matching is one of the best techniques to use in case study research because if the patterns are similar, the internal validity of the study is strengthened.

If the case study is explanatory (seeks to explain a cause-effect relationship) pattern matching can accommodate multiple dependent variables in the study even if different methods are used to study each variable. This is called a "nonequivalent dependent variables design" (Yin, 2003b, p. 116). Throughout this kind of analysis it is especially important to keep rival explanations in mind as failing to consider them can pose threats to the validity of the findings.

Campbell (1975) and Trochim (1989) were among the first to describe the process of pattern matching as it applies to relating a theory to case study findings. Berg (2001), Chen (1990), Cook and Campbell (1979), Gall et al. (1996), Marquart (1990), and Miles and Huberman (1984) also discuss pattern matching as a data analysis technique for case study.

The second technique described by Yin (2003b) is *explanation building*, which involves analyzing the data in order to build an explanation about the case. Steps that are generally included in explanation building are identifying an initial theoretical statement or proposition about the case, comparing it against the findings of an initial case, revising the statement, collecting new data and comparing it with the revised statement, collecting data from several subsequent cases, and continuing this process of comparing new data

against the statement and subsequently revising the statement in a cyclical fashion as many times as necessary.

Yin's (2003b) third technique for data analysis, a *time-series analysis* allows the researcher to study outcomes that are hypothesized to occur only as a result of a series of ordered, chronological events, and to assess changes that occur at each point along the way. Time-series designs can be simple time series, complex time series, or chronologies. Chronologies are considered a special form of this kind of analysis and involve comparing the chronology with a pattern that would be predicted by an explanatory theory. Yin (2003a) notes that this ability to trace changes over time is one of the most important strengths of case study methodology.

A fourth technique for data analysis according to Yin (2003b), *logic models*, is a combination of time-series analysis and pattern matching and has become an increasingly popular technique, especially in case study evaluation research (Yin, 1994, 2003b). The logic model is derived from theory and is used to predict a chain of events that will occur over time in repeated cause-effect patterns. As such, an event that was initially a dependent variable in the design could become an independent variable in the next stage of the chain and so on. After collecting the data, the researcher matches the events observed in the case to the overall pattern that is predicted by the logic model. This technique is especially useful for conducting evaluation research because it allows for an assessment of intermediate outcomes of an intervention as well as assessment of final or ultimate outcomes (Yin, 1994). Wholey (1979) was one of the early researchers who advanced the use of logic models in studying public policy interventions and outcomes.

One advantage of each of the four data analysis techniques described above is that they all can be used in either single-case or multiple-case designs. A fifth technique, *cross-case synthesis*, involves aggregating findings from a series of individual studies and therefore can only be used in multiple-case designs.

Yin (1994) also discusses three "lesser" (p. 119) techniques for data analysis. Although they are all appropriate to use in case study research, Yin notes that they are not sufficient techniques in and of themselves and must be used in conjunction with one of the five "dominant modes" (p. 119) described above. These techniques are (a) *analyzing embedded units*, in which smaller units within the case are studied in addition to the case itself: (b) *making repeated observations*, which is a special type of time-series analysis in which the observations of embedded units are made repeatedly but at different research sites or at different times; and (c) *case survey*, which is a cross-case method in which a survey instrument is developed and given to participants. If the numbers are large enough, the researcher may use statistical analyses on the survey results.

A final noteworthy aspect of Yin's work is that he writes extensively on the usefulness of case study method as a tool in evaluation research (Yin, 1992, 1993). His ideas for using case study in evaluations are discussed in detail later in this chapter in the section on "Program Evaluation Models."

Summary comparison of the three approaches. Merriam (1998) provides a useful analysis of the fundamental ways in which Merriam, Stake, and Yin differ in their conceptualizations of case study methodology. Merriam (1988, 1998) primarily defines case study in terms of its *end product*, e.g. the "intensive, holistic description" (1998, p. 27) of the case, whereas Stake (1994, 1995, 2000) emphasizes the *unit of study*, e.g. the

singular case. Yin (2003a, 2003b), with his emphasis on research design and data analysis, conceives of case study primarily in terms of the *research process*. While there are other differences in the three approaches, this analysis provides a useful framework for summarizing the primary emphasis of each.

Is Case Study Qualitative or Quantitative? My Orientation as Researcher

One of the fundamental questions that emerges from a review of the various approaches to case study is whether it is most accurately described as a qualitative or a quantitative research methodology. This is an important question for me to consider because my orientation to this question as researcher informs my overall conceptual framework for the research design of this study. To address this question, I considered the three approaches to case study offered by Merriam, Stake, and Yin. To deepen self-reflection, I also considered and applied the five primary assumptions of research as described by Creswell (1994): the ontological assumption, the epistemological assumption, the axiological assumption, the rhetorical assumption, and the methodological assumption.

According to Creswell (1994), the *ontological assumption* refers to the nature of reality. In quantitative research, reality is viewed as objective and existing separately from the researcher whereas in qualitative research, reality is seen as subjective with multiple truths as it is perceived differently by different participants in the study. While I believe "reality" exists as a combination of objective and subjective factors, I also believe that reality is primarily subjective because of the ways it is perceived by each individual as a function of his or her unique and collective identities, backgrounds, and experiences. Therefore, my ontological view leans toward qualitative.

The *epistemological assumption* refers to the relationship between the researcher and that being researched, including the participants in the study. While I believe that in certain kinds of research methods such as survey or experiment a researcher can successfully remain independent from the subjects of the study, I also believe that in any study in which the researcher must interact extensively with the participants, such as in a case study involving interviews, the researcher and the participants influence each other and consequently cannot remain completely independent. Therefore, my epistemological view is more qualitative than quantitative.

The *axiological assumption* refers to the role of values. The axiological assumption behind quantitative research is that it is value-free and unbiased, whereas the assumption behind qualitative research is that it is value-laden and bias and threats to subjectivity are acknowledged. I believe that for any research methodology that involves interaction between the researcher and participants and on-going interpretation by the researcher, it is impossible to be value-free or unbiased. In addition, when using a methodology such as case study that can be adapted or designed in such a variety of different ways, I believe the researcher's own biases will inevitably influence the ways in which the research questions are framed, the ways the probes and follow-up questions are asked of participants, and the overall direction the study will take. Therefore, my axiological view is more qualitative than quantitative.

The *rhetorical assumption* relates to the language of research. Quantitative writing uses a more impersonal voice whereas qualitative writing uses a more personal voice. My inclination is to approach scholarly writing in a more impersonal, quantitative way. However, when using a methodology such as case study, I also recognize the

critical importance of effectively conveying the voices of the participants in the study and also my own voice as the interpreter of the findings. For these reasons, I believe my rhetorical view is both quantitative and qualitative.

Finally, the *methodological assumption* refers to fundamental elements of the research process. Quantitative research emphasizes the deductive process, cause and effect, generalizations leading to prediction and explanation, and scientific views of reliability and validity. In contrast, qualitative research emphasizes an inductive process, a flexible and emerging design, consideration of contextual factors, attending to emergent patterns, categories, or theories, and accuracy and validity through verification, dependability, and consistency. I am comfortable with and value all of these aspects of research, so I consider my methodological assumption to be both quantitative and qualitative.

After an extensive reading of Merriam, Stake, and Yin, and after consideration of these five assumptions as described by Creswell (1994), I have concluded that case study research methodology can be both quantitative and qualitative, although I would lean toward describing it as more qualitative. However, Yin's quantitative and positivist orientation toward empirically designed case studies and his discussion of the use of theory and the deductive process in informing the research design of the study are appealing and compelling to me and are fundamental design elements that I have incorporated into this study. I also value Yin's inclusion of quantitative information as a legitimate source of data in case study research that can add value to the case and ultimately help researchers develop a more complete and comprehensive understanding. However, the overall emphasis in case study research on collecting multiple forms of data

and especially information from participant interviews in order to develop a rich, comprehensive view of the case, regardless of whether the study is explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive, implies to me a more qualitative orientation.

In summary, I have drawn from both quantitative and qualitative research methods in developing the research design, data collection procedures, methods of data analysis, and written description for this study. It is an evaluative case study in which multiple research methods were used. As case study methodology allows for the use of these multiple research methods, this study is not a mixed-methods study. However, the literature on mixed-methods research did inform my conceptualization of the research design. While scholars have defined "mixed-methods" in different ways (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007), I am conceptualizing it for this study as consistent with the classic definition by Green, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), who defined mixed-methods research designs as "those that include at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words)" (p. 256). More recently, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) observed that the "central premise" of a mixed-methods research design "is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (p. 5).

Overall, however, I consider this study to be primarily a qualitative study in which both qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques were incorporated that allowed me to effectively study the research questions and develop a complete and thorough understanding of the case.

The Use of Case Study in Evaluation Research

While case study methodology is appropriate for study of a broad range of research questions, it is widely recognized as one of the best research methods for conducting evaluations (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1983, 1995; Yin 1992, 1993). Reasons for this include its adaptability (Stake, 1995), the array of different techniques for data collection and analysis that it offers to researchers (Yin, 1993), and that it allows researchers to engage in "the weighing of information to produce judgments" which, according to Guba and Lincoln (1981), "is the final and ultimate act of evaluation" (p. 375). In Guba and Lincoln's view, case study is especially good for evaluation because it provides "thick description" (p. 375), it emphasizes an experiential perspective, it is holistic and lifelike, it allows researchers to focus on a specific aspect of the phenomenon of interest and to "simplify the range of data" (p. 376), and it draws in the attention of the reader and helps to illuminate meanings.

To adapt case study methodology to evaluation research, many scholars including Yin (1992, 1993), have developed specific program evaluation models for use within case study methodology. As this study is also a program evaluation, a review of the literature on program evaluation models that have helped guide the development of the design of this study, including case study as a program evaluation, is presented later in this chapter. It provides a theoretical framework for program evaluation within the overall methodology of case study research.

Strengths and Limitations of Case Study as a Research Methodology

Merriam (1998) discusses several general strengths and limitations of case study as a research methodology. One of the strengths is that "case study offers a means of

investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential

importance in understanding the phenomenon" (p. 41). Case studies can also result in

"a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon" (p. 41) and can offer insights and

illuminate meanings that expand understanding. The insights gained from case studies

can be useful in developing new and tentative hypotheses for future research on other

aspects of the phenomenon or case. Because of these strengths, case study "is a

particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education" (p. 41)

because the insights and findings can be extremely useful in program evaluation and

policy analysis.

There are also several limitations associated with case study as a research

methodology. Case studies can be extremely time-consuming and can require significant

resources to carry out adequately. In addition, because qualitative research

methodologies incorporate thick description, there is a risk that the final product "may be

too lengthy, too detailed, or too involved for busy policy makers and educators to read

and use" (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). Another risk is that the case study report might

"oversimplify or exaggerate" (p. 42) a situation, which could lead to inaccurate

conclusions about the case. Additional challenges relate to "the sensitivity and integrity

of the investigator [as the] primary instrument of data collection and analysis" (p. 42),

overall issues of trustworthiness, and issues of ethics.

Specific issues related to trustworthiness and ethics, especially those that are

directly related to this study, are presented and discussed in Chapter 4. Specific strengths

and limitations of this study are discussed in Chapter 6.

Program Evaluation Models

Stufflebeam (2001) defines an evaluation as "a study designed and conducted to assist some audience to assess an object's merit and worth" (p. 11). Therefore, program evaluation is the assessment of merit and worth of a specific program.

Like case study methodology, program evaluation research in the United States went through a period of modest activity in the 1950s. It was invigorated and expanded, however, by a series of high-profile national events and trends including the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1957, the passage of new civil rights laws in the United States in the 1960s that called for more equitable treatment of minorities and people with disabilities, new federal evaluation requirements associated with the initiation of the Great Society programs in 1965, a movement in the 1970s for increased accountability in educational and social institutions, an increased emphasis on excellence in the 1980s in order to increase the international competitiveness of the United States, and the trend in the 1990s toward evaluation as a means of ensuring quality and equity in the delivery of services (Stufflebeam, 2001; Stufflebeam, Madaus & Kellaghan, 2000).

Description and Assessment of Program Evaluation Models

In contemporary research, there are a multitude of program evaluation models. Although several authors such as House (1983) and Scriven (1994) have developed classifications or taxonomies as ways of organizing them, Stufflebeam (2001) presents a useful classification scheme of 22 different types of program evaluation models organized into four categories. Stufflebeam's classification is especially valuable as he presents a critical assessment of each of the 22 models that assists evaluators in making

determinations about which are the best and most applicable models and which are the least useful or even indefensible.

Classification of program evaluation models. Stufflebeam (2001) calls the first category in his classification scheme *pseudoevaluations*. Two types of evaluations are included in this category: (a) *public relations-inspired studies*, in which data are used for the biased purpose of convincing audiences and targeted constituents of the quality of a program, and (b) *politically controlled studies*, in which the release of the findings is controlled and to select audiences only. Stufflebeam categorizes these program evaluation models as "pseudoevaluations" because he believes they promote invalid or incomplete findings. Because of this, he doesn't bother to evaluate them as legitimate program evaluation models.

The second category, *questions- and methods-oriented evaluation approaches*, is the largest of the four categories and includes all of the evaluation approaches designed to address specific questions and that use a particular method or set of methods. These include (a) *objective based studies*, which are guided by some statement of objectives; (b) *accountability/payment by results studies*, which focus on an objective assessment of outcomes; (c) *objective testing programs*, which includes all the standardized, norm-referenced, multiple choice testing programs such as the SAT and the ACT; (d) *outcome evaluation as value-added assessment*, which is a special use of standardized testing to evaluate the effects of programs or policies such as annual testing at all grade levels to assess trends; (e) *performance testing*, which was designed to offset the limitations of multiple-choice standardized tests by incorporating assessment of performance on tasks such as writing ability or musical ability; (f) *experimental studies*, which are controlled

experiments in which scientific principles such as random assignment are used; (g) *management information systems approaches*, which are approaches that provide managers with information they need to conduct and report on their programs; (h) *benefit-cost analysis approaches*, which utilize quantitative procedures to develop a full understanding of the costs of a program and also allow the researchers to weigh the costs against broader social benefits; (i) *clarification hearing*, in which the researchers create a trial-like setting to debate the pros and cons of a program; (j) *case study evaluation*, which provides an in-depth description of a program; (k) *the criticism and connoisseurship approach*, in which in-depth analysis and evaluation is provided by experts available in the relevant area or field; (l) *program theory-based evaluation*, in which a well-developed and validated theory is used to develop propositions about ideal outcomes and then the program is compared to the theoretical model; and (m) *mixed-methods studies* that are characterized by a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Stufflebeam's (2001) third category of program evaluation models is *improvement/accountability-oriented evaluation approaches* and includes models that emphasize the need to assess a program's merit and worth. Specific approaches in this category are (a) *decision/accountability-oriented studies*, which encourage the proactive use of the evaluation to help improve the program; (b) *consumer-oriented studies*, which evaluate the program from the consumer perspective; and (c) the *accreditation/ certification approach*, which are evaluations for the purpose of meeting accreditation or certification standards.

The fourth category includes the *social agenda/advocacy approaches*. These

kinds of program evaluations are designed to improve society through evaluation by

revealing inequities and then working to ensure equitable access to educational and social

opportunities. The four types of program evaluations in this category are (a) *client-

centered studies* (or *responsive evaluation*, Stake, 1983), in which the evaluators respond

to the needs of the clients and the stakeholders and interact continuously with them to

ensure that their needs are being met (also see Bryk, 1983); (b) *constructivist evaluation*,

which is similar to critical research in that it is heavily philosophical, frames knowledge

as a human construction, places stakeholders at the center of the evaluation process, and

adheres to strict ethical standards; (c) *deliberative democratic evaluation*, in which

researchers envision program evaluation as contributing to the democratization of society

through the dissemination of reliable and valid findings; and (d) *utilization-focused

evaluation*, a kind of evaluation that is explicitly geared toward ensuring that the program

has an impact.

Of these 22 program evaluation models, case study program evaluation is clearly

relevant to this study. In addition, two other models – program-theory based evaluation

and mixed-methods evaluation – have also informed the design of this study and merit

further elaboration.

Case Study as a Program Evaluation Method

In Stufflebeam's (2001) view, case study is "highly appropriate in program

evaluation" (p. 35), especially for the purposes of clarifying and illuminating certain

aspects of a program. According to Stufflebeam, a case study evaluation "is a focused,

in-depth description, analysis, and synthesis of a particular program or other object"

(p. 34). A key component of case study evaluation is that the researcher does not control any aspect of the program being evaluated but instead observes, records, and analyzes the program "as it is occurring or as it occurred in the past" (p. 34). Stufflebeam also discusses the importance of using a broad range of both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data from multiple sources in case study evaluation. Finally, because of what case study findings can reveal, Stufflebeam advocates identifying and engaging stakeholders in the research process so the findings will be of optimal use.

Whereas Stufflebeam (2001) provides a broad description of the usefulness of case study in evaluation research, other researchers including Yin (1992, 1993) have developed more detailed models for using case study methods in conducting program evaluations. As Yin's model is of particular relevance to the current study, it is described further in the following section.

Yin's description of case study as a tool for evaluation. Yin (1992, 1993) has written extensively about the appropriateness and common use of case study as a tool for conducting program evaluation. He defines evaluation as "a particular type of research intended to assess and explain the results of 'demonstrations'" which are "action projects or programmes, operated in any variety of real-life, field settings" (Yin, 1992, p. 121).

Like Stufflebeam (2001), Yin (1992) believes that key differences between evaluation research and other kinds of quantitative research are the researcher's lack of control over the variables in evaluation studies and the real life settings in which they are conducted. Because of these factors, Yin (citing Goodstadt) describes several unique challenges that case study evaluation can present. These include (a) the possibility of changes in the program that occur while the evaluation is underway that might lead to the

need for the researcher to develop different processes and protocols for assessment and evaluation; (b) potentially high rates of attrition on the part of participants or other units of analysis in the study; and (c) the potential for "strained relationships" (p. 123) between the evaluation team and program officials and administrators during the course of the evaluation. This last challenge highlights the need for the research team to develop strong relationships with the program administrators.

In Yin's (1992) view, although case study evaluations can be either explanatory or descriptive, most should be grounded in the theory that informs the program and also in the unique context of the program. As for data collection and analysis, all of the same principles discussed earlier with regard to Yin's overall approach to case study methodology apply, including the use of theory to inform the research design (for explanatory or descriptive case studies), defining the units of analysis of the study, paying careful attention to the design of the study, and employing multiple sources of data, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

In designing and conducting case study evaluations, Yin (1993) suggests the following nine steps:

1. *Develop a hypothesized understanding of the program being evaluated.* The researcher should develop a thorough understanding of the way the program operates, the context in which the program operates, and its intended outcomes. This understanding should be reflected in (a) a program logic model that traces "the causal flows of the program" (p. 73), and (b) an emerging list of "contextual conditions" (p. 73) of the program.

2. *Immerse this understanding within previous research, wherever possible*. This includes developing hypotheses about the program that are derived from theory as well as practice and developing rival theories and hypotheses as potential alternative explanations for program outcomes.

3. *Tentatively define the main and subordinate units of analysis*. In most cases, the program itself will be the main unit of analysis. Embedded units of analysis could include various sites or subgroups within the program, or specific clients or individuals.

4. *Establish a schedule and procedure for making interim and final reports*. In Yin's (1993) view, one of the most valuable aspects of using case study in evaluation is the ability of the researcher to provide periodic reports to program officials for their on-going review and feedback. This continuous cycle helps to clarify and refine the research process throughout to ensure that the final results are of optimal use.

5. *Define and test instruments, protocols, and field procedures*. This step should include engaging in a thorough assessment of the different kinds of data that might be available to the researcher and should also involve pilot testing of instruments and procedures when possible.

6. *Collect, analyze, and synthesize data*. Yin (1993), like Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995), suggests that data collection and data analysis in case study do not need to occur at one specified point in time. Rather, they "are likely to occur in an intermingled fashion" (Yin, 1993, p. 74) as new data become available. A critical component of this step is thoroughly documenting methodological steps throughout the research process in order to enhance reliability of the study.

7. *Create a case study database*. In Yin's (1993) view, this means creating a "formal database or archive" (p. 74) that is designed to include all of the quantitative and qualitative data collected in the study.

8. *Analyze the evidence*. In some cases, the process of data analysis in a case study might lead to the need to collect more evidence, although the decision to continue to collect data is always dependent on time and available resources. If it is determined that additional data need to be collected, the researcher should engage in the same careful attention to methods and process as in the initial data collection phase of the study.

9. *Compose the case study report*. Although final case study reports can be organized in a variety of ways, key characteristics include (a) a report that is separate from the case study database, and (b) a presentation of the key evidence used in the formulation of conclusions.

Finally, Yin (1992, 1993) believes that case study as a tool in program evaluation can be effectively used in combination with other evaluation methods, as long as the methods are "compatible and complementary" and "their features are not mixed within the same design" (1993, p. 75). Two additional program evaluation methods that are complimentary to case study evaluation that I have used in designing this study are program-theory based evaluation and mixed-methods evaluation. Both are discussed further in the next two sections.

Stufflebeam (2001) conducted an assessment of the usefulness and applicability of each of the 22 program evaluation models he reviewed by judging them on the criteria of utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. The results yielded three categories labeled "best and most applicable," those having "restricted but beneficial use," and those that

are "indefensible or least useful" (p. 7). In this assessment, case study was found to be one of the nine "best and most applicable" program evaluation approaches out of the 22 surveyed. Stufflebeam also noted that one of the specific strengths of case study is that "it can be employed on its own or as a component of any of the other approaches" (p. 89). This is an observation that supports Yin's (1993) view of the appropriateness of using case study in combination with other compatible program evaluation methods.

Program-Theory Based Evaluation

In program-theory based evaluation, also called theory-driven evaluation, researchers identify and utilize a theory or set of theories as a conceptual framework for the evaluation (Bickman, 1990; Chen, 1990; Greene, 2000; Stufflebeam, 2001; Weiss, 1972, 1998). A program theory, which is also sometimes called "a model of the program's logic" (Stufflebeam, p. 38), can be a pre-existing or established theory that informed the development of the program, such as Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Stufflebeam, 2001), or it can be a theory that is specific to the program and derived by the researchers to explain "the causal links that tie program inputs to expected program outputs" (Weiss, 1998, p. 55). Program theories usually inform program inputs, activities, desired end results, and/or outcomes. In order to define the program's theory, Weiss suggests the researcher ask, "What ideas and assumptions link the program's inputs to attainment of the desired ends?" (p. 55). Once a program theory is identified and defined, the researchers can use it to hypothesize about causal linkages between the various program elements and outcomes. They can also use it to develop questions, indicators, and protocols in conducting the program evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2001).

Many contemporary evaluation theorists such as Bickman (1990), Chen (1990), Green (2000), and Weiss (1998) argue that theory-based evaluation is promising and valuable as a program evaluation method. In Greene's view, a "key argument for theory-based evaluation is its potential to contribute to generalizable knowledge about how social interventions work and the conditions and factors that enable and obstruct their success" (p. 993).

Stufflebeam (2001), however, expresses doubts about the overall effectiveness of theory-based evaluation. In his assessment of the 22 program evaluation models, he placed program-theory based evaluation in the bottom five, in the "indefensible or least useful category." His primary concerns were the lack of feasibility of the method and the risk of "failed or misrepresented attempts" at using program theory as being "highly counterproductive" (p. 39). In his view, researchers can encounter trouble with this method, especially if they attempt to design a unique theory for a program or if they use theories that are not validated. Stufflebeam does, however, concede that the program-theory based evaluation approach can be effective and researchers can make good use of it in the "rare case" (p. 39) when an appropriate and validated theory for the program already exists.

Mixed-Methods Program Evaluation

Mixed-method program evaluation designs evolved out of the longstanding debate in the evaluation and research community about whether quantitative or qualitative methodologies are most effective and appropriate for program evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2001). As it became apparent that this debate would never be resolved,

some researchers began to advocate mixed-methods designs that employ a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative research and evaluation methods.

According to Stufflebeam (2001), "It is almost always appropriate to consider using a mixed-methods approach" (p. 41) in evaluation research because such an approach can provide the opportunity to collect data on a wide range of evaluation questions. In addition, a mixed-methods approach can produce findings that allow for both depth and breadth of understanding and can provide evaluators and program officials with an opportunity to gain a more holistic perspective on the program.

However, there are several potential drawbacks and limitations associated with a mixed-methods evaluation approach. These include the need for researchers to be adequately versed in both the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms in order to ensure that methods from each are applied properly, the possibility that researchers might allow a mixed-methods approach to compensate for a lack of rigor in the research design, and the possibility that the study will produce confusing findings, especially if program evaluation methods are mixed in an uncritical way (Stufflebeam, 2001).

In Stufflebeam's (2001) assessment of the 22 program evaluation models, he placed the mixed-methods approach in the middle category as having "restricted though beneficial use" (p. 7). The reasons for this include all the potential limitations discussed above. However, if the evaluator is careful to consider each of these limitations and addresses them appropriately in designing and conducting the evaluation, then the mixed-methods approach can be extremely effective.

Strengths and Limitations of Program Evaluation Models

Stufflebeam (2001) discusses several strengths and limitations associated with the three program evaluation models – case study evaluation, program-theory based evaluation and mixed-methods evaluation – that informed the design of this study. He praises the case study approach as "highly appropriate in program evaluation" (p. 35) for many of the same reasons Merriam (1998) cites. In his view, case study can provide an opportunity to look at programs "as they naturally occur and evolve" (p. 35), and can create a holistic and in-depth understanding. Additionally, case study program evaluations can be done either retrospectively or in real time and can provide extremely helpful information to program administrators that can accommodate their unique timelines as well as their specific needs and interests. A final strength of case study evaluation is that it can be used alone or in combination with a variety of other evaluation approaches.

One of the primary limitations of case study evaluation according to Stufflebeam (2001) is that "some evaluators may mistake its openness and lack of controls as an excuse for approaching it haphazardly and bypassing steps to ensure that findings and interpretations possess rigor as well as relevance" (p. 35). To overcome this limitation, he suggests fully addressing "the principles of sound evaluation as related to accuracy, utility, feasibility, and propriety" (p. 35).

Stufflebeam (2001) is critical of program theory-based evaluation as a sound approach with broad and useful application because he believes that programs are rarely developed from a relevant, validated theory. However, he acknowledges that if such a theory does exist, then the approach can be useful and beneficial if the evaluation is

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conducted with care. For this study, I believe that Perry's (1968/1970) theory of

intellectual and ethical development is a relevant and valid program theory for the

Common Ground Dialogue Program. Therefore, the use of program theory-based

evaluation in this study is appropriate and justified.

There are advantages as well as disadvantages associated with a mixed-methods

evaluation approach. One of the advantages is that qualitative and quantitative evaluation

methods "complement each other in ways that are important to the evaluation's

audiences" (Stufflebeam, 2001, p. 41). Quantitative approaches can contribute hard data

and appease those who value an empirical approach, while qualitative approaches "can be

delivered in interesting, story-like presentations" (p. 41) and can provide a deeper sense

of meaning and understanding. The primary disadvantage of using a mixed-methods

evaluation approach is that researchers often use it because it "is the popular thing to do

rather than because the selected methods best respond to the evaluation methods" (p. 41).

Stufflebeam also warns that researchers risk appearing as though they are compensating

for a lack of rigor by using too many methods. Further, mixed-methods approaches can

result in confusing findings if the final report is not written in a clear and well-organized

way.

<div align="center">Restatement of the Theoretical Frameworks for the Study</div>

The theoretical framework for a research project is "the structure, the scaffolding,

the frame" of the study (Merriam, 1998, p. 45). The theoretical framework is informed

by the researcher's disciplinary orientation and includes all the bodies of literature drawn

upon for the study. As such, the theoretical framework informs all aspects of the study,

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from the conceptualization of the research questions to the development of the research design and techniques for data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

There are multiple theoretical frameworks for this study. For the conceptualization of the three research questions, I have drawn primarily from the literature on college student development theory and specifically the literature on cognitive development of college students, especially as conceptualized by Perry's (1968/1970) theory of intellectual development. In addition, I have utilized the wide and growing body of literature on educational outcomes associated with diverse learning environments (e.g. Astin, 1993a; Hurtado, 2004; Hurtado et al., 1999; Smith et al., 1997) and the smaller body of literature on contemporary multicultural dialogue programs in colleges and universities around the country (Adams, 2004; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001).

The theoretical frameworks for the research design of this study are case study methodology and program evaluation models. For case study methodology, I have primarily used Yin (2003a, 2003b) and Merriam (1998), and I have been influenced by Stake (1995). Merriam's work has been important for providing overall guidance for the application of case study methodology to research in an educational context. Yin's work has been especially influential in informing the design of this case study, which includes both qualitative and quantitative research methods and the use of an existing theory to develop a hypothesis about the impact of the program on cognitive development. For program evaluation, I have been guided by Yin's model of case study as a tool for evaluation (1992, 1993), program theory-based evaluation models as discussed by Bickman (1990), Chen (1990), Greene (2000), Stufflebeam (2001), and Weiss (1972, 1998), and mixed-methods evaluation models as described by Stufflebeam.

CHAPTER 3

THE COMMON GROUND DIALOGUE PROGRAM

The program that provides the case for this study is the Common Ground

Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland, a program resulting from a

collaboration between the Department of Resident Life and the CIVICUS Living and

Learning Program. This chapter includes an overview of the Common Ground program,

a discussion of contexts and settings in which the program is situated, a brief history of

the program, a description of the major elements of the program including the Peer

Dialogue Leader training, and evaluation information from student dialogue group

participants through Spring 2004.

Overview of the Common Ground Dialogue Program

The Common Ground Dialogue Program is an analytical, task oriented approach

to dialogue that provides structured opportunities for diverse groups of 12 to 15

undergraduate students to engage in peer-led dialogues about serious issues that have

important implications for twenty-first century multicultural society in the United States

such as affirmative action, abortion, same-sex marriage, and the death penalty. The

Common Ground program results from a collaboration between the Department of

Resident Life and the CIVICUS program at the University of Maryland, a two-year

undergraduate living and learning program dedicated to teaching students principles and

practices of civic engagement and healthy civil society.

The primary goals of the Common Ground program are to provide students with

opportunities to learn how to engage in dialogue in order to increase their ability and

willingness to enter into future discussions about controversial topics with people who

have views or identities that are different from their own, and to demonstrate the importance of working toward common ground through a consensual decision making process that highlights mutual understanding in the midst of potentially irreconcilable positions and points of view. Additional goals include helping students to develop a better understanding of the complexity of a current multicultural issue or dilemma, providing opportunities for them to learn about how different perspectives are often linked to dimensions of identity, helping them to learn how to ask questions of one another in order to elicit greater personal and group understanding, helping them to develop a better capacity for viewing an issue through the eyes of another, and encouraging them to test their own views and beliefs through exposure to multiple perspectives. While there is no expectation that a dialogue group participant change his or her position as a result of the dialogue experience, it is hoped that each participant will gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of views that exist on the issue in ways that will ultimately broaden their own views if not change their positions.

There are several fundamental principles that underlie the design and structure of the Common Ground program. The first involves a willingness on the part of the dialogue group participants to commit to fundamental obligations related to listening and speaking to others that are necessary to establishing a climate that is conducive to constructive dialogue. Second, the presence of peers as dialogue leaders creates an environment for interaction that holds unique promise for stimulating undergraduate student dialogue and learning. Third, diversity along a variety of different dimensions of identity in participant groups as well as among the dialogue leader pairs is critical to creating opportunities for members to be exposed to the multiple perspectives that exist

on a given issue. Fourth, participation in a dialogue group should be voluntary; if

individuals are forced to participate in dialogue when they do not have an intrinsic

investment or desire, this potentially compromises the quality of the experience for the

other members. Fifth, group members must commit to attend, be on time for, and

participate in all sessions of the group. And sixth, leaders and participants must commit

to creating a climate that is welcoming and inclusive of multiple perspectives. This is

essential to successful dialogue. From the program's website:

> One of the fundamental principles underlying the Common Ground program is
> that some of the most powerful learning occurs through exposure to and
> consideration of multiple perspectives. Therefore, one of our most important
> goals is to create a dialogue group environment in which members talk openly
> and candidly about serious multicultural issues while also listening carefully to
> the views and experiences of others, especially if someone has a view that is
> different from their own. Because multiple perspectives are so important to
> dialogue and to learning, there is never a "right" or "wrong" view on a particular
> issue. In addition, group members shouldn't feel pressured or obligated to change
> their minds. Instead, we hope that each person emerges from the experience with
> a deeper and more complete understanding of the issue and its complexities.
> ("Common Dialogue Program," 2007, p. 1)

There are several elements of the Common Ground program. These include a

three-credit course that was designed in part to be a foundational experience for the Peer

Dialogue Leaders, the three-credit Peer Dialogue Leader training program, and the on-

going dialogue groups.

While not a direct component of the Common Ground program, a foundational

element of the Peer Dialogue Leader experience is a three-credit course called Leadership

in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301 that is taught each fall in the CIVICUS living and

learning program and required of all sophomores in CIVICUS. This course was

intentionally designed in part to provide a preparatory experience for prospective Peer

Dialogue Leaders. In the spring, a select group of students who performed well in the

course and who show an interest and aptitude for further training are accepted to participate in the three-credit Peer Dialogue Leader training program, which is an internship opportunity for the students that also partially fulfills their CIVICUS capstone requirement. After they have completed their training semester, many of the Peer Dialogue Leaders choose to remain affiliated with the program throughout the remainder of their undergraduate careers and continue to co-lead dialogue groups.

From Spring 2001 through Fall 2004, most of the undergraduate student participants in the Common Ground groups came from various academic classes and co-curricular programs at the University of Maryland including the Resident Assistant (RA) training course, first- and second-year CIVICUS classes, and first-year seminar classes in another living and learning program at the University of Maryland called College Park Scholars.

<div align="center">Context and Setting</div>

While Common Ground dialogue groups are conducted with student groups from a variety of different populations from the University of Maryland campus community, the Peer Dialogue Leaders (with the past exception of one) are chosen from the CIVICUS program. (From 2001 to 2005, trainers accepted one student into the Peer Dialogue Leader training program who was not a part of CIVICUS but was similarly qualified. All other dialogue leaders came from CIVICUS). Therefore, descriptions of both the University of Maryland and the CIVICUS Living and Learning Program are included in this section to provide an overall context and the settings for this case.

The University of Maryland

The University of Maryland is a large, land grant, research university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States in the Baltimore – Washington D.C. corridor in College Park, Maryland. The school was originally chartered in 1856 as the Maryland Agricultural College and became a state institution in 1916 ("University of Maryland Timeline," 2005).

Since the time it was founded, the University of Maryland has grown into the largest institution in the state and one of the 30 largest postsecondary institutions in the country (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). In 2004-2005, the academic year in which data were collected for this study, enrollment included 25,140 undergraduate students and 9,793 graduate students for a total enrollment of 34,933. There were 13 academic colleges and schools, 111 undergraduate majors, and 96 graduate degree programs. Full-time annual undergraduate tuition for FY2005 not including room and board was $7,410 for in-state students and $18,710 for out-of-state students ("University Quick Facts," 2005).

The Fall 2004 undergraduate student population at the University of Maryland included 12,305 women and 12,835 men. In terms of racial/ethnic diversity, 68% of the students were White and 32% were students of racial or ethnic minority groups, a figure that included 12.1% Blacks/African Americans, 13.7% Asian Americans, 5.5% Latino/as, and .3% Native Americans. A majority of the undergraduate students, 75.5%, were from the state of Maryland and the remaining 24.5% were from out of state. Almost all (98%) were from the United States; 2% were international students ("University Quick Facts," 2005).

The university has also tracked its history of enrollment for students from diverse identity groups. For example, the university website notes that the Maryland Agricultural College became the first U.S. college to award a degree to a Korean student, Pyon Su, who graduated in the late 1800s. The first women students were enrolled at the University of Maryland in 1916 and the first Chinese student entered in 1918. The first African American students were not admitted until 1951 when the university enrolled one graduate student and one undergraduate student ("University of Maryland Timeline," 2005).

Today, diversity is an issue that is widely discussed at the University of Maryland. There are several major campus-wide diversity initiatives including an Equity Council and a President's Diversity Panel that reports directly to the Office of the President. There are also a variety of other campus-wide programs, initiatives, and diversity-related resources offered through the offices of Academic Affairs, Administrative Affairs, Student Affairs, and the University System of Maryland ("Equity and Diversity," 2005).

In addition to its geographic location in a racially diverse metropolitan area, part of the history that informs the University of Maryland's emphasis on diversity is its involvement in a prominent national court case on affirmative action, *Podberesky v. Kirwan*, in 1994. This case resulted from a lawsuit filed in 1990 by Daniel Podberesky, a Latino student, who sued the University of Maryland because he was not allowed to apply for the Benjamin Banneker Scholarship. This was a prestigious award the university had established in 1979 for African American students in response to a federal desegregation order resulting from concerns that the Maryland system of higher

education was too racially segregated. In defending itself against Podberesky's lawsuit, the university argued that the Banneker scholarship was necessary to recruit and retain highly qualified African American students and to promote campus diversity. The university also put forth an unusual defense; it argued that because of the history and segregated past of both the state of Maryland and the University of Maryland, the present effects of past discrimination against African American students were still being felt on campus and as such, the scholarship was needed as a remedy. In May of 1995 the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the university's appeal thereby upholding a lower court decision in favor of Podberesky (*Podberesky v. Kirwan*, 1994). After losing the case, the university took the action of merging its two premier scholarships into one. The resulting scholarship is now called the Banneker/Key Scholarship and all students are eligible to apply (Bayly, 1998).

Despite the university's stated commitment to diversity, there is also evidence that contemporary undergraduate student reactions to this commitment and their perceptions of it are mixed. For example, in 2003 the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) of the University of Maryland conducted a study of perceptions of campus climate and community through focus groups with 157 undergraduate students from diverse identity groups. They found that while some students perceived the campus to be generally supportive and committed to diversity issues, others felt there were areas in need of improvement. The students in the study made several recommendations for improvement to the campus climate. Specifically, they recommended that the campus become more intentional about attending to issues of climate; establish more campus-wide celebrations and opportunities for interaction; involve faculty and academics in diversity issues;

increase attention and services to Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) issues; establish more classes and other kinds of support for specific groups, especially Latina/o and Native American students; and provide and encourage various kinds of diversity training (University of Maryland, 2003).

The CIVICUS Living and Learning Program

CIVICUS is a selective and innovative living and learning program sponsored jointly by the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSOS) and the Department of Resident Life. Established in 1999, the two-year academic citation program is designed for "academically talented and socially conscious students who want to get involved with the local community and develop their intellectual curiosities" ("CIVICUS," 2005, p. 1). The program involves approximately 125 first- and second-year students who live together in one designated residence hall and learn about principles and practices of civil society through both academic and co-curricular experiences.

Incoming first-year students are invited to join the CIVICUS program based on a review of their application to the university including their essays, high school transcripts, activities, leadership experiences, school and community involvement, and letters of recommendation. Invited students who choose to participate generally indicate their acceptance prior to beginning their first year at the university.

Although CIVICUS students pursue a variety of majors, they take several required CIVICUS classes together during their first and second years. Students also have many opportunities to enhance their academic work by volunteering with non-profit organizations, developing their own community service projects, and participating in internships throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area (CIVICUS, 2004).

In the second semester of their sophomore year, their last semester in the program, all CIVICUS students are required to complete a capstone experience that can be an internship, an extensive community service project, or a research project. As one option to complete this capstone requirement, students can apply to participate in the three-credit Peer Dialogue Leader training program in the Common Ground program.

As the participants in this study were all members of CIVICUS, it is important to consider aspects of the student culture in the program as well as characteristics of students that the program tends to attract, as these factors could potentially inform the findings. From my experiences over the past several years working with CIVICUS students, I would generally characterize them as engaged and amenable to the fundamental tenets of the program, which include a general commitment to civic ideals and community service. In addition, through anecdotal conversations with CIVICUS students over the years, it seems that many are drawn to the program and to the University of Maryland because they believe these settings will provide a college living and learning experience that will emphasize opportunities to meet and engage with people who are different from them and to learn about issues of diversity.

History of the Common Ground Dialogue Program

The initial conceptualization and planning for the Common Ground Dialogue Program began in the mid 1990s. It grew out of discussions among staff in the Department of Resident Life at the University of Maryland about creating ways to capitalize on the rich diversity of the student population by encouraging dialogue about multicultural issues among residence hall students.

The vision that began to take hold was creating a program that would bring small groups of students together for more formal opportunities for dialogue and discussion than would normally occur in the residence hall environment. Steve Petkas, Associate Director of the Department of Resident Life, developed these initial ideas. The planning and development further benefited from a long-term consulting relationship between Resident Life and Dr. Carlos E. Cortés, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California, Riverside and a nationally recognized author, scholar, consultant, teacher, and trainer in a variety of areas related to diversity, multiculturalism, the impact of the media on diversity, and intercultural understanding.

During the time these discussions were occurring, a new two-year living and learning program in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSOS) called CIVICUS was being developed with the goal of teaching students concepts related to civil society. A formal proposal for that program was submitted in 1998 (Briggs & Steele, 2001). Upon approval, Dr. Sue Briggs was named director.

As CIVICUS was being developed, it became apparent that the goals and values of the program were clearly in line with the initial thinking in Resident Life about the importance of dialogue in the residence hall community as a fundamental element of healthy civic engagement. Further, the CIVICUS program needed a diversity-related course for its required curriculum and also a capstone opportunity for its sophomore students. Out of these mutual needs, Resident Life and CIVICUS forged a collaboration that eventually formed the basis of the Common Ground program.

Steve Petkas continued to work with Dr. Cortés and Dr. Briggs in finalizing the design of the program and developing the teaching and training curricula and materials

for the three-credit academic course, taught in the fall, and the three-credit Peer Dialogue Leader training program, taught in the spring. Through these efforts, the Common Ground program was officially launched in Fall 2000 with the teaching of the first offering of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society course.

I became involved with the Common Ground program in 2000, that same year, when I returned to Maryland as a full-time doctoral student and began a graduate assistantship in the Department of Resident Life. In that position I became co-instructor of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society class, co-trainer for the Peer Dialogue Leader training program, and took on many coordination responsibilities for the program. Since then, I have assumed a full-time position in Resident Life and my involvement with the Common Ground program has expanded to areas that include teaching the Leadership in a Multicultural Society course, selecting and training the dialogue leaders, program management and development, marketing and promotion, setting up the dialogue groups, staff training, and on-going program evaluation.

<center>Leadership in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301</center>

Leadership in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301 is a three-credit course required of all sophomores in the CIVICUS program. The first sections of the course were taught in Fall 2000 when the students in the inaugural CIVICUS class started their second year. The course has been taught every fall since then in two or three sections that have ranged in size from 12 to 35 students each. Resident Life staff members have taught one of the sections and Dr. Briggs has taught the others. Although the syllabi and structure for the sections have evolved differently, the Resident Life and the CIVICUS sections have shared the same general course objectives and overall goals of teaching

students how to be constructive leaders in a twenty-first century American multicultural society.

I have been an instructor or co-instructor for the Resident Life section of the course for six of the seven years it has been taught. Therefore, when discussing the course, this is the section I will refer to throughout the remainder of the study.

Although the exact course content has changed as we have continued to experiment with different approaches and have learned new lessons each semester, specific objectives for the Resident Life section of the course have remained consistent: (a) to help students develop an understanding of the major dimensions of multicultural identity in the context of a twenty-first century United States society, (b) to help students understand and learn how to apply constructive leadership practices for effective leadership in a multicultural society, and (c) to help students understand how these major dimensions of identity and constructive leadership practices play out in the context of dilemmas that arise in a multicultural society (see class syllabus in Appendix C). An additional unwritten objective, and one of the primary purposes of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society course from the Resident Life and Common Ground program perspective, is to provide a strong foundational experience for the Peer Dialogue Leader training the following semester.

Many of the major concepts taught in the course were suggested, developed, or inspired by the collaboration between Steve Petkas and Dr. Cortés. Several of these concepts resulted directly from Cortés' numerous years of experience working with multicultural issues in a variety of different arenas. Examples of these major course concepts include nine primary dimensions of twenty-first century multicultural identity in

the United States (race/ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ability/disability, age, class, language, and citizenship), the multicultural dynamics of *perception*, *balance*, *equity*, *interaction*, and *limits* and how they occur within the context of *change*, and six constructive leadership practices that are important to successful leadership in a twenty-first century society in the United States. Additional key concepts covered in the class include individual and group identities (Cortés, 2002) and the role of constructive dialogue in positive individual and intergroup relations.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development informed the design of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society class as well as the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. Evidence of this appears in the *Course Introduction* that was written by the instructors for the Resident Life section (Petkas, 2004). This introduction explicitly states that two of the primary objectives of the class are for the students to gain an "enhanced understanding of the complexity of multicultural issues and dilemmas" (p. 3), and an "increased appreciation for and understanding of multiple perspectives" (p. 4).

The Fall 2004 syllabus for the Resident Life section of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society class is in Appendix C. Cortés' (2001) six constructive leadership practices that became foundational to the overall design of the Resident Life section of the course are in Appendix D.

<center>The Dialogue Groups</center>

The Common Ground program is based on a definition of dialogue drawn from five fundamental elements developed by Dr. Cortés: "Dialogue is *honest discussion* of *serious topics*, with *flexible minds*, *without polarizing*, *while maintaining civility*." In

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addition, it is hoped that the dialogue group participants will learn four predispositions: *to ask*, *to listen*, *to see life through another's eyes*, and t*o understand another's views instead of simply asserting one's own* ("Peer Multicultural Dialogue Leader Training Manual, 2004). As discussed previously, within this framework the primary goals of the program are to demonstrate to the dialogue group participants *how* to engage effectively in dialogue, to provide them with an opportunity to be exposed to multiple perspectives that inevitably exist on any topic and in any multicultural group, and to help them learn how to seek common ground across differences of opinion, identity, and competing points of view.

The Four-Session Common Ground Format

The original design for the Common Ground Dialogue Program involves four dialogue group sessions. In this four-session design, a diverse group of 12 to 15 students meets once a week for a 60 to 90 minute session for four consecutive weeks. Each group is built around a deliberative question involving a contemporary multicultural topic or dilemma, and each of the four sessions involves a specific task for the group to consider within the context of the larger deliberative question. The tasks are designed to be successive and build upon each other from week to week. For example, a deliberative question posed to the group might be, "Should the death penalty be abolished?" The specific tasks for each of the four group sessions would be (a) identifying the various and multiple "dimensions" of the issue or controversy, (b) identifying "options for action" that might be taken in response to this issue, (c) considering "actions the group can come to consensus on," and (d) discussing "consequences of these actions," including intended and unintended consequences (Peer Dialogue Leader Training Manual, 2004).

In the first of the four dialogue group sessions, the Peer Dialogue Leaders generally start by conducting an acquaintance activity related to identity. In this activity the dialogue leaders either provide or solicit an overview of several major dimensions of contemporary multicultural identity in the United States, including race/ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ability/disability, age, class, language, and citizenship. Then they ask the members of the group to take turns introducing themselves by choosing two or three of the dimensions and describing their meaning for them.

With guidance from the dialogue leaders, the group then spends the remainder of the session discussing the question, "What are the dimensions of this issue or controversy (the topic of the group)?" To prompt the group, the dialogue leaders might say, "What are all of the things you would want someone to know about this issue in order to have an informed dialogue about it?" (Peer Dialogue Leader Training Manual, 2004). The purpose of this first session is for the group members to brainstorm as many dimensions and factors as they can about the issue. For example, if a group is discussing the deliberative question, "Should colleges and universities use intentional methods in admissions to achieve greater racial/ethnic diversity in their student populations?" participants might cite dimensions of the issue such as historical legacies of race in this country, issues of equity versus equality, or the impact of consideration of race as a factor in admissions on perceived beneficiaries. Although the deliberative question sets the context and the dialogue leaders provide guidance, the ideas, examples, and dimensions come from the group. While the primary emphasis of the first session is on generating a lengthy list of dimensions that helps to illustrate the complexity of the topic, group

members may also choose to begin more in-depth discussion about a few of the specific dimensions identified.

In all four sessions, the dialogue leaders record detailed notes of the content generated during that session on newsprint. To help establish continuity between meetings, they bring these notes with them to each session and post them as the group reassembles.

Throughout all four sessions the dialogue leaders also encourage group members to conduct additional research outside the group and bring their findings to the next session if anyone in the group becomes curious about exploring an aspect of the topic further or is confused or intrigued by an issue that was raised. This is encouraged to empower the student participants to share leadership in driving and shaping the dialogue.

After having developed a list of dimensions of the issue in the first session, the question for the group in the second session is, "What are the options for action in response to this issue?" To respond to this question, the group considers all the dimensions brainstormed in the first session and begins to discuss them in more depth for the purpose of identifying potential options for action. In the second session, the nature of the question often prompts the group to adopt the thinking, "If we were in charge and could do whatever we wanted to do with regard to this issue, what would we do?" In continuing with the affirmative action example, options for action might include keeping policies or practices the way they are, developing new policies, modifying existing policies, or abolishing them altogether. One of the important aspects of the task for the second session is brainstorming as many *possible* options as the group can without

necessarily taking the time to evaluate them or engage in in-depth discussions about them.

After the group has developed a list of potential options for action, the question for the third session is, "What are actions the group can come to consensus on?" In this session, the group reviews all of the options generated in the second session and through in-depth dialogue, works to identify one or more option for action that *every* member of the group can agree to. Consensus here is defined as every person in the group being able to live with the option, even if it isn't necessarily their first choice. If there are one or more members of the group who simply cannot agree to a particular option for action that others are advocating for, then the group is urged to consider different angles of that option by thinking creatively about it to see if new possibilities for consensus might be revealed. If they are unable to succeed with that approach, they need to move on to other possibilities that hold more potential for finding consensus and common ground.

The overall goal of the third session is to teach students how to seek common ground through the exercise of consensual deliberative decision-making. Key elements of this are careful listening, active engagement, and a potential willingness to modify one's personal stance for the purpose of identifying creative and flexible solutions when faced with what appear to be irreconcilable elements. To safeguard against a "majority rules" sentiment that might evolve, the Peer Dialogue Leaders are trained to watch the group closely throughout this session (as well as all the others) to try to ensure that students who have views or opinions that are different from the majority have an opportunity to express themselves and are heard and understood by the other members of the group.

In the fourth session, the group considers the question, "What might be some consequences of taking these actions?" In this final session, participants are encouraged to be creative about thinking through all the possible intended or unintended consequences or outcomes that could result from the options for action they had come to consensus on in the previous meeting. For example, if the group came to consensus on eliminating college and university admissions programs that take race into account, then possible consequences of this action might be that fewer students of color would gain access to higher education and therefore colleges and universities would become less racially diverse. The primary goal of this session is to illustrate to the students the importance of thinking intentionally and critically about all of the consequences of actions that leaders might take, including both intended and unintended consequences. It is also hoped that this session will prompt the participants to continue to wrestle with and seek further understanding of the complexities posed by multifaceted societal dilemmas.

Although the guiding questions for each of the four sessions are laid out in advance, the Peer Dialogue Leaders have flexibility throughout to adapt their leadership approach in each session depending on the mood, desires, participation, and investment of the group. They are trained that the ultimate goal of Common Ground groups is dialogue; if the discussion meets the five criteria developed by Dr. Cortés and laid out in the program's definition of dialogue (*honest discussion* of *serious topics*, with *flexible minds*, *without polarizing*, *while maintaining civility,* Peer Multicultural Dialogue Leader Training Manual, 2004), and if all the participants in the group are engaged, then regardless of whether the discussion is "on topic" or not, it is likely a good dialogue. This distinction between process and content (or task) is often a difficult one for the

dialogue leaders to learn. In rare cases, the Peer Dialogue Leaders who clearly

understand this distinction might choose to set aside the initial objective portrayed in the

session outline entirely based on the reaction of the group to the topic or the question at

hand and pursue an entirely different path. Usually this is done after consultation with

the trainers between sessions, although some dialogue leaders have made impromptu

decisions about this on their own.

As emphasized throughout this chapter, one of the primary goals of the four-

session format is to help students learn how to find consensus or common ground in the

midst of multiple and sometimes competing opinions and perspectives. Because of this,

the four-session format is called the "Common Ground" format.

Given the successive nature of the tasks for each of the four dialogue group

sessions, the Common Ground format also requires consistent weekly attendance on the

part of all members of the group in order to create an environment in which the group can

develop cohesion, which increases the likelihood of authentic dialogue. For these

reasons, attendance policies for the four-session groups are strict. Participants are told in

advance that they must attend all four sessions. If they miss a session, they will not be

allowed to continue with the group unless there are extenuating circumstances that merit

exception.

Four-session Common Ground groups have been conducted with a variety of

different deliberative questions having implications for twenty-first century multicultural

society in the United States. Examples include questions relating to interracial adoption,

affirmative action, equal pay for men and women, interracial dating, abridgements of

personal freedoms after September 11th, same-sex marriage, racial profiling, abortion,

and the death penalty. Over the years, the most popular choices among the dialogue group participants have been affirmative action and abortion.

One of the most adaptable features of the Common Ground program is that any topic that fits a few specified criteria can potentially be shaped into a deliberative question that holds promise for effective dialogue. This is because the Peer Dialogue Leaders are trained in the process of leading a group and not necessarily in topic content. Their ability to successfully lead a group is not dependent on their expertise on the topic. Instead, their primary roles as facilitators are to establish the parameters for the group, set up the initial questions for the group to consider, attend to group processes and dynamics throughout, encourage the group to generate the content, and ideally, to facilitate an atmosphere in which the group begins to manage itself.

There are several criteria for questions and topics that hold the best promise for stimulating effective and engaging dialogue. The best topics are those that involve serious issues having important societal implications, are multidimensional in that there are multiple and legitimate competing points of view about them, and typically involve different aspects of individual or group identity. If one or more of these elements is missing, the topic may not result in an engaging or compelling dialogue.

Topics and questions can be identified and shaped in a variety of different ways. If several groups are being organized at one time from a large pool (for example, a large number of students from the RA training course), a list of questions is developed, narrowed, and refined through consultation with the Peer Dialogue Leaders and the program coordinators that they think undergraduate students will find interesting and challenging and meet the criteria above. A dialogue group preference form is then

developed with these questions and distributed to all potential participants. As investment in the question and the topic of the dialogue is critical to the success of the group, students are asked to rank their top three choices for topics and every effort is made to accommodate their interests. If a student does not indicate interest in a topic that is chosen, the program coordinators carefully consider whether to place him or her into the group. Each student is also asked to provide identity information including gender, race/ethnicity, religion, country of origin and sexual orientation (optional) and their schedule of availability.

After reviewing all the participant forms, the program coordinators create groups of 12 to 15 students that accommodate the participants' topic preferences and schedules as much as possible and are as diverse as possible, especially along dimensions of identity that might be particularly relevant to the topic of the group. If just one group is being arranged, Common Ground staff will work with the group coordinator to assist him or her in crafting a deliberative question that meets the above criteria and is hopefully of interest and relevance to the potential group members.

All of the Peer Dialogue Leaders who participated in this study co-led a four-session dialogue group as part of their experience in the dialogue leader training program. None of them led one-session groups during the semester of the study, which are described in the next section. Therefore, when the Peer Dialogue Leaders' experiences leading dialogue groups are discussed throughout the remainder of this study, it is always in the context of their experiences leading four-session groups.

The One-Session Format

Although none of the participants in this study co-led a one-session group during the semester of the study, a description of the one-session format is given here to provide a complete description of the Common Ground Dialogue Program. In Fall 2004, the one-session dialogue group format was developed and introduced in order to achieve one of the original visions for the program, which was to create opportunities for students as members of residence hall floors and halls to engage in peer-led dialogues about important societal issues. The one-session format fit that vision by making dialogues more accessible to RAs and others who might be interested in organizing a group but would have difficulty arranging a group of students who could realistically commit to meeting for four consecutive sessions.

In the one-session format the prompt question for the group is, "What is the meaning of (this topic) to me?" For example, if the topic is the War in Iraq, students would be encouraged to reflect on their personal thoughts and feelings associated with the meaning for them and then convey whatever they were comfortable sharing with the group. The primary goal of this format is for the participants to achieve understanding, and often this understanding occurs across differences of identity or perspective. Although the one-session format is not task-oriented like the four-session format, meaning that there are not specific, defined tasks for the group to accomplish, the goals of providing students with an opportunity to learn *how* to engage in dialogue and helping them to gain insight into the multiple perspectives that exist on any given multicultural or societal issue are consistent for both designs.

Topics for one-session groups have included many of those mentioned earlier such as the death penalty, abortion, and same-sex marriage. Additional topics for one-session groups have included the 2004 Presidential election, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, hate crime laws, and perceptions of "diversity" at the University of Maryland.

Dialogue Group Participant Evaluation Information

From Spring 2001, the first semester in which dialogues were conducted, through Fall 2004, there were a total of 33 four-session Common Ground groups with 356 student participants. In addition, seven one-session groups were conducted with a total of 80 dialogue group participants including a one-session pilot group in Spring 2004. The participants for the four-session Common Ground groups during this period of time came from the RA training course (65%), first-year CIVICUS classes (24%), and second-year CIVICUS classes (11%) at the University of Maryland.

Participant evaluations have been completed for every Common Ground dialogue group that has been conducted. For four-session groups, the evaluation form consists of a combination of open-ended questions about the student's experience as a participant in the group and three questions on a three-point scale asking them to evaluate (a) a Participant's Guide that is given to each participant and reviewed by the dialogue leaders in the first session of the group; (b) the extent to which the Peer Dialogue Leaders were "helpful," "had no effect," or were "unhelpful"; and (c) how the experience might affect their future willingness to engage with people who are different from them on issues that are divisive. Response options for this last item are "more willing to engage," "no effect," or "less willing to engage."

Information from the participant evaluations of the 356 students who participated

in the 33 four-session Common Ground groups between Spring 2001 and Fall 2004 are

presented in Table 1. This table includes results from two specific evaluation questions:

(a) "helpfulness" of the dialogue leaders, and (b) "willingness to engage."

Table 1

Participant Evaluations of Four-Session Dialogue Groups: Spring 2001 – Fall 2004

_____

Total participants: $N = 356$	Responses	Percentage
"Helpfulness" of the Peer Dialogue Leaders		
Helpful	341	95.8 %
No effect	13	3.7 %
Unhelpful	2	.6 %
Impact of the Experience on "Willingness to Engage"		
More willing	259	72.8 %
No effect	92	25.8 %
Less willing	3	.8 %
No response	2	.6 %

_____

Of the 92 students who indicated "no effect" in response to whether the program

had an impact on their "willingness to engage" in the future with people who are different

from them about controversial topics, a substantial number wrote comments indicating

that the reason they responded this way was because they were already willing to engage prior to the experience and therefore the group had "no effect" on their willingness.

Although there are limitations associated with the wording of some of the questions on the four-session group evaluation form and the use of the three-point scale for the three quantitative questions, the self-reported data from these evaluations provide evidence of positive participant experiences in the four-session Common Ground groups.

The extensive comments written by the student participants on the four-session group evaluations from Spring 2001 through Fall 2004 have also been transcribed. As the focus of this study is the Peer Dialogue Leaders, participant comments in response to the question, "Please comment on the extent to which the Peer Dialogue Leaders had an influence on your experience" are included in Appendix E.

<div align="center">The Peer Dialogue Leader Training Program</div>

One of the most distinctive features of the Common Ground Dialogue Program is the exclusive use of peers as dialogue group leaders. All of the dialogue leaders in the program are undergraduate college students who have completed an extensive, semester-long Peer Dialogue Leader training program.

Near the end of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society course each fall, students are invited to apply to the spring Peer Dialogue Leader training program as one of the options to fulfill the internship component of their CIVICUS capstone requirement. Any student who completes the course with a grade if B or better is eligible to apply. The instructors of the classes also make a special effort to encourage those who have performed well in the class and who show particular promise and potential for leading multicultural dialogues to consider applying to the training program.

The application to the training program consists of short answer questions relating to the student's desire and motivation to be trained as a Peer Dialogue Leader. A letter of reference is also required. Final decisions are made based on a review of the applications and after consultations with the course instructors.

The size of the training groups has ranged from 7 to 14, with higher numbers in more recent years. Due to logistical considerations, the size is generally capped at no more than 14 trainees. From Spring 2001 through Spring 2004, 36 undergraduate students completed the Peer Dialogue Leader training program.

In the first two years of the Common Ground program, as it was getting established, almost every student who applied to the dialogue leader training program was accepted. However, due to increased popularity of the program and also increased enrollment in the Leadership in a Multicultural Society classes over the years, the process has become increasingly selective.

The Preparation Phase

The Peer Dialogue Leader training program begins at the start of the spring semester in the last week of January. The first phase of the training program, the *preparation phase*, consists of approximately 50 hours of training and occurs during the first seven weeks of the semester. Training sessions in the preparation phase almost always occur in the evenings and on weekends and are scheduled based on the students' and trainers' availability. They might be spread out over several evenings for several weeks or the group might choose to schedule fewer intensive weekend days in order to reach the required number of hours.

Regardless of the actual schedule, the curriculum for the preparation phase is outlined in a weekly format. In the first week, training topics include an overview of the Common Ground program such as foundations and philosophy; an overview of the nature of dialogue; a comparison of dialogue, debate, and discussion; and the goals for each of the four dialogue group sessions.

It is important to note that the dialogue leaders are trained first to lead the four-session Common Ground group format which prepares them for the experiential aspect of the training semester later on. Near the end of the training semester, after they have gained experience co-leading a four-session group, they receive training on how to co-lead the one-session dialogue groups. This sequencing is intentional and has evolved from the trainers' belief that the four-session training and leading experience creates a solid foundation for the one-session training later on. This is because working with a four-session group is a much more structured experience because of the specific tasks associated with each dialogue group session and is therefore potentially easier for a new trainee to master, as compared to working with a one-session group, which is much less structured and relies on more advanced facilitative skills.

In the second week of the preparation phase, the trainees learn about basic dialogue leader skills such as monitoring self-awareness, understanding personal communication styles, listening skills, recognizing and responding to hot buttons, and understanding comfort zones. They also review a document entitled *Development of Quality of Thinking* (Petkas, 2001) that was adapted primarily from Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development for the purposes of helping the dialogue leaders to recognize, understand, and respond to the varied kinds of thinking that participants in the

dialogue groups might demonstrate, and also to help them reflect on their own thinking as dialogue leaders. This document is in Appendix F.

In the third week of the training, the students examine participant behaviors in multicultural dialogue groups including roles that participants might play in dialogue groups and the subsequent influences of those various roles on the group. In the fourth week, the trainees learn about advanced dialogue leader skills including leader behaviors in multicultural dialogue groups; facilitative, interpretive, and confrontive behaviors; reframing skills; tips for effective discussion leadership; and dealing with typical challenges as a dialogue group leader. In the fifth week, trainees view film clips of group interactions, analyze participant and leader behaviors in the clips, and discuss how they might have responded if they were a leader or a member of the group.

In the sixth and seventh weeks of the preparation phase, the trainees participate in dialogue group simulations. For the simulations, members of the training group assume the roles of dialogue group members in simulated four-session discussions of topics they are likely to co-lead in the leading phase (e.g. abortion, the death penalty, and same-sex marriage). Trainees practice their skills in the simulations by taking turns co-leading the group in different leader-pair combinations. In these later sessions, the trainees also spend time discussing suggestions for helping a dialogue group achieve consensus and common ground.

A significant aspect of the experience of participating in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program is exposure to multiple perspectives that exist on a variety of contemporary societal multicultural topics and dilemmas. The entire training semester, including both the preparation phase and the leading phase, is intentionally designed to

promote complexity of thinking, to teach thinking about dialogue group processes, and to give students practical experiences as discussants and leaders in handling various multicultural topics.

One way exposure to multiple perspectives is achieved in the preparation phase, among the group of trainees, is through the encouragement of role-playing. During simulations and informal dialogues in the preparation phase, the trainees as well as the trainers may participate in one of two ways. Either they may participate as themselves, by interjecting their own views and perspectives, or they may adopt roles that may or may not be similar to their own views and persona. This is done to allow the trainees maximum flexibility to explore their own views as well as other views that might exist on the topic, to prevent any individual from feeling forced to participate in a dialogue as themselves if they have strong emotional or personal connections or reactions to a topic that for some reason they may not wish to share with the group, and ultimately to introduce a wider variety of perspectives and views into the simulated discussions that may not necessarily have been introduced if everyone in the training group had participated as themselves. The trainers in particular are intentional about introducing a wide variety of ideas, including those that are sometimes controversial, that may not have been introduced otherwise to promote critical thinking and exposure to multiple perspectives, and ultimately to help prepare the dialogue leaders and equip them to handle a myriad of different situations that might arise in their groups. Throughout the training, no participants, including the trainers, are ever pressured to reveal whether they were participating in a dialogue as themselves or playing a role. Through this approach, a degree of anonymity and privacy is protected for the trainees unless they choose to

reveal to the group their true views or perspectives. Above all, the overriding expectation is that the trainees listen to the views that are presented in a way they might not have ordinarily listened and to reflect on how their experiences in the simulated discussions will help them as dialogue leaders.

After the simulations are completed in the preparation phase, the trainers make decisions about leader pairs and make final assignments to dialogue groups based on observations of the trainees throughout the course of the preparation phase and their performance in the simulations. The leader pairs are then expected to spend time engaging in any final preparations needed for co-leading their groups. The groups begin immediately after Spring Break.

The Leading Phase

After Spring Break, the leader pairs begin to co-lead a four-session Common Ground group with participants from the spring RA training course at the University of Maryland. This is a three-credit class required of students who have been selected as candidates for the Resident Assistant (RA) position in the residence halls for the upcoming year. As one of the fundamental tenets of the Common Ground program is that dialogue group participation should be voluntary, the students in the RA training course are offered the option of participating in a Common Ground group from among two additional options to fulfill an identity exploration assignment for the class.

The Common Ground groups offered for the RA training course are typical four-session groups that meet once a week for approximately 60 to 90 minutes for four consecutive weeks. Throughout the time the Peer Dialogue Leaders lead these groups, they also engage in weekly consultation meetings with the trainers in which they reflect

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on and evaluate their experiences in each session and discuss strategies for approaching upcoming sessions.

After the four-session dialogue groups have concluded, the dialogue leaders participate in follow-up meetings and other training sessions as determined by the trainers and dictated by the needs and interests of the training group. These occur throughout the remainder of the semester.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study is presented in this chapter. It includes a restatement of the three research questions and a description of the research design, which includes an overview of the research methods, a discussion of the units of analyses, and a description of the specific methods for each research question. It also includes sections describing the five sources of data for this study, data collection methods, and procedures for data analysis. Several issues related to trustworthiness in this study are also discussed, including techniques that were incorporated to establish reliability, validity, dependability, and consistency. This chapter concludes with sections on the role of the researcher in qualitative research, issues of subjectivity related to this study, and ethical issues in case study research and this study.

Restatement of the Research Questions

As presented in Chapter 1, there are three research questions for the study. All relate to the experience of the undergraduate college students who participated in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program in Spring 2005:

1. What is the impact of the training program on (a) cognitive development, and (b) understanding of multiple perspectives?

2. What is the nature of the experiential learning that occurs through participation in the training program?

3. How do the dialogue leaders characterize their learning from the training program?

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Research Design

To study these questions I conducted an evaluative case study that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research methods, multiple sources of data, and multiple procedures for data analysis. Program evaluation models also informed the evaluation aspect of this case study.

Overview of Research Methods

In developing the research methods for this study, I was informed by various researchers and theorists who discuss case study methodology and also program evaluation models. For case study methodology, the primary influences were Yin (1984, 1993, 1994, 2003a, 2003b) and Merriam (1988, 1998), and I was also informed by Stake (1995, 2000). For program evaluation, I used Yin's model of case study as a tool for evaluation (1992, 1993), program theory-based evaluation models as discussed by Bickman (1990), Chen (1990), Greene (2000), Stufflebeam (2001), and Weiss (1972, 1998), and mixed-methods evaluation models as described by Stufflebeam.

Defining the Case: Units of Analyses and Sample

The setting for this case study, the Common Ground Dialogue Program at the University of Maryland, has been described in depth in Chapter 3. The particular aspect of the Common Ground program that is the focus of this study is the semester-long Peer Dialogue Leader training program. Specific outcomes of interest associated with participation in the training program were cognitive development, understanding of multiple perspectives, experiential learning, and students' characterizations of their overall learning.

Primary Unit of Analysis – The Peer Dialogue Leader Training Program

As described in Chapter 3, the Peer Dialogue Leader training program is a semester-long internship experience consisting of seven weeks or approximately 50 hours of instruction and simulations (the preparation phase), four consecutive weeks of co-leading a four-session Common Ground dialogue group (the leading phase), and additional training sessions and meetings that occur at the end of the semester. Therefore, the bounded case for this study, or the primary unit of analysis (Merriam, 1998), was the Peer Dialogue Leader training program at the University of Maryland during Spring 2005, which began on January 27 and ended on May 13.

Embedded Units of Analysis – Individual Study Participants

Whereas the training program was the primary unit of analysis, the embedded units of analysis for this study (Merriam, 1998) were those undergraduate students in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program during Spring 2005 who agreed to participate in this study.

There were 11 students total in the training program that semester. To identify the participants for this study, I invited all 11 of the trainees to participate. To extend these invitations, I attended an early organizational meeting at the start of the training semester to describe the study to the trainees and provide an overview of the participant obligations for the study. These included two written essays for the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID), two individual interviews, and periodic e-mail reflections to me over the course of the training semester. Students were told that all those who agreed to participate in the study and successfully completed the obligations would receive a $150 gift certificate to their choice of Target or Best Buy at the end of

the training semester. All of the trainees were invited to participate in the study, but I also clarified that they were in no way obligated to participate as part of their Peer Dialogue Leader training experience and that any of them was free to decline without penalty.

Of the 11 students in the Spring 2005 training program, 8 agreed to participate in the study. The informed consent form signed by each of the eight participants is in Appendix G. Additional information about the eight undergraduate students who agreed to participate in the study, including their pseudonyms and demographic information, is provided at the beginning of Chapter 5.

<div align="center">*Methods for Each Research Question*</div>

Research Question 1: What is the impact of the training program on (a) cognitive development, and (b) understanding of multiple perspectives? To study this question, I used explanatory case study methods (Yin, 2003a) and drew from an existing theory (Perry, 1968/1970) to set up an empirical research hypothesis. Specifically, this hypothesis was that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has a positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry's theory of intellectual development and on students' understanding of multiple perspectives.

As explained in depth in the previous chapter, Perry's (1968/1970) theory describes a cognitive/intellectual process through which traditional-aged college students typically move from a *dualistic*, either/or view of the world to a *multiplistic* view in which they see and acknowledge multiple viewpoints but are not yet able to effectively evaluate and prioritize the relative merits of each. According to Perry, development

beyond multiplicity is *contextual relativism*, in which people are able to think across contexts, prioritize competing points of view, and effectively weigh evidence.

To study the hypothesis that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program enhances cognitive complexity according to Perry's (1968/1970) theory, I gathered data from two administrations of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) (Knefelkamp, 1974; Widick, 1975), the first near the start of the training semester and the second at the end (see Appendixes H – J), interviews with each participant at the middle and at the end of the training semester (see Appendixes K and L), observations of preparation sessions throughout the first half of the training semester and consultation sessions in the leading phase (see Appendix M), and participant e-mail reflections over the course of the semester (see Appendix N). To enrich the data from the case study, I also conducted a separate sub-study, a focus group with five Peer Dialogue Leader alumni from various previous years of the training program (see Appendix O for the focus group interview protocol).

Analysis of the data for Research Question 1 included an analysis of the MID results, quantitative methods of pattern matching (Yin, 2003b), and qualitative methods of interpretive analysis (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) that involved the identification of categories, themes, and patterns in the data. Specific techniques and procedures for data collection and analysis in this study are detailed in the "Measures and Procedures" section later in this chapter.

Research Question 2: What is the nature of the experiential learning that occurs through participation in the training program? I used a descriptive case study approach to study this research question. The sources of data included participant interviews

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(Appendixes K and L), observations, (Appendix M), and participant e-mail reflections (Appendix N). Specific interview questions and e-mail reflection prompts were designed to elicit information about students' experiential learning in the training program. This included their expectations of leading the dialogue groups in the preparation phase as compared to their actual experiences leading groups in the leading phase. Data gathered from the sub-study, the focus group with the Peer Dialogue Leader alumni, were also included in the analysis for Research Question 2.

My previous experience with the Common Ground program has led me to speculate that while students learn a great deal in the preparation phase of the program, a different and significant kind of learning occurs once they actually begin the experiential activity of co-leading the dialogue groups. Therefore, while I entered into this study with this informal hypothesis in mind for this research question, I did not view the design for this question to be empirical or quantitative. Instead I viewed it as a qualitative, descriptive case study question in which I looked for relevant categories, themes, and patterns in the data.

Research Question 3: How do the dialogue leaders characterize their learning from the training program? Because I did not have a specific hypothesis in mind prior to the study about how the students would characterize their learning from the training program, and because there has never been a formal study conducted on the experience of the Peer Dialogue Leaders in this program, the possibilities for responses to this question were open. Therefore, I used exploratory case study methods to study it (Yin, 2003a). The participants were asked to respond to open-ended questions in the interviews about their perceptions of their learning from the program (see Appendixes K and L), and they

were also asked to reflect on this learning in their e-mail reflections. Information gathered from the alumni focus group was also included to augment the findings. The data were analyzed for categories, themes, and trends.

Measures and Procedures

Data Sources and Collection

The importance of collecting data from multiple sources in case study research for the purposes of data triangulation is well-established in the literature (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003a, 2003b). Data for this study were collected from five sources. The first four sources related to the eight participants in the Spring 2005 training program: (a) a quasi pre- and a post- administration of the MID; (b) participant interviews; (c) observations of training sessions; and (d) participant e-mail reflections. The fifth source of data was the focus group, a separate sub-study conducted with five alumni of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program.

Data from these multiple sources were collected at several different points over the course of the training semester. Table 2 presents a depiction of these various data collection points for the eight participants in the dialogue leader training program. The alumni focus group was conducted after the Spring 2005 training semester.

Table 2

Data Collection Points During the Training Semester

_____

| | Preparation Phase | | Leading Phase | |
	Beginning/During	End	Beginning/During	End
MID Essays	1			1
Interviews		1		1
Observations	4 (group)		5 (pairs) 2 (group)	
E-Mail Reflections		1	4	

_____

Instrumentation – The Measure of Intellectual Development (MID)

As introduced in Chapter 2, the MID (Knefelkamp, 1974; Widick, 1975) is a qualitative paper and pencil measure that utilizes open-ended essay prompts to assess students' development along the first five positions of Perry's (1968/1970) theory (Mines, 1982; Moore, 2004b).

In its current format, the MID consists of four options for essay prompts. Essay A asks students to describe the best course they've ever experienced, Essay AP asks them to describe a course that represents their ideal learning experience, Essay Q prompts them to look back on an experience in a course or program and reflect on their learning, and Essay C asks about issues related to career planning and vocational decision-making. Because Essay Q asks students to reflect back on an experience, it can also be used as a post-measure. Although the standard format for the MID is a single essay that typically

focuses on either the student's best class (Essay A) or ideal learning environment (Essay AP), researchers may use various combinations of any of the four essays depending on their needs ("MID: Frequently Asked Questions," 2002). Complete versions of the four MID essay prompts are in Appendix A.

Each essay takes 30 to 40 minutes to complete and is scored by raters trained by the Center for the Study of Intellectual Development (CSID). Once scored, each essay yields a number corresponding to the first five positions in the Perry (1968/1970) scheme ("MID: Frequently Asked Questions," 2002).

The original intent of the two administrations of the MID in this study was for them to be pre- and post-measures of the participants' cognitive development during training semester, with the first administration occurring at the very beginning of the semester and the other at the end. However, due to the timing of the IRB approval for this study, I was unable to give the first administration as planned at the first training session of the semester, which occurred on January 27, 2005. Instead, the first administration was given on February 15, two weeks into the semester. At that time, the trainees had completed approximately 9 of 50 hours (18%) of their training in the preparation phase of the program. Therefore, instead of referring to the first administration of the MID in this study as a "pre-test", I am referring to it as a "quasi pre-test."

As the intent of the MID administrations was "pre" and "post," the essays best suited for these purposes were Essay A as the quasi pre-measure, which asks students to describe the best course they've ever experienced, and Essay Q as the post-measure, which asks students to look back on their experience in a course or program and reflect

on their learning. In planning for the study, I consulted with Dr. William Moore at CSID about the research design and use of the MID essay prompts.

Essay A, the quasi pre-test, was administered to the participants on February 15, 2005. Essay Q, the post-test, was administered at the end of the training semester on May 10, 2005. The MID cover sheet for both administrations of the instrument is in Appendix H. The specific essay prompts are in Appendixes I (for Administration 1) and J (for Administration 2).

All essays were sent to CSID in Olympia, Washington for scoring. The cost was $6.00 per essay for two raters per essay and reconciled ratings ("MID: Frequently Asked Questions," 2002).

As described in Chapter 2, there are other popular instruments designed to assess cognitive development as conceptualized by Perry (1968/1970), most notably the MER (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1985). I chose the MID for several reasons. First, in contrast to the MER which is classroom oriented, the design of the MID essay prompts were a better fit with the dialogue leader training program; I felt that there was a stronger likelihood that the MID would have face validity for the participants in this study and would make more sense to them in the context of the training program, which was a class but not a typical class experience. Second, the MID lends itself more readily to a pre- and post- research design which was important to the design of this study. Third, interrater reliability ratings for the MID, especially on the dominant ratings of the Perry positions, have been reported to be very high, with correlations of .73 to 1.00 (Evans et al., 1998). Validity studies have also shown it to have fairly good correlation with other

instruments designed to measure similar cognitive development constructs ("Student-Affairs Related Outcomes Instruments," 2004).

Results from the two MID administrations in this study are presented in Chapter 5. They are discussed further in Chapter 6.

Interviews and Protocols

Qualitative interviewing has been discussed extensively in the literature by several writers including Fontana and Frey (2000), Merriam (1998), Patton (2002), and Weber (1986). In-depth research interviews can take many different forms; they can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, and they can occur individually, in small groups, and in larger groups (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Merriam, 1998).

For this study I conducted two semi-structured individual interviews with each of the eight participants lasting approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours each. I specifically designed the interview protocols to cover issues and questions raised by each of the three research questions for this study.

In order to assess change over the course of the semester, the timing of the two interviews was intentionally designed. The first interview (the mid-semester interview) was conducted at the midpoint of the training program, between the preparation phase and the leading phase. The second interview (the end-semester interview) was conducted at the end of the training semester, after the participants had finished co-leading their four-session dialogue groups. For both interviews, I used a semi-structured format that provided a common starting point for each interview but also enabled me to adapt each interview by using different probes and follow-up questions in ways that were unique to each participant and allowed me to pursue leads raised by their previous comments.

The first interview (the mid-semester interview) focused on four primary content areas: (a) overall impressions of the Peer Dialogue Leader training thus far; (b) characterizations of their learning from the preparation phase; (c) the impact of the preparation phase on cognitive development, including questions about the participant's current views on the topic of the dialogue group they were getting ready to lead; and (d) thoughts about how well prepared the participants had been in the preparation phase and their expectations of the leading phase (see Appendix K).

The questions designed to assess cognitive development were adapted from the structured interview formats offered by CSID for the purpose of assessing cognitive development according to Perry's (1968/1970) theory that were introduced in Chapter 2 ("Structured Perry Interview Format," 2002; also see Appendix B). These included questions about whether or not the students had encountered beliefs, values, or perspectives during the preparation phase that were different from their own, how they react to a variety of perspectives, how they account for that variation, how they go about evaluating the conflicting views or beliefs they encounter, and how they interact with people who have views that are different from their own. For the line of questioning related to the students' current views on the topics of the dialogue group they would be leading, a few specific questions were adapted directly from the Perry protocols. These included, "How have you arrived at this particular view" and "Can you remember a time when you didn't think this way and recall how your view changed over time?"

I also asked the participants in the first interview to reread the essay for the MID they had written at the beginning of the training semester and to reflect on anything they might have learned during the preparation phase that would have caused them to change

or alter their response in any way. Additionally, I brought copies of their e-mail reflections and asked a few questions to follow-up on some of their written comments.

The second interview (the end-semester interview) was conducted at the end of the training semester after the participants had finished co-leading their four-session dialogue groups. It focused on four primary content areas: (a) overall experience co-leading the dialogue group; (b) reflections on their experiences in the preparation phase as compared to the leading phase, including aspects of the preparation that had been most beneficial to them in leading and aspects that were least beneficial; (c) the impact of the preparation phase on cognitive development, including questions about the participants' personal views on the topics of the dialogue groups they led after having completed the experience of leading the group; and (d) their open-ended characterizations of their learning from the program, including questions about the Peer Dialogue Leader training program and the Leadership in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301 class that they had taken the preceding semester.

Questions from the suggested Perry (1968/1970) interview protocols ("Structured Perry Interview Format," 2002; Appendix B) that were adapted and applied to the second interview were very similar to those asked in the first interview. These included questions about whether the participants had encountered views or beliefs in the dialogue groups that were new to them, how they react to this kind of diversity of opinions or perspectives when it is presented to them, how they account for these differences, and how they go about evaluating the conflicting views or beliefs they encounter. These questions were asked again to provide an opportunity for two points of comparison, one before leading the group and one after leading the group.

As in the first interview, I also brought in copies of their e-mail reflections to the second interview in order to follow-up on comments of interest. This proved to be helpful as there were several times in which the students wrote a sentence or two in their e-mail reflections but then elaborated on their thoughts in the interview in ways that enriched the data. The interview protocol for the end-semester (second) interview is in Appendix L.

The rationale for conducting the two interviews at the times they were conducted is as follows. For logistical reasons as well for concern about the participants potentially growing tired of the study, it did not seem reasonable to conduct more than two interviews with each participant over the course of the training semester. In order to be able to ask the participants directed questions related to the second research question (regarding experiential learning and expectations of leading in the preparation phase as compared to the actual experiences of leading it the leading phase) it made sense to conduct one interview mid-semester, at the conclusion of the preparation phase, when I could get their immediate reactions to the seven-week training preparation they had just experienced and I could also get their thoughts in anticipation of the upcoming leading of the dialogue groups. The second interview was held at the end of the training semester after they had finished leading the dialogue groups. Through asking questions in all the relevant content areas and strategic placement of some questions during the first interview and others during the second interview, I was able to gather data over time that addressed each of the three research questions for the study.

All interviews were tape-recorded with each participant's permission. All were transcribed. As a form of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998;

Stake, 1995), the completed transcripts were sent to each of the participants to provide them an opportunity to review them for accuracy. A few participants replied with suggestions for minor corrections.

To test the protocols and questions for each of the two interviews, I conducted pilot interviews with two volunteer Peer Dialogue Leaders who had already completed the training program and were still active in the dialogue program. Through feedback from these pilot interviews, several of the questions on both interview protocols were adjusted for flow and ease of comprehension prior to the actual interviews for the study.

Observations of Training Sessions in the Preparation Phase

Field observations are also a primary source of data in case study research (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). According to Merriam, "Observations take place in the natural field setting instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing" and "Observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview" (p. 94).

The overall goal of observation is for the researcher to see the participants in the natural setting of the case. Merriam (1998) suggests several specific elements of the setting and environment that the researcher should attend to when conducting observations. These include the physical setting, activities and interactions, subtle factors or occurrences, symbolic meanings or events, non-verbal communication, and the researcher's own behavior, especially if it influences or disrupts the group in any way.

Merriam (1998) cites Gold's typology of four possible stances the researcher can assume in the field setting. These are (a) *complete participant*, in which the researcher

behaves as a member of the group and does not reveal his or her role in order to minimize disruption to the natural functioning of the group; (b) *participant as observer*, in which the researcher tells the group about his or her research activities and purpose yet still participates in the group as an active participant; (c) *observer as participant*, in which the researcher's identity is clearly known to everyone in the group and the researcher may participate in some of the activities of the group, but his or her participation is secondary to the role of researcher; and (d) *complete observer*, in which the researcher remains either completely hidden from or unknown to the group.

For this study I assumed a modified *observer as participant role* in several sessions of the preparation phase of the program and in selected consultation sessions between the co-leader pairs and the trainer in the leading phase. In these sessions, my identities as myself and also as researcher for this study were clearly known to the group and the study participants. I did not participate in the group, however; I chose not to participate as a trainer in order to disassociate myself from that role for the purposes of this study, and I could not have participated in the group as a peer. Therefore, I was not a *complete observer* based on Merriam's (1998) definition above. Instead, I was a modified *observer as participant*, meaning that the participants knew who I was, I was not hidden from view, and I asked a few questions for clarification from time to time.

For this study, I observed four of the large-group training sessions during the preparation phase prior to Spring Break, five co-leader pair consultation sessions with the trainer during the leading phase, and two large-group debriefing and evaluation sessions that occurred at the end of the training semester.

Although my intent was to observe the group as researcher, I also understood that because I was a former class instructor for some of the students and also a past co-facilitator of the training program, those factors might have influenced the ways in which the students perceived me and interacted with me. I kept this in mind throughout my observations. However, throughout the process of conducting the observations, at no time did I feel that these potentially conflicting roles had a detrimental impact on the natural functioning of the group or on individual members of the group.

One additional challenge associated with the training session observations for this study was that when I observed the Spring 2005 training group as a whole, 8 of the 11 members of the group were participants in my study and the remaining three were not as they had declined the opportunity to participate. Therefore, I needed to constantly keep this in mind as I considered information from the observations that might ultimately be incorporated into the study.

Due to the challenges associated with the fact that some members of the training group were participants in the study and some were not, and because I had such extensive individual contact with the study participants during the training semester through the interviews and e-mail reflections, the data gathered from the observations of the training group sessions did not prove to be useful for direct inclusion in the write-up of the findings. However, conducting the observations did prove helpful to me as researcher in several ways. They provided me with an opportunity to become much better acquainted with the study participants, especially with regard to how they interact in a group. The observations also allowed me the opportunity to witness first-hand several of the informal dialogues and discussions that occurred in the preparation phase among the training

group and the trainer that the participants recalled later as specific examples in their interviews and e-mail reflections. Finally, they helped me to develop an overall understanding of the character, nature, and dynamics of the training group as a whole, including the participants' relationships with the trainer as well as their relationships with each other.

The template used for field notes from the training session observations for this study is in Appendix M.

E-Mail Reflections

Data from "written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand" (Merriam, 1998, p. 112) also provide important sources of information in case study research (Hodder, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). These kinds of materials, which Merriam refers to collectively as "documents" (p. 112) provide unique opportunities for insights into the case.

Participants in this study were asked to write and submit a total of five e-mail reflections over the course of the training semester. E-mail reflection prompts and due dates were designed with the overall research questions in mind; they were developed to coordinate with the preparation phase and the leading phase of the program as well as the two individual interviews.

The first e-mail reflection was due at the end of the preparation phase. For this entry, the participants were asked to reflect on their overall learning from the preparation phase. They were also asked to reflect on anything they might have experienced that had challenged their thinking or caused them to think about something differently.

Reflections 2 through 5 were assigned and collected weekly during the leading phase after the participants had completed leading each session of their four-session dialogue group. Prompt questions for these reflections included questions about their experiences leading the dialogue group that week, learning associated with leading the group that week, and anything that might have happened in the group that week that caused them to think about the topic of their group in a different way.

As I was most interested in the students' overall thoughts and reactions, I was clear in my instructions about their e-mail reflections that I was not necessarily looking for polished writing. Instead, I told them I was most interested in the quality of their thinking, their reactions, and their impressions. After receiving their reflections, I believe this contributed to free-flowing thoughts and ideas. While their reflections were sometimes rambling, overall they seemed genuine, sincere, and uncensored. The prompts for the five e-mail reflections for this study are in Appendix N.

Sub-Study: Focus Group with Alumni from the Peer Dialogue Leader Training Program

To augment and enrich the data from the Spring 2005 training group, I conducted an additional sub-study, a focus group with five alumni from various years of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. The purpose of this focus group was to gather information from former trainees with a longer history with the program to enrich the data and the overall findings from the case study. In this focus group, I sought to explore their recollections of their learning while they were in the training program, examples of learning or skills they acquired while they were in the program that they continued to use later on, and how the experience of being a Peer Dialogue Leader continued to impact their later life experiences and opportunities.

Participants for the alumni focus group were solicited by e-mail invitation; an e-mail was sent to 18 current and former PDLs, all those for whom I had addresses I believed to be valid. I asked for a commitment of approximately 1½ hours and offered pizza and a $25 gift certificate to Best Buy as an incentive for participation.

Of the 18 PDL alumni invited, five replied and agreed to participate. Four others replied and said they were unable to participate. I did not hear from the remaining nine. The five who agreed to participate included one from the Spring 2001 training group and four from the Spring 2004 group. Additional information about the five focus group participants including demographic information is provided in Chapter 5.

At the start of the focus group, I provided an introduction to the study and to the process for that evening. To address issues of confidentiality, each focus group participant chose a pseudonym that would be used throughout the study. Many of the same potential limitations on confidentiality that were discussed with the eight study participants were also discussed with the focus group participants. These potential limitations included the small number of participants in the study and the fact that they were from a known group (Peer Dialogue Leaders).

Prior to the start of the focus group, each participant signed an informed consent form, which was adapted from the consent form used with the eight participants in the study. The focus group informed consent form is in Appendix P.

The interview protocol developed for the focus group emphasized five primary areas relating to the research questions for this study. These included reflections on their experiences in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program, their recollections of the experiential components of the training program, their overall characterizations of their

learning from the experience, and the impact of the experience on their thinking about multiple perspectives. Throughout the interview, I also asked questions designed to elicit understanding of how the experience of being a Peer Dialogue Leader might have influenced their later life experiences and opportunities. The interview protocol for the focus group is in Appendix O.

The focus group session was tape-recorded with each participant's permission. The tape was transcribed. As with the eight study participants, the focus group participants were also provided the opportunity to review the final focus group transcript and correct any errors or omissions in statements that were attributed to them. A few replied with minor revisions.

Data Analysis

General principles for data analysis for this study are presented in this section as well as specific techniques for data analysis that were used for each of the three research questions.

In general, I began data analysis at the time data collection began and continued it through the end of the study. According to Merriam (1998), "The right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it *simultaneously* with the data collection" (p. 162, emphasis in the original) because "you will have undermined your entire project by waiting until *after* all the data are collected before beginning analysis" (p. 161, emphasis in the original). This is because on-going analysis of the data while it is being collected allows the researcher to begin to develop tentative themes and categories that can continually be compared to new findings and then refined as necessary as new data become available. On-going analysis of the data also allows the researcher to make

important and unforeseen adjustments to the data collection process, such as rewording or adding interview questions for example, and ultimately makes the analysis of a large number of transcripts and documents a much more manageable task.

Merriam's (1998) emphasis on the importance of analyzing data in case study simultaneously with data collection is supported by Bogdan and Biklen (1998) who offer several suggestions to researchers when collecting data in the field. These include writing memos to yourself about what you are learning, trying out ideas and themes on subjects, exploring the literature while you are in the field, and playing with metaphors, analogies, and concepts during the data collection phase of the study. These overall ideas are supported by Stake (1995) who says, "There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations" (p. 71).

Throughout the data analysis process, I also followed four general "principles [that] underlie all good social science research" outlined by Yin (2003b, p. 137). These are (a) showing that you have attended to "all the evidence" (p. 137) in the study, meaning that the researcher should demonstrate that interpretations and conclusions are inclusive of all the data that have been collected; (b) showing that your analyses have addressed "major rival interpretations" (p. 137), meaning that "if someone else has an alternative explanation for one or more of your findings" (p. 137) then the researcher should incorporate it and present it as a possible alternative explanation; (c) highlighting "the most significant aspect of your case study" (p. 137); and (d) using "your own prior, expert knowledge" (p. 137) in analyzing the data, developing interpretations, and drawing conclusions. I interpreted this last point to mean that it was appropriate for me to use the

knowledge I had gained from my past experiences with the Peer Dialogue Leader training

program and my knowledge of student development theories in this study, specifically

cognitive development theory, in developing and refining my interpretations and

findings.

In addition to following these general principles of data analysis, I used several

specific techniques for data analysis that were determined by the unique nature of each of

the three research questions. An overview of the research methods for each question has

been provided in a previous section in this chapter. In this section, the specific

techniques for data analysis for each research question are described.

Research Question 1: What is the impact of the training program on (a) cognitive

development, and (b) understanding of multiple perspectives? Yin's (2003a) view of the

use of theory, research hypotheses, and deductive processes in explanatory and evaluative

case studies guided the primary methods for data analysis for this research question. The

hypothesis was that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has a

positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory of

cognitive development, and that it has a positive impact on students' understanding of

multiple perspectives.

I used three distinct kinds of data analyses to study this research question. First, I

conducted a comparison of the two administrations of the MID. Second, I conducted two

kinds of pattern matching analyses to test the research hypothesis that participation in the

training program has a positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry's

(1968/1970) theory. Third, I conducted an interpretive analysis of the qualitative data

related to the participants' cognitive development and increased understanding of

multiple perspectives. This analysis involved looking for themes, trends, and categories in the data, developing interpretations, and writing rich descriptions of the interpretations that often included direct quotes that supported and enhanced the interpretations and findings.

The pattern matching techniques (Yin, 2003b) I used in this study involved comparing the patterns generated by the case study data to the pattern of cognitive development for college students that would be predicted by Perry's (1968/1970) theory. Pattern matching has also been described by Campbell (1975), Trochim (1989), and Berg (2001). Trochim defines it as "an attempt to link two patterns where one is a theoretical pattern and the other is an observed or operational one" (p. 356). Similarly, Berg defines pattern matching as "a situation where several pieces of information from the same case may be related to some theoretical proposition" (p. 230). Data for the pattern matching analyses for this study included relevant data from all of the sources collected, including data from the focus group of alumni.

Throughout the analysis of the data for Research Question 1, I also considered the possibility of rival, alternative explanations (Yin, 2003b) for my findings. These are presented in Chapter 5.

Research Question 2: What is the nature of the experiential learning that occurs through participation in the training program? This research question called for descriptive case study approaches to data analysis. Therefore, I did not approach the analysis of the data for this research question with a formal hypothesis in mind. Instead, I used interpretive analysis (Gall et al., 1996; Hultgren, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000) to study the relevant data, search for patterns, and develop themes and categories that

described the nature of the experiential learning that occurred as a result of participation in the training program.

In the analysis of the data for this research question, I considered all aspects of the training program that were found to enhance or provide opportunities for experiential learning. As the opportunity to co-lead a four-session dialogue group in the leading phase was a primary experiential learning component, I focused special attention on the participants' perceptions of preparing to lead in the preparation phase as compared to their actual experiences leading the dialogue groups in the leading phase.

Research Question 3: How do the dialogue leaders characterize their learning from the training program? For this exploratory aspect of the study, I used interpretive analysis techniques including direct interpretation, searching for patterns and trends in the data, and developing themes and categories (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

In analyzing the data and writing up the findings for all three of the research questions, I also worked to include "rich, 'thick' description" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29) where relevant through examples and direct quotes for key findings. I also paid special attention to "seeking out the *emic* meanings" of the data for all three research questions (Stake, 2000, p. 440), meaning from the students' own perspectives.

<div align="center">Trustworthiness</div>

To address issues of trustworthiness, I incorporated several strategies suggested by Merriam (1998) for achieving trustworthiness in case study research. These included three strategies related to reliability, or how well the findings can be replicated, and six strategies relating to validity, or how well the research findings match the reality of the constructs or phenomena they are intended to assess. Additional issues related to

trustworthiness that I considered in designing and conducting this study included the unique role of the researcher in qualitative research and ethical issues in case study research.

<center>*Techniques for Reliability and Validity*</center>

To strive for reliability, I used three strategies in an effort to ensure that the findings from this study were dependable and consistent: (a) clarification of the investigator's position with regard to underlying assumptions about the study, relationship to the group being studied, and view of participants; (b) triangulation; and (c) keeping an audit trail.

Clarification of the Investigator's Position

According to Merriam (1998), one way to help ensure that results are dependable is for the investigator to explain his or her assumptions and views of the theory underlying the study, position with regard to the group being studied, and view of the participants in the study.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I have been involved with the Common Ground program since I began working in the Department of Resident Life in 2000. Since then, I have worked on the on-going development and conceptualization of the program including development of overall goals and structure, administration and management of the logistics associated with coordinating the dialogue groups, training the Peer Dialogue Leaders, marketing, and staff training. I have either taught or co-taught one section of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society course and have been involved in facilitating or co-facilitating the Peer Dialogue Leader training program for all but one year that the program has been in existence. Since July of 2004, I have been in a full-time position in

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the Department of Resident Life with one of my primary responsibilities being the coordination of the Common Ground program. Throughout this role, I have established solid relationships with many of the undergraduate Peer Dialogue Leaders and have maintained informal and on-going contacts with many.

With regard to the specific group of students who formed the pool of participants for this study, I was one of the co-instructors for one of the two sections of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society course that was taught in Fall 2004 when all of the participants in the study were students in the class. Four of the participants in the study (half) were students in my section of the course and the other four were in the other section. Therefore, I was known very well to half of the participants and less well known to the others. However, all of them knew of me as an instructor in CIVICUS and also as a Resident Life staff member involved with the Common Ground program.

I also hold several assumptions about the theory used in this study, Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development, that are important to clarify. Despite persistent critiques of the theory in the literature, eighteen years of experience as a student affairs practitioner have led me to believe that it is a very useful and generalizable theory for describing and predicting the cognitive development of college students, and that it hold a great deal of promise for successful applications to educational practice and enhancement of student development. Although additional studies with diverse college student populations would be important and beneficial, I have also come to believe that it is a useful theory with promising application to students of diverse identities, backgrounds, and groups. This is an observation I do not make lightly because one of my strongest professional as well as personal values is a commitment to understanding and

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working effectively with students of diverse identities and providing them opportunities to learn more about the varied identities and perspectives of others. I believe this is one of the most important and fundamental roles of higher education.

To mitigate some of the potential issues of bias associated with my role as a co-instructor for the Leadership in a Multicultural Society class and also as a past co-trainer in the Peer Dialogue Leader program, I made two conscious decisions at the end of Fall 2004 as I was developing the plans for this study. First, I did not involve myself in encouraging students in the class I taught to consider applying to the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. In prior years, my co-instructor and I had always made personal contacts with a few students we wanted to encourage. In addition, I made arrangements with my co-trainer to become completely disengaged from any visible role or involvement in the planning, administration, and public communication associated with the training program in Spring 2005. While I still needed to be involved in some of the behind-the-scenes logistical coordination related to scheduling dialogue groups as a function of my full time job, I made a special effort to distance myself from any visible connection to the program during the time I was conducting the study.

Triangulation

According to Merriam (1998), triangulation in case study research involves the incorporation of multiple research methods, data sources, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis "to confirm the emerging findings" (p. 204). The multiple research methods and five data sources incorporated in this study have been outlined in earlier sections of this chapter.

Keeping an Audit Trail

Keeping an audit trail involves developing and maintaining detailed records of how data were collected, how interpretations, categories, themes, and patterns were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study (Merriam, 1998). Further, the audit trail should be clear enough so that "independent judges can authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher" (p. 207).

For this study I asked a current doctoral student in educational policy and leadership to serve as my inquiry auditor. The auditor had completed research methodology classes at the doctoral level and was also a colleague in the Department of Resident Life, which meant that she had foundational knowledge about the Common Ground program and the larger department as its context. Her primary role as inquiry auditor was to meet with me to review my raw data, coding systems, software, case study data base, and notes about methodology and data analysis processes, and to engage in discussions with me about the trustworthiness of my emerging findings and interpretations.

Merriam (1998) also offers six strategies for enhancing internal validity of the study: (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, (c) peer examination, (d) long-term observation, (e) participatory or collaborative modes of research, and (f) clarification of the investigator's position. As triangulation and clarification of the researcher's position have already been discussed, this section will focus on the remaining four strategies.

Member Checks

Member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) involve "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were

derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). I incorporated member checks into this study by sending the transcripts from the two individual interviews to each of the eight participants to offer them the opportunity to review them for accuracy and to correct any statements that were not captured appropriately or were incorrectly attributed to them. I also followed the same procedure with the five participants from the PDL alumni focus group.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing or examination is "asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). For this study, I asked a peer who was also a doctoral student in college student personnel to serve as a peer debriefer. His role was to review the interview transcripts and my emergent findings and interpretations and meet with me to offer his reactions, impressions, and challenges.

Long-Term Observation

According to Merriam (1998), gathering data over a long period of time or making repeated observations can increase the validity of the findings. I conducted this study over the course of one academic semester and gathered data at many points throughout the semester. This included data from the MID administrations, individual interviews, e-mail reflections, and observations of training sessions.

It is important to note that an opportunity to study these participants for a period of time longer than one semester would have been desirable and potentially could have increased the likelihood of finding change in the dimensions of interest, especially cognitive development. However, that option was not available to me as the training program only lasted for one semester. Given the research questions and the goals of this

study, I believe that this length of time gave me sufficient time to develop relevant and useful findings.

Participatory or Collaborative Modes of Research

Participatory research is a somewhat controversial technique and means "involving participants in all phases of research from conceptualizing the study to writing up the findings" (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). Although I engaged in member checks in the form of offering participants the opportunity to verify the accuracy of interview transcripts, I did not use other participatory or collaborative techniques as described by Merriam. First, the timing of the proposal and approval for this study prevented me from involving participants in the conceptualization phase. In addition to logistical constraints, I also had strong concerns about asking too much time of the participants, especially because many would continue to volunteer their time after they completed their training semester to lead dialogue groups. A final constraint was philosophical as I continue to weigh the benefits and costs of participatory research approaches. While I understand how involving participants in all aspects of a study could lend authenticity to the findings, I can also see how involving them so closely could compromise the findings if participants are biased toward a particular outcome or are overly concerned about how they might be portrayed.

Role of the Researcher and Issues of Subjectivity

In qualitative research, "The investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data and, as such, can respond to the situation by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information" (Merriam, 1998, p. 20). Gall et al. (1996) also view the researcher in case study research as the "primary measuring

instrument" (p. 554), meaning that he or she "carries out data collection and becomes personally involved in the phenomenon being studied" (p. 554). In case studies that are evaluative, the researcher also assumes the role of "program evaluator" (Stake, 1995, p. 96). In this role, the researcher "chooses specific criteria or a set of interpretations by which the program's strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, will become apparent" (p. 96).

Merriam (1998) also describes three traits that are important for qualitative researchers. The first is *tolerance for ambiguity*, which is needed because there are few set protocols or procedures in qualitative research and the researcher needs to be comfortable operating within a lack of structure. The second is *sensitivity*, or "being highly intuitive" (p. 21), which includes a general awareness and sensitivity to all aspects of the case and an ability of the researcher to reflect on his or her own personal biases and views and how they might be impacting the study. The third is being *a good communicator*, which involves an ability to develop rapport with participants, good listening skills, and empathy. In addition, Merriam notes that qualitative researchers must also have good writing skills given that the act of writing and developing thick descriptions of the various phenomena and findings of the case is one of the primary interpretive techniques of case study research.

In acknowledging the subjective nature of qualitative research, Peshkin (1988) strongly argues that qualitative researchers should be intentional about reflecting on their own subjectivity for the purposes of gaining an awareness of "how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes" (p. 17). Issues related to my own subjectivity potentially shaped this study in several ways. As my researcher role required me to

function as the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing the data, it has been important for me throughout this study to attend to how this role might have been influenced or shaped by any potential biases or predispositions I might have brought with me into the study or that emerged through the research process.

In my role as researcher, my potential biases stem primarily from the length of time in which I have been personally involved in the development, administration, and coordination of the Common Ground program. This includes my involvement in teaching the Leadership in a Multicultural Society class, my involvement as a trainer for the Peer Dialogue Leader training program, my involvement with dialogue groups, and my on-going relationships with past and current dialogue leaders. This program is important to me; I have a long history working with it, I have invested a great deal of personal and professional energy in it, and it has evolved to become one of my primary professional interests. As a result of these experiences, I have come to believe strongly in its merit and worth and the potential positive outcomes for the dialogue leaders as well as for the student dialogue group participants. To use a term from Peshkin (1988), I have "personal stakes" (p. 17) in this program.

Due to these stakes, there was a risk throughout the study of these potential biases affecting my subjectivity. As subjectivity "operates during the entire research process" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17), these biases could have influenced the ways in which I conceptualized the research questions, interacted with the participants and asked them questions, coded the data, analyzed and interpreted the findings, and developed and organized the final written report. Since I entered into this study with a generally positive view of the impact I believe this program has on students, I have constantly needed to be

aware of how this potential bias might have created a positive predisposition toward certain findings and may have caused me to overlook or minimize findings that were less favorable or less supportive of the research questions.

Another "subjective I" (Peshkin, 1988), or aspect of my identity that has been important for me to consider throughout this study, relates to my role as a full-time staff member in the Department of Resident Life. Overall, the department has been very committed to the Common Ground program and because of this, has also demonstrated an exceptionally strong commitment to my research study. This commitment has included monetary support, access to resources, moral support, and time to work on the study. Because of these potentially conflicting roles as a staff member in a department that has been so supportive and also as researcher, I have needed to be very careful to not overemphasize the positive aspects of the findings and to be as true as possible to the results and findings as they were revealed by the data, regardless of what the departmental reactions to these findings might be.

Ethical Issues in Case Study Research and this Study

All fields have standards and codes of conduct for ethical research, especially when human participants are involved. In Stake's (2000) words, "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world [and] their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 447).

Given the unique nature of case study research, it is important that researchers take adequate time to familiarize themselves with the unique settings and circumstances of the case they are studying in order to develop an ethical perspective of it (Gall et al., 1996). According to Merriam (1998), ethical issues in qualitative and case study research

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are most likely to emerge in the two areas of data collection and dissemination of findings.

With regard to data collection, both Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) observe that interviewing is particularly risky because of the intimate nature of what participants might be asked or what they might reveal. In-depth interviewing might also have potentially damaging and unintended long-term consequences if participants reveal information about themselves they have never shared before or if the interview prompts a new and potentially painful recognition about some aspect of their lives. On the other hand, Merriam notes that in-depth interviews can have unanticipated yet positive consequences if the interview provides an opportunity for the participant to talk about something that is important, make connections or revelations that provide positive insight, or verbalize something for the first time to another person.

Writing and disseminating findings from qualitative research, including case study research, can also be difficult because the sample sizes for the studies are usually small and thick description provides a great deal of information that might make it easy for readers to determine the true identity of the participants. Therefore, researchers should pay particular attention to protecting confidentiality and anonymity in designing and conducting studies and especially when writing and disseminating the findings.

In this study, the main ethical challenge was to protect the identities of the participants. This was difficult given that every participant in this study was a member of a small and known group of Peer Dialogue Leaders.

To address these concerns I utilized several strategies. First, as described earlier, every student in the training program was given the opportunity to either participate in

the study or decline to participate. None was forced to participate and it was made clear that there would be no adverse repercussions for those who chose not to participate. Second, I asked each of the eight study participants as well as the five focus group participants to choose a pseudonym that has been used throughout all aspects of the study, including the transcripts and data documents, the case study database, and this written report. I am the only person who knows the true identity of all the participants and their corresponding pseudonyms. Third, I informed the participants in the introductions to the study and also through the informed consent process that every effort would be made to ensure confidentiality. This included a conversation about the use of pseudonyms and also an acknowledgment that while I would be discussing the overall findings periodically with the other program administrator who was also the Spring 2005 trainer for the purposes of program evaluation, I would not be revealing any names associated with comments and would make every effort to convey the findings in such a way as to minimize the possibility that they could be linked to any specific individual. Finally, I discussed with the participants the known limitations on confidentiality associated with this study. These included the small sample size that could make it easier to link comments to specific individuals, and the fact that they were members of a known group, which could make it easier for someone to make connections about their true identity.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The findings for the study are presented in this chapter. Major sections include

an introduction of the eight study participants, an overview of the Spring 2005 Common

Ground dialogue groups, an introduction of the five alumni participants of the focus-

group sub-study, and the findings from the three research questions for this study. A

summary of findings is also presented.

Introduction of the Study Participants

As mentioned in Chapter 4, eight of the Peer Dialogue Leaders (PDLs) in the

Spring 2005 training program agreed to participate in the study. The group included

seven women and one man. For the purposes of this study, they are identified by the

pseudonyms Cathleen, Elena, Keisha, Leia, Samantha, Sonia, Soraya, and James.

All eight participants were either 19 or 20 years old and had completed at least 45

credits by the start of the Spring 2005 training semester. When asked to describe their

race/ethnicity, three identified as Black, two as Latina, two as White, and one as Indian.

Their college majors were American studies, communications, criminology/criminal

justice (two), early childhood education, environmental science and policy, government

and politics, and sociology. Their self-reported GPAs at the start of the training semester

ranged from 3.3 to 3.8.

In order to protect confidentiality and anonymity of the participants as much as

possible, I have decided not to identify each participant with their specific individual

demographic characteristics. After carefully considering the impact this approach might

have on the presentation of the findings, I have determined that it is negligible and have

decided to err on the side of protecting the students' identities as much as possible given that the participant group is so small and diverse and therefore easily identifiable. While some of the demographic characteristics of selected participants may become evident to the reader through the various quotes that have been included in this chapter, it is my hope that, overall, this approach will serve the dual purposes of attending to confidentiality while still enabling me to present the findings in a way that adequately addresses each of the three research questions.

Spring 2005 Dialogue Groups – Co-Leader and Group Topic Assignments

In the leading phase of the Spring 2005 training semester, each of the Peer Dialogue Leader participants in the study co-led one of seven four-session Common Ground dialogue groups. Six of the seven groups were on different multicultural topics.

The dialogue leaders and topic assignments for the leading phase were as follows: Cathleen and Soraya co-led a group on the use of intentional methods in college and university admissions for the purpose of achieving racial/ethnic diversity, Elena and another trainee (who was not a participant in the study) co-led a group on interracial adoption, James and a returning PDL co-led a group on same-sex couples adopting and/or fostering children, Keisha and another trainee led a group on racial profiling, Leia and a returning PDL led a group on same-sex marriage, Samantha and another trainee led a group on the death penalty, and Sonia and a returning PDL led a group on abortion.

The participant application for the dialogue groups includes voluntary, open-ended questions about five dimensions of identity: gender, race/ethnicity, religious/spiritual affiliation, sexual orientation, and citizenship. A complete summary of

the self-reported demographic characteristics of the 91 student participants in the seven Spring 2005 Common Ground dialogue groups is presented in Appendix Q.

Introduction of the Focus Group Participants

As described in Chapter 4, I also conducted a separate sub-study for this project, a focus group with five alumni from the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. As discussed previously, these five alumni were not formal participants in the study because their involvement in the training program did not occur within the "bounded case" (Merriam, 1998) for this case study, the Spring 2005 dialogue training program. However, comments the alumni participants made in the focus group interview were analyzed for evidence of consistency with the findings that emerged from the case study data. To that end, several comments from the focus group participants are included throughout this chapter as enrichment to the case study data and reinforcing evidence of many of the themes that emerged.

Five alumni from the Peer Dialogue Leader training program from two separate training years participated in the focus group. These included one from the Spring 2001 training group (four years prior to the semester of the study) and four from Spring 2004 (one year prior to the study). The focus group included three men and two women. Two identified as White, one as Asian American, one as Black/African American, and one as Guyanese/Indian. The pseudonyms they chose for the purposes of the study were Christian, Ethan, Eve, Jen, and Sedgewick.

As alumni of the training program and veteran Peer Dialogue Leaders, they had experience leading several Common Ground dialogue groups between them. At the time of the focus group interview, Christian had led two four-session groups and came in as a

substitute half-way through another group, Ethan had led two four-session groups and one one-session group, Eve had led two four-session groups and five one-session groups, Jen had led three four-session groups and one one-session group, and Sedgewick had led three four-session groups and one one-session group.

Overall, the similarity between the themes that emerged from the focus group interview and the themes that emerged from participant group data was striking. This is noteworthy in that it provides additional evidence for the validity of the overall findings.

Research Question 1 – Impact of the Training Program on

Cognitive Development and Multiple Perspectives

As detailed in earlier chapters, the first research question for this study related to the impact of participation in the Spring 2005 Peer Dialogue Leader training program on (a) cognitive development, as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development, and (b) understanding of multiple perspectives. To study this question, I used explanatory case study methods (Yin, 2003a) and drew from an existing theory (Perry) to set up an empirical research hypothesis. Specifically, this hypothesis was that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has a positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry' theory, and on the dialogue leaders' understanding of the multiple perspectives that exist on various multicultural topics.

The findings for this first research question are organized into two main categories: (a) findings related to the impact of the training program on cognitive development, and (b) findings related to impact of the training program on understanding of multiple perspectives. The first section on "cognitive development" includes results from the administration of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID), results from

two kinds of pattern matching analyses, findings from the interpretive analysis related to cognitive development, and a summary of the findings about cognitive development. The section on "multiple perspectives" includes findings related to multiple perspectives encountered by the participants in the preparation phase, multiple perspectives encountered by the participants in the leading phase (on the topics of the dialogue groups), a discussion of the impact of exposure to multiple perspectives, and a summary of the findings related to multiple perspectives.

This section for Research Question 1 also includes a discussion of potential rival explanations (Yin, 2003b) for the findings about cognitive development. Finally, as this study is also a program evaluation, specific aspects of the training program that enhanced cognitive development and understanding of multiple perspectives are identified.

Impact of the Training Program on Cognitive Development

This section on cognitive development includes results and findings from three distinct methods of data analysis. First, results from the two administrations of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) are presented. Second, results from two pattern matching analyses are presented, including (a) a comparison of comments participants made earlier in the study to those made later in the study for evidence of change that would predicted by Perry's (1968/1970) theory, and (b) a matching of overall themes and categories that emerged from the data to general learner characteristics and cues that would be predicted by Perry's theory. Third, findings from an interpretive analysis are presented in two categories: (a) examples of participants' use of Perry terms to describe their thinking, and (b) additional examples of potential cognitive growth along the Perry continuum.

Results from the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID)

As described in Chapter 4, each of the eight participants in this study completed two administrations of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) (Knefelkamp, 1974; Widick, 1975) in order to assess their placements in the first five positions of Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development (see Appendixes H – J for the MID cover sheet and essay prompts). The first administration occurred near the beginning of the training semester, on February 15, 2005, and the second administration was at the end of the training semester, on May 10, 2005. The purpose of the two administrations of this instrument was to conduct a quantitative exploration of the impact of participation in the training program on cognitive development as defined by Perry.

As mentioned in Chapter 4 under "Measures and Procedures," each MID instrument is rated by two trained raters. Results are provided with each individual rater's score and with a final "reconciled" score of the two ratings for each administration (Moore, 2004a).

The reconciled MID scores are represented by a three-digit number that reflects both dominant and subdominant positions. This number also depicts whether or not the person might be in a transition phase between two dominant positions. As Moore (2004a) describes, "This system extends the Perry scheme continuum from 4 steps – that is, positions 2, 3, 4, and 5 – to 10 steps: 222, 223, 233, 333, 334, 344, 444, 445, 455, and 555" (p. 1). The center number indicates the dominant position. For example, a score such as 333 reflects a "stable position" (p. 1), within Position 3, a score such as 223 represents "dominant position 2 opening to position 3" (p. 1), while a 233 indicates

"dominant position 3 with trailing position 2" (p. 1). In the latter two examples, these scores also indicate transition between Positions 2 and 3.

A final reconciled score can also include a "glimpse" rating (Moore, 2004a). An example of a glimpse score would be 333(4). This means that the reconciled rating for this person was a Position 3, but that they showed a "glimpse" of Position 4.

Moore (2004a) also provides a chart that depicts the conversion for each of the MID scores to Perry positions 1 through 5. These converted positions either yield a solid position (e.g. Position 2) or a transition position (e.g. 2→3, meaning transition between Position 2 and Position 3).

Prior to presenting the MID results, I wish to note that for the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity of the study participants, I have decided not to report their individual MID scores under their pseudonyms. This is because I believe the results from the MID administrations are compelling when the overall pattern for the group is considered as a whole, and I do not feel that attaching individual scores with individual participants would greatly help in describing the overall picture of the data that emerges – which includes both the quantitative and the qualitative data – for this research question. In all, I do not feel that the potential benefits of reporting each individual participant's MID scores outweigh the costs. Therefore, I am presenting the MID results anonymously, in random participant order.

The reconciled MID scores and corresponding Perry (1968/1970) positions for each of the participants in the study for both administrations of the MID are presented in Table 3. Table 3 also presents a characterization of the change in positions that occurred

over the course of the training semester for each participant, from the first administration

to the second.

Table 3

MID Scores and Changes in Perry Positions During the Training Semester

| | Administration 1 (Beginning Semester) | | Administration 2 (End Semester) | | |
	Reconciled Score	Perry Position	Reconciled Score	Perry Position	Change in Perry Position
Participant					
A.	333	3	333(4)	3	Slight +
B.	233	2 → 3	333	3	½ position +
C.	344	3 → 4	344	3 → 4	None
D.	233	2 → 3	333	3	½ position +
E.	233	2 → 3	333(4)	3	½ position +
F.	233	2 → 3	233	2 → 3	None
G.	333(4)	3	334	3 → 4	½ position +
H.	333(4)	3	334	3 → 4	½ position +

As these results show, the MID scores of six of the eight participants in the study

indicated positive change in cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970)

theory over the course of the training semester. Further, five of the six showed positive

change of at least one-half of a Perry position. The sixth participant who showed positive

change, Participant A, showed very slight positive change as a result of the glimpse rating for Administration 2.

Two of the participants in the study showed no change; one (Participant F) scored at both administrations in transition between Positions 2 and 3, and the other (Participant C) scored at both administrations in transition between Positions 3 and 4. However, it should be noted that Participant C scored in the very high range near the start of the study for what would be predicted by age and academic year, so little change would be expected for this participant over the course of the semester given the higher incoming score.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of these results, I translated the MID scores into the corresponding Perry (1968/1970) terms for each participant's position(s) near the beginning of the training semester as compared to the end of the semester. (See Chapter 2, the section on Perry's theory, for an explanation of the labels I have chosen to use in this study for Positions 1 through 5). These results depicting the translation of MID scores into terms for the Perry positions are presented in Table 4, along with the same characterization of change between the two administrations of the MID that appeared in Table 3.

Table 4

Changes in Perry Positions as Assessed by MID Scores – In Perry Terms

_____

Participant	Administration 1 (Beginning Semester)	Administration 2 (End Semester)	Change in Perry Position
A.	Early Mult.	Early Mult.	Slight +
B.	Dualism → Early Mult.	Early Mult.	½ position +
C.	Early Mult. → Late. Mult.	Early Mult. → Late. Mult.	None
D.	Dualism → Early Mult.	Early Mult.	½ position +
E.	Dualism → Early Mult.	Early Mult.	½ position +
F.	Dualism → Early Mult.	Dualism → Early Mult.	None
G.	Early Mult.	Early Mult. → Late. Mult.	½ position +
H.	Early Mult.	Early Mult. → Late. Mult.	½ position +

_____

Table 4 shows that according to the MID results, four of the participants in the study (half of the participant group) started the semester in transition from dualism to early multiplicity, and the remaining four started in early multiplicity with one, Participant C, already in transition to late multiplicity. By the end of the training semester, seven of the eight participants were out of dualism and into early multiplicity, and three of these seven were in transition to late multiplicity. Only one participant, Participant F, remained in dualism at the end of the semester, in transition from dualism to multiplicity.

One way to better understand these results is to put them into a normative context. In other words, how do the changes in cognitive development reflected in these MID scores compare to changes that would be expected of students of this same age and class year? Comparison data for these purposes is presented and discussed in Chapter 6.

In an effort to further understand these results, I also consulted with Dr. Moore at the Center for the Study of Intellectual Development. According to him, "While it's hard to say anything too definitive about a sample size this small, both the number of students showing positive movement and the level of change is unusual for that amount of time, particularly with a mostly sophomore sample" (W. S. Moore, personal communication, July 27, 2007).

In summary, the results from the two administrations of the MID for this study provide strong support for the hypothesis that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program had a positive impact on students' cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory of intellectual development. While caution must be observed in interpreting these results given the small sample size, they are compelling given that the change that was detected by the instrument occurred over a period of slightly less than three months.

Results from Pattern Matching Analyses

Two kinds of pattern matching analyses were conducted on the data to study the hypothesis for this research question about whether participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has a positive impact on the dialogue leaders' cognitive development. The first pattern matching technique was an analysis of specific comments individual students made earlier in the training semester as compared to later in the

training semester that illustrate potential change in cognitive development during the course of the training experience that would be predicted by Perry's (1968/1970) theory. The second pattern matching analysis was a comparison of the overall themes and categories that emerged from an interpretive analysis of the data to a table of general "learner characteristics" that are associated with positions in the Perry scheme.

Technique 1 – Comparison of earlier comments to later comments as evidence of change along the Perry scheme. In conducting the first type of pattern-matching analysis, which was a more traditional method of pattern matching, I compared specific examples of students comments from earlier in the training semester (primarily from Interview 1 and the first e-mail reflection) to comments they had made later in the training semester (primarily from Interview 2 and the later e-mail reflections) for evidence of changes in thinking consistent with change in cognitive development that would be predicted by Perry's (1968/1970) theory.

Participant responses to the questions derived from the Perry interview protocols ("Structured Perry Interview Format," 2002, see Appendix B) for the two individual interviews in this study served as the primary data for this pattern matching analysis. Although these responses served as the primary data, all of the remaining data collected for the study were also analyzed for examples of earlier comments as compared to later comments that would suggest changes in thinking over the course of the training semester that would be consistent with Perry's (1968/1970) theory. In conducting this broader analysis other coding categories did yield relevant findings, especially the interview questions about the students' views of the topics of their dialogue groups before leading

their dialogue group as compared to their views of the same topics after the experience of leading the group.

Overall, this pattern matching analysis revealed strong evidence for changes in cognitive complexity over the course of the training semester for all of the participants. As a first example, consider Elena's response in Interview 1 to the question about how she accounts for differences in opinions or perspectives:

> Oh, [the differences come from] where people grow up, their parents, their friends, their school that they came from. I definitely know that's true just from being in CIVICUS because a lot of the kids will be like, well, where I came from….I never had a Black kid in my classes or all the kids in my classes were Black or I had friends that were Black and they were smart, too, so you know like, just different things like that. And, they feel like that is like a reason why they can have the opinions they have. And so, maybe that is the reason for it, but…I don't know, I just think it comes from where you come from.

This response exemplified a fairly typical response from most of the participants to this question in Interview 1; many spoke about where people grow up, their backgrounds, their family, and their experiences as being important in shaping people's different views and perspectives. In Interview 2, however, after having had the experience of leading the dialogue group on interracial adoption, it was striking how Elena's response to the same question shifted from the very typical response above to one that involved a more complex analysis of the individual:

> I look at the person. I kind of listen to how they're speaking, how they're formulating their ideas. And I guess I'm pretty critical. I didn't think that anyone in our group was like…had…I mean no one could have a stupid opinion, but I didn't think that anyone in our group had like an uninformed opinion or was kind of just talking out of their ear and just trying to say something that they hadn't really thought out.

> But I mean like…the one girl, I felt like her opinion was jaded because she felt she had an inside view of something and she felt like it was a good…her family was happy and they felt like it was okay, so I felt like her opinion was kind of jaded on the subject because she was looking at it from an insider perspective.

And when you're inside of something, you can't really see the issues that are with it, like you can't really notice that maybe this is not all perfect because like it feels right, it's been this way for you forever.

In the second interview, Elena immediately gravitated toward the use of an example from her experience leading the dialogue group to illustrate her point, instead of responding in generalities as she and most of the other participants had done in the first interview. While this was probably not surprising given the context of the study and the interview questions, one of the themes that emerged from the second interview as compared to the first was a markedly increased tendency for the students to use specific examples from their experiences in their dialogue groups to illustrate their points.

Soraya's initial response to this same question in Interview 1 about what she thinks causes differences in opinions or perspectives was similar to Elena's:

> Everything (laughter), I don't know. I feel like just people's backgrounds, social, religious, age, sex, gender, citizenship; everything, everything can go into the way you were raised; the way you were brought up, it makes everybody different.

After being asked the same question in Interview 2 however, after the experience of leading her dialogue group on affirmative action, her response initially sounded similar but then she began to offer much more context than she had in the first interview:

> So [their diversity in opinions] has a lot to do with where people come from, their geographic location. And their socio-economic status, which my personal experience is that people that come from more wealthy areas that have, you know, parents who have reached a higher level of education or certain levels of success or make a certain amount of money, like they tend to think affirmative action is not necessary. Where people like middle to lower class people feel if their parents haven't achieved, you know, they maybe dropped out of school, people who are coming from other countries, people… I've noticed a lot, people that come from, that have migrated to the United States they actually are for affirmative action.

She continued on in Interview 2 with a fairly detailed discussion of "cultural things" as a context that informs opinions and perspectives that she did not give in Interview 1. This was an observation could imply increased contextualizing:

> I feel like it has to do with a lot, like cultural things. Like because I've noticed there are a lot of Latino people that are perhaps very strongly for affirmative action….And I read an article that said that Latinos are not an individualist community. They're always like, you know, they wash one hand with the other. You know you help one person out; you help the next man out. You know if you do well, help someone else. So I feel like because like…people who have migrated here or who have cultural experiences, like they definitely are for affirmative action. In my experience. So definitely just where you come from and culture and stuff.

When I asked Sonia in Interview 1 about how she evaluates the quality of an opinion, she gave a textbook multiplistic response: "Well, I think everyone is entitled to their own opinion." In elaborating, she went on to say:

> I just think that where people are coming from matters so much. And not try to evaluate the quality of their opinion, you know what I mean? Because they have reasons to believe what they believe, you know? And they're not invalidated just because I don't believe that.

This response in Interview 1 typified the sentiment of "I'm okay, you're okay," which is a classic cue of multiplistic thinking according to Perry's (1968/1970) theory (see Appendix R). By the end of the semester, however, it was striking how Sonia seemed to move away from this "I'm okay, you're okay" perspective to one in which she was willing to strongly critique opinions that arose in her dialogue group on abortion as "ridiculous" and "counter-productive." In describing her perceptions of the group's attempt to come to consensus in the third session, Sonia specifically discussed her strong negative reaction to their discussion of a potential "abortion cap," or a government-imposed limit on the number of abortions a woman could have:

Yeah. And I just think it's completely ridiculous (laughter). I was just like, are you kidding me? You can't let the government tell you how many things, you know? Like that is just *way* too whatever. So I personally just didn't like that topic to begin with….I don't know. I just thought it was kind of counter-productive to the group.

What was interesting about his example was how throughout the first interview she emphasized the "validity" of opinions for each individual, but by the second interview she seemed to be struggling with the dissonance between feeling obligated to continue to characterize others' opinions as "valid" while at the same time believing that some of them were "ridiculous." While this could possibly be seen as movement toward dualism, another explanation could be that Sonia's multiplistic views were being challenged in a way that prompted more contextually relativistic thinking according to Perry's (1968/1970) theory. This would imply an increased willingness to prioritize, evaluate, and critique differing perspectives.

Soraya's responses to the questions about how she evaluates opinions provided another example of potential change in cognitive development over the course of the training semester. In Interview 1, she responded to that question in the following way:

If you come to me with according to these numbers or according to this, I'm going to be more attentive and respect you a lot more because you've come to me with something more than just something you've pulled out of your head. Granted an opinion is an opinion, so you have to understand them either way, but I'm willing to…I don't know if this is a good or bad thing, but I'm going to respect you a lot more if you come to me with numbers. If you come to me with a fact, like this is a fact, it's going to make me think a little more. Like you know, what is this fact? Maybe that's something I hadn't taken into consideration.

This was also a response that was fairly typical of how many of the participants answered this question in Interview 1 about how they evaluate opinions; several talked about the importance of "numbers" and "evidence" in establishing validity for them. Her comment that "an opinion is an opinion" was also very typical of multiplistic thinking.

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In contrast, this was Soraya's response to the same question about how she

evaluates opinions in Interview 2. Although she began this response in much the same

way she did in Interview 1 with a discussion of the importance of "facts" and "evidence,"

she went on in Interview 2 to add a more contextualized discussion of "personal

testimony" and also the importance of understanding a "bigger picture":

> I'm a very fact-driven person. I like to see facts and statistics, but I know that's
> not always, like…we talk about it in training, like that's one of the lower levels of
> thinking….But I'm very fact-driven; I like to see numbers. I feel like numbers are
> very strong.
>
> ….So I value if someone could tell me, if I don't agree with them and say why,
> and then they give me that one-person testimony….Like I need to know how is
> this affecting me overall. I'm all about the bigger picture. How is this affecting
> the *overall* community, the overall minority community, overall student
> population, the university culture? Like I'm *always* about the bigger picture.

I found this Interview 2 response to be especially noteworthy because Soraya had not

mentioned anything at all about a "bigger picture" in Interview 1. Her further

elaborations about personal testimony and a bigger picture in her later response could

suggest an increased understanding of overall contextual factors, which would be

consistent with cognitive development along the Perry scheme (1968/1970).

Soraya also made a reference in this excerpt from her second interview to having

learned about "lower levels" of thinking in the preparation phase of the training. This

was a reference to the fact that the dialogue leaders were taught aspects of Perry's

(1968/1970) theory in the preparation phase of the training program. Their self-

reflections prompted by this learning about Perry's theory and their frequent application

of it to their own styles of thinking throughout the study, as evidenced by the number of

times they raised it unsolicited in their interviews and in their e-mail reflections, is one of

the primary findings to emerge from this study and is discussed further later in this chapter as well as in Chapter 6.

Another example of potential change along the Perry (1968/1970) continuum over the course of the training semester was demonstrated by Leia. In Interview 1, she responded to the question about how she reacts to diversity of opinions in the following way:

> I just take it in and I just analyze it. I don't jump to pointing fingers, you know? You're wrong, you shouldn't have this kind of stance. It's wrong because there should always be exceptions [talking about the topic of abortion]. I don't take that stance.

When I went on to ask her in Interview 1 if she thought that reaction was typical of how she usually responds when confronted with a diversity of opinions, she said, "Yeah, I usually just internalize things. I just take time to analyze it."

Leia's initial response to the question of how she reacts to a diversity of opinions indicated a more internal approach of taking in new information and analyzing it when confronted with multiple and potentially competing perspectives. Interestingly, her response to the same question at the end of the semester in Interview 2 suggested much more confidence in her own opinions and also an increased willingness to engage others on their views. When I asked her in the second interview how she reacts when she encounters someone who has a different view from her own, she said:

> At first I'm dumbfounded. I'm like…I can see your point. But what about these people? I don't usually make, like an earth-shattering monumental kind of statement where it makes them be quiet. But you know I say a couple of words and make them think. You know, like how would you feel if you were poor or homeless? Or stuff like that. Just putting the person in that same situation.

It was striking how she seemed to move from a more internal approach of analyzing opinions and mulling them over in her own mind in Interview 1 to a more active

approach of engaging someone on either the merits or shortcomings, in her view, of their opinions in Interview 2. This change could suggest an increased willingness to evaluate the opinions of someone else, especially someone with whom she disagrees, and could also potentially signal a moving away from the "I'm okay/you're okay" thinking of multiplistists. This might be overstating it, however, as it could also indicate a new willingness to simply point out to someone else her view about the errors in their opinions, which could be still be consistent with dualism or multiplicity. Regardless, her new willingness to engage others about their opinions after having completed the training semester and the experience of leading the dialogue group seemed like a good step toward increased complexity in thinking.

When I asked Keisha questions in Interview 1 about how she accounts for differences in opinions and how she reacts to diversity of opinions, she talked at length about the strength of her own opinions and about how hard it would be to change them:

> I wonder where these people have heard their information from and maybe if that's an accurate voice they've heard it from. I'm pretty staunch in my opinions. I know that. You know, I have…I don't want to sound like I know everything, (laughter) but I just like…it's hard for me to change my opinions right now. Like I'm going to always be pro-life and I'm probably always going to be against the death penalty and things like that. So when I hear other differing opinions, it's like, where did you hear that from? And how can these people think that? So sometimes I'm a little *shocked* when I hear it, I'm like…wow, other people really do think this way! I know it's different, but when you actually hear it and actually hear their reasoning, it's kind of like, whoa! Where is this coming from?

Her emphasis on an "accurate voice" in Interview 1 as a source could be an indicator of a dualistic or multiplistic view of knowledge. By Interview 2, however, Keisha's comments seemed to indicate a loosening of the rigidity of her own opinions and an increased willingness to incorporate new perspectives into her existing views. For

example, when I asked her in Interview 2 what she thought she got out of the training, she said:

> I mean just a broader appreciation of what people have to say, I guess, and listening to people's viewpoints like and not letting that…I don't know. Like letting it kind of tweak what you *already* know.

By the second interview, she definitely seemed to be struggling with holding on to her strongly held opinions, yet at the same time incorporating the new idea that letting in aspects of other people's ideas can perhaps enhance your own. This new idea in Interview 2 of "letting [new opinions] kind of tweak what you already know" was very different from her strong assertions about the rigidity of her opinions in her first interview.

Several examples of potential changes in cognitive complexity as described by Perry's (1968/1970) theory also emerged from a comparison of the students' responses to questions about their personal views on the topics of the dialogue groups before and after they had a chance to lead the groups.

For example, Cathleen expressed a very complex view of her topic, affirmative action, in Interview 1 just before leading her dialogue group. However, one of the things that really stood out from her first interview was how frequently she characterized that topic as "Black and White":

> But I just think that if affirmative action is going to become acceptable to at least the majority of this country…like right now it is solely a Black and White issue and it needs to get off that. And at the same time, it's solely a Black and White issue and there are so many other minorities that, you know, like everything I found when I did my research was between Black and White. And while that's still the main racial divide line, there's so much more going on these days that people just ignore. So I feel like before it even hits that point where it needs to be profiling of like every individual person, it's going to have to become not just Black and White, and people are going to have to recognize it's like Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, etc.

Although she clearly expressed a desire for the issue to move beyond "Black and White" in a way that demonstrated complexity in thinking, it was noteworthy how she characterized the issue of affirmative action several times in that very dichotomous and dualistic way. One possible explanation is that she may have been simply conveying her current perception of the way affirmative action is often discussed.

By Interview 2, however, after having had the experience of leading the dialogue group, it was striking that Cathleen never once used the term "Black and White" to describe the issue of affirmative action. Instead, she seemed to demonstrate a broadened view of how different people perceive the issue, citing "personal experiences" and the variety of different perspectives that were mentioned in her dialogue group. She said:

> They hit on all different aspects of the same viewpoints. The same viewpoints were still raised, like yes we should have it [affirmative action] or no we shouldn't, but they hit on very different aspects of it that I never really considered or thought of, so that was good.

In comparing Cathleen's overall comments from the first interview to the second, a change in language from a dichotomous, dualistic characterization of the issue of affirmative action (or at least her understanding of people's perceptions of it) to one that was more nuanced and complex was evident.

In summary, several examples from this pattern matching analysis of the participants' comments earlier in the training semester as compared to later in the semester were found that suggest positive change in thinking and cognitive complexity along the Perry (1968/1970) continuum as a result of the participants' experiences in the dialogue leader training program. While examples of potential positive change in cognitive development were found for all the participants in the study, one important pattern that emerged from this analysis was a scarcity of examples for this section from

the two study participants who did not show any change in their MID scores. The fact that this pattern matching analysis yielded very few examples of potential change along the Perry continuum for these two participants in particular suggests both reliability and validity of the research methods for this research question.

Technique 2 – Matching of overall themes and categories from the data to the Perry scheme. To conduct the second pattern matching analysis on overall themes and categories that emerged from the data in comparison to what Perry's (1968/1970) theory would predict, I developed a table of *Learner Characteristics Implied by the Perry Scheme* (see Appendix R) that I adapted and synthesized from three sources: a table by Cornfeld and Knefelkamp (1979) that was printed in the republished version of Perry's book (1968/1999), Moore's *Instrument Manual for the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID)* (1990), and Perry's 1981 essay, *Cognitive and Ethical Growth: The Making of Meaning.* This table includes 11 categories of "learner characteristics" associated with thinking that would be exemplified by students in Positions 2 through 5 of the Perry scheme: dualism, early multiplicity, late multiplicity, and contextual relativism. These positions were emphasized because they are most likely to apply to traditional-aged college students; Position 1 was not included because it is considered to be a theoretical position for the purpose of illustrating concepts in theory and is not necessarily representative of the real life thinking of college students. The 11 categories in the table are: view of knowledge, view of the role of authority/instructor, view of the role of the student as learner, view of the role of peers in the learning process, view of the role of classroom atmosphere and activities, view of evaluation, primary intellectual

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tasks, use of language, sources of challenge for the student, sources of support for the student, and general characteristics of students within each position.

In the first category in the *Learner Characteristics* table associated with Positions 2 through 5 of the Perry (1968/1970) scheme, students' view of knowledge, one of the most prominent and frequently-cited themes to emerge from this study was the students' ***new learning about the concepts of, and the distinction between, process and content***. Specifically, many of the participants reported that the Peer Dialogue Leader training experience, which strongly emphasized that the primary role of the dialogue leaders is to attend to the *process* of the dialogue group in contrast to a strict structure and content agenda, was very different from their previous peer leadership training experiences and stood out for them significantly as they reflected on their overall learning from the program. The participants reported time and time again that learning about the distinction between process and content, and then having an opportunity to apply these concepts to the practice of leading the dialogue groups, had a significant impact on their thinking throughout the training semester.

Learning about the concepts of "process" and "content" is explicitly identified in the *Learner Characteristics* table several times. Three examples appear in thinking associated with Position 3 – early multiplicity, under the categories of *view of knowledge* ("First view of learning as a *process* that the student can learn"), *primary intellectual tasks* ("First understanding of process as a concept; [student] sees difference between process and content for the first time"), and also *sources of challenge for the student* ("Learning processes as opposed to facts").

Understanding process as distinguished from content is also mentioned under Position 4 – late multiplicity, in the category, *view of the role of classroom atmosphere and activities* ("Focus is on method/process of thinking/analysis; *how* should we approach this?"). It is also mentioned in *view of role of authority/instructor*, which suggests that for students in Position 4, the authority or instructor is the "Source/facilitator of the process of thinking; 'The *way* they want us to think'."

While the overall category of learning associated with process and content will be discussed in more depth in later sections of this chapter, two quotes from the students provide excellent illustration of this learning. The first is from Soraya's first e-mail reflection, after she just finished the preparation phase and before she began leading her dialogue group, in response to the question, "What have you learned or experienced [in the preparation phase] that has challenged your thinking in any way or caused you to think about something differently?"

> What I have learned that has challenged my learning/leading behaviors significantly has been that the PDL program is all about process and not content. I have been through multiple training programs throughout my life and all of them have focused around setting a goal, clearly defining its components, then taking sequential steps in order to reach that goal. This process however is significantly different.
>
> The PDL process is more focused on how people achieve their desired goal, in this case either an option for action or consensus and not necessarily the goal itself. This is really hard for me because as a leader I have been trained to be goal oriented and as a student I have also been trained to focus on a task and achieve it, but this process has a goal all its own . The goal of this process is healthy civic dialogue and not consensus and letting the group "just go" is something I'm really going to have to work on.
>
> Samantha also commented on learning about process and content in her last

e-mail reflection, after having finished leading her dialogue group. In this observation,

she focused on her role as "authority" in setting the tone for the learning of the group members:

> In this session [dialogue group session four], I have learned that, as a facilitator, I got more satisfaction out of knowing that people actually valued the process more than content. If I had been more intent on making lists and achieving the tasks set at each session, I think I would have been highly disappointed with the outcome of my group.

A second theme to emerge from the study that was consistent with terminology in the *Learner Characteristics* table has to do with the participants achieving a **new view of peers as a more legitimate source of learning**. This learning is clearly reflected in the table under *view of the role of peers in the learning process*. One of the characteristics of Position 3 – early multiplicity is that "Peers are now a more legitimate source [of learning]; [and] can be a source of interesting diversity/discussion (often in small group discussions)." Further, by Position 4 – late multiplicity, "Peers are a quite legitimate source [of learning]."

Many times throughout the study, the participants described the power of learning that came from either dialoguing with their peers in the training program in the preparation phase or witnessing dialogue among the student participants when they were leading their dialogue groups. Numerous examples of this are highlighted in later sections of this chapter.

In addition, one of the related themes that emerged from this study was the participants' learning associated with their *own* abilities as peer dialogue leaders, the ways in which they were received by their peers who were the student participants in the dialogue groups they led, and the learning they were able to effect in others, as peers. For

example, this was one of Cathleen's observations in Interview 2 about how the student

participants in the group viewed her, even though she was a peer to them:

> At the very beginning of the session when we got them to start dialoguing at the first session, they were looking straight at us. We kind of stopped them like half way through and we were like, you guys we just don't want to, you know…we went over the difference between the leader and the facilitator, we were like, you don't need to look at us. Don't look at us when you're talking. And we'd kind of sit there and like nod when they were looking at us, and we were like, we don't want to nod like we're *agreeing* with you, but you're looking at us while you're talking (laughter). And then that was when we started to sit in the group and split up and sit on other sides of the classroom.

> But I think that *definitely* made it a lot better [that we were peers]. I think they are much more willing to open up and talk if they're not so worried about you being a teacher or judging what they're saying or, you know, we're not going to write back to their TAs about what they said and how much they participated. It was simply that they showed up. I *was* very surprised but I also was very happy about it. I think that was one of the better parts.

Leia also commented on her role as a peer leader her second interview. Her

remark was interesting in that she acknowledged her dual role in the group as authority

figure and also a peer. In her words, "Well, I didn't really feel like a leader in the group

just because we were supposed to be fellow *learners*, so I didn't like try to impose

leadership upon them."

A third theme that emerged from the study that was directly consistent with

terminology in the *Learner Characteristics* table (Appendix R) was the frequent and

thoughtful way in which the participants ***related their learning in the peer dialogue***

leader training program to "real life" learning outside of the program. While this was

in part prompted by direct questions I asked them in both interviews, I was struck by the

ease and thoughtfulness with which they repeatedly related their learning in training to

"real life" settings outside of training, and also by how well they were able to articulate

that learning in their interviews. This type of thinking is described in the *Learner*

Characteristics table as a cue for Position 4 – Late multiplicity, under the category of

primary intellectual tasks: "Can relate learning to other issues or to issues in 'real life'."

Samantha provided one of the best examples of this at the very beginning of her

first interview, without being asked. In response to an open-ended question about what

she had learned thus far in the preparation phase of the training, she began by describing

a recent experience she had at dinner with a small group of friends:

> I definitely learned how to be a PDL leader as far as taking myself out of the situation and not putting my opinion in it. Because at dinner the other night I was with my friend and we got to talking about what I do as far as PDL is concerned. We were talking about the death penalty and abortion….and everybody was going around and sharing their opinions and [one person] was the typical person who kept bringing religion into it and I kept trying to tell him, well what do you say to people who aren't religious? How do you argue your whole argument?

> ….Then after we left the restaurant, we got in the car and one of my friends said, "Well, Samantha, we talked about this. It's obvious that you're a facilitator of these groups, but you know, what are your opinions on it because I couldn't tell?" So I was very impressed with myself (laughter).

Sonia also gave a specific example of how she applied learning in the PDL

training to an outside setting. In her second interview, in response to open-ended

questions about what she had learned, she talked about being an Orientation Leader and

some of the initial trepidation she felt after having been assigned a group of Computer

Science majors, a field she knew very little about. She said, "So [the PDL training]

helped me to just step back a little bit more and not be like, "Well what do you think

about this?"

In addition to the larger themes of learning about process and content, gaining a

new view of peers as a more legitimate source of learning, and demonstrating an ability

to relate their learning in training to real life settings outside of training, several other less

prominent themes emerged in this pattern analysis that were consistent with the language

in the *Learner Characteristics* table. For example, one of the cues for Position 4 – late

multiplicity in the category of *sources of challenge for the stude*nt is ***learning to evaluate***

sources. This was reminiscent of an example that Samantha had discussed extensively in

her second interview regarding her frustration with two participants in her dialogue group

who had relied heavily on an article they had read and a movie they had seen about the

death penalty that, in her opinion, were very limited in scope, were not necessarily

"good" sources, and were ultimately serving to limit the participants' views of the issue

and their ability to attain expanded views. In her case, Samantha's experience leading the

dialogue group had prompted her to think a great deal about the issue of credibility and

reliability of sources.

Additional learner characteristics described in the table and associated with

multiple Perry (1968/1970) positions are ***increased complexity of thinking*** and ***increased***

understanding of the contextual nature of knowledge. There were many, many

examples of these kinds of insights that emerged from the study that will be presented in

later sections of this chapter.

Finally, ***increased capacity for "meta-thought,"*** or thinking about one's thinking,

appears in the table as a cue for Position 5 thinking, or contextual relativism. While I am

not suggesting that any of the participants in this study reached Position 5 as a result of

participation in this training program (and the MID results confirm this), the frequent

examples the participants provided that are presented throughout this chapter about how

the training program stimulated their thinking about their own thinking lend strong

support for the hypothesis that the experience of participation in the training program

promoted increased complexity of thinking, and especially toward meta-thinking, regardless of the student's current Perry (1968/1970) position.

Throughout the process of developing the coding categories and conducting the interpretive analysis for this study, one of the process elements that was most striking to me was how several of these major themes emerged independently, yet in the same or nearly the same language, as specific cues and characteristics that would be prominent in the *Learner Characteristics* table I developed later. One of the best examples of this is the theme about process and content. In conducting the interpretive analysis, an early coding theme about the importance of learning about process and content emerged long before I developed the table and realized that specific language about the importance of these two concepts would be so prominent as cues associated with thinking in the various Perry (1968/1970) positions as described by Cornfeld and Knefelkamp (as cited in Perry, 1968/1999), Moore (1990), and/or Perry (1981).

In summary, this pattern matching analysis of overall themes and categories that emerged from the data to the table of *Learner Characteristics* implied by the positions in the Perry (1968/1970) scheme (Appendix R) provided evidence for the hypothesis that participation in the training program had a positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry's theory. I believe that this second pattern matching analysis has face validity and strengthens the findings for this research question about the impact of participation in the training program on cognitive development.

Overall, results from both of the pattern matching analyses suggest strong support for the hypothesis that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program had a positive impact on the participants' cognitive complexity as defined by Perry's

(1968/1970) theory. The first pattern matching analysis of participants' comments made earlier in the training session as compared to later in the training session resulted in several specific examples that suggest movement over the course of the training semester from dualism to multiplicity, and even movement from multiplicity to thinking that is more consistent with contextual relativism. The second pattern matching analysis, a comparison of selected themes that emerged from the study to the *Learner Characteristics* table, also yielded several matches, many in the same or similar language that is used in Perry's theory.

Findings from Interpretive Analysis

In addition to the two pattern matching analyses, an interpretive analysis on the data that emerged from the study related to cognitive development was conducted for additional categories, themes, and trends that might shed light on the potential relationship between participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program and impact on the students' cognitive development as defined by Perry's theory (1968/1970). In conducting this interpretive analysis, I looked for *self-reported* examples of changes in the students' thinking that potentially show movement from dualism to multiplicity, or from multiplicity to contextual relativism, over the course of the training semester. Attention was paid to focusing this analysis on examples that seem to indicate change or growth *as a result of* participation in the training program. In particular, I looked for examples of "meta-thought" (Perry, 1981, p. 85), or thinking about thinking, which can either signal possible transition from multiplistic thinking to contextual relativism or can be a cue for relativistic thinking.

Two main sets of findings emerged from this interpretive analysis. The first includes examples that illustrate the surprising frequency with which the participants' recalled specific Perry (1968/1970) terms and concepts in describing their own thinking and learning as a result of their participation in the training program. The second includes additional self-reported examples of learning that occurred over the course of the training semester that could indicate positive growth in cognitive development along the Perry continuum.

Participants' use of Perry (1968/1970) terms to describe their thinking. One of the earliest and most striking themes to emerge from conducting the interviews and the interpretive analysis of the data was the frequency with which the participants responded to open-ended questions about what they had learned from the Peer Dialogue Leader training program by citing examples utilizing Perry terms that they had been taught early in the training semester to describe examples of their meta-thinking – or their thinking about the evolution of their own thinking – over the course of the Peer Dialogue Leader experience. As one of the research questions for the study focused on cognitive development as defined by Perry, I made an effort to not ask leading questions in the interviews as well as in the e-mail reflection prompts that might focus the participants on that particular aspect of the preparation phase curriculum. Therefore, it was noteworthy that one of the first things to come to mind for many of them in their interviews was their learning about Perry's theory.

As this particular aspect of the curriculum in the preparation phase was only mentioned briefly in Chapter 3, I'll provide a brief overview here to provide a context for the remainder of this section. In preparation for the first peer dialogue leader training

group in 2001, Petkas drafted a training document entitled *Development of Quality of Thinking* (2001, see Appendix F) that provided a synthesis of a number of cognitive development theorists' observations (e.g. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; King & Kitchener, 1994; Perry, 1970, 1981) about how changes in thinking occur over time. The document describes how concrete thinking becomes (more) abstract thinking, simple thinking becomes (more) complex thinking, external authority becomes (more) internal authority, and certitude becomes (more) comfort with doubt, uncertainty, and independent inquiry (p. 1). It also goes on to describe "dualistic and received knowing," "multiplistic and subjective knowing," and "relativistic and contextual knowing" (p. 2). The primary purpose of this training document and component in the training curriculum for the Peer Dialogue Leader training program is to help the trainees recognize and understand the kinds of thinking that might be evident among the undergraduate student participants in their dialogue groups. A secondary purpose is also to help them recognize and understand their own thinking as undergraduate students in ways that will assist them in their roles as peer dialogue leaders.

In the training session on this document, the trainee assigned to it for that particular session was responsible for presenting an overview of the content to the rest of the group. The trainer then supplemented the student's presentation by leading a discussion that prompted them to think about examples of their own dualistic thinking, multiplistic thinking, and perhaps even contextually relativistic thinking. This training document from the Spring 2005 Peer Dialogue Leader Training Manual is in Appendix F.

The participants in the study were formally exposed to this document and discussion about it in one relatively brief training session in the preparation phase early in

the semester, although it was referred to periodically throughout the remainder of the preparation phase. Therefore, given this limited coverage in comparison to other material that was covered in the preparation phase, I was surprised at how often the participants mentioned it throughout the study in response to open-ended questions about what they had learned.

Keisha provided several references to her learning about Perry's (1968/1970) theory in the preparation phase. The following is an example that occurred very early in Interview 1, shortly after the preparation phase had ended. In response to open-ended questions about what stood out for her most and what she had learned, she first replied that she learned a lot about the importance of "non-verbals" in communication. Then she went on so say:

> ….And, let's see, another thing was the multiplistic learning or thinking, that's it. And that was really helpful. I've tried to do that more often in just like every aspect of…why it's just making sure I consider gray areas and things like that. Because with my friends I tend to…sometimes we'll get into like not debates or anything, but we'll talk about stuff and I try to be as objective as possible, making sure I pay attention to the gray areas and things like that….So being more aware of that. Things aren't just black and white.
>
> And I knew that before, but just knowing that there are actually levels of knowing, and that there's this other relativistic knowing that, you know, he [the trainer] was like well you might not get there yet, you know? (Laughter) You're probably here. So I mean that's something to aspire to. And I think just practicing…practicing acknowledging gray areas in situations is just going to make me more objective with things. And that's how I try to be.

When I asked her if she had been exposed to the specific concepts before, she said:

> No. I've always tried to be objective when I like try…I would try to make sure I include everything, but it's usually been like, just it's been more dualistic. Like with abortion or something. I understand that there are extenuating circumstances and I usually look at it as pro-life, pro-choice. But then you have to consider also like extenuating circumstances. Like that's what I would consider the gray areas and things like that. So I knew about that and I knew how to handle it, but I still saw it more as pro-choice and, you know, pro-life. And like yeah…two ways.

....And [now] I try to think of other things like, why is this person pro-choice? Maybe their mother has had an abortion, maybe they know someone who's had an abortion, you know, things like that. So just taking all that into consideration and just kind of expanding my knowledge of abortion and making sure I don't sound too assertive with my point....If I dismiss what they [others] think by not including the gray area with my debate, then I feel like I'm kind of, there's no point in debating....So that's been really helpful with a lot of things.

When I asked her to be more specific about what exactly she was referring to regarding the stimulus that prompted her learning about multiplistic thinking, she said, "Probably the discussions that we had that night [in the preparation phase]. It was when Steve [the trainer] went through each level, like I realized that." Then she went on to recollect how the trainer would also point out examples throughout the preparation phase when the trainees were using dualistic thinking. She said, "He would remind us that there are other sides to the issue." She also recalled how as a result, she began to "catch" herself in dualistic thinking, telling herself, "Wait, I'm being dualistic in that."

As we continued in Interview 1, I asked Keisha if she could think of a time from the training semester when she had caught herself in this kind of "meta-thinking" in an application outside of training. A specific example she recalled had to do with discussions she had with her family about the Terri Schiavo case, a current event that was prominent in the national news during the spring of 2005 involving a woman with brain damage who had become dependent on a feeding tube and the resulting dispute between her husband and her parents as to how to handle her medical care:

Well, I was talking about that with my dad and, like me and him were just so like, how can they do that to that woman? And then I was thinking, I was like well maybe, you know, I should think of like the other areas. I mean I didn't actually say this in my head, but like kind of that thinking like, what else could provoke this man to want to, you know, take out the feeding tube? So I mean things like that. I was thinking well maybe if the doctors really feel there's no hope, and maybe, you know, he just can't handle it anymore and maybe the family isn't as supportive as they are seeming in the media and things like that.

Throughout her explanation of this specific example, she emphasized repeatedly the importance of being intentional about looking at "other areas and things that are really going on" in the case aside from her initial reactions. When I asked her to characterize the ways in which the training she had received might have prompted her to be more intentional about thinking of these alternative views, or the "shades of gray" as she repeatedly called them, she said, "Yeah….I probably wouldn't have made it a point to think of other things [before the training]." In elaborating, she said:

> But I've noticed more and more that ever since I've read about it [the three levels of thinking presented in training], that I've been wanting to look at the gray areas….Like with abortion when people talk about extenuating circumstances.
>
> ….Maybe before [the training] I would have been, umm, I don't care about your extenuating circumstances (laughter); this is how I feel. So I've been a little more lax with how rigid I am with my viewpoints. Like if I didn't have the training….I really wouldn't have made it a *point* to think about it.

One of the aspects that was most compelling about these examples was how Keisha had so clearly taken these concepts she had learned in the preparation phase, about dualistic, multiplistic, and contextually relativistic thinking, and applied them not only to her role as a Peer Dialogue Leader but also to other personal settings outside that role. In characterizing this, she said, "Well, let me say it this way. If they were such good qualities to have in a [Peer Dialogue] leader, then they obviously are good qualities I guess to have in your personal life, too."

Keisha emphasized the importance of learning about "multiplistic" thinking again, later in the first interview, when I asked her an open-ended question about whether there are other topics that should have been incorporated into the preparation phase or emphasized more that would have helped her feel more prepared to go into the leading

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phase. She said, "I think the multiplistic thinking should. I would like that to be

emphasized more." In supporting this suggestion, she said:

> I think it's very important that we [as dialogue leaders] understand that there are gray areas so that we don't get offended by things….Like it's not always X equals Y (laughter), you know?….I think it's really helpful when dealing with the [dialogue] group."

The idea of dualistic, multiplistic, and contextually relativistic thinking clearly

had a strong impact on Keisha because she continued to think about it and bring it up

repeatedly in subsequent e-mail reflections throughout the training semester and also in

Interview 2 at the end of the semester. For example, in Reflection 5, after leading her

fourth and final dialogue group session, she wrote about how she had applied her learning

about different ways of thinking to the leading of the dialogue group:

> This was our best session yet! The group was very much involved and active and made co-leading so pleasurable. I asked people questions that made them think multiplisticly [*sic*]. For example, [participant], a member who was leaning towards pro-racial profiling, made the comment that there must be a problem with this area of Baltimore where a lot of Blacks lived for there to be 1 out of 4 Black males incarcerated. I asked him to think of the reasons these statistics might be accurate besides Blacks just being destined for jail. He came up with something that hinted at the reasoning that racial profiling might have had a large part in it. Other members found this reasoning more acceptable and used it as a springboard into other topics of race.

Given Keisha's continual application of Perry (1968/1970) terms to a variety of

different contexts in Interview 1 and then throughout the leading of her dialogue group, I

looked forward to having a chance to follow up with her about these insights in Interview

2. As it turned out, that interview was dominated by a recounting of her experience with

her co-facilitator in confronting a few particularly challenging group members. Even

through this context, however, she persisted in analyzing the experience in Perry terms.

For example, in responding to questions in Interview 2 about aspects of the preparation

phase and overall training that she thought helped her most in leading the dialogue group, she said:

> I think what prepared me for this a lot was…because I think the biggest thing *was* confronting them [the challenging participants in her dialogue group]. And so, being like…Steve was talking about like, it sounds really weird I'm going back to this, but like the whole multiplistic thing and how you have to think of things like kind of not, like either/or. Like I had to deal with that…I did that a lot with [challenging participant]. And so, *that* helped out a lot.

When I asked her to elaborate on how she used these concepts to inform the way she dealt with the challenging participant, she gave examples of "giving her the benefit of the doubt" and "not judging her either way." In asking her to describe further how these examples related what she had learned in the preparation phase about the three levels of thinking, she reiterated the importance of considering multiple factors, beyond "black and white" and considering the possibility of a "whole slew of things that I don't know about." "I was trying to be multiplistic," she said. "I wasn't trying to be thinking black or white."

As Keisha's repeated applications of Perry (1968/1970) terms to her experiences in the training as well as co-leading her dialogue group were so noteworthy, I asked her near the end of the second interview if she could isolate that learning to the training semester or if it was something she had learned previously. She said it was not something she had learned previously, at least "not in those terms." While she credited her parents as having paving the way toward more flexible thinking by always teaching her to give people "the benefit of the doubt" and to not judge others, she said she acquired the labels and a clear understanding of the concepts from the preparation phase.

One of the aspects that was so interesting about Keisha's responses to these questions about multiplicity was the way she connected it to being open-minded or less

judgmental, as compared to, in her view, a "dualistic" person who may pre-judge and would not necessarily take people's varied life circumstances into account in making a determination about their views or positions.

In Keisha's final e-mail reflection she turned in at the end of the semester after the second interview, she provided several more illustrations of this. For example, in talking again about her overall learning from the program, she said:

> In PDL, we have to take in consideration people's identity when trying to relay their feelings to the rest of the group. For example, if a Muslim feels frustrated because there is a language barrier between him and the group and really wants to say something about Homeland Security and how it affects Muslims, I have to be the one that vents his frustrations to the group. It takes a civil listener, an open mind, and a multiplistic thinker to accomplish that feat.

Later on, in that final e-mail reflection, she wrote:

> With all the information I've gained through PDL I can't forget about it, I have to use it. Knowing how identity affects communication and how thinking multiplistically affects your perception of people, places and things is very useful and even more powerful than what you can pick up in a textbook.

Keisha was not the only participant to bring up detailed examples of insights acquired as a result of learning about Perry's (1968/1970) theory, its application to experiences in training, and how it had prompted meta-thinking. At least three additional participants – half of the participant group – brought in Perry terms or concepts into the study, in interviews and/or e-mail reflections, completely on their own and unsolicited by the researcher.

Samantha was one of these participants. In both interviews, she brought up several insights and reflections she had about Perry (1968/1970) concepts over the course of the training semester. For example, in responding to an open-ended question in Interview 1 about what had been easiest for her to learn in the preparation phase and what had been most challenging or difficult, she said that while there were terms in the manual

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that were new to her, she felt like much of the material was "common sense." When I

asked her if she could think of any specific examples of terms she learned that she felt

were "common sense," she said, "I did a presentation [in the preparation phase], but I

don't remember what it was on…I want to say it had to do with like complex thinking.

There were three different things on the page and maybe it was complex thinking. No, I

don't think that was it…." After struggling for a few moments to come up with the exact

words, I helped her identify the terms "dualistic," "multiplistic," and "relativistic."

Although Samantha wasn't able to initially recall the exact terms as readily as Keisha,

she went on to apply them with accuracy:

> Yes, those are the three things I had to do [present]. And I read over what each of
> them meant and with the first one, we talked about dualism. And I kept thinking
> that it actually came up in our BSOS 301 class and I think I mentioned it to you
> that my mom always said that I was a black and white thinker. Like things have
> to be yes or no, right or wrong; there's no in-between. And so, it made me
> think…okay, well there's obviously going to be some dualistic thinkers in PDL.
> This is common sense. I should know this. If I'm inclined to think in black and
> white terms, then there's going to be plenty of other people out there that are
> going to be thinking that way.

When I asked her if, at that moment in time, she considered herself to be a "black and

white thinker," she said:

> I think I would like to be, but I think that (laughter) between CIVICUS and PDL,
> I've been trained to think that there are always other factors that play into any
> dilemma or any situation. There's never just a right or wrong; there are so many
> other factors that you have to weigh into making a decision and that kind of thing.

Later, she also went on to credit her CIVICUS experience and learning she had acquired

in here BSOS 301 class for helping her to understand how "There's an answer, but this

answer might also cause other consequences that might be effects of whatever decisions

you make." When I asked if she could recall a specific example from BSOS 301, she

remembered a case study about Israelis and Palestinians as being the first time she

realized that "This obviously isn't a black and white issue," and "They both have valid reasons for believing in whatever they do, and they just can't come to an understanding with each other." In elaborating, she said:

> So I think that was my first, you know, realization, that oh, I'm not just a black and white thinker anymore. I mean obviously these two groups could only see it one way. But after they had come to some kind of understanding, or we're going to sit down and listen to why they felt the way they did, they might be able to create peace or something like that.

In Interview 2, Samantha again relayed some of her learning about "black and white" thinking, this time in describing a conversation she had with the trainer in a consultation session after leading one of her dialogue group sessions on the death penalty. In this example, she chastised herself a bit about not picking up on the potentially dualistic thinking of a group participant, but then saw it immediately after the trainer pointed it out as a possibility:

> And so then, after the [dialogue group] sessions, when we would go back to Steve for the consultation, he would point out, well this person probably has the black and white way of thinking. And I thought that the training sessions [in the preparation phase] would have prepared me to think that…to say that okay, well this person said that [something that] was very bipolar. It was black and white. And *I* didn't pick up on that when we were in the [dialogue group] session, which I thought I would be able to do more readily.

> But it wasn't until the consultation when we started to talk to Steve that I picked up on this. Oh well, this person is a dualistic thinker and this person is thinking like that. And then I could understand.

When I asked Samantha if she could recall a specific example of when someone in her group had been demonstrating dualistic thinking, she described her experience with a participant who was insistent on bringing in and referring to "statistics" to back up her arguments. In recalling a consultation session she had with the trainer, she remembered that he had challenged Samantha and her co-leader to think about why the participant

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might have been so insistent in relying on statistics. She said, "And then once I thought about the reasons *why*, it made me understand that okay, well it's just the fact that this girl probably isn't…it's not her thing to sit here and talk about the death penalty. She's more into tangible evidence."

Samantha's frustration stemming from the group member's insistence on relying on statistics to convey her points in the dialogue group is also illustrative of an important point about cognitive development that emerged from the study and is illustrated throughout this chapter. Several of the dialogue leaders who had similar experiences with their groups reported a realization of the difference between what they perceived to be an absolute kind of thinking associated with numbers and facts and a more nuanced thinking associated with experiences, feelings, and perceptions.

Soraya was another participant who volunteered lengthy and detailed examples throughout the study about her new insights into Perry (1968/1970) terms such "dualistic" and "multiplistic" thinking that she had first learned in the preparation phase and were illustrated and reinforced for her through the leading of her dialogue group. For example, when I asked Soraya a general and open-ended question at the beginning of Interview 1 about what she thought she had learned about herself thus far in the training program, she spoke at length about how learning to lead a dialogue group in the Common Ground program, which requires flexibility and an understanding that there are not necessarily any right or wrong answers, was a "new style" that had really challenged her previously-held notion that leader activities were supposed to be scripted, planned, and "clear flowing." In comparing this to her experience in a peer mediator training program

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in high school, she said, "It's really hard for me to adapt to change when I've had the same kind of training my entire life." In elaborating, she said:

> Yeah, I was a peer mediator and we had training, like this is what you do if this happens and you go to X and if this happens, Y. So it was very clear flowing. And then for the [Maryland organization], I was the trainer for the middle school and high school conferences and it was like how a bill becomes a law, and you know we have to vote on this, vote on that. There was a process. Robert's Rules of Order was my best friend and I'm very, very strict when it comes to these things because it's been beat into me since I was 11.

> And now (laughter), you know, it was just very hard for me to change. It was just very hard for me to change. Like, okay, this is a new style. You know you have to learn; it's not always just this, just this. And throughout the whole [PDL preparation phase], I would notice that about myself. I wanted to define words and state that…like for saying consensus, I wanted to define consensus, define abortion, define affirmative action. And everybody was like, *no*. Everybody else, I feel, had a more open mind going into this than I did.

When I asked her if she could elaborate more about her need to "define" things, she drew from what she had learned about Perry's (1968/1970) theory by observing, "I'm a black and white person like with the dualistic thinking, yes and no, and that's how I see things."

When I asked her to expand on what she meant by "dualistic thinking," she said:

> Oh, dualistic because that was what we learned in our, some part of our training. We learned different types of thinking and how thinking evolves over time. And dualistic thinking was like the basic how people think, like the bottom, like people think there's an either/or, and you know the more they learn instead of thinking just this or that, they're open to more…they're open to different kinds of thinking. There's not just either/or answers. There are many different answers that you're willing to accept. So that's just a term that I use. I learned it and I use it all the time now.

> In bringing her comments full circle, Soraya concluded by observing that her tendency toward "dualistic thinking" connected to her "wanting to define everything." Further, she continued to emphasize how much she resonated with being a dualistic thinker, yet at the same time she expressed a strong desire to work on "changing" that aspect of her thinking:

So I use it to describe myself and I know it's something that I want to work on personally and like taking the training has opened my eyes. And so that [dualistic thinking] is the most basic form of thinking like when you're not, you know, when you haven't, when you've not learned….And I don't want to be perceived that way. But it's just…I can't help it. It's something that I really want to work and I want to change, that I'm such an either/or person.

In following up on her comment that her black and white thinking was something that she really wanted to "work on" and "change," I asked her, "What specifically do you want to change?" She said, "I want to see more gray."

Later in the interview I asked Soraya if she could provide an example of other things that might have been going on in her life *outside* of the peer dialogue leader training that semester that reinforced what she had been learning *in* training. In her response to that question, she provided yet another example in which she noticed dualistic thinking on the part of others and it frustrated her. This example related to her experience in the Student Government Association (SGA):

Actually in SGA…there were some bills and legislation that somebody was writing….And it was like, oh we can either put $500 back into student activities fees or we can put the $500 into SGA accounts. And I was just like, there are a million other things you could do with the money. Like you could put the money into here or we could buy something for the university. We could do this. Like I was coming up with ideas and they were like *no*. These are the *only* possibilities. I'm like, what are you're talking about? There's $500! You can do a lot with $500! Charity, anything. They were like *no*.

When I asked her if she remembered being frustrated because she thought they were being "dualists," she said:

Yes. It's like you almost feel like you're so single-minded, like you're single tracked (laughter). I was just like, no I'm focused. You're not focused; you're only seeing two things; you're not focused. I was just like you might be focused on what to do with this money, but you're not focusing on all of the options and it just irritated the hell out of me. And it was like…you were just like, you're thinking like me and that bothers me! (Laughter)

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Although I did ask her a leading question about the members of the group being dualists, she strongly agreed with me in her response. Further, frustration about their dualism yet her acknowledgment that they reminded her of *her* provides a really interesting example of her meta-thinking and potentially illustrates thinking that is transitioning from a dualistic perspective to a more complex multiplistic perspective.

Soraya made yet another surprising connection to "dualistic thinking" when I asked her a routine question near the end of Interview 1 that I asked all the participants about the essays they wrote at the beginning of the semester for the first administration of the MID. The essay prompt for that first MID administration was about the "best course you've experienced" (see Appendix I). In her essay, Soraya had written about a political theory course and her learning about Machiavelli. When I asked her in the interview if she would now change it from the response she had given five weeks earlier, she immediately said, "No, Like right now I like to see other people's views like Machiavelli, like I think he's crazy, but I think he….a lot of his points are valid." In her enthusiasm, she went on to elaborate about what she perceived to be his "dualistic thinking":

> I think Machiavelli is hypocritical. Sometimes when he says, like, by any means necessary, like that was basically him (laughter). The decision was that the ends justify the means….But his basic thing was just like controlling his kingdom. It means that he wanted stability and order and I think that's a just goal, but, at the same time, like by any means necessary…
>
> ….Because I think….I realize it's dualistic thinking….There are a lot of things that you have to take into consideration. And also one of Machiavelli's points was when he said peace shouldn't come with the price of cruelty. So there are different levels. Because what I didn't understand is like you need to be forceful, but you can't be too forceful. You need to do this, but you can't torture people. And I'm just like…I don't understand, it doesn't make sense because if he says at one point that the ends justify the means, then he's just like, but you can't be *too* mean. Like, what the hell did that mean? So I talked to my professor about it.

Leia also unexpectedly brought up Perry (1968/1970) concepts in her first interview when I asked her to elaborate on a comment she had written in her first e-mail reflection in response to a prompt question about her overall learning from the preparation phase. In referring to learning she had gained from leading groups in simulations in the preparation phase, she had written, "Lastly, I have learned that when leading a group, it is okay to be comfortable with doubt and uncertainty." When I asked her in Interview 1 if she could expand on that comment, she described the Perry (1968/1970) concepts if not the exact labels:

> Yeah, definitely….There are different views we learned about at the beginning of the semester. One of them is right or wrong, polarizing. And then the other one is like, oh, everything's okay. And then like…the whole thing, going from simple to complex thinking; it's just relaxing and accepting that if you have a doubt, it's okay to think…to not know the answer. So I mean just because you don't know the answer, it doesn't mean that you're not going to learn anything from the experience.
>
> So I mean when I wrote that and when I thought about what I learned, it just asserted my view that it was okay to be unsure. And sometimes that leads to more understanding because in my view, if you're not sure about something…. it'll make me a more accepting person.

In this example, Leia seemed to find comfort in multiplicity because it offers less pressure of a "right" or "wrong" answer or way to approach things, including the leading of a dialogue group. This response was also interesting because, like Keisha, she connected multiplistic thinking with increased empathy, less judgment, and, in her words, being a "more accepting person." This pattern was extremely intriguing, especially in the context of teaching undergraduate students how to lead dialogue groups.

In summary, these examples illustrate surprising and compelling connections that the participants in the study made to Perry (1968/1970) concepts that they had learned in the preparation phase of the training program. At the outset of the study, I did not expect

the students to raise these concepts in such unsolicited ways, with the frequency and detail in which they did. Several of the dialogue leaders had spent a great deal of time reflecting on concepts of "dualism," "multiplicity," and "relativism" and their application to their own evolving thinking.

Additional self-reported examples of potential cognitive development along the Perry continuum. This second category of responses I tracked in the interpretive analysis for Research Question 1 includes examples of the participants' *self-reported* changes in their thinking over the course of the training semester that were consistent with cognitive growth according to Perry's (1968/1970) theory, but did not involve an explicit discussion of Perry terms or concepts that characterize the examples in the previous section.

Seven primary themes emerged related to self-reported changes in thinking that could be related to growth in cognitive complexity. These were (a) changes in the quality and complexity of the participants' thinking (their meta-thinking), (b) new insights associated with learning about the concepts of "process" and "content," (c) new insights into the opinions and perspectives of others, (d) new insights into their own opinions and perspectives, (e) challenges to previously held stereotypes, (f) a new recognition of dualistic thinking in others, and (g) an ability to relate their learning from the training program to their own real life experiences.

Meta-thinking. One of the first themes to emerge from an analysis of Interview 1 was a series of statements made related to self-reported **changes in the quality and complexity of the participants' thinking about their own thinking (their meta-thinking)**. For example, in talking about the impact of the exposure to different views in the

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preparation phase of the training, Elena described what she was thinking while she witnessed a heated dialogue between several other trainees about the topic of abortion. While she described herself as not necessarily becoming more "passionate" about the issue as a result of witnessing this exchange, she did talk about the impact it had on her thinking:

> The more that we [the training group] talked about it and the more that they kind of like were passionate about it…it wasn't that their ideas like rubbed off on me; it just made me have to think about it more deeply so I could be part of the conversation. And so I thought about, why do I have this surface view? What is behind my own thinking of this topic?

> The especially notable aspect of this example was Elena's observation that witnessing the exchange about abortion made her think "more deeply" about the topic so she could "be a part of the conversation." Leia reported a similar insight in her first e-mail reflection about what she had learned thus far in the preparation phase:

> What I have learned in PDL training has also helped me grow as a person because it has challenged my previous thinking. For example, without noticing it, I always treated everything in general terms and I thought about the big picture OR I would focus in on one or two details. Going through training so far, I have had to work harder and to get the members of the group focused on the principles behind their position and explaining why they feel like they do. Whereas before I would just accept their different views and sometimes adopt an "I'm okay, you're okay" attitude.

The interesting thing about this example is that she seemed to be reflecting on prior dualistic thinking (focusing on one thing OR the other) *and* multiplistic thinking ("I'm okay, you're okay") on her journey to becoming more contextually relativistic in her thinking.

Keisha reported a different kind of change in her thinking over the course of the training semester in her first e-mail reflection, a change that involved her learning "to think more objectively":

I've also learned to think more objectively [as a result of the PDL training]. I know when someone says something they may mean it one way and it comes across to me another way. This is especially useful when in a dialogue. The situation [death penalty] where I proposed an idea to the group and it was rejected by half the members, we dialogued for awhile back and forth before we both realized what the other side was talking about.

In reflecting on changes to her thinking, Sonia reported an experience that was echoed widely by many of the other participants, a new understanding of the multiple "facets" to issues. From her first e-mail reflection:

In terms of thinking differently, all of my opinions are the same I just now realize that there are many facets to everything. I also realize that people's experiences come into play a lot so it is very important not to judge. And you might not know where people are coming from.

When I asked her in Interview 1 if she could attribute this learning to the training, she said, "I think I would have thought about it before, but the training again reaffirmed it and made it like…made me think about it."

Process and content. Another strong theme to emerge in Interview 1 was the students' self-reported ***insights associated with learning about the concepts of "process" and "content."*** As described in Chapter 3, there are structured tasks associated with each of the dialogue group sessions in the four-session model (identifying dimensions of the issue or controversy, identifying options for action, actions the group can come to consensus on, and consequences of those actions). However, the dialogue leaders are trained to balance these session guidelines with the overall needs of the group. In other words, if the guiding tasks for each of the sessions serve the ultimate interest of dialogue, then the dialogue leaders should stay with them. If they don't and the group indicates a desire to move in another direction that still serves the ultimate interest of dialogue, then

the dialogue leaders may make on-the-spot decisions to jettison the outline and go with

the desires of group.

As some of the participants' comments have already indicated, their learning

about the difference between process and content was profound for many of them. As

discussed earlier, it is also very consistent with cognitive development according with

Perry (1968/1970). For example, Cornfeld and Knefelkamp (1979) specifically describe

a "first understanding of process as a concept" and seeing the "difference between

process and content for the first time" as cues for Position 3, early multiplicity (see

Appendix R). The implication is that an increasingly sophisticated understanding of

process and content indicates further development along the Perry continuum.

As further examples to those already cited in previous sections, James made

several comments throughout the study regarding the challenges for him associated with

learning the distinction between process and content. For example, in his first e-mail

reflection he wrote:

> Throughout the training I have been taught things that challenged my way of
> thinking up to this point. The biggest and most obvious challenge is the idea of
> letting the dialogue groups go. Just letting the groups flow which ever way they
> wanted to go and the basic idea of relinquishing firm structure for a discussion.
> This challenges my way of thinking that things dealing with school and classes
> always have structure to them and really just don't free flow.

Soraya also mentioned the importance of learning about the difference between

process and content in her first e-mail reflection. Specifically she wrote, "It really stands

out to me that being a facilitator is much more than guiding a dialogue but more serving

as a medium of comprehension between all parties involved."

The participants' insights associated with learning about process and content,

especially in the context of being a dialogue group facilitator, also carried over into

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Interview 2 and into the last four e-mail reflections. For example, Soraya continued to

reflect on the importance of this learning in the very first answer she gave in Interview 2

in response to an opening question about her overall experience leading the dialogue

group:

> Overall, I think it was a really great experience for myself learning-wise because I think the biggest thing I learned throughout the whole thing was being able to facilitate for content and not process. I keep bringing that up but like it was really hard for me to learn that.

When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by the "content process thing," she

said:

> My entire life I wasn't trained in process. Like this is what we had to do… content. Do it, get there! I don't care *how* you do it, do it the most efficient way. And then this is like *process*. It doesn't necessarily matter if we get there as long as we get there the right way.
>
> So it was really hard for me to do that because at the beginning of training I wanted to define all the words then you know….I couldn't do that because that's not the purpose of this. So I get into my group. And I think it made me a better facilitator, like having a clear understanding that the goal of this was for…. *process*, because it was like, it was okay when people would go into beneficial digressions [a term from the training], when people would digress from what we were talking about. But if their conversation, their dialogue, was still, you know, a good dialogue, I would let it go. If I hadn't accepted and comprehended the fact this is more, it was about process and not content, I would have stopped it and said, "You know what? That's not what we should be talking about, go back to this." So that definitely made me a better facilitator.

Soraya expanded further on her understanding of process as compared to content when I

asked her to elaborate on her view of the overall goal of Common Ground. She said:

> We're just trying to achieve a dialogue, like a healthy dialogue for people to be able to like…one to create the environment where people feel comfortable having their own opinions and expressing that whether they know that it's accepted by the group or not. Having them conduct themselves in a way that, you know, both respects themselves and others, that allows for others to *want* to understand you as well. That's the process that I see. For people to feel comfortable in the environment there and to share their true feelings on a topic that is really controversial no matter how their feelings are about a certain issue.

It was clear from this response that Soraya had indeed grasped the overall goal of the dialogue program. While she acknowledged that learning the distinction between process and content was hard for her to do, it seemed as though these were new and salient understandings that would likely stay with her.

Insights into the opinions and perspectives of others. An additional theme of self-reported changes in the participants' thinking that emerged from Interview 2 that could indicate increased cognitive complexity was **new insights into the opinions and perspectives of others**. This category of findings does not necessarily relate to the specific *content* of the opinions and perspectives, but rather to a new understanding of the depth and complexity of others' views.

For example, Elena described several observations in about changes in her own thinking about other people's opinions. One of these insights was learning about the nuanced relationship between identity and opinions in a way that was less stereotypical than she had viewed it before the experience of leading the dialogue group. To illustrate, when asked in Interview 2 if the training experiences caused her to evaluate opinions in a different way, she said:

> I think so. I mean I always looked at it [before] from, like an identity perspective, but more so that…people that share the same identity think more the same than not. And that's not necessarily true….I mean sometimes that's true, but I know that it's not necessarily true. And I understand that more now than I guess before.

In addition to these new insights about the relationship between identity and perspectives, Elena also reported changes in her own thinking about the topic of her dialogue group, interracial adoption. Specifically, she said, "I mean I never really thought about *why* I think it's important [the topic of interracial adoption]. I mean generally, broadly, but not specifically or any of the like little idiosyncrasies. Although

later comments she went on to make clearly indicated that she had developed new insights into the content and complexity of the topic of interracial adoption itself, I was must struck by her observation at the beginning of this excerpt that she had "never really thought about *why*" she thinks it's important before. This is an example of how the experience of leading the dialogue group may have prompted meta-thinking, or thinking about thinking, for Elena.

Insights into their own opinions and perspectives. Consistent with Elena's reflections about her own views in the previous section, another theme to emerge from an analysis of the data for this section that could be consistent with increased cognitive complexity was that the participants also demonstrated **new insights into their own opinions and perspectives**.

Cathleen provided several illustrations of this in Interview 2. For example, in talking about all the diverse views and perspectives that were put forth in her dialogue group about affirmative action, she said:

> So it [exposure to the diverse views and perspectives] *did* really like challenge my thinking. It didn't *challenge* my thinking, like it didn't change my opinion, but it gave much more substance to my opinion.

Cathleen went on in Interview 2 to report a specific example of a change in her thinking, in response to a question that was also asked in Interview 1 about how she evaluates opinions. Specifically, she said in the second interview, "I now much more think that a good opinion is something that has to be thought of on all those issues. Like I would have originally said it was just something that you had your reasons to stick up." When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by "all those issues," she said she now

felt that opinions that are based on many different questions, instead of just one or two narrow experiences, "makes a truly good opinion."

Although Cathleen was still hesitant in Interview 2 to pronounce a dialogue group participant's opinions as "bad," which is consistent with dualism or multiplicity, her changed response to this question about how she evaluates opinions in Interview 2 suggested a new appreciation for opinions with breadth and complexity. This is consistent with potential transition from lower levels of multiplicity to higher levels of multiplicity and even contextual relativism (Perry, 1968/1970).

Keisha provided another example in Interview 2 of increased insight into her own opinions as a result of the experience leading her dialogue group on racial profiling. Specifically, she said that the experience "broadened" her own view "a lot" on the topic of racial profiling and she went on to describe several new things she had learned that had prompted her to reflect a great deal on her own views.

Similar to Keisha, Leia also talked in Interview 2 about having gained a "more informed" perspective on the topic of her dialogue group, same-sex marriage, one that had "more substance." Specifically, she said, "I think I have a more *informed* perspective than I did before….It gives a new…more substance to my opinion."

Challenges to previously held stereotypes. One of the other strong themes to emerge from the analysis of self-reported changes in the participants' thinking as a result of their experiences in the dialogue leader training program was ***challenges to previously held stereotypes***. While I am treating this as a distinct theme, it is also clearly related to the other themes in this section about to new insights into the complexity of opinions and perspectives of self and others.

James provided one of the most vivid and candid descriptions of this theme in Interview 2 in describing what he learned from leading his group on same-sex couples adopting or fostering children. When I asked him if there were things he knew about after leading the dialogue group that he did not know prior to leading the group, he said:

> Well, I know a…I know a gay person's view. I mean, as horrible as that may sound. I just….I didn't really know what they would feel about this and it actually shocked me somewhat to hear them [the gay participants in the group] say it because….I mean a lot of what they *said* was shocking to me in the sense that I would not have *thought* that that's what they would have *said*. I would have thought they would have taken the stringent strongly "for view" on this, but they *didn't*. They took more of a wanting to understand everybody else's view, viewpoint. They didn't really advocate for it as much as I…I would have thought they would.

When I observed that this insight seemed to have surprised him, James said, "It surprised me *a lot*." Later, when I asked him if it would be accurate to say that prior the experience of leading the dialogue group, he had never had a conversation with anybody whom he knew to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual about this issue, he said, "No, I have not."

One of the aspects that was most noteworthy about James' characterization of his learning from this experience was his direct and personal exposure for the first time to a gay person's view on this issue. Leia had a similar experience as a dialogue leader in her group on same-sex marriage. When I asked her in Interview 2 about the different opinions that were expressed in her group, she relayed the example of a gay man in her group who said he felt that same-sex unions "shouldn't be allowed." In elaborating, she said he told the group that his views were primarily informed by his religious background and beliefs. In discussing this example, Leia emphasized that she thought the exchange had been "really awkward." When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by that, she said:

Because, you would think that a homosexual person would want to, you know, be called a marriage. They would want all of the rights and privileges, which I think he wanted all the rights and privileges, but he didn't want it to be called a "marriage" because…like the way I think he defined it was just like, it would be within the church. And if the churches didn't accept them, then why would they want to be a part of it?

In following up on this example, I asked her to clarify the position she thought a gay person might take on the topic, prior to the experience of leading the group. She said, "I would say that they would *want*…(laughter), they would want to be called a marriage, they would want *everything*, you know?" Further, she said she felt that the man in her group was "limiting himself" through his views. However, when I asked her how she would respond to that question now, after having had the opportunity to experience the dialogue group, she said, "I think (laughter)…there would be different opinions. Even within the gay community….I think there is just a variety of perspectives." Like James, she also went on to say that while she has gay and lesbian friends, she had never taken the opportunity to talk to them directly about this issue before.

Later in Interview 2, Leia elaborated further on her learning from these exchanges in her dialogue group. In particular, she commented on being surprised by the fact that two of the gay people in her group also identified as Asian American:

I really didn't think that there would be a lot of Asian gay people. There were two in my group. So…I was like…*okay*. Because before I would think, you know, like everyone is always saying that Asian parents are so strict and you shouldn't be gay and I just…I just thought that…that just blew me away.

When I asked her to expand on what she meant by "blew me away," she said she was surprised because this was an example of a stereotype she had – of "strict" Asian parents – that was challenged by the experience of actually meeting gay men who also identified as Asian. "I thought it was pretty cool, yeah," she said. In continuing to explain the

views she had brought with her into the group, she related them to her own personal understandings of perceptions of "being gay in the Hispanic community." For example, she said that in her experience it wouldn't be uncommon for Hispanic parents to say, "We're going to take you to a psychologist" if they found out a son or daughter was gay. Further, she said, "And just to see how that kind news affects parents still today, it's pretty boggling."

Samantha also provided an example of having experienced a situation as a dialogue leader in which stereotypes she brought with her into the group were challenged. In recalling her experience in her group about the death penalty, she was describing how different people's opinions in the group broke down by race or ethnicity. Specifically, she said she was surprised that students in the group who identified as Indian American were in support of the death penalty. When I asked her to say more about why she was surprised by that, she said:

> When I think about an Indian American….I just expected them to be, I don't know, I guess you could say more conservative? And I just…I really thought that…well they all come from…I think they all had the same religious background, so I expected them all, even if they…I didn't know if they were for or against, I expected them all to think the same thing.
>
> ….I just expected them to be more conservative so I definitely thought that they would not be for the death penalty. I thought they would be against it. And I guess based on their religion and the little bit that I *do* know, I just think of it as being a very, I don't know, I guess you could say not…I won't say liberal, just a kinder, more peaceful religion. And so…I didn't expect them to be…anyone to be definitely for the death penalty.

Like James and Leia, this experience suggested powerful learning for Samantha in terms of new insights she gained about herself, her own biases and perceptions, and potential stereotypes she may carry with her into situations with diverse groups of people.

While the experience of having one's stereotypes challenged is not explicitly emphasized in the literature about Perry's (1968/1970) theory, it stands to reason that any change from simplistic, dichotomous thinking (e.g. "I expected all gay people to believe…," or "I didn't think that Indian people would think…") to a more complex awareness of opinions, perspectives, and identity, including differences and variations in perspectives among people in an identity in-group, seems consistent with increased cognitive complexity.

Recognition of dualistic thinking in others. Samantha provided another example of a self-reported change in her thinking that was not necessarily related to insights about the opinions of herself or others, but instead related to ***a new recognition of dualistic thinking in others***. This was a theme that also emerged through the descriptions of other participants, but Samantha's example provides the best illustration. In responding to a final question in Interview 2 about whether there was anything that could have been included in the preparation phase that wasn't that would have been helpful to her in preparing her to lead the dialogue group on the death penalty, she said:

> I don't know if this should be included or not….but this whole thing about whether or not to include some kind of article at the beginning to get people's minds' thinking about [the topic]. And at the beginning of training I was really gung-ho about, yeah, I really think we should have an article for these people so they can kind of start thinking about the death penalty. But now I would say that….he [the trainer] shouldn't give us that option and that we shouldn't have any articles or movies or watch any clips or anything [in the dialogue group].

When I asked her to expand on what had changed her mind about this idea, she said:

> Because I think it's hard to find mediums that aren't biased and just like with the statistics….Even with the statistics, they were all [in her dialogue group] leading towards the fact that the death penalty should still be in place. So…yeah, I'd rather just people kind of form their own opinions based on what they're hearing from their peers rather than on statistics or what they're going to see in *The Life of David Gale* because that movie came up a lot during our group, and *Law and*

Order, too. Those two things….kept coming up. And I just think it gives them a very sheltered view of the *whole* dimension of the death penalty or whatever topic we're talking about.

Samantha's worry about the dialogue group participants getting a "sheltered view" of the "whole dimension" of the topic, as well as her lamenting their reliance on statistics and expert sources such as articles, movies, and television shows indicates a broadened understanding of the complexity of the topic of the death penalty as a result of the experience of leading the group. This new understanding, in light of her observation that at the beginning of training she would have been "gung-ho" about bringing in such a source, indicates a definite change in her thinking that is consistent with increased cognitive complexity. Specifically, her movement away from a reliance on expert sources, which she characterized elsewhere in her interview as "dualistic thinking," to a position of wanting the participants to get the "whole view" of the topic is striking.

Relating learning to real life experiences. A final theme that emerged from the interpretive analysis on students' self-reported changes in their thinking that could indicate increased cognitive complexity was the ways in which they were able to ***relate their learning to their own real life experiences***, unsolicited from the interviewer. According to Perry's (1968/1970) theory (see Appendix R) this is an indication of Position 4, late multiplicity. While there were many examples of this kind of thinking and application throughout the study, Elena provided a strong one. When asked how the experience of leading her dialogue group on interracial adoption might have informed her opinion on the topic, she replied:

> I didn't really have a *big* opinion about it, but I think it did, because…just like thinking about…like my little sister is three. Just thinking about the types of things that *she* will be taught from my mom and having her mother that is part of her. Like we don't have a big like cultural background. We don't really like

celebrate too many different holidays based on any one culture or whatever. And like if you *talk* to people in my family about it, they'll kind of say, you know, well this is where we come from and this is what we think is going on, but we don't really have any like atypical background. But I still think that her growing up around my mom and me and my grandmother, I feel…I think that has a big impression on how she will act. Because she even acts different from my mom's sister's children and we're like in the same family.

Her immediate jump in her response to relating the topic to her little sister and viewing it through that personal lens was noteworthy. Many of the participants in the study responded to similar questions in the same way, by relating their learning in the dialogue group to personal and specific examples in their own lives. Throughout the study, I found those examples to be compelling and sincere and potentially indicative of increased cognitive complexity. Minimally, the findings from this study indicate that participation in this dialogue program creates numerous opportunities for the students to at least make these strong connections to their own lives and experiences.

Several of the participants in the focus group also gave specific examples of how they had applied what they had learned in the dialogue leader training program to the "real world." For example, in recalling what he had learned by watching the training videos in the preparation phase, Ethan said:

> I think a lot of the techniques that we used in training, especially the videos, I thought were really helpful for me because they really allowed me to connect the things that we learned inside *this* classroom and actually put them in context into the real world. Especially if you're watching the news, for example, and if you're watching a debate. And that's a real thing. It's like we learned a debate rather than a dialogue, and I learned that, you know what? If you're having a conversation, you're not always going to be convincing someone of your point. And it's more about consensus, and it's more about reaching out and seeing what you have in common rather than just like pushing your points down someone's throat.

When I asked him if he could give a specific example of a time when he was watching TV and thought about that, he said:

Just every single time you turn on CNN, you watch at some point. Like a lot of the times when two people are having a discussion about an issue, and they're not listening to the other person, they're just saying their points, and the other person is saying *their* points. And nothing is really being gained from that. It's just back and forth, no one really listening to each other. And I think it's more important actually to be like, alright, this is what we have in common so kind of focus on that rather than going through the alternate way.

Summary of Findings – Impact of the Training Program on Cognitive Development

The findings related to the impact of participation in the Spring 2005 Peer Dialogue Leader training program on cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1970/1990) theory of intellectual development have been presented in these sections. These findings include results from the two administrations of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID), results from the two kinds of pattern matching analyses that were conducted on the data (including a comparison of earlier participant comments to later comments for evidence of cognitive change that would be predicted by Perry's theory, and a matching of overall themes and categories that emerged from the data to Perry's theory), and findings from the interpretive analysis (which included examples of participants' use of Perry terms to describe their thinking, and additional self-reported examples of potential changes in cognitive complexity).

Overall, these findings provide strong support for the hypothesis that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program had a positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry (1968/1970). The MID results provide strong evidence for change in cognitive development among the participant group over the course of the three months of the study. The first pattern matching analysis, a comparison of earlier comments to later comments, yielded many rich and specific examples that provide strong support for the hypothesis that participation in the program promoted increased

complexity of thinking over the course of the training semester. The second pattern matching analysis of overall themes and categories that emerged from the data also yielded several compelling findings that are consistent with Perry's theory. Specifically, the findings from this second pattern matching analysis suggest that that the program promoted learning about the concepts of, and the distinction between, process and content; a view of peers as a more legitimate source of learning; an opportunity for the students to relate their learning in the program to settings outside of the program; an enhanced ability to evaluate the merits of sources; increased complexity of thinking; an increased understanding of the contextual nature of knowledge; and an increased capacity for "meta-thought," or thinking about one's thinking.

The interpretive analysis also revealed compelling findings. One of the strongest themes was the frequency with which the participants in the study brought in Perry (1968/1970) terms, on their own and unprompted by the researcher, to describe their meta-thinking that had occurred throughout the training semester. The interpretive analysis also revealed several additional themes of self-reported changes in thinking that are consistent with change along the Perry continuum. These included self-reported changes in the quality and complexity of the participants' own thinking, additional insights associated with process as opposed to content, new insights about the opinions and perspectives of other people, new insights into their own opinions and perspectives, challenges to previously held stereotypes, recognition of dualistic thinking in others, and an opportunity to relate what they learned in the training program to their own real life experiences outside the training program.

Taken as a whole, these findings suggest strong support for the hypothesis for part (a) of Research Question 1. Specifically, the results and findings from the data analyses for this aspect of the study indicate that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has a positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development.

Impact of the Training Program on Understanding of Multiple Perspectives

The second part of Research Question 1 for this study, part (b), is about the impact of participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program on the students' understanding of multiple perspectives. For the purposes of this study, this has been defined in Chapter 1 as, "an increased understanding of the complexity of different perspectives or points of view that exist on a given topic, including one's own and those that are different from one's own." This increased understanding of multiple perspectives is also informed by, and strongly related to the literature on, cognitive development.

While the findings for this aspect of the research question are reported separately from the findings for the question about cognitive development, they are clearly related. The distinction I drew in conducting these analyses and organizing these findings was a specific focus in the preceding section on "cognitive development" on themes and examples that seemed to indicate potential changes in thinking that were directly consistent with Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development. In contrast, the focus in this section on "multiple perspectives" is on examples of changes in thinking that highlight an increased understanding of diverse points of view, but do not as directly or obviously relate to Perry's theory. An additional and important distinction between the

two is a stronger focus in this section on changes in the *content* of the participants' learning that would suggest increased understanding of the nature of multiple perspectives, while the dominant focus in the preceding section was primarily on *processes* and *changes* in thinking that were consistent with what Perry's theory would predict. In this study, this increased understanding of content came from primarily two sources: exposure to the multiple perspectives on various multicultural topics and dilemmas that were raised by fellow PDLs and trainers in the preparation phase, and exposure to the multiple views and perspectives that were raised by the student participants in the dialogue groups during the leading phase.

The methods for data analysis in this section included an interpretive analysis of overall themes and trends, as well as a comparison of the participants' characterizations of their understanding of the multicultural topics of their dialogue groups before the experience of leading the group (in Interview 1) and after the experience of leading the group (in Interview 2). As the prime focus of this section is multiple perspectives, it also includes a discussion of the impact of exposure to multiple perspectives based on the findings from this study.

Throughout the study, all of the participants commented in general ways about the impact of having been exposed to so many multiple perspectives during the training semester. For example, in discussing in Interview 2 the variety of perspectives that existed among the participants in her dialogue group, Cathleen said:

> …it was *really* like *very* evident. *So* many people…I mean like I feel like every perspective or viewpoint was mentioned throughout the group. Like someone, at least one person in the group, had like every possible viewpoint that you would think of. They really hit on every issue and every topic that…I'd like to think I had at least thought of most of them throughout the past two years.

Multiple Perspectives Encountered in the Preparation Phase

This first section of findings on multiple perspectives relates to those the participants encountered in the preparation phase, through exposure to training discussions and simulated dialogues with the training group and the trainers. To study this, I asked a specific question in Interview 1 to all the participants about views and perspectives they had encountered in the preparation phase of the training program that were different from their own.

Their responses to this question about the various discussions, exchanges, and dialogues that had occurred during the preparation phase were lengthy and spirited and covered a wide range of multicultural topics. The four topics that they mentioned most frequently as having stood out in their memory of the preparation phase were discussions about the death penalty, abortion, affirmative action, and same-sex marriage. For example, Sonia touched on all of these topics in Interview 1 in her initial response to my question about whether she had encountered views in the preparation phase that were different from her own:

> Oh, absolutely and I think that everyone has their own opinions and everyone has their own degree and like I know for me, I'm really pro-choice and I really support gay marriage and rights and all that stuff, but I don't know how I feel about the death penalty or…there's another one, oh, affirmative action….It's sort of like, it's just very back and forth. And I think that everyone just has their things where they're like yes, yes this and no not this at all.

As Sonia's response indicates, some of the most lively and memorable dialogue and conversation for the students during the preparation phase was about the death penalty. In Interview 1, Keisha described an exchange that was one of the most memorable to many of the participants, one in which she had been a central player:

Um…the death penalty? When the whole side [of the training group table] was involved? Where you have like five people who are just like, no I don't agree with you at all? And I'm like, but what are you talking about? You're crazy. Like this is what I'm thinking in my head. I'm like…why wouldn't you allow…. DNA? DNA evidence should be allowed anytime! Like…if you're trying to exonerate someone, why wouldn't you allow that? And this is what I'm thinking in my head and it's like, oh my gosh! What's wrong with these people? Like I have all these emotions and stuff, but I have to be like, I tried…I tried to allow myself to be somewhat in character, not to be like totally mellow about it. That's why I went so emotional I think. But I didn't think it would get to me as much as it did. I was like, how can these people not think that?

James also brought up the same interaction in responding to a general question at the beginning of his first interview about what had stood out to him over the course of the preparation phase:

Yeah, there was the death penalty topic actually, the thing that Keisha brought up ….the one when Keisha was kind of arguing with Cathleen, myself and [an alumni PDL guest]. We were all arguing against Keisha and it was like, just back and forth. [Keisha was arguing that it] should be used to save lives and stuff. That was an interesting point, actually when I thought about it. At the time, I was just arguing from what I learned, from what I know from CRIM and stuff like that, legal searches and stuff, but it was an interesting point.

When I asked him if he's ever heard anyone make that argument before, he said, "I've never heard anybody argue that one before."

Cathleen also talked at length about the various perspectives that were raised on the topic of the death penalty in the preparation phase and the simulations and how these discussions had impacted her. In Interview 1, she said:

I was like *blown away* by how much my opinions were affected just in the simulations. I'm such a loud and opinionated person and I'm *so, so* stubborn and I just always have this mindset like, these are my opinions, they're concrete, they're not changing. You can say what you want and I'll listen to you, but it's not going to change anything. And there were so many times in simulations that it happened. And I was like, why am I even considering this option? It's so far against anything I believe in, but it's a possibility.

In expanding on a specific aspect of the topic that has piqued her interest, she spoke

about conversations the group had about the pros and cons of televising executions, to

make them available to the public. At least one participant raised this possibility in the

wake of the Oklahoma City bombings and September 11:

> The whole point about making the death penalty open to like certain portions of the public. Well I still don't necessarily support that idea, I just sat there the whole time, like that could actually work. It's inhumane and it's well, I mean, in my opinion, it's like, I was thinking of it as, oh I would never support that because it's inhumane and you know like… that's not like where society should be leading. But I mean if that *is* where our society is leading that could possibly have like an effect on making the death penalty a deterrent. And that's coming from like, the criminal justice major mindset, too. Like, I'm like *whoa*! It's not a deterrent and it could be!

When I asked her if she had ever considered that perspective before hearing it in the

preparation phase, she said:

> Not really. I mean the only time I could ever even think that I would have like thought about it simply just everyday, would have been like when the Oklahoma City bombers were put to death and things like that. And you know it was televised for a certain portion of those who were affected by that event. And I remember a lot of outbursts happening because of that, but I wasn't paying too much attention to it.

Later when she described more about what she thought she had learned from exposure to

that perspective, Cathleen framed it in the context of expectations of being in the "PDL

setting":

> I also feel like when you're in the PDL setting, you know that you have to *have* your mind open to all these things. Like you can't be shut off to anything because you're supposed to like learn and figure out how to react to problems and stuff.

In continuing to reflect on that example, Cathleen thought more about the how the

exposure to this idea had impacted her and her opinions. She struggled with her mixed

feelings about the idea of broadcasting the event to selected members of the public, yet

she also said she began to think about this approach as a potential deterrent in ways she

had never thought about before. One the whole, however, the whole idea still felt

extremely repugnant to her. Regardless of her personal views though, she continued to

marvel at how the idea had captured her attention. Later in Interview 1, still reflecting on

it, she said, "[I was thinking,] just like….it *could* be possible. Like the fact I was sitting

there considering whether or not to support it….I just never considered that option."

In reflecting on all of this learning from the preparation phase in her first e-mail

reflection, Cathleen wrote about being "more open-minded than I thought I was," and

that her ideas were "more malleable than I thought they were":

> [The conversation about the death penalty was] a good example of the things that
> have challenged my thinking during this training process. I have also experienced
> a lot of beliefs that I have wanted to shout at in response, and yet I've tried my
> best to be respectful and keep my mouth shut….I have found that PDL and
> Common Ground cause you to question some of your opinions as well as to center
> your beliefs in them even more because by explaining how I feel, I am forced to
> truly understand why I think a certain way.

Keisha was also one of the central figures in many of the discussions about

abortion, which was another hot topic to emerge in the preparation phase. Almost all of

the participants commented on how they were impacted by the dialogues and exchanges

about abortion that occurred in the preparation phase, especially between Keisha, who

identified as strongly pro-life, and another trainee, who identified as strongly pro-choice.

For example, when asked in Interview 1 if she could think of examples of views that

somebody brought up during training that were very different from her own view, Leia

said, "Keisha's stance on abortion." When I asked her to elaborate, she said:

> Just because…I mean I think she'll make an exception for like rape cases, but
> she's pro-life all the way through, its pro-life…no exceptions. And personally,
> I'm more liberal and more relaxed about it, so I…I was like wow! You know,
> this is so cool. This person I know is actually very conservative but I'm still her
> friend….Just listening to her, there was somebody else as well who was
> adamantly against abortion. I just remember her face and when she was talking
> about it and pro-life this and pro-life that. And so, that's another thing that got to

me because I would make exceptions for like…for lifestyle choices not to have abortions and then I wouldn't always like use the religion thing and then make cases I'd make exceptions for. Just different things that I would make the exception for.

Cathleen mentioned the same example about Keisha's opinion on abortion, observing the apparent link between Keisha's religion and her views on the topic. "I know she very much strongly roots it in her religion and in her family. She said that multiple times. I mean that's one of roots of people's opinions."

The discussions about abortion in the preparation phase were also prominent for Samantha and Elena. For example, when I asked Elena in Interview 1 about any significant beliefs or values she had encountered among the other dialogue leaders or the trainers during the preparation phase that were different from her own, she specifically remembered the discussions about abortion involving Keisha. She also talked about insights about the topic that she gained as a result of witnessing these "heated" discussions:

> I probably started thinking about it [abortion] more then. Because I never really thought too much about, like, the difference between mother and child and whether or not it's like a life before it's born. Normally, I didn't think too much about that.

Keisha herself had the following to say in Interview 1 about the discussions among the training group about abortion. One of the aspects most striking to her was how her peers in CIVICUS could have such dramatically different views.

> Yeah, [the discussion about abortion], that was like a *huge* thing (laughter) that we talked about….I didn't know that [strongly pro-choice trainee] was pro-choice or anything. I could have sworn…I would have thought she was pro-life or that she didn't care….And I didn't know that Soraya was so adamant about pro-life and that we shared so many views and that me and Cathleen differed on the views of affirmation action. And like…it's just a lot of things that I thought we all kind of agreed upon just being in CIVICUS and all having met the same requirements I guess sort of to get into CIVICUS? That we were all kind of the same. And

when people see us together, it's just like, okay, they're CIVICUS and they love that there's this one, like, entity of people that share the same views and share the same, like…or are just exactly kind of the same person.

But I feel that we're all upstanding good people, but we still have our right to different views. And just like having people express those in this open environment, which is you know…it was refreshing to see that we aren't….we all don't share the same opinions I have. It's nice knowing someone that doesn't have the same opinion as me because I like to say, "Well, why do you think that?" And because I would like to know that, too. Which I guess goes back to the multiplistic thing.

Keisha also spoke in Interview 1 about how difficult it was for her to stand up in front of the group in the preparation phase and co-lead a simulation on abortion given her very strong feelings on the topic. She had struggled with how to reconcile wanting to "tell them the truth" with respecting the different opinions in the room:

> When I was up there [as a co-leader in a simulation] and I was doing the abortion dialogue, the simulation for abortion, it was just…it was difficult. It was like, how can these people think this? And I just wanted to jump in there and be like wait, no! You don't know this. And I wanted to tell them like this is what they need to know about abortion, but I'd have to realize and respect that everyone has different views.

In expanding on this, Keisha went on to describe how that experience helped her to understand that she didn't always "need to tell them everything" about her own views and could instead listen to what others had to say.

Samantha and Sonia also took away strong impressions from a different discussion in the preparation phase about abortion. For Samantha, the example involved a returning PDL who was a guest during a particular training session who had suggested that the father should have the final say as to whether or not a woman can get an abortion. In recalling her reaction to this, Samantha said:

> [When] he said that the man should have the say…in whether or not the baby gets aborted….Because I decided it was so ludicrous that the guy should have any choice in the matter at all….I thought that was way out there.

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Sonia also said she reacted strongly to this comment:

> Oh, yeah! ….I was up there as a leader and [guest PDL] made the comment about, something about women shouldn't have the right to say or something *crazy* like that. Like natural instinct, because just like, are you *nuts*? You know, so frustrated, but I have to be like okay we're in character. What would make a reasonable and caring person think that…you know, mean that? So especially in training because…people put on these characters….

Both of these observations relate to the PDLs and the trainers taking on roles from time to time in preparation phase discussions and simulations for the purpose of introducing various multiple perspectives into the conversation. While several of the participants critiqued some of these roles as too "out there" or "over the top," most also acknowledged that exposure to these sometimes extreme perspectives, whether they were "really what they believed" for the person interjecting them or not, definitely prompted them to think about the issues in a way that was different from how they had ever thought about them before.

In a final example of the participants' recollections about views they encountered in the training group that were different from their own, James recalled an exchange from the discussions about same-sex marriage that had stood out for him with regard to the possibility of same-sex couples having children:

> A point was brought up that I never thought of before. Well I know people have it but I never thought they did. That, you know, some people believe that everybody needs a man and a woman in the child's life for them to be…to come out right I guess, to be brought up right. And I'm not one to believe that. I mean as long as they [a gay person or couple] like meet all the other regular adoption requirements like financial security, and they're not a bad home, and they're not in a bad area and they can provide for the child, then I don't see any problem.

Soraya also recalled reactions she had to discussion in the training group about the topic of same-sex marriage, prompted by a video shown to the group of a town hall

meeting on the topic hosted by Ted Koppel. In describing this example, she framed it

squarely within the context of her own identity:

> Well, my biggest thing…I'm a Catholic, but I'm not like…I'm not the Virgin
> Mary, you know? So it just really irritates me when people say like, oh, you're
> Catholic or whatever. That bothers me. Although I may be Catholic and I feel
> my faith is very important to me, I don't, you know, I feel like there's such a thing
> as a liberal Catholic, you know? I don't live my life by the Bible. I understand
> that times are changing. I'm okay with them and like I'm not…I don't agree with
> abortion, but I do agree with, I feel like homosexuality is okay. And I just don't
> like when people just discount my opinion on the basis that I'm Catholic. "Oh,
> you're Catholic." That puts me with a whole bunch of people.

Given that Soraya had such a strong recollection of this example, I asked her to explain

further the context that had occurred in the preparation phase. She described how one of

the participants in the video shown to the training group had compared same-sex couples

getting married in the Catholic Church to interracial couples, and how one of the dialogue

leaders in the training group had said they thought that was a good analogy:

> And I didn't think it was a good analogy whatsoever because I didn't see the
> connection. I was like, you can't compare the Catholic Church accepting, you
> know, or marrying or ordaining homosexuals to the acceptance of interracial
> couples getting married. They [the other trainee] were just like, oh, it's the same
> thing. You know at one point society wasn't ready for interracial marriages, but
> then they passed the law and blah, blah, blah and they were just like, okay.

> I understand, but that's the law, that's the state. But this is religion, like this is not
> something that's going to change. Like the Catholic Church isn't going to update
> every year. Like the Bible doesn't fall out of the sky every 2005, like, hello, you
> know a new Bible! That's not going to happen, you know? And then [the other
> trainee], she was like well maybe it should, you know?….I felt like that was a
> direct attack on myself and on my religion and I told her, I was like, [trainee], I
> am not going to debate this with you.

One of the other themes that emerged from the analysis of the data for this section

on multiple perspectives was the frequency with which the participants reported that the

discussions that occurred in the preparation phase among the PDLs and the trainers were

the first time they had an opportunity to formally engage in a conversation about

particular multicultural topics. For example, James said that the PDL training program was the first time he had really thought critically about the topic of the dialogue group he eventually led in the leading phase, same-sex couples adopting and/or fostering children. And Samantha specifically attributed her thinking on the topic of the death penalty to her experiences in CIVICUS and in the PDL training program:

> Actually, I don't think I formed my whole opinion about the death penalty until we got in CIVICUS or even in PDL and we started really talking about the issue when I was at the table [in the preparation phase]…I think it honestly has to do with listening to what everybody else said. Not necessarily their answers to the question about whether or not it should be abolished or not, but their reasons for thinking that….So basically, after listening to everybody's arguments for why they believe one thing or another, I kind of took the ones that I liked from that, agreed with, and formed my own opinion.

When I asked the participants about views they had encountered in the training group during the preparation phase that were different from their own, most of them discussed examples from dialogues and discussions that had occurred among the group of trainees. However, there were also several compelling examples of learning associated simply with exposure to other trainees in the training group with new dimensions of identity they had never encountered before. Leia wrote about this in her first e-mail reflection:

> During training, I have learned more about individual PDL group member personalities than anything else. Before training, I only knew some of the members from class, and had not had the opportunity to talk to them one-on-one. It was awesome to get the opportunity to learn about the PDL group members and what mattered to them by discussing various topics during downtime discussions. Examples include, [one of the trainees], finding out she was a Quaker was awesome because I had never met another Quaker before….Going through this training with her was a great way to experience this first hand.

As Leia's comment demonstrates, the participants in the training program seemed to benefit not only from exposure to the multiple perspectives that were put forth in the

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various dialogues and discussions in the preparation phase, but also from the opportunity to get to know each other as individuals with distinct aspects of identity in ways they probably would not have otherwise.

Multiple Perspectives Encountered in the Leading Phase on Dialogue Group Topics

One of the unique aspects of the Spring 2005 training semester was that the eight Peer Dialogue Leader participants in the study had an opportunity to co-lead dialogue groups in the leading phase on seven different multicultural topics: affirmative action, interracial adoption, same-sex adoption, racial profiling, same-sex marriage, the death penalty, and abortion. Two of the participants, Cathleen and Soraya, led together on the topic of affirmative action, but the remaining six all led dialogue groups on topics that were distinct. This was fortuitous because it allowed for the collection of rich data about these students' learning associated with exposure to a variety of different multicultural issues, topics, and dimensions.

As described in Chapter 4, one of the questions built into each of the two interview protocols was about the students' personal views on the topic of the dialogue they co-led in the leading phase. I asked this question before they began to lead their groups (in Interview 1) and after they had finished leading their groups (in Interview 2). This design allowed "pre" and "post" comparisons of their views on the topics for the purpose of collecting potential data for the cognitive development analyses, presented in earlier sections of this chapter, and also for the purpose of collecting data about the impact of leading the dialogue groups on the participants' acquisition of multiple perspectives on the dialogue group topics.

It is also important to note as context for this section that the Peer Dialogue Leaders are explicitly trained to not reveal their own personal views about the topics to the dialogue group participants, to the best of their abilities, at least not until after the group has been completed. This is so they can create a climate in the group as dialogue leaders, to the greatest extent possible, that is inclusive of all potential views of the participants in the group.

As the dialogue leaders are trained to focus primarily on this process and not as much on content in leading the groups, this has meant that their own personal views on the topics have not necessarily been relevant in assigning them to groups unless one of them has told us, for whatever reason, that they would not be comfortable leading a group on a particular topic. Therefore, prior to this study I had not had a chance to explore the dialogue leaders' own personal views on the topics with them, at least in very much depth. One of the unexpected fortunes I realized during the course of this study was how much I enjoyed exploring the depth, complexity, and contradictions of their own personal views on these topics in the individual interviews. I was extremely impressed by their candor and their willingness to share things they felt strongly about, things they didn't know, aspects of the topics they had never thought about, their biases, and areas of contradiction they were still working through. As an educator interested in undergraduate college students' development and especially in their thinking about multicultural issues, this aspect of the study was especially rewarding.

A few examples from these portions of the interviews have already been included in previous sections to illustrate findings related to cognitive complexity. For the purposes of this section, I am focusing on additional examples that illustrate acquisition

of new (and multiple) perspectives on the topics of their dialogue groups as a result of the experience of leading the groups.

Overall, the analysis of the data for this section revealed that the participants were exposed to a variety of new and different perspectives as a result of leading the dialogue groups in the leading phase. While most of the participants reported that the experience did not necessarily *change* their views or positions on the issues, the analysis of the data revealed that their views and perspectives had definitely become more "broadened" and nuanced with "much more substance" or "more information" as a result of exposure to new perspectives, thought-provoking questions, and real life examples that the student participants in the dialogue groups provided.

As an illustration of this, in response to a question in Interview 2 about whether she had learned anything new about the multiple perspectives that exist on the topic of affirmative action as a result of leading her dialogue group, Cathleen said, "I definitely did. It didn't change *my* opinion so much, and I guess I knew…I mean like again, they hit on the very classic opinions, but they all hit on different *aspects* of the same viewpoints."

In elaborating on how the experience of leading the group had broadened or informed their opinions, many of the participants provided specific examples of thought-provoking questions, issues, or angles that participants in the dialogue group had posed during the course of the dialogue that the participants said they had never considered before. For example, in describing her experience in her group on the death penalty, Samantha said that one of the participants posed the question, "What good does the death

penalty do in general? All it does really is kill somebody." In describing how she found

herself considering this question later, she said:

> So when I thought about it like that, it actually brings no good to society as a whole. Why do we have the death penalty? So that was definitely a thought-provoking question that popped in, that I started to wonder about. And, if I answered that question, well what good does the death penalty do? I'd be like, well it doesn't do *any* good. Therefore, we *really* shouldn't have it in existence anymore.

James also provided several specific examples of perspectives that were raised in

his group on same-sex couples adopting or fostering children that he said he had never

considered before. For example, he said the detailed conversations in the dialogue group

about how the topic should or should not be covered in the K-12 school curriculum was a

dimension of the issue he had "never even thought of." An additional aspect of the topic

James said that he had never considered before came from an article that one of the

participants had brought into the group:

> Someone in our group brought in an article or research thing that she read where a gay couple fostered kids who were sick, like who had AIDS or who had terminal illnesses. They would foster them all, because they were the ones that were left behind. And they usually got kids of minority races, too. They were two White men and they took in kids from minority races and they fostered them. So it was just kind of like, I mean, that's…and what's wrong with that?

In conducting the data analysis for this section, I also looked for examples of

more subtle changes in the way the participants characterized their understanding of the

topics in Interview 1 (before they led the dialogue groups) as compared to Interview 2

(after they completed leading the dialogue groups). Cathleen provided one of the most

striking examples of such a shift. In the first interview, she repeatedly characterized the

topic of her dialogue group, affirmative action, as primarily a "Black/White" issue. In

contrast, in her second interview after the experience of leading the group, she never used

that term once and instead talked at length about the variety of different perspectives that existed in the group and made very intentional connections between those diverse perspectives and people's "personal experiences."

I found that others also expressed much more nuanced views of their topics in the second interview as compared to the first. For at least two of the participants – James and Leia – these differences could be characterized as moving from a polarized, dichotomous view of the various perspectives they believed to exist on the topic in the first interview to a more nuanced complexity of the topic in the second interview. For example, when I asked James in Interview 1 about additional perspectives on his topic that he was aware of, he described a "strictly moral biblical perspective" as one view, concerns about whether a child "needs a man and a woman in their life" as another, and those who think "it's okay." By his own acknowledgment, he said in Interview 1, "I think more of the positions that I'm aware of are just so extreme."

In contrast, one of the changes that was most striking in James was how in the second interview he was able to give a much more detailed account of some of the nuances and complexities of the topic, including aspects he said he had never thought about before such as how to address the topic in the school curriculum:

> A lot of these education majors were in the group, so they were talking about bringing up a certain curriculum or building it into the curriculum to have, like having same-sex couples mentioned.
>
> What it generally came down to, the general consensus among most of the group was they wanted to just have it *mentioned* in the curriculum, like that children's book, *My Two Mommies* or whatever. Like have them just go *over* it in elementary school. So kids who would have maybe two mommies or two daddies won't, you know, feel left out.
>
> But then the problem with that they brought up was, what about kids who *don't* have that? Will they start asking questions about why *don't* I have two mommies

or two daddies? Or kids who don't even have two parents?….They said you just have to mention everything if you're going to mention that. You have to go through *all* the different forms of family nowadays.

Then they got to later in school, like middle school or high school, and what would you mention there? Because you'd have to mention it again if you're going to mention it in elementary school; you couldn't just leave it there and say okay, that's it, that's all we're going to talk about it. Like would you mention it in sex ed? Or would you mention it in like, I don't know, like some sociology-based class or something like that? So then that was just kind of a different view. I never even thought of the schools as part of the topic.

Leia also reported views in her first interview on the topic of her group, same-sex marriage, that seemed polarized and stereotypical. When I asked her in Interview 1 about her current understanding of the different views and perspectives that exist on that topic, she said, "I think they're on a spectrum, like really conservative to liberal… really, really, really liberal. I think I'm in the middle between moderate and liberal." In elaborating, she generally reiterated the three basic positions of "conservative," "moderate," and "liberal."

In Interview 2 however, after the experience of leading the group, Leia demonstrated a view with many more fine distinctions and complexities than the self-described "extremes" she had outlined in her first interview. For example, she talked at length about participants in her group who had identified as gay, some of whom were Asian American, and who participated in a way that was very different from how she expected they would participate. Throughout Interview 2, she also reported a more in-depth understanding of the complexity of religious views on the topic of same-sex marriage:

> We went over *a lot* of religious kind of information. There were different people with different religious beliefs and they shared their beliefs and we went over… we had three homosexual people in the group, so we went over what they thought about it and what everyone else thought about it. Religion…like how law fit in.

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In describing additional insights she had gained that she had never thought about before, she went on to say:

> I think I have a more *informed* perspective than I did before. Because before I was just saying, you know, I was more on the human rights issue. Like you just should let them be…it's their life, let them live it the way they want. But now I'm just…after listening to all the examples they gave out in the discussion group, like how they [gays and lesbians] are treated in the Middle East and how like the Qur'an prevents it and stuff like that. I just…it gives a new…more substance to my opinion.

In e-mail reflections, Leia elaborated more on what she had learned about same-sex marriage from each of the dialogue group sessions. In Reflection 2 she wrote, "I did learn more about the differences between the homosexual union and the heterosexual marriage. For example, what rights are given to the couples, such as visiting privileges in the hospital or in wills after death?" And in Reflection 3, after the second dialogue group session, she wrote about additional insights into religious perspectives and also about a new awareness of PFLAG, an advocacy group. Finally, in her last e-mail reflection, Leia commented on additional perspectives raised in the group that she had never considered before and how they had prompted her thinking:

> One key point that was made throughout the conversation was that if an individual church decided to marry a same-sex couple, then that church would be labeled as the "gay" church. Honestly, this thought had never entered my mind.
>
> ….Something else that I thought about after the session was when the group mentioned training for the same-sex parents of children. Some thought this option to be condescending because the parents might feel that they know how to teach their children about the trouble they will encounter and the parents might feel that they do NOT need to learn how to tell their children about this, as they have experienced this FIRST HAND.

Another finding from this section on multiple perspectives encountered by the dialogue leaders in the leading phase was the frequency with which several of the participants discussed the impact of exposure to other people, often for the first time, who

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had real life experiences with some of the topics in ways they had never been exposed to before. While this theme will be discussed further as a major finding for Research Question 3 for this study, it merits introduction here as it was such an important aspect of the dialogue leaders' exposure to multiple perspectives as a result of their experiences leading the dialogue groups.

Elena, who led a group on interracial adoption, provided a strong example of this. In her first interview, Elena didn't express strong feelings about the topic prior to leading the group and she also said that she hadn't spent a great deal of time thinking about it. However, as she reflected on it during Interview 1, she definitely expressed strong views about certain aspects of the topic, especially about the potential impact of interracial adoption on the child's identity.

In the experience of leading the dialogue group however, Elena had an opportunity to witness first-hand an example that brought to life some of the more abstract hesitations she had expressed in Interview 1. In recalling her experiences leading the group in Interview 2, she said:

> I thought it was kind of strange when the one girl [in the dialogue group, who was White] was talking about her sisters [who had been adopted] who were Korean but they didn't want to have anything to do with being Korean.
>
> ….Because we [the group] talked about, you know, if a parent adopts a child from a different nationality or different ethnicity, should the parents take time to teach them about it? Take time to put them…immerse them in that culture, or have them….at least an understanding of it? And she [the participant] was like, well I don't know because my sisters don't want to have anything to do with being Korean. They don't think that it's important. And then she was like, yeah, you know, my parents try to teach them Korean, like Korean classes, Korean school and even offered to take them there. And they're like, "No, we don't want to go." We are your children, don't try to make us be Korean. And I thought *that* was kind of strange.

When I asked her a more general question later in the interview about perspectives presented in the group that might have altered her view on the topic in any way, she continued with the same example:

> It really disturbed me about how she said her sisters didn't want to be Korean. Like I just think that's really disturbing. And maybe that's just me like being like a psychoanalyst….To me, that just signals self-dislike or self-denial.

> ….I mean I don't understand how you could…grow up and be a certain race or a certain ethnicity or a certain something and everyone else *sees* you as it and you *are*, like you were *born* that race. It's not like you just look like you might be Korean; you just happen to look like it, but that's not really what is inside of you. Like that's your *blood.* You can't deny it; you can't say that you're not it. So to say, "Okay, I'm not really interested in learning the language," that's fine. To say, "I don't really want to visit there," that's fine. Like the whole…I am *not* that race, I don't want to be a part of it…that kind of…I don't know. I just think it's weird.

This aspect of the discussion that had occurred in the dialogue group clearly made a strong impression on Elena. From the experience of leading the dialogue group, she had gained such a detailed and personal example of how this topic can play out in real life and in real families.

Sonia provided a similar example of this in recounting her experience leading her dialogue group on abortion. In her second interview, she clearly expressed that her "personal opinion didn't change at all" on the topic as a result of leading the group, but that she had definitely been impacted by the experience. One of the most important aspects of this for her had been that one participant in the group had disclosed to the rest of the group in the first session that she had an abortion. In Sonia's words, "One girl already had an abortion and she…she said it flat out, 'Can I be honest with the group? I've had one'."

Sonia went on to observe that this disclosure may have had an impact on the rest of the group, that "maybe it kind of made the boys a little hesitant about what to say," but that overall she was very glad the participant had offered the disclosure and that it had made a strong impact on her and the group. She wrote several times about being "fascinated" by this participant's story in her e-mail reflections, and she also discussed it at length in Interview 2. When I asked her to reflect more on why this participant's story had been so compelling to her, she said it was mostly because this was the first time she had ever had an opportunity to talk openly to someone who had an abortion:

> *Interviewer:*   You wrote about her story and being so fascinated by it.
>
> *Respondent:*   I really *was*! I really was! And, like…
>
> *Interviewer:*   Had you ever talked to anyone in that situation before?
>
> *Respondent:*   No, I don't think I ever…I mean if I know someone, then they haven't told me, you know?

In her second e-mail reflection, Sonia elaborated on how meaningful this disclosure and experience had been to her:

> One participant told a really personal story about how she actually had an abortion. That blew my mind. They had an amazing dialogue, and even though I couldn't actively participate [as the dialogue group leader] I felt very engaged. I was thinking about it the whole time.

While many insights emerge from this section about the participants' enhanced understandings of the multiple perspectives that exist on these multicultural issues as a result of their experiences leading the dialogue groups, these last two examples illustrate an especially strong theme. Specifically, exposure to a specific person who had direct, personal experiences with the topic seemed to strongly influence the participants' acquisition of new insights and perspectives. The experiences of Elena, Sonia, James,

Leia, and Samantha all reflected this; each of them described new and compelling understandings as a result of being exposed through the dialogue group for the first time to someone who had a particular identity or experience that gave them a personal connection to the issue being discussed. Samantha described her reaction to hearing students who identified as Indian in her group express a religious view that was different from what she had expected them to express. Elena spoke at length about her reactions to the comments of the White student whose parents had adopted two younger children from Korea. James talked about the participants in his group who identified as gay and their perspectives on same-sex adoption and how that was the first time he had ever had a chance to hear directly from someone who was gay about their views on that issue. Leia had a similar experience with students in her group who identified as gay and how she was surprised to learn that their views on same-sex marriage were different from what she expected they would be. And Sonia was so fascinated by the story of the participant in her group who had an abortion and they way in which she discussed that experience so openly and candidly with the group. In each case, they all gained the experience of, "Now I've talked to someone who…."

In summary, the participants' rich descriptions of the new insights they acquired into the multiple perspectives that exist on various multicultural topics as a result of their exposure to the many perspectives that were portrayed in the preparation phase, and also as a result of their experiences leading the dialogue groups in the leading phase, provide very strong support for the supposition that participation in the dialogue leader training program enhances understanding of multiple perspectives.

Impact of Exposure to Multiple Perspectives

Thus far in this section on multiple perspectives, I have sought to answer the question about whether participation in the training program has an impact on the students' understandings of multiple perspectives. While the overall picture that emerges points toward a definitive "yes," an important aspect of this question remains in terms of the nature of this impact; if the dialogue leaders are exposed to multiple perspectives as a result of this training experience, what is the impact?

First, and perhaps most obviously, the dialogue leaders **learned more about topic-related content** of their dialogue groups and gained new information about the various content-related dimensions of their topics. Samantha's new understandings about religious perspectives on the death penalty, Elena's new insights into the potential for discrimination in the issue of interracial adoption, James' exposure to varying ideas about how to portray gay parents and families in the K-12 school curriculum, Leia's learning about the difference between "unions" and "marriage" in the dialogue about same-sex marriage, and Sonia's exposure to the heated discussion about "abortion caps" in the dialogue about abortion are all examples of this. In Leia's words:

> Off the top of my head…what did I learn? Just the, in general, like the topics we discussed in the group sessions…the different organizations that existed, the laws that they can…the privileges and the laws that they're not entitled to because they're gay.

As a result, most all of the participants reported that their own views on the topics had become "deepened" and "more informed," and that their views and opinions "had more substance" as a result of the experience.

Second, the participants also **gained a broadened understanding of the range of others' views, perspectives, and experiences** in a way that they had not understood

previously. This does not necessarily refer to the content of those views but rather to new insights about the *number* of different kinds of views that people hold. In Keisha's words from her first interview:

> I guess in training I learned a lot about other people in CIVICUS. Just how the same information can be related to 12 people that are supposed to have the same characteristics, but it can also mean a whole lot of different things.

James echoed this in Interview 2 by observing that his experience leading the dialogue group "reaffirmed the whole how…how many different views people can hold."

Clearly, they also **learned more about those diverse perspectives** as well. All of the examples in the previous sections illustrate this.

Another theme to emerge with regard to impact of exposure to multiple perspectives was that the participants **gained new insights into the relationships between people's identity and their views and perspectives** on the various issues. For example, in his first e-mail reflection after leading the first session of his dialogue group, James said:

> I also thought it was interesting to see how much identity plays a role in one's opinions and beliefs. A person's background is a huge contributor to beliefs and opinions. Granted I only saw this in a limited capacity in this [dialogue group] session but it was still prevalent and would become more prevalent to me over the course of the dialogue sessions.

Some of these insights involved learning more about people's identities, some involved learning more about others' views, and some involved the dismantling of stereotypical views and expectations of someone else's view or position as a member of a particular identity group.

As an example of learning more *about* people's different identities, Sonia very candidly described in Interview 2 what she had learned in the dialogue group about people of different religious faiths:

I thought it was really interesting. I'm not going to lie; I don't really know much about western religion…. I've never read the Bible. And I didn't really grow up in an area that was really Christian. I grew up in [a Maryland town], where everyone's Jewish, where I went to fifty bar mitzvahs when I was in the seventh grade, you know?….Everyone was going to Hebrew school instead of church.

So I didn't really grow up around that, so I don't really know much about it…. I don't really know what Methodist means. I just figured it was just, okay, well for some sort of religion you wear a cross here (laughter) and, you know….And it's awful, it's *so bad*.

Leia also reported learning more about religious identity and how it potentially relates to people's views and opinions. In talking about what she learned from the experience of leading her group, she said in Interview 2:

Oh let's see here, what did I learn? Just that you know some people can be really sensitive to…to this topic [same-sex marriage] because of their religious beliefs. How they view it, how they would change their life to avoid it. How they would raise their children. Because we had one or two people who would say…we would be tolerant, but we would teach our children not to, you know, not to follow the path of destruction. So I just…I thought that was a really neat thing to learn.

Elena provided an example of how her thoughts about this relationship between identity and perspectives had changed over the course of the semester in Interview 2:

I mean [before] I always looked at it [people's opinions] from, like an identity perspective, but more so that…people that share the same identity think more the same than not. And that's not necessarily true….And I understand that more now than I guess before.

Like many of the participants, Elena also reflected on *her own* identity and how that might be related to her own views. From Interview 1:

I think I'm pretty sure I have different opinions on that than some of the people in my group basically just because of me being Black and female and they're not. Like I think that I definitely have different opinions from them.

In another theme, the participants in the study also reported ***increased self-awareness*** as a result of exposure to multiple perspectives in the training program. This

included increased awareness of their own views of the topics, a new understanding of their own hot buttons and their personal limits associated with dialogue about these multicultural topics, and a more generalized awareness of self that is discussed later in this chapter in the findings section for Research Question 3.

A related theme to emerge from the findings in this section was that exposure to multiple perspectives prompted *increased self-reflection on the dialogue leaders' personal views*. Cathleen commented on this in her first e-mail reflection:

> I have found that PDL and Common Ground cause you to question some of your opinions as well as to center your beliefs in them even more because by explaining how I feel, I am forced to truly understand why I think a certain way.

As another example, Elena echoed this theme in Interview 1 by saying that one of the things she learned from the preparation phase was "just knowing that I have an opinion on some topics":

> Going through and like simulating and hearing different people's opinions [in the preparation phase], it kind of helped me know that I *do* have an opinion about those things, a pretty strong one about it….Having the topic be more like, in front of us to discuss, it kind of made me think about that a little bit more. So I kind of realized that I *do* have an opinion deeper than, okay, just surface level about it.

Finally, as introduced in the previous section in this chapter about multiple perspectives the participants encountered in the leading phase of the training program, a prominent theme to emerge from this study was that the overall training experience frequently provided the dialogue leaders with an opportunity to hear different views and perspectives on topics from people who had who had real life experience with them. Through this exposure, the participants gained *new understandings of real life examples* in ways that probably would not have occurred otherwise. Leia made a general observation about this in Interview 2 in talking about leading her dialogue group:

I learned….I heard the opinions of different people again. Where [before] I had read them in books or I would watch them on TV or listen to them on the radio, but now it's actually coming from people at the university that I would run into on a daily basis….It doesn't like materialize until you *hear* somebody *saying* those words, you know?

For Leia and many of the other participants, the opportunity to *hear* first-hand another person describe his or her view or personal experience, and to hear that multiple times through multiple and different lenses, brought these topics to life for them in ways that seemed to create powerful learning.

Several of the participants in the focus group of alumni Peer Dialogue Leaders also commented on the multiple perspectives they were exposed to throughout the training program and the learning they felt they had gained from that exposure. For example, Eve said, "I think that there were a lot of different viewpoints that I…that I hadn't really heard presented from people. You sort of have the mindset in your mind, you know you have this way of thinking about things." Similarly, Jen said, "It gave me more of a range instead of, you know, the two extremes for most of these issues. And a different way to look at people."

Summary of Findings – Impact of the Training Program on Multiple Perspectives

The purpose of part (b) of Research Question 1 for this study was to explore the impact of participation in the Spring 2005 Peer Dialogue Leader training program on the dialogue leaders' acquisition and understanding of multiple perspectives. Many rich examples emerged from this section of multiple perspectives that the participants were exposed to and acquired in the preparation phase of the training program and also in the leading phase on the topics of the dialogue groups they led. Overall, the findings provide strong support for the suggestion that participation in the training program has a positive

impact on acquisition and understanding of multiple perspectives on a variety of different multicultural topics.

The question of impact was also explored; what was the impact of this exposure to multiple perspectives on the participants? Several themes emerged. The analysis of the data for this section suggests that the participants learned more about topic-related content of several multicultural topics as a result of discussing them with a diverse group. They also learned about the number and range of different views and perspectives that exist on these topics, and they learned more *about* those diverse perspectives. It was also found that the exposure to multiple perspectives created by this training experience promoted new insights into the relationships between people's identity and their opinions and perspectives. It increased the participants' awareness of their own views as well as their personal hot buttons and limits on these issues, and it encouraged deeper reflection on their own views. Finally, the findings from this study suggest that exposure to new and multiple perspectives on these topics, especially through the leading of the dialogue groups, brought the topics to life for some of the dialogue leaders in ways that were unique and powerful because it provided them with an opportunity to get to know someone, often for the first time, who had direct, personal experience with the topic. As a result, several emerged from the experience with the ability to say, "Now I've talked with someone who…."

<center>*Rival Explanations for Findings about Cognitive Development*</center>

As described in Chapter 4, the methodology for explanatory case studies (Yin, 2003a) calls for constant consideration of rival, alternative explanations for the findings (Yin, 2003b). As I have used explanatory case study methods in designing this first

research question about cognitive development and multiple perspectives, the purpose of this section is to present possible rival or alternative explanations for the findings for Research Question 1.

Throughout the process of designing this study, analyzing the data, and writing the case study report, several rival explanations have emerged. Some of these I anticipated, by building questions into the interview protocols to try to assess potential rival explanations. Others emerged along the way, either through the process of data collection, data analysis, or writing this chapter.

The first and perhaps most obvious rival explanation for the findings related to changes in cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory over the course of the training semester would be normal maturation and cognitive growth that would occur for typical college students during this same period of time, regardless of their participation in the training program. As I did not gather data from a control group for this study for purposes of comparison, there is no way to know for sure whether the changes in cognitive development that were observed for the participants in this study were the direct result of their participation in the training program or whether they would have occurred independently of the training program. While the pattern matching analyses and the analysis of the MID data provide support for a direct relationship between participation in the training program and growth in cognitive development, this potential rival explanation for these findings needs to be acknowledged.

A second possible rival explanation for the findings relates to the intensity of the training experience for the undergraduate dialogue leaders. This was a time-intensive training program in which clear expectations were provided and the students received a

great deal of attention and instruction throughout. One possibility could be that that findings that appeared to be related to increased cognitive development and enhanced complexity of thinking instead resulted from the intensity of the experience and not necessarily from the curricular and experiential design of the training program.

A third potential rival explanation, especially with regard to any learning or insights about multiple perspectives that occurred during the leading phase when the participants were leading the dialogue groups, was each individual participant's previous knowledge about the topic. This is important to consider because if a dialogue leader went into the group with a great deal of pre-existing knowledge of the topic, he or she may have been less likely to acquire new perspectives as compared to another participant who went into the experience of leading the group with very little knowledge or prior experience. It was certainly true that the eight participants reported differing levels of previous exposure and thinking about their topics. For example, Sonia (abortion), Cathleen (affirmative action), Soraya (affirmative action), and Keisha (racial profiling) all said that they had spent a great deal of time either thinking about their topics or discussing them prior to the training semester. In contrast, Elena (interracial adoption), James (same-sex adoption), Leia (same-sex marriage), and Samantha (death penalty), although to a lesser degree than the other three, all reported less knowledge about their topics and/or exposure to them prior to the training semester.

However, in reviewing the findings, it is striking that even among those participants who went into the leading experience with the most knowledge and prior exposure to their topics, they all reported new and compelling insights as a result of the experience of leading the group. Sonia and her description of being so "fascinated" by

the story of the participant in her dialogue group who had an abortion is a good example of this; she had talked at length about the fact that she had participated in a Common Ground group on abortion when she was a first-year student, had been exposed to the topic of abortion extensively in the training simulations, and had also spent a great deal of time thinking about it and discussing it in other arenas. Further, she even expressed some feelings of frustration, hesitation, and apathy after having been assigned the topic, fearing that it wouldn't be stimulating to her given all of her previous exposure. However, of all the participants, Sonia reported some of the highest levels of excitement about the new insights she had gained from the experience of leading her group and being exposed to the differing perspectives put forth on the topic of abortion by the dialogue group participants.

A similar potential rival explanation for the findings related to increased understanding of multiple perspectives could be the participants' differing levels of interest in or passion about the topics of their dialogue groups. When I realized that this was emerging as a potential rival explanation for the findings related to their experiences leading the groups, I began asking the participants in Interview 1 to describe their level of "passion" or "enthusiasm" for their topic, on a scale of 1 to 10. In general, those who initially reported more interest in or passion about their topics (especially Cathleen, Sonia, Keisha, and Soraya) seemed to heartily embrace the experience of leading the group. However, it was consistently striking how those who initially reported less enthusiasm for their assigned topics (especially Elena and James, and to some degree, Leia and Samantha) still reported many compelling and often unexpected new insights.

While some of their reactions were a little more tempered, unexpected learning and challenges to the complexity of their thinking occurred nonetheless.

An additional possible rival explanation I anticipated for any potential findings related to development of cognitive complexity and understanding of multiple perspectives was whether or not the students were experiencing anything else in their lives *outside* of the dialogue leader training program during the semester of the study that might have reinforced what they were learning *in* the training program. This was a question built into the protocol for Interview 1 (see Appendix K). Additionally, I asked each participant whether or not anything else had happened to them during the time they were leading their dialogue group – perhaps in another class or outside of class – that may have prompted more learning about the multiple perspectives that exist on the topic of their group. This was a question built into the protocol for Interview 2 (see Appendix L). Both questions were intentionally included to try to establish whether any learning the participants reported could correctly be attributed to their experiences in the training program or whether they may have been influenced by an outside stimulus or source.

The participants' responses to these questions were varied but in general, very few reported any significant outside experiences that impacted their learning in the preparation phase or influenced their awareness of the topic of their dialogue group during the leading phase. While many provided detailed examples of how they had applied aspects of their learning in the preparation phase and from the leading of the dialogue group *to* many other settings and situations outside of training (which are discussed in the section in this chapter on Research Question 3 – Overall Learning), the

participants gave few examples of simultaneous experiences that were occurring for them *outside* of the training that, in their view, strongly impacted their experiences *in* training.

In Interview 1, the experiences they did report that occurred outside of the training program that semester included conversations with veteran PDLs about the training material in the preparation phase (Cathleen), participation in extracurricular school activities in which conflict arose among the group members (Elena and Soraya), learning from a few classes they were taking – especially communication classes – that was somewhat related to the material in the dialogue leader training program (Keisha), and participation in other campus training programs in which they were taught similar skills (Sonia). Samantha also brought up an interesting example of babysitting during the PDL training semester for two children ages 8 and 11. She discussed a few ideas she had been reflecting on related to observations about complexity of thinking in children that age as a result of observing the children she was babysitting.

In Interview 2, the participants reported a few outside experiences that could have potentially enhanced their understanding of the topics of their dialogue groups. These included brief exposure to news articles about the topic (Cathleen) and fairly minimal discussion about it in another class (Soraya). Other than that, the other participants reported that their primary exposure to the topics of their dialogue groups during the time they were leading came exclusively from their experiences as co-leaders of the groups.

A similar possible rival explanation for the findings from this study related to cognitive development is the fact that all of the dialogue leaders were students in the CIVICUS living and learning program. This was an on-going experience for them that occurred outside the specific context of the dialogue leader training program and could

have contributed to their learning and development observed over the course of the training semester. Many times throughout the study, the participants cited the general environment, climate, and culture of the CIVICUS program as important to their overall disposition and receptivity toward multicultural learning. Therefore, one of the possible rival explanations is that the findings related to cognitive development in this study might instead be attributed to the participants' on-going affiliation with the CIVICUS program during the training semester and not necessarily to their participation in the dialogue leader program. One way to explore this further would be to study a control group of CIVICUS students during the same semester who were not participating in the dialogue leader training program.

Another possible rival explanation for the findings for Research Question 1 emerged during the interviews when some of the participants began to describe having had similar experiences in previous peer leader training programs. For example, both James and Soraya talked about previous experiences in peer leader and peer advisor training programs in high school. As I did not ask any questions at the beginning of the training semester about any similar previous training experiences the participants might have had before beginning the PDL training, it occurred to me that these potential differing levels of previous experience could have had an impact on their learning and their cognitive growth during the semester of the study.

To explore this potential rival explanation, I began to ask the participants an intentional interview question about whether they had any prior experience in a similar training program. If the answer was yes, I probed in more depth about the nature of that training experience. In all cases, I was satisfied that while a few may have had

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experiences in peer leader training programs prior to the PDL training program, none of the programs they had been involved in approached peer leadership from the process-oriented philosophy of the Common Ground program. In fact, for Soraya and James in particular, coming to understand the difference between the structured, content-oriented approaches they had been taught in high school and the "process-oriented" approach in Common Ground was a noteworthy aspect of their learning and ultimately seemed to have had a positive impact on their cognitive development during the training semester.

A final possible rival explanation for the findings for this research question relates to the participants in the dialogue groups. While this is also a potential limitation of the study as described in Chapter 6, it merits discussion in this section as well. The students who were participants in the dialogue groups in the leading phase of the training semester were all students who were also candidates for the RA (Resident Assistant) position at the University of Maryland. These are students who had gone through a rigorous selection process before being placed in the RA training course, and in general, were high achieving, highly competent students who were likely capable of levels of thinking that may not accurately reflect the undergraduate student population as a whole. Therefore, as these were the students who were the participants in the dialogue groups, the possibility should be considered that one of the reasons the dialogue leaders learned a great deal through the experience of leading the groups is because of the quality of the perspectives that were put forth by the group participants who were also RA candidates. While this possibility certainly does not diminish the impact of this particular training experience on the study participants' learning and cognitive development, it does raise

cautions about generalizing their experience to other dialogue leaders who might work

with groups that are composed of undergraduate students who are not RAs.

Aspects of the Training Program that Promoted Cognitive Development

and Understanding of Multiple Perspectives

As this study is also an evaluative case study, the purpose of this section is to

identify and discuss the specific aspects of the design and/or implementation of the Peer

Dialogue Leader training program and the Common Ground program as a whole that

seemed to promote the dialogue leaders' cognitive development and understanding of

multiple perspectives.

The first aspect of the training program that seemed to strongly promote the

development of cognitive complexity has been discussed in this chapter already. This is

the program's ***emphasis on process as distinguished from content*** in the leading of the

dialogue groups and the intentional teaching of these concepts to the dialogue leaders.

As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, this element of the Common Ground

program seems to have had a particular and relevant impact on increased complexity of

thinking. This came about in three different arenas: (a) new insights into the general

definitions of the terms "process" and "content" and the distinctions between them, (b)

"process and content" as it relates uniquely to the Common Ground Dialogue Program

(as opposed to other leadership opportunities the participants may have been involved in),

and (c) "process and content" as it relates more generally to the role of a dialogue group

facilitator. As discussed in the section on results from the pattern matching analyses, this

is a finding that has particularly strong relevance to Perry's (1968/1970) theory as an

insight that is likely to promote cognitive complexity. In Soraya's words from Interview

1: "So, it was really hard for me to just back out and be like it's not about content. It's process, process, like I had to keep telling myself that."

Another aspect of the training program that has been introduced already that seemed to have an extremely positive impact on the participants' cognitive development was ***the intentional teaching of fundamental principles of Perry's (1968/1970) theory, including terms and concepts***, and the continued emphasis on this throughout the dialogue leading experience. As described earlier, the findings from this study provide strong support for the idea that intentionally teaching and exposing the dialogue leaders to aspects of Perry's theory in the preparation phase, through the coverage of the *Development of Quality of Thinking* document (Petkas, 2001, Appendix F) promoted their meta-thinking, or their thinking about their own thinking, which is one of the characteristics that is consistent with increased levels of cognitive complexity according to the theory. In summarizing what she had learned about Perry's theory and how she had applied it to her own evolving thinking, Keisha said in her final e-mail reflection:

> I'm very grateful that I've been able to hone my intellectual prowess because one of my life goals is to be a Renaissance Woman. I want to be so educated and learned that I can speak on almost any issue or current event and still have more to learn.

> In the PDL manual it discusses relativistic thinking. I've mentioned multiplistic thinking a few times, which is not thinking dualistically but considering the grey area of an issue and trying to take in all sides of an issue regardless of their distinctiveness. Relativistic thinking is step beyond that. It really just comes with age and an open mind. If I keep thinking multiplistically I'll eventually start thinking relativistically and consider *all* sides of an issue, now that's exciting!

Another aspect of the program that emerged as having a positive impact on the students' cognitive development that has not yet been introduced is ***the requirement that the students assume the role of neutral facilitator***. In other words, the Peer Dialogue

Leaders in the Common Ground program are trained to attend primarily to the process of the group, and they are also trained to keep their opinions and their biases to themselves as much as possible in order to create a climate for all participants in the dialogue group to share their views. The findings from this study suggest that this requirement and approach had a profound impact on the dialogue leaders' personal learning and cognitive development. They raised it time and time again as an aspect of the program that forced them to actually listen to and consider, often for the first time, views that were different from their own because they were unable to weigh in with their own points and counterpoints. While this was a significant challenge for some, it was also the impetus for some of the most powerful learning from the program. All eight of the participants commented on this in some way, either in their interviews or through their e-mail reflections. For example, Cathleen, in her second interview, provided an excellent illustration of this finding in response to a question about what she liked most about the experience of leading the dialogue group and what she liked the least:

> Well…it's kind of my answer for both – facilitating and *not* being able to join in the conversation. To some extent I really *liked* it because there were a couple of times Soraya and I would catch ourselves like almost commenting or like yelling at the person that just spoke, or like wanting to throw in our opinion. And we could really see the other person start to like jerk forward or something and then we'd catch ourselves and be like *wait*, never mind, can't do that.

> And I feel like if I *was* in that group, I would have been at points just so frustrated and like I would come back so upset that like, you know, people just didn't understand it from my way, even though that's *not* obviously the point of it. Like the point is to, you know, listen to other perspectives and understand where they come from. And I feel like if I had been in that group in the position of being able to actually interact within the dialogue, I probably wouldn't have come out with that feeling.

When I noted that she had mentioned the challenge associated with not inserting her own opinions several times in her e-mail reflections, Cathleen reiterated how difficult that had been for her:

> Yeah, it was just *so* hard…. it was good and also easy to know that I didn't have to worry about throwing in my opinion; I could just sit back and listen and let them [the participants] control the dialogue. But it was also *hard* to not throw in my opinion!

Later in Interview 2, she added, "I feel that just like *through* PDL and through the training….I guess I've just learned to keep my mouth shut a little more."

Elena also discussed the impact of having to keep her opinions to herself and attending to process as opposed to content in her second interview:

> Because like in the first [dialogue group] session, I thought that they [the participants] were…they weren't getting it. And my questions were kind of like, I felt myself kind of like leading, like, "Well don't you guys think that….?" (Laughter) Then I was like, okay, wait. I have to be more…not objective, but just kind of find a better way to ask the question that I'm trying to ask without leading to the answer that *I* want them to say.

Later, when I asked Elena if that was something that felt different from what she would do in her ordinary, day-to-day interactions with people, she said, "Um hum, most definitely."

Sonia also said in her first interview that she had to learn how to "bite [her] tongue, maybe just a little" as a dialogue group leader:

> Because when we're facilitating, we can't say how we feel….and being put in that position for something I feel pretty strongly about wasn't as hard as I thought it was going to be, which is good. So that's kind of nice. But, yeah, I guess that by not saying how you feel about it makes you really try to facilitate the group.

In Interview 2, Sonia continued to discuss the impact of being a neutral facilitator, this time through the lens of having had the experience of leading the dialogue group. When I asked her if she had any examples of situations in which she applied some of the

lessons she learned in the dialogue leader training to any setting outside of training, she said:

> It's just the way you hear things. It's *different* now. Like I…you know kind of maintained that neutral position [in the dialogue group], you had everyone just talking….I feel like I took in the information in a different way because I had to *really listen* for what they were saying and like paraphrase it so everyone else knew. And so, I guess just hearing things like that, you know? It was different.

Soraya provided a comment in Interview 2 that summarized many of the findings related to the impact of being a neutral facilitator:

> And then like hearing what other people had to say at the same time, I feel that makes you a better listener. Because….you don't have the ability to respond, you're forced to listen. And since you're forced to listen, you might as well…it's like you sit there and you're like, okay I have to listen to this and I can't say anything. I might as well just try to understand where they're coming from.

> If I wouldn't have been in the facilitator role, like if I was a participant in the group, I would have definitely just sat there like, okay you're talking and I already know I don't agree with you. And I'd be quiet, but I wouldn't be listening to what they were saying. I wouldn't want to understand. So being a facilitator *makes* you like try to find things…well, I can see that; I can see that. As opposed to just spitting stuff back out.

In addition to underscoring the overall impact of being a neutral facilitator on the participants' learning and cognitive development, these quotes illustrate two distinctive sub-themes that emerged within the larger theme of "being required to assume the role of neutral facilitator." These are (a) being a neutral facilitator *forces listening* to other people's views and perspectives versus "shutting off," and (b) being a neutral facilitator *promotes self-reflection* on the dialogue leaders' own views.

First, **being a neutral facilitator forces listening to others' views and perspectives versus "shutting off."** In other words, repeated exposure to other people's opinions and perspectives, throughout both the preparation phase and the leading phase, combined with the expectation that the dialogue leaders be neutral facilitators, forced

them to listen in a way that was contradictory to many of their natural, self-described inclinations, which would have been to "shut off." Several of the participants spoke to this directly. For example, in Interview 1, Cathleen said:

> I also feel like when you're in the PDL setting, like you know that you have to *have* your mind open to all these things. Like you can't be shut off to anything because you're supposed to like learn and figure out how to react to problems and stuff.
>
> ….I feel like when we're in PDL and in Common Ground, I can't come in here and be closed-minded during the simulations and refuse to hear any point or learn anything because I'm not helping the facilitators; I'm not helping anyone in that group. I'm not helping myself.

Samantha emphasized the same point in Interview 1 when I asked her a general question about what had stood out for her in the preparation phase:

> Oh, gosh! The only thing that really sticks out is the fact that it's really hard for me [to listen]. I didn't realize how hard it was just to listen to other people's opinions when they don't agree with you. I wouldn't say that I have really set opinions….but if I really just didn't agree with them, I can shut them out completely whether I was a participant or a leader. That was really difficult. I had to learn.

When I asked Samantha if this had been her natural reaction prior to training, to "shut out" an opinion that was different from her own, she said, "Um hum, yeah. Before I would tune it out, but now it's more like, okay, well let's see how this comes to this conclusion. Why did they think that?"

The second sub-theme for "neutral facilitator" is that **being a neutral facilitator promotes self-reflection on the dialogue leaders' own views**. This, in turn, promotes cognitive development. In other words, just the act of listening in a way they would not have ordinarily listened prompted the dialogue leaders to reflect more deeply on *their own* thoughts and feelings about the issues. Several examples of this have been described already, such as Elena, who realized that she actually had a "pretty strong" opinion about

abortion after having been exposed to that discussion in the simulations. In another example, Soraya said, "So being a facilitator *makes* you like try to find things….well, I can see this, I can see that. As opposed to just spitting stuff back out."

In support of the overall theme of "neutral facilitator," several of the participants in the focus group specifically mentioned the learning they had gained as a result of being required to be a neutral facilitator in their dialogue groups. For example, Jen said that one of the most important things she learned in the dialogue leader training program was, "to appear like you don't have an opinion, because you can get a more honest answer from people a lot of times. And so I think that I've used that a lot, in talking with friends and family about a lot of different issues." Jen also said of the experience:

> I think it really taught me to keep my mouth shut sometimes. Like I think it taught me to watch the way that I look when people say things, and to not…that I don't always have to, you know, say my opinion first. That sometimes I learn a lot more if I take a step back and act more like a facilitator instead of a participant in a discussion.

Sedgewick also said he learned a lot from being a neutral facilitator but that he found it harder than he thought it would be, especially in the context of leading one-session dialogue groups after he had completed the training semester. He also went on to observe that being neutral is especially difficult if you feel strongly about the topic of the group because of an aspect of your own personal identity:

> I had to learn how to be so much more careful and not to put myself *in* the group and maintain as a facilitator….Like for example, we did interracial dating at [another local university] and because my co-leader was multiracial and I've been in an interracial relationship, we've both had similar experiences that we could relate to them. And so in some ways we could put them out, but we still had to remember, hey, we're facilitating the group, so we can't contribute too much. So that was a little hard.

Several of the PDL alumni in the focus group also said that their training in the dialogue program had challenged them to not "shut down and stop listening" when they encountered a view that was different from their own. For example, Eve said:

> I guess I would probably say the number one thing [I learned] is…in the past, you'll be talking to someone and they'll say something, and they'll just be… they'll just drop some sort of a phrase, or some sort of a word and your red light just goes off in your head. It's like you completely shut down and stop listening to whatever they said because they, you know, used this phrase, this word that you interpreted as being offensive or just very much not in your beliefs. And it was so easy for you to just, like, immediately be thinking in your head, oh my God, I can believe this person just said that, and then not even listen to what they were saying anymore. And I think the program really challenged me to *keep* listening, until they were actually done talking.

Ethan agreed, saying in the focus group that the experience of withholding his own opinions forced him to listen in a way that he would not have otherwise:

> It really reinforced that I'd like to listen and hear other opinions rather than just shooting out my opinions. And I think it's becoming more important to understand where people are coming from and how they formulated those views. I think that can be so much more important than just regurgitating what you have to say. Just really understanding the underlying issues of how people came to think about certain things. I think that was a really important skill I picked up.

Christian strongly agreed with the others in the focus group about the value of having learned how to be a neutral facilitator in the PDL training program. In discussing how he has applied it to his professional position conducting focus groups, he said:

> For example, today I did a focus group, a national study, and we asked them questions about government, what activities they do….And I actually had to sit there, because I'm not *leading* the discussion, and I can't correct people, which is what I *want* to do because that's what I'm trained to do.

Another aspect of the peer dialogue leader training program that emerged as beneficial to the participants' development of cognitive complexity was ***the on-going consultation sessions with the trainers***. Again, the consultation structure of the program is set up so that each leader pair meets with a trainer before and after each of the four

dialogue group sessions for evaluation of the session, feedback, consultation, and planning for the next session. Throughout the study, the dialogue leaders provided several descriptions of learning that occurred as a result of these sessions that prompted or enhanced the complexity of their thinking.

Samantha, in Interview 2, provided a good example. She described talking with the trainer and her co-leader in the consultation meeting about her frustration with one of the dialogue group participants because of her continued reliance on statistics about the death penalty. In Samantha's view, this participant's continued insistence on relying on these statistics was becoming detrimental to the group:

> So then in the consultations with Steve….he said something like, okay, well *why* do you think the girl is bringing in statistics? And then once I thought about the reasons *why*, it made me understand that okay, well it's just the fact that this girl probably isn't…it's not her thing to sit here and talk about the death penalty. She's more into tangible evidence.
>
> ….When Steve made me think, okay, well *why* would she bring in the statistics? Then I was thinking okay, well maybe it's because she is just a more content-oriented person than a process, I guess you could say, oriented person.

This was a strong example of the impact of a consultative conversation with the trainer that really prompted her thinking and reflection about cognitive complexity, first as it enhanced her understanding of the participant in the dialogue group, and second, as it related to her thinking about her own thinking.

Finally, several of the participants discussed ***specific elements from the Leadership in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301 course***, the three-credit class that all of the dialogue leader trainees took the preceding semester, as one of the aspects of the overall Common Ground program that helped promote cognitive complexity. For

example, a few of the participants mentioned the importance of the discussions in the

class about various dimensions of individual and group identity. Keisha said:

> Oh, my gosh…I loved that class. So I think a *lot* of it had to do with…with just being so receptive for things in PDL, I think that really helped me. I feel like if I didn't have that class, then I wouldn't have gotten so much from PDL or gotten so much from the *leading* experience because of the whole like multicultural leadership and understanding that other people are different because of their identities, and because of who they are, but that doesn't *mean* anything. Like they can just be different and there's nothing wrong with that.

Others mentioned the importance of being exposed to multiple perspectives in the

class. Elena said:

> I mean we talked a lot about, like perspectives on everything [in BSOS 301]. Everything that we talked about we dealt with [in the PDL training]. Who was saying it, and why they were saying it, and why they felt that this was helpful. I think that that was something that…I don't know if I would have necessarily *only* learned it in that class, but I think that it was something that was kind of drilled in with that class. So I think that became important for peer dialogue leading.

A few others described very specific examples of activities they recalled from the

class including film clips they had been shown or terms that had been introduced that had

made an impression on them with regard to a general understanding of complexity as it

plays out in a multicultural society. In Leia's words, "I thought….I actually thought the

entire class was kind of like prep for the training because we just went over the different

topics and how different people would react to the topics."

One of the alumni Peer Dialogue Leaders in the focus group, Ethan, also

mentioned the importance of what he had learned in the BSOS 301 class and how he had

found himself applying it to the complexities of a current news event that was prominent

at the time:

> I just thought of another recent example of when I thought about PDL recently… involving the Duke lacrosse case. When reading about that, watching the news about that, I was just going back to one of the case studies that we talked about in

our BSOS [301] class, and I was just really breaking down the issues and seeing, okay, looking at different parties involved, looking at things such as advantage, looking at things…just overall, just kind of the same things that we used in BSOS. And that was just one example. But there are so many cases in the media, when things occur, that they really follow the same formula, and you really can use a lot of the concepts and thinking to really understand it.

In summary, the findings from this study revealed several aspects of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program that promoted cognitive complexity and the understanding of multiple perspectives. These include the program's emphasis on distinguishing process from content, the intentional teaching of fundamental principles and terms from Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development, and the requirement that the dialogue leaders assume a role of neutral facilitator. Within the category of "neutral facilitator," there are two sub-themes: first, being a neutral facilitator forces listening to others' views and perspectives versus "shutting off," and second, being a neutral facilitator promotes increased self-reflection on the dialogue leaders' own views. Two additional aspects of the training program that were found to promote cognitive complexity are the on-going consultation sessions with the trainers and the dialogue leaders' learning from the Leadership in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301 course.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1 –

Impact of the Training Program on Cognitive Development and Multiple Perspectives

The hypothesis for Research Question 1 was that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has (a) a positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory, and (b) a positive impact on the dialogue leaders' understanding of multiple perspectives. The research methods for this question included two administrations of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID), two pattern

matching analyses, and interpretive analyses related to both cognitive development and understanding of multiple perspectives.

Overall, the results and findings from these analyses suggest a very strong relationship between participation in the dialogue leader training program and development of cognitive complexity, including the acquisition and understanding of multiple perspectives. With regard to cognitive complexity as conceptualized by Perry (1968/1970), the results suggest that participation in the training program promoted new learning and insights about the concepts of process and content, a view of peers as a more legitimate source of learning, a relating of learning in the training program to "real life" experiences outside of the program, an enhanced ability to critically evaluate sources, self-reported changes in the quality and complexity of thinking, and an increased capacity for "meta-thought," or thinking about one's own thinking. In addition, participation in the training program was found to promote new insights into the opinions and perspectives of others, new insights into their own opinions, challenges to previously held stereotypes and assumptions about others, and recognition of dualistic thinking in others. All of these findings are consistent with increased capacity for complexity of thinking and cognitive development as defined by Perry.

The finding that participation in the training program had a positive impact on the acquisition and understanding of multiple perspectives also revealed several potential positive outcomes associated with exposure to multiple perspectives. These included increased learning about topic-related content of various contemporary multicultural issues and dilemmas; new insights into the range of different perspectives that people have on these issues; new learning *about* these diverse perspectives including, for some, a

"bringing to life" of the topics through direct exposure to personal stories and experiences of others; new insights into the relationship between people's identity and their opinions and perspectives; and increased self-awareness as a result of self-reflection about one's own views, including one's hot buttons and personal limits.

As this case study is also an evaluative case study, distinctive aspects of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program that were found to promote cognitive complexity and understanding of multiple perspectives were also identified and discussed. These aspects of the program included the philosophical emphasis on process as distinguished from content; the intentional teaching of Perry's (1968/1970) theory to the trainees, including terms and concepts from the theory; the requirement that the dialogue leaders assume the role of neutral facilitator when leading the groups, which (a) forces listening to others' views and perspectives versus "shutting off," and (b) promotes the dialogue leaders' to reflect on their own views in ways that would not likely have occurred otherwise; the on-going consultation sessions with the trainers; and elements from the Leadership in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301 course that were introduced to the students in the semester before their participation in the dialogue leader training program.

Potential rival explanations for these results and findings were also identified and presented. These include the possibility that changes in cognitive development that were found over the course of the training semester could be attributed to normal maturation and changes in cognitive growth that would have occurred for the students during this time period anyway, the differing levels of previous knowledge about their dialogue group topics that each participant brought with them into the study, the participants' differing levels of interest and/or passion about their topics, things going on in the

participants' lives *outside* of the dialogue leader training program during the semester of the study that may have influenced or reinforced what they were learning *in* the training program, and the fact that all of the student participants in the dialogue groups were all enrolled in the RA training course as candidates for RA positions, which may have had an impact of the quality of perspectives they interjected as participants in the dialogue groups.

Despite these possible rival explanations, the overall results and findings from the study of Research Question 1 suggest strong support for the hypothesis that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has a positive impact on cognitive development and understanding of multiple perspectives. The themes and patterns that emerged from the numerous and rich examples of learning, insights, and challenges to their thinking that the students provided, in their own words, creates a compelling portrait of an overall experience that enhanced their ability to think in ways that became increasingly complex and reflective over the course of the training semester.

Research Question 2 – Experiential Learning

The second research question for this study was about experiential learning through participation in the training program. This question encompassed experiential learning opportunities in the preparation phase, experiential learning opportunities in the leading phase, and the dialogue leaders' actual experiences leading their groups as compared to their expectations of what the experience of leading would be like. To study this question I used descriptive case study methods (Yin, 2003a), which called for interpretive analysis that involved looking for categories, themes, and trends in the relevant data.

The findings for Research Question 2 are presented in two main sections: (a) findings from the preparation phase related to the participants' expectations of leading, their sense of confidence for leading, how prepared they felt to lead, and their views on the effectiveness of the training preparation thus far in preparing them to lead, and (b) findings from the leading phase about the participants' actual experiences leading the groups, how these actual experiences compared to their expectations of leading, and overall insights they gained about experiential learning. In addition, as this case study is also an evaluative case study, aspects of the training program that provided opportunities for experiential learning are identified.

Preparing to Lead in the Preparation Phase

I asked several questions of the participants in Interview 1, after they had completed the preparation phase and before they began leading the dialogue groups, about what they thought the experience of leading would be like, how prepared they felt to lead their group, and how confident they felt. In order to gather data that would provide evaluative information about the training program, I also asked the participants questions about aspects of the preparation phase training curriculum they felt were most helpful to them in leading the group and aspects that they felt were least helpful (see Appendix K for the interview protocol for Interview 1).

Expectations of Leading in the Preparation Phase

In Interview 1, after just having completed the preparation phase of the training semester, the participants' expectations of what the experience of leading the groups would be like ranged from anxiety and apprehensiveness to anticipation about being "nervous," to being "excited," to thinking it would "be a piece of cake."

Soraya and James both acknowledged that they would be a little nervous, at least initially. Soraya said:

> I think at first I'll be nervous just to…or maybe not so much nervous, but anxious to see the personalities of the people in the group and anxious to see what they come up with.…I know how I feel, but I'm anxious to see what *they* come up with without someone like me…or even to see if there's someone like me that has my view there and see how they express it. Or not even someone with my view but someone with my personality there to see how they express it and how they're perceived by others. I think it's a really good, like outside-looking-in experience. I'm praying there's someone [in the group] that's like me so I can see, you know, how that person, how my attitude affects others. That's something I'm excited to see.

It was very interesting how she quickly went from acknowledging how she would feel as the leader of the group to describing the possibilities for learning more about *herself* as a result of being able to watch and learn from the student participants in the group, especially those who might be similar to her.

James also acknowledged being a little nervous, although he believed he'd "calm down real quick" once he got going. In response to a question about what he thought leading the group would be like, he said:

> I have no idea, to be honest. Simulations were one thing, but I mean that's… that's with people that I know. And while that's reassuring at times, it also is kind of…it's also even more nervous sometimes when you're with people that you know because you know they'll be really honest with you. And also with me – I don't know about other people – I can be more assertive with people I don't know because they have no idea who I am. And so I can just be like, hey, this is who I am because you don't know me.

> .…Obviously I'll be nervous. There's always that sense of nervousness, even when you're doing simulations. It's just…having to talk to anybody like in a weird type of role. You get that nervousness. But I mean you calm down real quick, at least I do. I mean as long as…once you get, once you get flowing, it's calm down. I think the second day and a third day and the fourth day, the meetings anyway, I'll be calm.

Sonia had a different perspective, although her anticipation might have been influenced by the fact that she was paired to co-lead her dialogue group with an experienced PDL who was also her friend. Sonia's first response to the question of what she thought leading would be like was that it would be a "piece of cake," but then she went on to acknowledge that she was also a little nervous:

> I think that because I'm working with [experienced PDL], a returner, you know it's easy…like it's going to be a piece of cake for me because she knows what to do. But I was talking to her last night and she's like, I'm going to take a step back…I want *you* to do this, you know what I mean? And I pretty much thought I was going to follow her lead and kind of let it go, you know?

> ….But I don't know. I'm one of those people who until it actually happens, I won't know….So I will probably be very nervous the week I get back [from Spring Break, before the dialogue group starts]. You know I'll be like, oh my gosh! You mean these people who are going to be RAs could potentially be older than me, or know more than me, or whatever? So I can totally see myself getting nervous, but I'm just not in that mindset right now.

As I asked other participants in Interview 1 to characterize what they thought the experience of leading the group would be like, several responded by discussing aspects they thought would be better than they had experienced in simulations, and others mentioned aspects that might be more difficult or challenging than what they had experienced in simulations. For example, Leia believed that the actual experience of leading the group would be much more "relaxed" than many of her experiences in the preparation phase with the training group:

> I think…actually, I don't think it's going to be crazy. I think it's going to be more relaxed than, than the first couple of simulations here were [in the preparation phase], because here we were like weird characters. But then it's going to be like the last couple of simulations we had where we were actually ourselves, and people were sharing, they were being civil to each other. That's what I think it's going to be like.

Samantha and Elena also felt that the group might be more "calm" than the groups they had experienced in the preparation phase simulations, but to the point where they were worried that they would be "too" calm. In thinking about her upcoming group on the death penalty, Samantha said, "Hmm...I think it's [the dialogue group] going to be really quiet. I don't think people are going to talk much, and I think that being quiet is worse than people talking and arguing with each other." When I asked her if she meant that the group being quiet would be worse for her as a facilitator or for the group members, she said:

> As a group member. *And* as a facilitator. I think everybody is going to be very timid and shy and just *not talk* because they're all going to be afraid that, you know, somebody is going to think bad of them if this is the way they think about the death penalty. They're just not going to agree with their opinions and they want to look good I guess in front of their peers so they're just not going to let the dialogues go. I don't think they're going to realize what an opportunity it was and what a great opportunity it was for them to get to do this until after the session is over.

Some of Samantha's worry that her dialogue group would be a little too quiet seemed to come from her own experience as a participant in a CIVICUS Common Ground group. However, Elena also had a similar worry about the group being "silent":

> I'm just always worried that people are going to be like silent. I think that's my...not fear of silence, but I think that at the beginning, it's important to kind of get a good start. So I think I'll be nervous at the start of it and if it goes well, then it'll be good and if it doesn't, then I'll probably be stressed out.

Elena also said she thought that the group might be "like simulations, but less controlled." I interpreted this to mean that she thought it would be less predictable given that it wouldn't be occurring in the context of the training group where everybody understood the goals and the process.

In all, the participants came out of the preparation phase looking forward to leading their groups, but with varying degrees of apprehension, nervousness, and excitement. They also described an awareness that it was impossible to know in advance exactly how each of the groups would play out.

Sense of Confidence and Preparation for Leading

In addition to asking general questions about what they thought the experience of leading the groups would be like, I also asked each participant how prepared and confident he or she felt coming out of the preparation phase and going in to the leading phase. Although most expressed nervousness and a bit of apprehension in response to the general questions about what they thought leading would be like, almost all of them said they felt "really confident" going into the leading phase because they felt that the training they received in the preparation phase had done a "good job" of preparing them to lead.

Most of the participants expressed a great deal of confidence in their abilities to lead the group effectively, partly because they felt very comfortable with their co-leaders and believed that if for some reason they were to stumble, then their co-leader would be there to back them up and help them through it. The trust they associated with this co-leader relationship seemed to have been established by their experiences working with various co-leaders in the simulations during the preparation phase and then seemed to be reinforced for many of the pairs in the leading phase. Cathleen expressed this sentiment when she said, "If I was doing this by myself, I'd be terrified. But just knowing that you have someone else there to lean on if you don't know what to do is so reassuring."

Cathleen also expressed confidence in her overall preparation, although she was still concerned that she might not have enough "history of the issue" of her dialogue group topic, affirmative action:

> I think I'm pretty prepared in terms of, like…I mean, I think my biggest issue was having to know some of the history on the issue….I always feel so much more confident on something if you know something about the issue, you know?

Samantha raised this same point when she wondered aloud whether she had enough content information about her topic (the death penalty) to feel prepared:

> I keep going back and forth about whether or not I need to be more informed on the death penalty. I know it can be kind of like a bad thing to be informed on the topic that you're leading. But I'm so afraid that I'm going to go in there and everyone else is just going to…or all the members, all my peers, are going to know a whole bunch about the death penalty. They're going to throw things up there that [my co-facilitator] and I don't know, don't have any idea about, because we're clueless about the death penalty. So I guess I keep teetering back and forth about whether or not I need to do some reading up on it or not.

Although the training group had spent a considerable amount of time discussing the death penalty in the preparation phase, it was noteworthy that Samantha still felt "clueless" about the topic. This general fear of feeling as though they didn't have enough information about the topic prior to leading the group came up a few times in Interview 1. However, this did not prove to be problematic for any of the participants once they actually began to lead their groups.

When I asked James how confident he was and how prepared he felt to lead his dialogue group, he said he felt "pretty confident" and also prepared in the sense that while he had "no idea" exactly what he was going to do when he entered the group on the first day, he felt like the training had given him a strong sense of knowing "what I need to do."

In recalling their thoughts and feelings after they had finished the preparation

phase and before they began leading their dialogue groups, most of the PDL alumni in the

focus group also recalled being nervous yet confident in their abilities. For example, Jen

said:

> I remember walking over there, over to [the location] with [my co-facilitator].
> We were like, (breathless) oh my God! We had met for an hour before and we
> were like okay, so what are we going to do for this, and what are we going to do if
> this happens? And then after that, we were like, whatever. We're fine, you
> know? I think once we got into the first session and realized that we could be
> comfortable and like, understood each other a little bit more and things like that. I
> don't think that was because the training didn't prepare us. I think that's just, you
> know, the initial experience.

Later, Jen added, "And you become more confident in the skills and the

knowledge that you've gained in the past six or eight weeks." Eve agreed with Jen's

comments, saying, "Once you get through a few sessions, you realize that you can get

through okay, and you realize that you are able to get through."

Dialogue Leaders' Views on the Effectiveness of the Training Preparation

Before they began leading their dialogue groups, I also asked the participants in

Interview 1 to identify and describe aspects of the preparation phase had been most

helpful to them in preparing them to lead their groups and also any aspects had been the

least helpful or ineffective in their opinion. A few common themes emerged.

As for elements of the preparation phase that the participants identified as most

helpful, the most frequent response by far was "the simulations." Most described the

simulations in the preparation phase as having been critical in preparing them to lead

their actual dialogue groups because they gave them "practice" that helped them feel

"confident" to lead. While several of the participants did criticize certain aspects of the

simulations, especially the role-playing, as too "exaggerated" or "over the top," almost all

of them brought up simulations as a key element and synthesizing culmination of the preparation phase. For example, James said in Interview 1, "Simulations, of course, are great because they gave me practice. Without those, I feel like…what the manual has said is all not relevant without actually having a chance at least to put it into some type of perspective." Elena agreed, saying, "Definitely the simulations were the best part." In referring specifically to the need to learn how to be a "neutral facilitator," Keisha also agreed that the simulations were "a huge part just because we actually did things, you know, and actually had to practice not saying stuff."

In reflecting in Interview 1 on what she had learned from the simulations and the dialogues among the training group during the preparation phase, Sonia described the value of these experiential components for her:

> I feel like we learned more when we interacted with each other, not really from the book. I mean that's how I feel college is, you know? Like you learn so much more out of the classroom than inside the classroom. So I just felt like it was one of those things, like when we talked it out and when we gave each other examples and when we facilitated our dialogues, I think that we learned so much. And that was the best thing we could have done because if we had just gone over it in a book, it wouldn't have done anything. So really putting ourselves in those roles, really helped a lot….It totally makes a difference and you don't even think it will, but it does. You really kind of get to see potential problems or solutions.

Sonia also anticipated the value of the practical experience of leading her dialogue group. When I asked her a general question in Interview 1 about what she had learned from the training experience thus far, she said, "I think that's kind of a hard question because I haven't had time to settle. Do you know what I mean? I haven't put it into practice yet, so I'm not really sure."

Several of the participants in the alumni focus group also commented on the importance of the simulations in the preparation phase as being especially helpful in

preparing them to lead. Many described them as the aspect of the training semester that had stood out for them the most. For example, Jen said, "I think the simulations were like, not only my favorite part, but the most useful part of training." In agreeing, Sedgewick laughed as he recalled some of his experiences in simulations, saying, "Everybody knows that was *my* favorite part!" Specifically, he said he remembered them to be useful because the simulations would "represent all the different people we're going to come in contact with."

Other aspects of the preparation phase the participants cited as helpful in preparing them to lead their dialogue groups included learning how to use "clarifying questions" (Cathleen and Leia), "open-ended questions and the rephrasing" (James), "paraphrasing and reframing" (Samantha), "recognizing emotions" (Soraya), and "paying attention to non-verbals" (Soraya). A noteworthy aspect of all of these examples that relates to the findings for Research Question 1 about cognitive development is that all of these examples were about facilitating dialogue group process as opposed to content.

One aspect of the preparation phase that was cited as being both helpful and not necessarily helpful at the same time was learning about hot buttons and how to handle them. Cathleen said she felt like she would "use hot buttons the most" in leading her group, while James felt that learning about hot buttons might not be very necessary because he didn't think the dialogues in their actual groups would be as "heated" as some of the dialogues in simulations.

Another aspect of the preparation phase that Soraya identified as helpful in Interview 1 was learning about the definition of "consensus," one of the primary objectives of the four-session Common Ground model:

The definition of consensus [we learned in the preparation phase], that was the best definition I've ever read before. Because my definition of consensus [before training] is like when both parties are equally pissed off, like that's my definition.

When I asked her to elaborate about her new understanding of the definition of consensus, she said:

It's that it doesn't have to be perfect. Like both parties don't have to be completely happy, and it's not damn near perfect, but it's just something that both people can come to a good…it's acceptable. Like I can live with this, you can live with this. We don't have to be necessarily angry. That was my opinion before. [Now I think that] you don't have to be angry or uncomfortable with the situation, but we can accept it and live with it.

Like Soraya, a few of the participants in the alumni focus group also commented on the importance of learning about the concept of "consensus" in the dialogue leader training program. For example, Christian said that when he went on to graduate school and then to professional positions, he had repeatedly found that "consensus-building in meetings is very important."

As for elements in the preparation phase that were not as helpful in preparing them to lead their groups, the participants had fewer responses. A few, however, did give specific examples. Cathleen said that while she definitely understood the value of learning about clarifying questions, "I don't know if I'll use the paraphrasing that much." James thought that it would have been helpful to structure the preparation phase in a way that provided more information about "what a real group is going to be like." And Elena said that she felt like a lot of the material presented in the preparation phase was "common sense" and she wasn't sure how it would help her lead her group. She did, however, acknowledge the importance of the experiential component of the training program by saying that while much of the material was "common sense," she felt like she would understand it better once "you practice it."

In Keisha's response to the question about whether there were areas that should have been emphasized more in the preparation phase, she once again cited "multiplistic thinking":

> I think the…the multiplistic thinking should. I would like that to be emphasized more. Like I was just personally really interested in it, so I kind of, you know, listened more intently….I think it's very important that we understand that there are gray areas so that we don't get offended by things. Because we can just, you know, give people the benefit of doubt, or whatever. I think it helps us understand other people more, you know?

Others identified a few additional areas in which they felt somewhat underprepared or apprehensive about their preparation to lead. For example, Keisha worried about her ability to take effective notes for the group on newsprint, a skill that was practiced during the preparation phase and portrayed by the trainers as harder to do than it looks. Soraya, feeling particularly confident after the preparation phase, simply said, "I feel pretty much prepared in everything."

Experiences Leading in the Leading Phase

Findings from Interview 2 and the later e-mail reflections related to experiential learning in the leading phase are presented in this section. It includes a discussion of the participants' actual experiences leading the dialogue groups as compared to their expectations of what leading would be like, and their descriptions of how prepared and confident they felt in retrospect after their groups had been completed. In addition, overall insights the participants gained about experiential learning are identified.

Experiences Leading as Compared to Expectations of Leading

In Interview 2, after all the participants had finished leading their dialogue groups, I asked each of them questions about how the actual experience had been similar to their expectations of what it would be like and how it had been different (see Appendix L for

interview protocols for Interview 2). One of the strongest themes to emerge in this section was that in general, most of the participants found the experience of leading the groups to be much more "civil" and "calm," and less "controversial" than they expected it to be. For example, James said in his first e-mail reflection, "This was my first shot at leading a Common Ground group. It ended up being a lot easier then [*sic*] I had initially expected." Samantha described her group as "very mellow" yet "talkative," which was different from what she had expected. She also described the overall experience of leading the group to be "easier than expected." From her second e-mail reflection:

> Co-leading the dialogue group was easier than expected, which made my first session as a facilitator kind of anticlimactic. I left the session very pleased with the way everything went. Since it was the first session, I was definitely expecting the group to be really quiet, but instead the group was very talkative. I also did not expect everyone to know each other as well as they did. The group seemed quite comfortable sharing their differing opinions and asking for clarifications. There were a couple times where outlandish analogies and generalizations were put on the table, but the participants took it upon themselves to reframe any hasty comments.

Cathleen also found her group to be much less "crazy" than she had expected, partly because she felt that the group comprised of students from the RA training course was different from what she thought a CIVICUS group would be like. From Interview 2:

> I never did Common Ground [in CIVICUS] as a freshman….I heard people talk about it or like when I heard people from last year reflect on their training and facilitating the groups for PDL. It [leading the RA group] was a lot like, I guess, I expected it to be. A lot of really good dialogue and everyone contributing and not too many hot buttons pressed. But when I looked on the topic, like when I found out that I was doing affirmative action, I thought it was going to be *crazy* and I thought no one was going to agree and they were all just going to yell right past each other's point and refuse to listen to everyone else. So in that sense, it wasn't…it was what I thought it was going to be. I was a little surprised by the topic in a *good* way.

Sonia had a similar reaction about the nature of the participants from the RA training course as compared to what she would have expected from CIVICUS students. From her second e-mail reflection:

> Being in a Common Ground group in CIVICUS is different than leading a group of RA candidates. The RA candidates were a lot more calm than Somerset [CIVICUS] kids. Because we [CIVICUS students] all knew each other, it was easier to get louder and more out of hand, in my opinion….I also thought that I was going to have to step in more. It was different because people got a lot more personal than I expected. Also, people in Somerset know each other's life stories and the RAs don't, so it is interesting and new.

In her second interview, Sonia reiterated that the experience of leading the group was not nearly as difficult as she thought it would be. She said, "The training was a lot more overwhelming and the actual practice of it was just kind of very serene." Later, she went on to say, "And you know what else? I just wasn't expecting…I just wasn't expecting it to be so good….I think the positive attitude that, you know…just everything contributed and it made it all really well."

In James' description of how his actual leading experience had been as compared to his expectation of leading, he spoke again about how the experience in the dialogue leader role had given him new insights into group process as opposed to content, especially when compared to his previous leadership experiences. In responding to the question about whether the actual experience of leading the group was different from what he expected, he said, "No, it wasn't different from what I expected it to be. It was just different from other types of leadership activities I'd been involved in….it's just a whole different style of leadership."

Keisha's recounting of her experience leading her group was different from the other participants in that she was the one participant who said that the experience of

leading turned out to be much harder than she thought it was going to be. She attributed much of this to several especially challenging participants in her group and an unusually difficult time she and her co-leader had regarding punctuality, attendance, and attitude among the dialogue group members. She said, "I really thought it was going to be more of like a relaxed kind of atmosphere because that's how I felt towards my Common Ground [group, as a first-year student]." She also raised the issue of "dead spots" encountered in the group and the challenges associated with dealing with them. She said, "It was different than I expected with the…how much dead spots *really hurt* a dialogue and how much…I guess, how hard it is to start dialogue up again when it's stopped."

Keisha summarized her experience in her second e-mail reflection by writing, "I went into this feeling quite assured of myself and knowing that what was tossed at me I could handle. I must say, though, the dead spots and the lateness (and what to do with that) shook me." While she said she initially felt it would be "a piece of cake," she went on to observe that the whole experience turned out to be much more challenging than she had anticipated.

While other participants certainly acknowledged some anxiety throughout the process of leading the groups, none of them had an experience that was as challenging as Keisha's. Leia was the one participant whose experience was the closest to Keisha's in that she said she never quite found a way to overcome her anxiety. In her second e-mail reflection, she wrote, "Overall, I think that leading the dialogue group was an anxious experience for me. I felt a little nervous because I felt uncertain of where to start the conversation with the dialogue group."

Sense of Confidence and Preparation for Leading

I addition to asking the participants in Interview 2 about how the experience of leading compared to their expectations of leading, I also asked them the same question I had asked in Interview 1 about how prepared and confident they felt going into the leading phase, in retrospect. In all, the participants strongly agreed in Interview 2 that they felt either "pretty prepared" or "very prepared" and "confident" coming out of the preparation phase in anticipation of leading the dialogue groups in the leading phase. While many acknowledged initial nervousness, the majority described a feeling of having been able to quickly gain confidence. For example, Sonia said in Interview 2:

> I always get a little nervous before those things. But looking back on it, I think those [leader preparation] outlines that we had in that little six-week section [in the training manual] were perfect. That's all we needed. We could have been given that and just done it, you know? I felt *so* prepared and I felt like the training was really…like it worked well and, you know, I felt very confident. And you know after the first session and even during it, I could feel myself ease up because I was pretty nervous and I was practicing. But then by the third session, you just get there and you do it.

Soraya had a similar reaction although she focused her response more on specific aspects of the preparation phase that had helped her feel prepared:

> I felt *very* prepared and *very* confident….I felt prepared that, you know, we had the necessary materials and tools to use to go in there given all the training in paraphrasing, summarizing, you know, how to handle dead spots, questions, how to deal with hot buttons, and all the tools. I felt *very* prepared going in.

Elena echoed this overall theme, saying, "Yeah. I was pretty confident, I was pretty prepared. I mean I brought my manual, but I didn't really look at it." James said, "Prepared? For *my* group, I'd say I was over-prepared for it (laughter). As far as confident, it really only took me to say one thing and then I was confident." Later in Interview 2, when I asked him to critique the training he had received in the preparation

phase, James observed that while he initially felt that some aspects of it were

unnecessary, he now understood the importance of "taking it as a *whole*":

> You can't really do without one piece of that because…sure there's probably
> something, if I sat down and actually went through the manual page by page, I
> could probably find lines of things that I could take out. But I take it all as a
> whole. Like I learned as a *whole* from it all. I didn't learn more specifically, like
> section-by-section, but that disappears from your memory anyway unless you
> could go over it every day. So I just took it all as a whole. So basically, all of it
> together, I think it works nicely.

Cathleen agreed with much of what the other participants had said about feeling

prepared by the training. She said, "I feel like the training…it definitely did a really good

job preparing you. It prepared you for *anything* that could happen in the group, which is

always good….Like I feel like it definitely did cover every aspect."

Of all the participants, Leia expressed the least amount of confidence at the end of

the preparation phase going in to the leading the group because of her challenging

experience in the simulations. However, she said she quickly gained some confidence

through the actual experience of leading. And despite her apprehension, she also seemed

to come away from the preparation phase feeling "real confident" about her training:

> I wasn't that confident going into the first group session…I was so worried
> because, I mean after simulations, I kept like laughing and just rambling on and
> looking at the board. And I just couldn't keep track of everything. And so I was
> worried that what happened there, the mistakes that happened there, would
> happen again in the sessions. And throughout the four sessions [of the dialogue
> group], that didn't happen. And so I was really happy for that. And I guess I
> came away being real confident with my training.

Insights about Experiential Learning

Throughout the study, the participants expressed many new insights related to

experiential learning, or the *experience* of leading or doing as opposed to *training about*

leading or doing. The most prominent theme to emerge from this section related to their

learning about how to lead, in the moment and while the groups were in process. This included learning associated with making impromptu decisions as a dialogue leader and also experimenting with different leadership approaches.

For example, in describing the difference between learning about how to lead a dialogue group and actually leading a group, Sonia discussed the challenge of assessing the needs of the group in the moment and making impromptu decisions about how to best meet those needs:

> So [with the dialogue group] there was a lot more communication in terms of, okay, well, this is an example of what we need, or maybe if you guys could think about things like this…just to kind of get the ball rolling. Because when we were in training and stuff, everyone knew what we were supposed to do, so it wasn't like, well I don't understand what "options for actions" means.
>
> ….But during the group, I think that it was hard because they didn't know what we expected of them at all. And they've never heard this lingo or jargon or whatever….So we really had to, not coax it out of them, but kind of just get it going. So that was kind of hard.

Cathleen also gave the example of learning from experimenting with different approaches while the group was in process. She described how it felt to realize that she was on her own with the group and needing to make effective decisions in the moment by critically weighing the pros and cons of a variety of different possible courses of action that had been offered to her beforehand:

> Yeah, there were a couple of times that…like I mentioned that Steve gave us clarifying questions or, you know, if the dialogue dies you can ask these questions for further insight. And there were a couple of times when the conversation [in the dialogue group] started to die or was getting off track and we wanted to get it back on track. And I'd find myself thinking like, oh no, where is my training manual? I had to think of it.
>
> But when you'd look at the questions [in the training manual] they really…like if you had asked one of them, it would have been completely out of the blue….The questions that he [the trainer] had listed for us wouldn't have fit at all or wouldn't have made any sense to the group.

….And there were just so many times that you would reflect on every single thing and be like, oh wait, we *watched* this video, or I read that in the manual, but it's not going to fit every single dialogue group. And so you have to take it and tweak it somehow.

Cathleen's description of how she learned to selectively apply aspects of the training she had received to the real-life situation of leading the dialogue group, in the moment and in ways that were appropriate and fit the needs of the group at that time, is strong evidence of experiential learning. An especially noteworthy aspect of this example was the critical thinking she demonstrated in considering the appropriateness of certain prompt questions given the unique needs of the group.

Later in Interview 2, Cathleen alluded to the satisfaction associated with having the freedom to make these kinds of decisions and then being able to witness the consequences of those decisions. In describing the joy and satisfaction of "learning to do it on your own," she said:

> I mean that was the best part [of leading the group], like sitting in a circle; we didn't *have* the binder right in front of us. Like we would just sit there and did it off the top of our heads. So we had these 50 hours of training crammed into our heads about what to do when this goes wrong and this goes well, and what to ask and how to phrase it….And [in the actual group] we were just kind of doing it the way we thought it should be done. And I think that's the best part of actually learning.

> Like it's one thing to do it in training, by the book, where you're standing in front of the class and you've like written out your speech of how you're going to do the simulations ….But when you get there [to the group], you're not really going to read off the sheet of paper in front of you. That's the whole aspect of learning, you know? Learning to do it on your own.

In the focus group with the alumni from the training program, several members of that group also emphasized the importance of the experiential components of the training program, and specifically the opportunity it provides for undergraduate college students

to lead dialogue groups. Christian, in particular, focused on the uniqueness of this experiential opportunity:

> I think one of the things that stands out to me, especially now, is that we were like, what…19 years old? That's crazy (laughter) that we were allowed to do what we did, I think. Because I think that that was just a…very much a maturing process. And very innovative at the time as well. So you know, I think it speaks a lot that you can train 19-year olds who are in a very, kind of crazy time in their life, and get them to settle down and focus, and handle very serious issues that adults…that you need to pay people to come in and do who are experts.

In reiterating this observation at the end of the focus group, Christian also said, "I think putting faith in young people to say that, 'you can do this,' I think is one of the most empowering things you can do."

Aspects of the Training Program that Enhanced Experiential Learning

For the evaluative purposes of this case study, specific aspects of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program that provided opportunities for experiential learning are identified in this section. The first and most obvious aspect of the training program that encouraged experiential learning was the opportunity for the trainees to lead a four-session dialogue group in the second half of the semester during the leading phase. Learning associated with this opportunity to lead a group, on their own and outside the presence of trainers, has been demonstrated throughout this section and also in previous sections in this chapter. Key components of this experience included working with co-leaders to plan the leading of the group, learning how to read the dynamics of the group in the moment and make impromptu, on-the-spot decisions based on needs of the group, and participation in follow-up consultation discussions with the trainers for the purposes of processing past sessions and planning strategies for future sessions. As Cathleen said,

there seemed to be powerful learning in coming to understand how to "do it on your own."

In addition to the opportunity to lead the four-session dialogue group, there were also opportunities for experiential learning incorporated throughout the entire training program, including the preparation phase. As the findings from this section and also previous sections suggest, the participants strongly benefited from the frequent dialogues that occurred and were encouraged among the members of the training group in the preparation phase. They also said they benefited from the opportunity to take turns teaching selected portions of the training manual to their peers, including planning the lessons, executing them, and receiving feedback on their delivery and approach.

Another component of the training program that emerged as central to the participants' experiential learning was the dialogue group simulations with members of the training group and also occasional guests, including returning PDLs, that gave the trainees an opportunity to practice their skills, experiment with different leading approaches, and receive detailed feedback prior to the actual experience of leading the groups. While several of the participants offered critiques of the simulations, especially the "exaggerated" nature of some of the roles that a few trainees and participants adopted, their learning from the simulations was a key theme to emerge from this study.

Finally, as presented in the previous sections in this chapter on cognitive development, findings from this study suggest that there was something about the unique nature of the dialogue leader training experience that encouraged the participants to apply their learning in the program to real life settings outside of the training program, and conversely, to bring real life experiences into the training program for discussion and

consideration. While college students clearly apply their learning from a variety of different contexts, such as classes, to their outside experiences, the findings from this study suggest that an experiential-based training program like this strongly encourages that kind of application.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 2 – Experiential Learning

The purpose of Research Question 2 was to describe the nature of the experiential learning that occurred through participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. One of the central questions was the dialogue leaders' actual experiences leading their groups as compared to their expectations of what the experience of leading would be like.

As for their expectations of leading, the participants expressed a variety of emotions ranging from nervousness and apprehension to excitement. They also, however, expressed a great deal of confidence in their training and in their ultimate ability to succeed. Although they expressed a few worries such as not feeling like they were knowledgeable enough about the topic of their group or wondering if the group would be participatory enough, they generally felt prepared and confident.

Their actual experiences leading the dialogue groups proved to be similar to what most had expected and different from what some had expected. Most expected the groups to be more "calm" than those they had experienced in the training simulations in the preparation phase. For the most part, with the notable exception of Keisha's group, these expectations were consistent with how their experiences played out. In general, the participants were also impressed by the thoughtfulness and care with which the student participants in their groups treated the dialogues and the experience. A few were

surprised by how different the participants in their groups, who were all candidates from the RA training course, were from the CIVICUS groups they had experienced as participants themselves.

Overall, the dialogue leaders seemed to finish the experience feeling satisfied with their abilities as leaders and complimentary of the training they had received as having provided them with solid preparation for a successful leading experience. Insights they acquired or that were reinforced about experiential learning included new understandings about their abilities to assess the needs of a group and make effective decisions in the moment, and the satisfaction and sense of accomplishment associated with "learning to do it on your own."

Several aspects of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program were found to offer opportunities for experiential learning. These included the opportunity to teach each other material from the training manual in the preparation phase, participation in the frequent dialogues that occurred among the members of the training group in the preparation phase, participation in the dialogue group simulations in the preparation phase, and the experience of co-leading the four-session dialogue groups in the leading phase. In addition, it was noted that this dialogue leader training program provided unique opportunities for participants to apply what they had learned in the program to a variety of contexts and life experiences outside of the training program.

Research Question 3 – Students' Characterizations of their Learning

from Participation in the Training Program

Research Question 3 for this study was an open-ended question about how the participants themselves characterized their learning from the training program. To study

this question I used exploratory case study methods (Yin, 2003a), meaning that I entered the study with no specific hypotheses in mind about how the students would characterize their learning and the themes that might emerge. To gather data for this question, I asked open-ended questions in the interviews and in the e-mail reflection prompts about what the students had learned, from their own perspectives, as a result of their participation in the training program. The relevant data were analyzed for categories, themes, and trends.

As all three of the research questions for this study were designed to explore student learning as a result of participation in the training program, it is important to clarify how the findings for this research question are different from the findings for Research Questions 1 and 2. As outlined in the preceding sections, the first two research questions related specifically to the impact of the training program on cognitive development and understanding of multiple perspectives (Question 1) and experiential learning (Question 2). The purpose of Research Question 3 was to develop an overall picture of the students' perceptions of their learning, as self-reported through the interviews or written reflections. As there was inevitably some overlap across the findings for all three of the research questions for this study, attention has also been paid to emphasizing findings in this section that have not already been presented in previous sections.

General Findings – Students' Characterizations of their Learning

Several theorists such as Pedersen (1988) and Pope and Reynolds (1997) have suggested three general components important to the development of an overall capacity to successfully navigate the complexity of a multicultural environment: awareness, knowledge, and skills. As the categories of learning for this research question began to

emerge, I realized that they were aligning in a way that was very consistent with these three categories. Therefore, I adopted this primary framework to organize the findings for this section, but also adapted it to accommodate all the categories that emerged from the data. This process resulted in four categories of findings for Research Question 3: (a) knowledge acquisition, (b) skill development, (c) self-awareness, and (d) integrated transferability.

The first category, *knowledge acquisition*, includes self-reported learning and knowledge that the participants gained through the experience *about* something or *about* other people. The second category, *skill development*, includes new or enhanced abilities to translate learning into action that were developed or refined through the students' participation in the training program. I am calling the third category *self-awareness*, instead of simply "awareness," to include all those insights the students gained about *themselves* as a result of their participation in the training program. A fourth category I am adding is *integrated transferability*, which includes self-reported descriptions of learning that the students will likely carry with them into future life settings and will have implications for future life opportunities.

Knowledge Acquisition

As a result of their participation in the dialogue leader training program, the students in this study reported gaining a great deal of content-related knowledge, insights, and learning in a variety of different areas. These included knowledge about the concept of dialogue as it is defined by the Common Ground program; knowledge about general characteristics of dialogue that might be applied to any dialogic setting; knowledge about leadership; insights about other people, including how they behave in groups and group

development, their comfort in dealing with multicultural issues, their differing

communication styles and personalities, their convictions, and their opinions; knowledge

about relationships and working with other people; and increased insight into the nature

of stereotypes, both as applied by others and also as they emerged from within.

Knowledge about dialogue – As defined by the Common Ground Program. Not

surprisingly, when I asked the participants open-ended questions about what they had

learned from the training program, one of the most frequently cited themes they reported

was gaining a great deal of knowledge about the concept of dialogue, especially as it is

conceptualized in the Common Ground program. This included an understanding of the

overall purpose and goals of the Common Ground program as well as an understanding

of the purpose and goals of each of the four group sessions and how each fits into the

overall model of the four-session design.

Several examples illustrate their learning about the goals of the Common Ground

program. Elena said in Interview 1:

> I think of dialogue as kind of like a roundtable. Like I guess we're talking but we
> have a purpose. We're trying to understand what's going on or trying to gain an
> understanding of something, or an understanding of some thing as opposed to
> someone being right or wrong.

In Interview 1, Soraya also correctly described the overall goals of the Common

Ground program as "healthy civic dialogue" about "serious topics" that included "coming

into consensus." Above all, though, she said, "Your first [goal] throughout all of the days

is to have, to promote the healthy discussion." Later in the training semester, after having

the experience of leading her dialogue group on affirmative action, Soraya added more

detail about the relationships between members of the dialogue group:

We're just trying to achieve a dialogue, like a healthy dialogue for people to be able to like….to create the environment where people feel comfortable having their own opinions and expressing that whether they know that it's accepted by the group or not. Having them conduct themselves in a way that, you know, both respects themselves and others, that allows for others to *want* to understand you as well. That's the process that I see is to….for people to feel comfortable in the environment there and to share their true feelings on a topic that is really controversial no matter how their feelings are about a certain issue.

As for her understanding of the goals of the Common Ground program, Cathleen said in Interview 2, "As long as you can get the group to talk or to dialogue, I feel like that's the main point." Later, when describing how her group went, she said:

I definitely feel like it's just, you know, every person got the chance to speak. And every person understood that there are different dimensions and different aspects of the issue even if they don't necessarily understand every aspect that was brought up or they don't listen to everything….As long as they're more willing to understand that this can happen in a setting and it can be okay and you don't flip out about it, or worry about, or like, oh God, are we allowed to talk about this? That's the main point. So I feel like that was what we were trying to reach.

Elena not only spoke of her own understanding of the goals of the program, but of her desire for the participants to "get it" as well. From Interview 2:

I just really wanted them to *get it*. Like I really wanted them to understand what was happening and like, really talk about it and really gain some understanding of what was going, at least with themselves. I just really wanted them to get the point of the Common Ground group, to understand what was happening.

Knowledge about general characteristics of dialogue. In addition to learning about the goals and purpose of a Common Ground dialogue group, the participants learned about aspects of dialogue that could be applied to most any dialogic setting. These included an increased understanding of the distinction between the concepts of "dialogue" and "debate," insight into the ways in which participants might behave in dialogue groups, insights into the concept of "hot buttons" and how they can play out in

any dialogue group, and new understandings about how effective dialogue can occur across differences of identity and/or opinions.

First, the participants reported learning a great deal about *the difference between "dialogue" and "debate"* through their experience in the training program. While these were not necessarily new concepts to the students, many reported that before the training, they had not thought a great deal about the differences between them. As one illustration of this, Leia said in Interview 1:

> Well, [I learned that] that dialogue is not a debate. So whenever I think…. whenever I hear the word "debate," it's like oh that's not dialogue because you're not winning. And dialogue is more about understanding and finding common ground, whereas debate is right or wrong. And discussion is different from dialogue.

The participants also reported learning a great deal about *how participants behave in dialogue groups*. Examples of learning in this area included observations regarding the tendency of some group members to want to rely on facts and "statistics" often at the expense of listening to other points of view, the possibility that some group members will dominate conversations, and insights into why some participants might "shut down" in dialogue groups, especially if they are hesitant to contribute if they are in the minority in the group with regard to an aspect of identity or their perspective.

As specific examples, Sonia discussed getting "annoyed" with a participant who "liked to hear herself talk" and "didn't know when to stop," to the point where "it kind of irritated the other participants as well." James described an incident involving one person in his group who said she felt "attacked" because of a comment another participant had made about her religion.

Sonia also described gaining interesting insights into how a participant who is in a perceived "out-group" with regard to an issue being discussed and who is also in the numerical minority in the group in relation to an aspect of identity might be hesitant to participate fully. In describing the ways in which the four men in her group on abortion (which had 11 participants total), participated in that group, she said:

> It was kind of interesting to see like the male role in the…in the whole thing because there were only four of them….I kind of liked how they just played devil's advocate to everything and they never, I mean they never really got into their views. But one time we were talking about fathers' rights….and one of the guys was like, "None. What if they just had none?" You know? And I just thought it was really interesting.

When I asked her if she had a theory as to why some of the men may not have expressed their own views as much as some of the women in the group, she speculated that it could have been due in part to the disclosure of the woman in the group who had an abortion, or it could have been that "they just didn't feel comfortable."

In a similar example, Sedgewick, in the focus group of PDL alumni, recalled reflecting on what it felt like to be a "minority" in a dialogue group and the role a dialogue leader can play in supporting participants who are in that role. In following up on a comment someone else in the focus group had made about being the minority in a group, he said:

> I think, you know, having that experience [of being the minority]….That's going to help you when you go out, even into the real world, or even doing those dialogue sessions. If you saw that person [who was in the minority in the dialogue group] slink back, I mean you could see, you know, when you get a majority/minority difference, and the group is able to see the same thing. So no matter what the topic is, and you see the voices come, you're seeing who's in the majority and who's in the minority. And so you're able kind of like to keep an eye out for them. Like, you know, I see you, you go ahead and talk. It's alright, you know? You're able to make it a little more comfortable for them.

Another aspect of dialogue the participants reported learning more about was the concept of *hot buttons* and how they can play out in a dialogue group. James described this concept as especially intriguing to him in Interview 1 and reflected on how hot buttons had played out among the training group in the preparation phase. In recalling one of the other trainee's views on the death penalty, he said, "I remember just thinking that that was kind of an out there....hot button to have. I was just kind of like, wow. I never knew that could be touched on, the hot button." Later in Interview 1 when I asked him if the concept of "hot buttons" had been familiar to him prior to the training, he said, "I've heard it. I've never thought of it. I know, you know, people get pushed by different things. I never actually called it 'hot buttons' though."

In the last theme related to knowledge about general characteristics of dialogue, several of the participants reported that participation in the dialogue leader training program taught them, or at least reinforced for them that *effective dialogue can occur across strong differences of identity or opinions*. Cathleen said in Interview 2, "I think definitely with affirmative action, because I've just always had this mindset that like, oh God, it's a horrendous topic, and no one can discuss it without getting into like a huge fight and hating the other person." However, as a result of her experience in the program, she said that she "learned that it is possible for people to come together and discuss this issue."

In the focus group of alumni, Eve also said that one of the things she had learned from the training program was that effective dialogue can occur across difference, and that people can be "compassionate" on multiple sides of an issue:

> I feel like I sort of walked away pretty much sold on the idea that there is a
> compassionate way to believe all sides of every issue, you know? At least the

ones that I looked at. I found myself surprised, sort of like being, wow, I can *totally* disagree but still recognize that there is some respect and compassion in that view that, you know, I used to think is like wholly bigoted….I definitely feel like I'm open to the idea that even if you're against…even if you're against gay marriage or something which is a really big issue for me, there is potentially a compassionate way to disagree with what I feel to be, you know, inherent civil rights of a whole group of people.

Knowledge about leadership. Through their experiences in the training program, the participants also reported learning a great deal about leadership. This included learning about the experience of being in a leadership role, as a dialogue leader, and also a more general understanding about different kinds of leadership. This section does not necessarily include findings about acquisition or development of leadership *skills*; those are reported in a later section. Rather, the findings from this section relate primarily to insights about *what it means to be a leader* and how that role felt to the students.

For example, Sonia said she learned about the importance of "picking your battles" as the leader of the group as compared to being a participant. Keisha said that she gained a new understanding of how it felt to be the one "in charge" as opposed to a participant. In describing how she and her co-leader had to confront members of their group about their persistent tardiness, Keisha acknowledged that she felt a bit like a "hypocrite" about it because when she had been a participant in a Common Ground group, she was somebody who would "probably be late, too." I offered an observation that her comments seemed to indicate that in the role of leader, she experienced the group in a different way from how she had experienced it as a participant. She laughed, "Yeah, a very different way. Like I had to make sure I was…I got there on time myself!"

Leia also spoke about how the leadership role felt to her. In reflecting on this in Interview 2, she described a very collaborative approach to the role of leader yet also commented on how it felt to have "some sort of power":

> Well, I didn't really feel like a leader in the group just because we were supposed to be fellow *learners*, so I didn't like try to impose leadership upon them. But I mean it was nice to feel like you had some sort of power in the group. Like when you were cutting somebody off, if they started to go off in a tangent, it felt kind of like reassuring to…to have the power to say, you know, well let's keep on, stay on track. And that was nice.

When I asked her if she had been in a situation before in which she felt that she had that kind of power within a group, she said, "that kind of power was new."

Later in the second interview, Leia went on to describe more ambivalent feelings about the role of leader. In responding to a question about any aspect of leading the group that she did not enjoy, she said, "Just like having to be the one to tell them, you know, guys be quiet because someone else is talking or, you know, giving them the awkward look when they'd come in late. Just because I don't like…that." She went on to say that for her, maintaining the boundary between being the participants' friend and the leader was difficult because, "I don't want them to hate me, you know?" However, despite the fact that she did not enjoy confronting the group, she acknowledged that she felt good about herself after having confronted them in a way that generated a successful result:

> Well, I mean I felt *good* because they actually listened. I don't know whether the confrontation pushed them away from participating, but I don't think it did. I felt like it worked….Since I wasn't like staring them down the entire time, I don't think they thought of it…like didn't take it personally. So I felt good afterwards.

In addition to learning more about what if felt like to be in a formal leadership role, the participants reported gaining insights into *different kinds of leadership* and a new

understanding that leadership in one context is not necessarily the same or does not necessarily call for the same skills, abilities, or approaches as leadership in another context. Comments by several of the participants presented in earlier sections of this chapter, especially from James and Soraya, provide vivid illustrations of learning associated with coming to understand what was required of them as Common Ground dialogue leaders as compared to what was expected of them in previous leadership experiences. Despite the fact that this was different kind of "leadership" experience from those he had been involved with before, James also said he came to feel like it was a style of leadership that "fit well" for him:

> It was definitely a whole different style of leadership. I know I've said that before somewhere….But it was good to see. I fit well with this style of leadership I found, especially working with [my co-facilitator], too. We seemed to work well together. We'd bounce off each other. It just kind of worked. It was a good experience overall. I don't know…I liked the laid-back style of having to lead the group.

> Several of the participants in the alumni focus group also discussed what they learned about leadership through the experience of the training program. For example, Ethan said:

> I never did anything like that [before], for which I was the sole facilitator of a group. So I thought that was a really good experience for me, just being in front of the group and having everyone listen to you and actually controlling what's going on. I thought that was a huge skill that I gained.

> ***Knowledge about other people***. In another set of findings under knowledge acquisition, the participants reported gaining a great deal of knowledge *about* other people. This included knowledge about other people's opinions, the strength of other people's convictions, group development and how people behave in groups, vast

differences in communication styles and personalities that can lead to differences in behavior, and people's differing levels of comfort in dealing with multicultural issues.

Several of the themes from this section, especially those relating to the diverse opinions and perspectives that people have about multicultural topics, have been presented in earlier sections of this chapter. However, an important finding from the study was that the dialogue leaders not only learned about *the content of these opinions and perspectives*, but also about *the strength with which some people hold these views*. In Leia's words, from her fourth e-mail reflection:

> As a result of leading the group this week, I learned that although the group members all had high hopes of coming to consensuses, they also felt firmly about their beliefs and would not forgo their faiths in order to come to a consensus.

The participants also reported that they gained more knowledge about *how people behave in groups* and *group development*. In describing what he enjoyed most about the experience of leading the dialogue group, James said, "I enjoyed it, actually just watching the group develop….I never thought that would be enjoyable to me, but it was really interesting to see how people played into roles." When I asked him to elaborate on what he meant by "watching the group develop," he said:

> Like watch how certain members in the group react to certain things, watch how they surprised you. Like sometimes you can *guess* what they would say based on what they *had* said before, but then they would completely do a 180 and surprise you. Watch how group members feed off of each other. There were a couple of members in my group who definitely fed off one another; looked towards each other for either an opposing comment or a helping comment. It was just interesting to see how all that plays into where the dialogue goes and how the group does.

James also commented on his interest in "group dynamics" in his e-mail reflections. In Reflection 3, after the second dialogue group session, he mentioned that

he "continued to learn more about group dynamics and how they play a role" and that he had been especially interested in the majority/minority dynamics in the group:

> I think the fact that the majority of the group, or at least the few extroverts who are more dominant and tend to control the flow of the dialogue, agree on the topic so the other members of the group just go along with it.

Samantha also commented on what she had learned about working with people in groups. In her second interview, she described learning that every group is unique. "But overall, what did I learn? No group is the same. Just talking to other people, other facilitators, they're like, oh I'm catching hell with my group and all this other stuff. No group is the same."

Knowledge about relationships and working with other people. One of the most prominent themes that emerged in this section about knowledge acquisition was that the participants reported gaining a great deal of knowledge about the nature of relationships and how to work more effectively with other people. Learning in this category included new insights and understandings about the importance of effective communication, the importance of exposure to different perspectives and interacting with people you disagree with, the importance of being open-minded and withholding judgment, and how important it is for people to feel understood by others. Many also reported gaining a new or enhanced understanding about stereotypes, including a new awareness of their own stereotypical thinking. Finally, many reported learning that people can still be friends despite differences in opinions and/or identity.

Several of the examples presented already in this chapter illustrate the students' learning about *the importance of effective communication*. Many examples have also been presented in preceding sections regarding their learning about *the importance of*

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exposure to multiple perspectives and the impact of that exposure. As one additional

illustration, Elena said in Interview 1, "So I think that it's good for people to get exposure

to [different perspectives] and to see that they're…whatever they think is not necessarily

absolutely true for everyone."

In another theme, the participants also reported learning more about *the*

importance of being open-minded and withholding judgment. Sonia said in Interview 1,

"I guess I didn't realize how important it was for people to not be so close-minded." In

reflecting more on what she had learned from leading her dialogue group about how

many people might have stories that are not readily apparent, she emphasized how

important it is "not to judge":

> The thing about where people come from.…with the personal experiences? Like
> you never know where people have come from, you know what I mean? There
> could very well be a person in the dialogue group who had an abortion…or you
> know, someone who is homosexual and….isn't out yet….Those are what I'm
> talking about. Like there are so many more complexities that people just don't
> know about. So it's really important not to judge because you have no idea where
> these people are coming from.

Several of the participants also described learning about *the importance of people*

feeling understood by others. For example, in recalling what she learned from the

simulations in the preparation phase, Samantha described learning about how important it

is for the dialogue leader to try to ensure that the participants in the group "feel like

they're being understood." From Interview 1:

> If I'm able to paraphrase what they say, then that means that the other person who
> was actually talking is going to feel like, oh, well, they actually listened. They
> actually got what I was saying. And I think that's why a lot of heated debates get
> heated. Or at least in my simulations I noticed it too, that if people don't feel like
> they're being understood or heard, they get really frustrated.
>
> So I think as long as we can keep it so that people feel some relief in knowing that
> they were understood and people were actually listening, then we're more likely

to have a civil dialogue than just a whole bunch of frustrated people trying to…. explain themselves.

Soraya echoed this in Interview 2 in describing what she had learned about using "feeling words" as a dialogue group leader in order to help participants in the group feel more understood. At first she was ambivalent about the usefulness of this aspect of the training, but after her experience in leading the group learned about its value:

> When we were going over feeling words, I was like, how important is this going to be? But then in summarizing – like feeling words go with summarizing and paraphrasing – people feel a lot better when you can say a feeling word. Like okay, you sound *frustrated* and you sound *angry*. Because they feel…like you understand them. And when you verbalize it to the group, coming from the leader, they tend to understand it more. So those feelings words, I thought were going to be useless (laughter)….

> But then afterwards, you realize that in the group, like when you say okay, it sounds like you're frustrated…it sounds like, you know, you're a little upset. And then you try to elaborate a little more. And people's faces, they started nodding… it feels *good* for them to know that *you*, that the facilitator, knows how they feel.

In another theme related to knowledge about relationships and working with other people, several of the participants reported gaining a great deal of knowledge *about stereotypes, including (a) increased recognition of the ways in which other people use stereotypes, and (b) insights into their own stereotypical thinking*. As documented in previous sections of this chapter, several of the participants including Leia, Samantha, and James were very candid about reporting experiences in their dialogue groups with group members who participate in ways that were different from how they expected they would participate and challenged their own stereotypical thinking. In addition to these examples, several other participants including Cathleen and Soraya also described witnessing members of their dialogue use stereotypes or demonstrate stereotypical thinking in ways that they felt were detrimental to the group.

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As an example of the first kind of learning about how stereotypes are used by others, Cathleen provided an account in Interview 2 of her frustration with one of the members of her dialogue group on affirmative action:

> Yeah, like she'd throw out…she used stereotypes that Soraya and I were like *shocked* by. And thankfully *a lot* of people in the group called her out on it. Because we really got to the point where we were about to be like, point of order [a Common Ground dialogue tool] times twenty, like what? Like you don't know that! And thankfully, I think *a lot* of people in the group started to get really annoyed with her.

As an example of how the dialogue leaders' own stereotypes were often challenged as a result of leading the groups, James continued to think in his last e-mail reflection about his reaction to the participants in his group on same-sex adoption who identified as gay but who had opinions and perspectives that were different from what he had expected:

> Another thing that I learned this week was to not expect people with certain identities to hold certain opinions just based on their identity. Granted I already know that we're not supposed to do that but it's hard not to. However, I learned this because I caught myself looking towards the two openly gay members of my group to have some opinion in certain lines of discussion that I assumed might spark a fire within them. However, it was these two members who often shocked me the most with some of their opinions and their questioning towards other members. For the most part, the two openly gay members did not take offense to anything said that even I thought they would. And even the two of them did not agree on points within the topic and they found themselves on opposite sides of the dialogue more then once.

As this example illustrates, James not only learned more about general stereotyping of members of identity groups, he also learned more about variations in opinions and perspectives that might occur among individuals within an identity in-group. He summed this up by saying, "I definitely learned a lot about identity and the role it plays in a group during this session."

As a final theme in the area of knowledge acquisition, many of the dialogue leaders reported learning, or at least having it reinforced, that *people can still be friends despite differences in opinions and identity*. For example, in referring to Keisha's stance on abortion during the dialogues among the training group in the preparation phase, Leia said, "I was like wow! You know, this is so cool. This person I know is actually very conservative but I'm still her friend." Sonia made a similar comment in describing some of the dialogues that had occurred among the members of the training group:

> But you know (laughter) I feel like in general when we're talking, I can be pretty civil. But just to see that in action was *really* good because that's what you want to see. You want people to be…if they have opinions, opposing viewpoints, know that at the end of the night, they can leave the door and still be friends, you know?

Skill Development

The second major category of findings that emerged for Research Question 3 was about skills the dialogue leaders developed as a result of participation in the training program. For the purposes of this study, a "skill" is defined as an ability to translate learning into action. The findings included in this section are skills the dialogue leaders reported that they acquired, enhanced, or reinforced as a result of their participation in the program. It is important to note that all of the skills identified and discussed in this section were self-reported by the participants; I did not incorporate observations or verification of the acquisition of these skills into the design of the study.

Ten distinct categories of self-reported skills were identified. These included skills that were directly related to dialogue group facilitation within the context of the Common Ground program, and additional skills that were related to dialogue group facilitation but also have potentially broader application to a wide variety of settings and

experiences. The latter category included active listening, dealing with people, being empathic, handling others' emotions, confrontation, working with a co-leader, making effective impromptu decisions, presentation skills, and taking notes during a group discussion.

   Dialogue group facilitation skills. Not surprisingly, one of the strongest themes to emerge in this section was that the participants reported gaining many specific skills related to how to lead a dialogue group. In Cathleen's words, "Obviously I learned a lot about facilitating a group." James echoed this in Interview 2 when he said, "As far as leading the dialogue group, I learned how to actually *do* it now. I feel like a staunch veteran now, compared to what I did going in." And Sonia said in her second e-mail reflection after the first session of her group, "I learned that I can actually co-lead a dialogue group!"

   The specific skills they learned through this experience include many of the those discussed in previous sections about facilitating a Common Ground group, such as learning how to be a neutral facilitator and being intentional about withholding one's own opinion in order to create a climate of inclusion for all the group members. Based on the analysis of the data for this section, however, the dialogue leaders also reported learning several additional dialogue group facilitation skills such as paraphrasing, clarifying, posing effective facilitative questions, summarizing, attending to non-verbal communication, "self-control," "learning when to step in and when not to step in," handling silence and "dead spots," attending to one's own biases as a dialogue group facilitator, and effectively configuring the physical space of the room.

For the specific skill of *paraphrasing*, Samantha said in Interview 1, "It's now become apparent to me that the ability to paraphrase is essential to sustain respectful simple dialogue." In echoing this statement, Cathleen spoke at length in Interview 1 about what she had learned about paraphrasing and how it is a harder skill than it seems:

> I learned a lot just in general about paraphrasing someone else's thoughts….you would always say, you know, "Don't get me wrong, but what I think you're saying is"…and then follow it up with a question.

> ….You always think that it's so easy to paraphrase someone's thought. Like with just papers and homework assignments, and like any time you listen to someone talk, you're paraphrasing their thought in your own head. But then to actually put it out and respectively paraphrase their thought, it's a lot harder to do (laughter). So I learned a lot about that.

A skill similar to paraphrasing they reported learning was *posing effective facilitative questions*. Elena spoke specifically to this in her first e-mail reflection when she said, "Learning the facilitative questions and cues helped to sharpen my analysis and taught me how to get to the heart of someone's comment." She also talked more about the skills associated with this ability in Interview 2, saying, "I have to kind of be more…not objective, but just kind of find a better way to ask the question that I'm trying to ask without leading to the answer that *I* want them to say."

Several of the alumni focus group participants also said they learned about effective facilitative questions through the training experience. For example, Sedgewick mentioned the importance of learning about "open-ended and closed-ended questions" and Eve mentioned "probing questions."

Another skill area the participants reported learning about was "*self-control*." They gave a series of examples that illustrated their learning about the importance of paying attention to their own reactions, verbal responses, and non-verbal responses, and

the impact those reactions might have on others. For example, in her first e-mail

reflection Samantha wrote about how gaining "self control" ultimately leads to an ability

to be a more effective dialogue leader:

> I felt that the training focused more on self control. For example, there was a
> point in training where we would screen videos of group discussions. The
> purpose of these videos was to test our listening skills and our attention to non
> verbal queues [*sic*]. After the first video, I realized just how instinctual it was for
> me to tune out those people whose views opposed my own and as a result I was
> unable to paraphrase what was said. Although this did not seem like a big fault at
> first, it has now become apparent to me that the ability to paraphrase is essential
> to sustaining respectful civic dialogue. People need to speak their minds and feel
> that they have been understood. This is essential to dialogue and as facilitators, it
> is our job to make sure that each participant leaves feeling content.

In a similar example of learning about self-control, James talked in Interview 2

about the importance of learning to closely monitor his own non-verbal reactions as a

dialogue leader and also the nature of his facilitative questions:

> Non-verbals and your verbals, like your pitch and your questions and stuff.
> Because I….during simulations I tried to withhold myself from asking certain
> questions out to the group because, I mean, I want to hear the other side and I
> know I can get at the other side by asking these questions. But it's more like a
> close-ended question, you know? I feel like it would portray some of my….my
> views on the situation. But I mean really I'm not showing my view, but wouldn't
> show a view that I'm not having.

A few of the participants in the alumni focus group also discussed the importance

of learning "self-control." For example, Sedgewick said:

> You guys [the trainers] didn't come right out and say it, but it [the PDL training
> program] really taught us a lot of self-control. Because we were constantly being
> told to be aware of your actions, you know, and how you're sitting and everything
> else. And when you got into the actual dialogue groups…and even, you know, in
> things outside of the classroom as we've been talking about, when people say
> those things, inside you may be ready to erupt, but you're able to control yourself
> and just seem very relaxed. And you basically learn how to control yourself so
> you can think consciously about what they're saying. Or rationally. And just be
> ready to come right back with it.

In addition to learning about self-control, the participants also talked about

learning "when to step in and when not to step in" as a dialogue leader. For example,

Sonia said in Interview 2:

> I learned when to step in and when not to step in, you know? And, that's really important because when people are going and having their dialogue, I piped in when *I* felt that she was talking for too long, and I think that everyone else in the group's non-verbals were like, just like make her stop! And I was just like, okay, well you know, we've got to stop now, but we can move on to this.

Samantha provided another example of learning when to step in and when not to

step in when she described what she had learned about adjusting her "facilitative

assertiveness." From Interview 2:

> In the first session, [my co-facilitator] and I were very, very laid back. We didn't have to do much. The second session, we were still really, really laid back because, you know, [the participant who focused on the statistics] was pretty much running the show, and no one seemed frustrated in the group so we didn't feel like we needed to do anything.

> But after the second session, it became apparent that, okay, well we're going to have to be more assertive because, like I said, I felt that my credibility as the facilitator had been taken away. And so I would have to, you know, we would have to be more heavy-handed with the next session so people would realize that, oh, these are the people that we need to come to.

Keisha also commented on learning more about maintaining an effective

facilitative balance, especially the importance of not over-facilitating. Finally, Leia

provided a good summary comment for this theme when she said in her first e-mail

reflection that she had learned that as a dialogue leader, she did not always have to be

"the center of attention":

> In order to lead a group, you *do not* have to be the center of attention. In other words, the Peer Dialogue Leader can guide the conversation in an indirect manner. Most importantly, I realized that you do not have to control the conversation, the PDL leader does not have to use a million words to summarize every point of the conversation, and the leader does not have to interject every time something potentially upsetting has been said. The value of this lesson is

important to me because I learned that the PDL leader could let a conversation play out, since the overall benefit to the group will be greater and constructive to the dialogue.

A similar kind of skill that several of the participants reported learning was how to *effectively manage silence or "dead spots"* in the dialogue. Samantha described learning how to "step in at awkward silences" in Interview 2. Others also talked about learning how to become more comfortable with silence and managing silence in a group. For example, Leia discussed how she had developed a strategy for this in consultation with the trainer and her co-facilitator:

> I talked to Steve about this and I think [my co-facilitator] and I like, we're not going to let them sit down for thirty seconds and not say anything. But Steve was like yeah, there's a trick, because sometimes it's like a game to see who can stay quiet the longest. And eventually they're going to crack. And so I kind of used that and I learned that you don't always have to be….poking them for answers because they'll say it. One of them eventually is going to take the lead and say something.

Learning how to handle "dead spots," however, did prove to be challenging for a number of the participants. Keisha said in Interview 2 that, "It was different than I expected with the…how much dead spots *really hurt* a dialogue and how much…I guess how hard it is to start dialogue up again when it's stopped." However, like Leia, she also seemed to learn that sometimes "dead spots are okay" and can ultimately contribute to the dialogue in a constructive way.

Soraya also mentioned "dead spots" in her second interview, saying, "Some things were harder to get over like the dead spots, but I mean I felt prepared for the dead spots. Steve loaded us with a rack of questions for dead spots, so we used them when that time came." Her co-facilitator Cathleen concurred, noting in her fifth e-mail reflection, "After about twenty minutes, the group was dead and refused to cooperate. As

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intensely frustrating as this was, Soraya and I needed to be quick on our toes to think of a way to keep the dialogue flowing."

Several members of the alumni focus group also commented on the issue of silence in the groups and what they had learned about it. In recalling her experience, Jen said, "I had a really hard time with silence in the group." Sedgewick agreed, suggesting that perhaps it would be beneficial to "talk through the differences of when you have a good silence versus a bad silence." In responding to these comments, Eve described a strategy for dealing with silence that she and her co-leader had developed:

> [My co-leader] and I after the first session, we would sit down in the beginning of our sessions and come up with a half dozen questions we could asked based on our notes or something like that. Just little things like that, knowing that there was a little card on our table that had questions. So if it got really dead we could be just say, hey, number one!

Another important skill the dialogue leaders reported gaining through participation in the training program was *learning to be self-reflective about their own biases*, especially for the purposes of constantly analyzing the impact that these biases and potential agendas might have on the group. In reflecting on this, Soraya said and she "didn't expect, as a leader, to….to have such bias":

> Because I went in like, I know I have biases, but I can let them go. It's a lot harder to let go of your biases than it seems. Because some people in the group, like knowing their opinions when they've come in, I wouldn't even want to talk to them; I'd be like, you're a bigot and I don't want to speak to you right now (laughter). But you have to be like, you know, hi guys. You have to be gracious and treat them all fairly. And that's really hard to do, *knowing* that some people in the group, you *don't* agree with at all. And other people….in the group you definitely have more of a liking to. So that was one of the hardest things. I thought it would be a lot easier before I started then (laughter) it actually was.

Several of the alumni focus group participants also brought up the importance of learning about their own biases and working to manage them as a dialogue leader. Jen

said, "I think it was really helpful for me to learn how to phrase things in an unbiased way," and Sedgewick described the importance of learning how to control his emotions and non-verbal expressions in order to minimize the chance that he would convey his own biases on certain issues to the group.

A final example of a very practical skill that a few of the participants reported learning was *how to configure the physical space of a room* to create an environment that is conducive to dialogue. Soraya mentioned this in her last e-mail reflection about how she and Cathleen had approached the leading of the fourth session of their group:

> In order to save time, we decided that the group could remain sitting behind their desks. We also figured that the group was already familiar with the environment and type of discussion, so the chair placement would have little to no effect. We were wrong. During the fourth session we asked the question and this time for real there were no answers. Just blank stares.

I followed up about this with Soraya in her second interview. She said she felt like their approach with the room had definitely hindered the dialogue, and she expanded on what she had learned about taking the time to set up the room properly:

> I felt like Cathleen and I probably were too lax in our presentation. Like, you know, guys this is the last day, we don't actually have to move the chairs, you can just sit where you are. We made it too lax because then there were two people playing on the computer and I was asking them, could you put that away? Don't disrespect what we're doing, you know? So people just wanted to get out and leave. But maybe they felt like it was more of a classroom setting….We never presented ourselves extremely professional, but we always made the lines clear, like this is who we are. We are the facilitators, you're the participants. But this time it was probably like…it was just different. So having those tables definitely hindered our fourth session.

In addition to gaining all of these skills that were directly related to leading a dialogue, the participants also reported gaining several additional skills that are related to leading a dialogue but also have potentially broader applications to many different life contexts. These were active listening, dealing with people, demonstrating empathy,

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handling emotions, confronting others, working with a co-leader, making impromptu decisions, presentation skills, and taking notes on newsprint.

Active listening. Perhaps one of the most important skills the participants reported acquiring or honing through participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program was the skill of active listening. While findings about the importance and benefits of active listening have been outlined in previous sections, active listening is also included here because it emerged as such a prominent theme that was reported by all of the participants as a central aspect of their learning. For example, Soraya said in Interview 2:

> What I learned? I mean the biggest thing I've learned throughout this is listening, like you need to be a good listener, like in *every* situation that you're in. Because you can't be an effective communicator, leader, participant, friend, student, anything, if you're not a good listener. So…I just need to be a better listener…. I need to *want* to understand.

Later, I asked her, "What do you think happens when you actually listen?" She said, "You actually *understand* (laughter). When you listen, you gain an understanding."

In Interview 1, Sonia also described how her listening skills had developed and improved over the course of the training semester and how she had been applying them to other aspects of her life:

> Probably just in like the manner in which you've listened; it's so different. Like I just stopped taking it in and then give my opinion. And I feel like that's something that I've always had a hard…like I've always been pretty quick in firing it off. But I have to take a moment…I guess just in personal relationships and people and friends and everything, you have conversations and dialogues. So that whole thing about taking it in, reflecting, letting your thoughts go.

When I asked her how the training might have played a role in her new understanding about the importance of listening, she said, "[The training] reinforced it. I think the

training reinforced a lot of things that people should do when they're listening and don't relate."

Keisha also commented extensively on the importance of listening and how she was committed to continually improving these skills numerous times throughout the study. For example, in Interview 1 she said:

> Oh, something I learned from training was not to always be thinking of something in your head when people say stuff. It's like when [another trainee] and I were talking about abortion. It's better for me to *listen* to what she has to say and just be strong enough in my facts to rebut that, than having to be like, "Oh I know what she's going to say" and not really listening to what she has to say. Yeah, yeah, so I *really* tried to work on that a lot.

In summarizing her thoughts about the importance of listening, Keisha said in her last e-mail reflection that one of the training goals she had set for herself at the beginning of the semester was "to learn not to speak as much during discourse. I wanted to train myself to be a better listener, a more active listener." In evaluating herself on how well she had achieved that goal, she wrote:

> I must say throughout this whole experience I indeed have become a better listener. This is one thing I have seen in myself change looking back to my pre-PDL days. I know that the beginning of the semester (or my "pre-PDL" days) isn't that far in the distant past but just being immersed in this internship I really have seen such a turn around in a matter of weeks! No longer do I feel the need (well it's not as great) to enlighten people. I can find joy in listening to others and reflecting on what they say.

In continuing to reflect on how she had applied what she had learned about active listening to other settings outside of the training program, she said, "I've practiced this most in my classes, because that is where I feel the need to talk the most."

Dealing with people. Throughout the study, the participants also reported developing a general set of skills that helped them to "deal with people" more effectively. While many of the skills associated with this finding have been alluded to in previous

sections, one additional example provides a good overall illustration of this theme. In Keisha's words, from Interview 2:

> I guess [I learned] just being able to deal with people. Not so much within the actual dialogue, but just like the things we had to deal with outside of the dialogue. Like having to deal with participant behavior, people getting here on time, people respecting other people, things like that. That was a lot of what I had to deal with.

Empathy. In a related finding, the participants also reported gaining skills in the ability to more deeply understand the experience of another, through that person's perspective and their frame of reference. While it might be argued that "empathy" is not a skill but is rather a characteristic or perhaps an insight, I would argue that it is a skill that can be learned and practiced, through exposure to multiple perspectives and thoughtful and intentional consideration of the origin of those perspectives.

In recounting in Interview 2 what she had learned from listening to one of the participants in her dialogue group discuss his view on affirmative action, Soraya provided a detailed example of having gained a deeper, more empathic understanding of his point of view through intentional listening. She said that the participant, who identified as White, said he was strongly against affirmative action programs because a high school classmate who was a person of color and who had lower SAT scores than him had been admitted into a prestigious university they both wanted to attend and he was not. In recalling the example, Soraya said that she really struggled with her own emotions when listening to his views, as her own personal views were so strongly in support of affirmative action. She said she found his story "upsetting." She experienced a turning point in her views about this participant, however, when she listened to him describe his feelings to the group:

And so, you know, the whole time he just had that attitude. But then at one point he was like, "I need for people to understand that I am hurt by this." He was like, "I've been affected," and he was like, "And the way I feel about affirmative action is shaped by that incident." He said, "I need for people to understand."

Then having thought about it, I was like, you know what?….If I was him and coming from his shoes, then it's kind of…you're like, okay, I still don't agree with you, but I can emphasize, you know? With the way you're thinking.

I suggested that it seemed as though the experience of being a dialogue leader might have prompted her to put herself in his shoes in a way that she may not have done otherwise.

Soraya responded, "Um hum…otherwise, I definitely wouldn't have. I would have been like, you're dumb and you're lying (laughter) and just stop talking." In asking her to expand a bit on her use of the word "empathy" in recounting this example, she said:

Yeah….no matter where the people are coming from, no matter what they're saying, like they're still people, too. And you have to have empathy for their situation regardless of whether it's something that *I* don't think is right, *I* don't think is accurate. But it's a part of his life that's clearly having a great impact.

Handling emotions. Another skill the dialogue leaders reported was learning how to handle or deal with strong emotions that people might display in a group setting, or minimally, gaining an ability to not be completely derailed by the presence of emotion. The participants talked about this in at least two ways. First, they discussed developing skills in naming emotions when they surface by using "feeling words" that communicate understanding, and second, they talked about learning how to react more effectively as a leader in the midst of a heated, emotional discussion.

Leia talked about having developed the skill of identifying and naming the emotions of others through the use of feeling words. In Interview 2, she said that one of the "easier" skills she had learned from the training program was watching people and "making sure you're understanding what the person is saying. Like if they're mad or

sad." She also went on to note that she used to "overuse" emotional words prior to the training, but that the dialogue leader experience had taught her how to be more selective in their use and application. She reinforced this in her first e-mail reflection by saying, "During PDL training, I have also been reminded that it is important to use "feeling words" on a consistent basis, if you notice that a group member is upset, aggravated or disconnected with the group."

Keisha also noted the value of this skill when she wrote in her second e-mail reflection, "I'll have to keep an open mind to others' emotions in expressing them to the group." Keisha also provided some of the strongest examples of gaining proficiency in handling emotions in the midst of heated dialogue, including her own emotions as well as the emotions of the participants in the group. Several of these examples, especially those related to her own strong emotions in reaction to comments that other trainees made in the preparation phase simulations, have been presented in previous sections.

One additional example Keisha provided that was related to this skill of handling emotions was about the learning she gained through the experience of having to confront the challenging participants in her group. In recalling what she had learned from that aspect of her leading experience, she specifically mentioned learning more about the role of emotions in a heated situation. From Interview 2:

> When she [the challenging participant] started like backing down [after being confronted], I could tell, like that said a lot (laughter). Like…it's better to just stick with the facts and never let your emotions guide situations like that, because if mine had, I might have come off too strong and she might have either felt really, really bad or got really, really angry. And that didn't need to happen.

Confrontation skills. Keisha's example in the preceding section points to another set of skills a few of the participants reported developing. These were skills associated

with confronting other people, especially from a position of authority. Keisha and Leia both described examples of having to confront participants in their groups for issues related to tardiness, missed sessions, not paying attention, and general attitude.

As one aspect of her learning from this experience, Keisha described learning about the importance of preparing for the confrontation:

> What I did was just to keep in mind all she had done. I'd try to keep that fresh in my mind. And then before the session…like the day of the session, I went and circled things in my Participant's Guide that I noticed that she had followed along with in the first two sessions. So that's how I prepared for it. And I tried not to get over-prepared because I didn't really know how she'd react to it and I didn't want to come across too strong.

After it was completed, Keisha also said she felt like she experienced success with this confrontation. From her last e-mail reflection:

> I just learned a lot this week [the fourth session]. What was said to the members really sunk in! The problem areas we had in the first three sessions were no longer in this session. Everyone arrived early! It was very comforting knowing that we weren't being taken lightly. What [my co-facilitator] and I said to them in the previous session really made an impression.

When I asked Keisha if she had ever been in the situation before of needing to confront somebody in that way, she said, "not in a professional setting."

Leia had a similar experience of needing to confront members of her group, although her experience was not as intense as Keisha's. For Leia, the problems were mostly related to participants talking while other people were talking and generally being disruptive in the group. In describing this in Interview 2, she said:

> There was this girl and her friend would always come in late, well five minutes, and I'd say, you know, you guys, you're here for a reason and if you're going to show up late, you might as well not come because you're going to miss the conversation, the key points that you might not understand later on. And she'd kind of give me like this awkward look. And I was like um, okay; all right… moving on.

Although Leia learned from the experience of having to confront and she seemed to have successful results, she also acknowledged that she didn't like doing it. She said it was hard "having to be the one to tell them, you know, guys be quiet because someone else is talking or, you know, giving them the awkward look when they'd come in late. Just because…I don't like that."

Working with a co-leader. Another skill area the dialogue leaders reported developing was learning how to effectively work with a co-leader. While this was a skill area they didn't identify as directly as some of the others, most alluded to it throughout the study. They talked a great deal about how much they appreciated their co-leader, especially if it was a good working relationship, and how much they disliked or would not like having a co-leader who was not strong or not a good match.

One of the aspects of this finding that a few acknowledged directly was that it was often harder to work with a co-leader than they thought and that it required much more work and planning than they anticipated. For example, Elena said in Interview 2:

> It was harder to work with a partner because I felt like a lot of times….I felt like I was like taking over her and I felt like [my co-leader]….was a little bit more uncomfortable. Like sometimes when people weren't talking or when they weren't getting what we wanted them to get….I just always felt like I had to cover or make sure I was saying all the right things. But also I felt like I was…I was more into it. And so I just thought it was hard to not talk over her.

She went on to elaborate that one of the reasons it was hard was because co-leaders need to keep track of what the other one is doing and not work against each other:

> You have to make sure you're following where the other person is going. Like if they say something that you don't necessarily always agree with. But you can't go back and say, "No that's not it…," or say something that contradicts them. I don't know. It's just difficult.

In addition to learning about how to work with a co-leader, the participants also gained an enhanced ability to identify the kinds of co-leaders who would be compatible with their style and the kinds who wouldn't. In commenting on how she and her co-facilitator were balanced in their styles and approaches, Samantha said:

> We [my co-leader and I] just complemented each other really well, I think. She's pretty hyper, upbeat and, you know, just kind of gets everybody riled up. And the other side, I'm kind of the person everybody in the group looked to, to keep everything on task and focused and everything. And it just worked out well so there was a good balance. And I kind of felt like this welcoming, homey feeling between the two of us working together. And she likes to write, which I hate to do, so I got to sit and I definitely was the one to just observe the group the entire time. It worked out. And we had good communication, like even during the facilitating of the group.

Sonia also commented on the importance of "balance" between co-leaders, and also not being afraid to rely on a co-leader for help and support. And in her last e-mail reflection, Keisha reported achieving a "shared experience" with her co-leader after the "tumultuous" time they had with the challenging participants in their group.

The skill of learning how to work effectively with a co-leader was also one of the strong themes to emerge from the focus group of PDL alumni. Several commented on the skills they had gained in this area and how important they felt they were. Sedgewick said, "You just learn to work with people who you would never ever choose to work with in life....just learning how to communicate in so many different ways." Jen agreed, saying:

> I think the co-facilitator was really important, it helped us to be able to utilize our strengths. Like [my co-facilitator] was really observant in watching people. He kind of got in the group and watched what people were doing and observed. And I was more comfortable standing up and writing and things. And so I think you kind of figured that out in the beginning and what roles you were going to play, to allow people to do what they're more comfortable doing.

Christian had a similar observation in the focus group. In recalling what he

learned from being required to work with a partner, he remembered his initial resistance:

> So I guess another thing I took away is actually working with someone. Because
> I was like, you know, I could do this myself. I was like, yeah I don't really need a
> partner. But being forced to work with a partner was like, oh I have to do
> something I don't want to do? That's crazy! Because you're used to doing things
> your own way.

He went on to describe more about what he had learned from being forced to work with a

co-leader by saying, "Compromising, I think was a big part. And that's just generally

part of maturing. And you know, I think there's a lot of growing involved in the program

that you really can't measure."

Making impromptu decisions. Several examples have been described in previous

sections of this chapter of an enhanced ability to read the dynamics of a fluid situation, in

the moment, and make effective decisions as the leader. This was covered in the sections

on cognitive development as an example of one of the outcomes of the program that was

found to have a positive influence on the students' cognitive complexity, and it was also

addressed in the sections on experiential learning. Skills associated with making

effective impromptu decision also merit inclusion in this section though, as they also

emerged from the data analysis as a specific skill that many of the participants reported

developing or enhancing as a result of their participation in the training program.

As many examples related to impromptu decisions have been presented already, I

will include just one more here. It is from Samantha, who talked in some detail in

Interview 2 about making an "unconventional" decision in the midst of her dialogue

group in order to get it "back on track" after one of the participants had been insistent

about emphasizing "statistics," which had the effect of turning the dialogue into a debate.

Samantha said, "So [my co-facilitator] and I had to come up with something to do." She

went on to describe how she and her co-facilitator had consulted with one another after

the session that had turned into a debate and decided that they needed to confront the

impact of the statistics on the quality of the dialogue:

> So in order to get the group back on track, which I guess was kind of unconventional, we asked the group how they thought that session with the statistics went….Because we felt that that session was just way off target for where we wanted to go as far as dialoguing went. We decided to ask the group as soon as they came into the third session, "Well, you guys, how did you think the group went last week?" And they all said that everything went really, really well.

> And then [my co-facilitator] and I kind of pointed out, well, yeah, I think you guys did talk a lot, but do you feel that you got anything accomplished? And once we posed that question, then everybody was like, well, no I don't think we really got anything accomplished. I think we were just going back and forth and nobody was really hearing each other's ideas.

Their decision to check in with the group in this way turned out to be a prompt that

ultimately allowed the group to achieve more authenticity. When I asked her if she could

identify the point in the training semester at which she might have learned to handle this

situation that way, she said she didn't recall specifically learning it, but that that it had

been impressed on her that her responsibility was to the process of the group and to a

constructive dialogue. She also said that while she and her co-facilitator had consulted

with the trainer about posing that question to the group, it had definitely been the

dialogue leaders' idea. When I asked her how she thought it worked out in the end, she

said:

> I think it worked really, really well. Because the last session [after that], they were back on track just like the first session. They were very talkative and they were dialoging, and really, really talking and sharing their own opinions. And the statistics weren't even brought up at all (laughter).

Presentation skills. The dialogue leaders' also reported gaining skills in

delivering presentations over the course of the training semester. The skills in this

section are different from dialogue leader facilitation skills; the participants reported that

presentation skills were developed or enhanced primarily in the preparation phase, when

each trainee was assigned to develop a presentation based on the training curriculum and

teach it to the training group. Then after their presentations, each trainee received

extensive feedback from the trainer and also their peers on its effectiveness and their

strengths and weakness in delivering it.

While several of the participants complained in the first interview about the

presentations, especially about feedback portion of that experience and how

uncomfortable it was for them at times, most acknowledged the value of this aspect of the

training in illuminating for them some aspects of their style and delivery that they had not

necessarily been aware of before. Sonia said in Interview 1:

> I think my first one went over pretty smoothly and I got my point across fine, but
> then the second round….it [the material] was really difficult to explain without
> reading it. With paraphrasing it and trying to convey the point. And it was short
> and very concise and I just….It was just hard to verbalize it like I understood it.

In recalling their learning from the experience of taking turns teaching aspects of

the training curriculum to each other, several other participants also commented on

learning about presenting material in a way that is engaging. Additionally, many spoke

of learning about their non-verbal as well as their verbal mannerisms and how those

might impact their ability to give effective presentations.

Taking notes on newsprint. A final, practical skill that many of the participants

reported was learning how to track information during a group discussion or dialogue and

take concise, summary notes on newsprint. While this turned out to be an enjoyable skill

for some, a few said that it was not enjoyable and much harder than they expected. For example, Leia described in Interview 2 the difficulty she experienced trying to lead the group and take notes at the same time. She said, "I did better when I was talking with them and sitting down than when I was writing. That helped a lot….I guess I'm not *that* multitasking kind of an expert, but I just couldn't do both, listen and write." When I asked her if this surprised her, she said:

> Yeah, like I thought at first I could do both and still pay attention. But then I found after the first session, that I was just getting so distracted. And sitting down and just having…being able to talk and having somebody else just write, I thought that helped me a lot.

In contrast, Sonia said that the note-taking aspect of leading the group was one of her favorite parts of the experience:

> In terms of the actual PDL roles all that stuff, I enjoyed writing and being up there and kind of being more interactive than just sitting there. Because I can't contribute anything because I have to remain neutral. So the….like taking notes was my favorite part of leading the session.

When I asked her if that was surprising to her, she said, "I didn't realize how much I liked it until I didn't do it. Then I felt…it just felt too passive to me to just be sitting there." When I observed that she seemed to like the *active* part of taking notes, she agreed.

Learning how to take effective notes proved to be such an important skill for James that he recommended building in more opportunities for intentional practice into the preparation phase of the dialogue leader training. "Tell the group to just *spit* out ideas, like it doesn't matter what the heck it is, just have them rattle them off and see how well the group leaders can keep up."

Several of the participants in the alumni focus group commented in a general way about the overall value of the skills they had developed as a result of participation in the training program, and also about the value of those skills for them into the future. For example, Christian said:

> I think that training as a dialogue leader is probably the first hard skill….that I think I learned in college. So college is very academic, like oh, I take some tests, answer some questions, what's up, you know? But I came here and actually learned a skill. And that's what I tell people when I go to interviews, when I deal with people, and when I talk to younger students. And I call it a skill because we would sit there and we would practice, right? Over and over.

Sedgewick agreed, saying, "There are so many different skills that you get from it. You know, we don't have the time to name them all, but it just evolves you as a person."

Self-Awareness

A third category of findings that emerged for Research Question 3 about the participants' characterizations of their overall learning as a result of participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program included new insights, understandings and levels of awareness that the participants reported gaining about *themselves* through the process. These included increased understanding of their own beliefs, increased awareness of their personal communication styles and how those styles are interpreted and received by others, specific examples of self-improvement, and an enhanced sense of self-confidence, not only for leading dialogue groups but also in terms of general self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Increased insight into their own beliefs. The first theme of findings for this section is one that has also been mentioned in previous sections. One of the most prominent themes to emerge from this study was that the participants repeatedly reported that they emerged from the experience with an enhanced understanding of their own

beliefs and also a new understanding of the importance of coming to know more about those beliefs. As several examples of this have been presented in earlier sections, I include just one quote here that provides a good summary of this overall theme. In her first e-mail reflection, Cathleen said:

> I have found that PDL and Common Ground cause you to question some of your opinions as well as to center your beliefs in them even more because by explaining how I feel, I am forced to truly understand why I think a certain way.

Increased awareness of personal communication style and how others may receive it. All eight of the participants reported learning a great deal about their unique, individual communication styles through the continuous feedback provided by the trainer and their peers throughout the training semester. Through this process, they also reported gaining many new insights into how aspects of their personal communication styles are received by others. These included new knowledge about a variety of verbal and non-verbal behaviors that they had been unaware of previously such as facial expressions, tone of voice, manner of speaking, gestures, and nervous habits. As James said in his first e-mail reflection, "I also learned a lot about myself in terms of my non-verbal and verbal cues and how they affect those around me." Keisha also said in Interview 1, "With the training it's been…. a great experience in that you learn so much about communication and things like that." Later in the interview, she went on to provide a more detailed description:

> The non-verbals is a big thing, just in making sure I watch those with anything, with being in an interview, and not looking bored or something. I just have to be more aware of that. And when he [the trainer] would bring that up, I would look at other people in the room and I could tell, like they don't look like they're interested. And I would just be thinking about what my impressions were. And then I'd be like, you know what? Maybe I'm doing that, too. So I would try to watch myself with…in how I communicate non-verbally and making sure people aren't given the wrong message or anything.

When I asked her if these were things she had learned about before, she said, "They were,

but....I just thought I was fine":

> I don't have any non-verbals (laughter). I was like....I'm in control of that more
> than, you know, like full control. There's nothing wrong with my
> communication. But then I realized that maybe in six-hour lectures that maybe
> my non-verbals start coming across more strongly (laughter).

James also commented on what he had learned from training about the importance

of his non-verbal communication. In describing the "most challenging and difficult"

aspect of the training for him, he said, "Just to constantly be aware of what you're

playing out to the group, like what emotions are showing....Non-verbals and your

verbals, like your pitch, and questions and stuff."

Of all the participants, Soraya was probably the most strongly impacted by the

feedback she had received about her non-verbal communication. She recalled it several

times throughout the study:

> I'm also working really hard on paying attention to people's reactions when I
> speak, because like people have told me when I speak sometimes, I'm even
> abrasive. And "abrasive" like scared me....it doesn't sound nice! So paying
> attention to how people perceive me, I feel, is really important.

Several others also said that they felt that they had become more effective

communicators as a result of the training experience. For example, Cathleen wrote in her

first e-mail reflection, "I learned too that it is difficult for me to phrase my thoughts so as

not to offend many other people. On the other hand, I then learned how to better phrase

my thoughts for those exact reasons." As another example, Leia described what she had

learned from being told that she has a "soft voice":

> Another incident that caused me to think about the way I present more intently
> was when Soraya said she has a tendency to block people out if they have a soft
> voice and they do not sound convincing. This caused me to change my thinking

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because I realized that when I talk sometimes, I have an extremely soft voice and if I want to have everyone's attention, I should ALWAYS speak clearly and as confidently as possible.

Finally, Keisha echoed all of these sentiments in her first e-mail reflection by saying, "I have learned so much about how to communicate, how to interpret communication, and do both more effectively." Then in her last reflection, she wrote, "I am now much more aware of my non-verbals. I try to just smile most of the time; I feel it's better than rolling my eyes. I can still improve on my non-verbals, but in baby steps."

Several of the alumni in the focus group also said that some of their most powerful learning as a result of their participation in the program had been about communication, including their own communication and styles as well as learning how to better understand the communication of others. For example, in describing what he had learned about both verbal and non-verbal behavior, Sedgewick said simply, "You learn to communicate." Eve agreed, focusing not only on the importance of knowing how one's style is received by others, but also on the benefits of "mature communication skills":

> The tools [I learned in training] have really helped me to sort of understand a little bit more and evaluate and put my opinion out there without being too attacking. Because in the end, if you're the one who remains mature, you win anyway!

Specific examples of self-improvement. In addition to improving their ability to be effective communicators, the participants reported numerous additional examples of ways in which they felt that they had "improved." Examples include Cathleen, who said, "I learned that I am much more open-minded than I thought I was," and Keisha, who felt that she had become "a more knowledgeable person." Keisha also laughed when she talked about learning more about the importance of "punctuality" and being a more

punctual person through the experience of having to confront the members of her group who were frequently late.

In her first e-mail reflection, Cathleen commented on this theme of self-improvement in a general way when she wrote, "I chose PDL as my internship because I knew that I needed to improve on several characteristics of myself. I now believe that my experience so far as allowed me to change the way I needed to."

Self-confidence. As a final theme of learning about self through the experience of participating in the dialogue leader training program, the participants reported gaining or reaffirming a great deal of self-confidence, not only in their abilities to perform the tasks necessary to effectively lead a dialogue group, but in a more generalized sense as well. For example, in talking how the experience "reaffirmed" a sense of confidence for him, James said in his second interview:

> It also helped me know that I'm fine, and it also reaffirmed the feeling that I have that I'm fine in these situations, like meeting new people. Like I said, it only took me to say one word and I was…I was in my own.

Leia's experience was a bit different in that during the first half of the semester, in the simulations in the preparation phase, she felt like she was struggling more than the others. However, through a successful experience leading the group during the leading phase, her "confidence just kept going up":

> Well…I didn't think I had it in me at the beginning because of the incident that happened during simulations. I was really worried. And so then, you know, kind of just going through [the dialogue group] sessions, my confidence just kept going up in that I could lead the group. And I just felt *better* at the end.

When I asked her if she could give a specific example of something that had happened in her group that helped her feel "better" about her ability to lead, she said:

I found that I didn't have to speak all the time, where I would just say a couple of words and people would catch on to what I was trying to say. And they would be, like shaking, nodding their heads….And I was like, hey, I don't have to talk a million times in order for them to keep going!

Although Cathleen's apprehension was not nearly as great as Leia's, she said she had a similar experience of self-doubt earlier in the semester when challenged by the "rephrasing and everything" in the preparation phase. She said, "I was like, "Oh I can't do it! I'm such a failure!" After having the experience of leading a successful dialogue group session, however, she realized, "I *was* able to do it when I needed to!" In reflecting on what that success had meant to her, Cathleen said:

It's kind of nice to be like…I felt like I actually kind of like facilitated a group, and was in charge of the conversation, the dialogue. It was just like a nice self-esteem booster (laughter). As selfish as that might seem, it was nice! Being like, ha, I'm, like in the front!

Sonia provided a nice summary example of the confidence she gained through the experience when she said in her second interview, "I think it all ties together, you know? Like I can…I can stand there, I can be looked at as a leader, I can know what I'm talking about, and communicate it to other people."

Integrated Transferability

The last set of themes to emerge for Research Question 3 was about learning the participants reported that has become incorporated into who they are and has direct application for them in the future. While one could certainly argue that most if not all of the findings about learning presented thus far had applications for these students beyond the setting of the dialogue program, I created this section to accommodate a few examples of learning for the future that stood out as especially noteworthy. Specifically, several of the Peer Dialogue Leaders reported that their learning became "ingrained" or

instinctual throughout the course of the training semester. A few found direct

connections to potential future careers, and most expressed an increased willingness to

engage in conversations about difficult or controversial issues in the future as a result of

their experiences in the training program.

   Learning that became more "ingrained." An important finding from this study

was that many of the dialogue leaders not only described learning principles, approaches,

and skills that they could consciously apply, they also described learning that had become

more "ingrained" or instinctual for them. In other words, several described learning that

had become incorporated into who they were, sometimes to a degree that was not even

conscious to them anymore. For example, in responding to a question in Interview 1

about what she had learned from the training that could be useful to her, Elena said:

> Just realizing that you don't have to teach someone something all the time. That
> you can kind of let them figure it out. There's more than one way to do things…
> and I think that those are, okay. Like those tools, they're things that I have known
> before, but after going through the training, it's more like ingrained; it's more
> substantial.

   In Interview 2, Samantha characterized some of her learning in a similar way,

observing that at some point she realized that good facilitative questions would "kind of

pop up" for her and that she hadn't really noticed exactly when in training she had picked

that up. At some point, it had become an unconscious skill:

> It's just the kind of thing of my being able to kind of pop up these questions to ask
> the group, and then get them to just…to provoke dialogue again. And I don't
> know *when* in training I just picked up that, I don't know, that skill? But it came
> from training or whatever it was. Probably maybe when we started doing the
> video simulations [in the preparation phase]. And I started to really listen to what
> the people on the TV were saying, and I started to be able to really analyze, I
> guess, what they were saying in my head and spit it out as a question to the group.

In a similar example, Cathleen realized how at some point she was able to

perform the skills necessary to lead the dialogue group "off the top of [her] head":

> I guess it's like spur of the moment almost. Like you're realizing something's going on and you're like, oh no, I recognize this and I need to stop it, or I need to switch it, or I need to say this to get them to explain more, you know? Like, oh no, someone's confused over there. Let me get them to clarify their point….So you're *recognizing* it, but then it's kind of off the top of your head where you're learning how to…like rephrase it or redirect it or question it.

Sonia also indicated that the experience had a transformational effect on her, and

the way she looked at things was "different now." In responding to a question in

Interview 2 about applying what she had learned in training to outside settings, she said,

"It's just the way you hear things. It's *different* now."

Several of the participants in the alumni focus group also spoke about having

gained knowledge, skills, and awareness that became ingrained for them, incorporated

into who they were to the point of becoming "habit." For example, in talking about the

communication skills he learned, Sedgewick said:

> I learned this here. Learned to…not to say things too long, but just make them concise, direct, and to the point. And about body language and how, you know, be careful to sit forward and not sit as if you don't care. Those type of things. And actually, it came just out of habit.

Christian also spoke about the skills he had gained in the training program and

how they had become "a part of" him. In a statement similar to Sedgewick's, he said,

"And now they've become a part of me in that I'm comfortable; things happened without

me having to think about them all the time."

Application to future careers and opportunities. Over the course of the study, a

few of the participants said they could also see the application of what they had learned in

the training experience to future experiences they were planning. In Elena's case, the

experience even prompted her to think about a different career path:

> Before this, I never really thought about, like, being a teacher. I don't really like
> kids, but now I think that I kind of want to. And I mean I kind of thought about it
> before….And then like going into it [the training] made it more…like it's
> something I think that I might really be more interested in….At some point, I
> might be somebody's teacher….I think it's important.

As another example, Keisha talked in detail in her final e-mail reflection about the

knowledge she had gained and the skills she had acquired and how that learning would be

helpful to her when she went into the Peace Corps, one of her future dreams:

> I plan to also use everything I've learned from PDL training in the Peace Corps (if
> I am accepted). Most of what we talked about in training applied directly to
> dialogues but the groundwork that was laid for us can be applied to other fields as
> well. Knowing how to dialogue with my peers I think will be helpful in
> conversing with other peoples of the world. Knowing how to control my non-
> verbals, being able to interpret emotions, refusing to see things in black and white
> will really help me in dealing with those that don't speak English for example. If
> I encounter someone who speaks Spanish, communication would be hard if not
> impossible, but being able to use what I've learned will definitely help me
> understand him/her more than if I had not done the training.

Finally, in a very powerful acknowledgment of the learning she had acquired and

its implications for her future, Keisha also wrote about how the experience helped spark

"a learning bug" for her that had prompted her to want to explore the issues raised in the

training further, through all aspects of her life:

> With all the information I've gained through PDL I can't forget about it, I have to
> use it. Knowing how identity affects communication and how thinking
> multiplistically affects your perception of people, places and things is very useful
> and even more powerful than what you can pick up in a textbook.
>
> ….By being in COMM 324 [a communication class] while in PDL training it
> sparked a learning bug inside me. I've actually sat at my computer and sought out
> new things I didn't know before. The things I look up have more to do with
> people and causes I'm interested in, but still there is this impetus pushing me to
> discover more things about other peoples and cultures.

In giving specific examples of how the experience had helped to spark this learning for her, Keisha went on to describe how she was reading the newspaper more and paying more attention to current events:

> I've already starting reading the paper more. Before I would just read headlines and maybe a few graphs from an article, but now I find myself reading whole articles at a time then moving on to another one….It's amazing how many things one will read that seem "random" when actually it isn't and will come up in everyday conversation; this way I'll be prepared for these conversations.

Several of the participants in the alumni focus group also spoke about how the dialogue leader training program had prepared them for life in general and for future jobs activities, and opportunities. In responding to a question about what stood out for him most as he reflected on his experience in the program, Sedgewick said:

> What stood out for me is how much I used the different tools that I learned elsewhere. Especially like, I'm very active in my church….I'm a decision counselor. I'm also working with young adults too, and as a mentor in ministry. And a lot of the training that we went through for that, I was able to reflect back and see, oh, you know, I learned this here.

Echoing this, Jen said that for her, the aspect that stood out most was "just…how much I used it in everyday life. Just talking to friends, not even in jobs or anything like that. Just, you know, discussing things." Christian also said he had used much of what he learned in the dialogue program in graduate school, and more recently in a professional position conducting focus groups. "So…these skills, I mean I'm *constantly* using them."

Sedgewick also described the impact he believed the experience will have on his future job opportunities. "If you're going to the job market and you throw out these tools at somebody, I really doubt anybody else in the interview is going to mention anything like that." Then he added, "And that's going to make me stand out when they make their

final decisions." Eve strongly agreed, noting that for at least one job she had applied for since she completed the training program, she believed her dialogue leader experience had made the difference for her:

> Yeah, it's definitely something I found more so than anything else on my resume that people ask me about….I mean I *know* for one job that it got me the job, because I've had this training and it was really important. I was dealing with interracial adoptions, so the fact that I've been through, you know, some sort of multicultural training and have been presented with these issues, I found I wasn't really intimidated by people in having really heated conversations about it.

Eve summarized her thoughts on the value of the experience to her future by saying that the learning the Peer Dialogue Leaders acquired in the training program "really does transcend to other areas":

> They are really valuable skills that I feel are really great for college students to move out into the world in. And there are a lot more businesses each day that are finding that multicultural training and being sensitive to these issues is really important. It's a unique and powerful skill to have in such a young person, I think.

Increased willingness to talk about controversial issues. Finally, one of the things that became apparent from an analysis of all the data from this study was that the experience of participation in the training program seemed to encourage an increased willingness among the dialogue leaders to engage in discussions about difficult issues with others in the future. As described in previous sections of this chapter, many of the participants said that before the training, they were either likely to "shut off" if they encountered someone with a view that was different from their own, or they might have debated with them for the purpose of winning the point. Through the experience of the training program, however, they seemed to learn the value of being more intentional about engagement with others in order to listen more effectively for the ultimate purpose of understanding.

As an example of this, Leia described in Interview 1 how she tended to "shy away from conversations":

> I don't always go in for, you know, trying to get into a debate. Trying to say, "that day in class when you talked about this?"…I'm not going to bring it up again. Well I mean I'm not…sometimes I'm pretty confrontational about some things, but most of the time I shy away from conversations.

In contrast, at the end of the training semester in Interview 2, Leia described being pleasantly surprised by the experience of having engaged in a conversation with one of her roommates about her political views that were different from her own:

> It was important for us to have those conversations because one, before my roommate this semester, I hadn't had like…real conversation with my roommates. And I just thought it was *nice* that she wanted to talk about it [her political views]. Because before then, I didn't even want to touch the topic of politics with her.

Several of the participants in the alumni focus group also described how participation in the Common Ground program had helped them become more willing to engage with others. Sedgewick said, "It taught me just to speak up. About more. Speak out."

Summary of Findings for Research Question 3 –

Students' Characterizations of their Learning from the Training Program

The purpose of Research Question 3 was to explore how the participants in the study characterized their overall learning as a result of participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. Interpretive analysis of the relevant data from the study revealed findings in four major categories: (a) knowledge acquisition, (b) skill development, (c) self-awareness, and (d) integrated transferability.

In the first category, *knowledge acquisition*, the participants reported gaining insights, understandings, and content-based knowledge about the concept of "dialogue"

as it is defined by the Common Ground program, about the concept of "dialogue" in a more general sense, about leadership, about other people, and about relationships and working with other people. In each of these areas, specific findings were identified and presented.

In the category of *skill development*, the participants reported gaining new skills or enhancing existing skills in a variety of areas. The first of these areas included skills that were directly related to the successful leading of a dialogue group such as paraphrasing, posing effective facilitative questions, maintaining self-control, learning when to step in and when not to step in, effectively managing silence or dead spots, learning to be self-reflective about one's own biases, and effectively configuring the physical space of the room. Additional skills the participants reported gaining through the training experience that apply to leading dialogue groups but also have a variety of applications to wider settings include active listening, dealing with people, empathy, handling emotions, confrontation skills, working with a co-leader, making impromptu decisions, presentation skills, and taking notes on newsprint during a group discussion.

The participants also reported gaining increased *self-awareness* through the training experience. Learning in this area included increased insights into their own beliefs including increased understanding about why that kind of reflection and knowledge is important, increased awareness of their personal communication styles and how others may receive them or react to them, specific examples of self-improvement such as an awareness of having become more open-minded or a more knowledgeable person, and increased self-confidence, both for the specific tasks associated with leading a dialogue group and also in a more generalized sense.

The fourth category of findings for Research Question 3 was *integrated transferability*. The participants reported having gained knowledge, skills, and awareness that became more "ingrained" or instinctual and therefore had become a part of who they were. They reported applications of this learning to future careers and opportunities and they demonstrated an overall increased willingness to engage with others about controversial or difficult issues in the future.

Summary of Findings – Chapter 5

The purpose of this chapter has been to present findings from the three research questions for this study. Many categories and sub-categories of findings have been presented for each of the research questions. Question 1 was an explanatory case study question designed to investigate the impact of participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program on (a) cognitive development and (b) multiple perspectives. Question 2 was a descriptive case study question designed to explore the experiential learning components of the training program and the students' learning as a result of these experiential opportunities. Question 3 was an exploratory case study question designed to explore the participants' overall characterizations of their learning from participation in the training program.

For Research Question 1 about cognitive development and multiple perspectives, the findings from the administrations of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) as well as the pattern matching analyses and the interpretive analysis of the qualitative data indicated that participation in the training program had a strong and positive impact on the dialogue leaders' cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory. The findings also indicated that participation in the training program had a strong and

positive impact on both acquisition and understanding of multiple perspectives, especially perspectives related to the multicultural issues and dilemmas that were addressed and discussed throughout the training semester. The findings about multiple perspectives were important because new acquisition and understanding of multiple perspectives is consistent with increased cognitive complexity as defined by Perry.

The findings for Research Question 2 indicated that the training program provided many opportunities for experiential learning, and that these experiential opportunities enhanced the participants' overall learning. The dialogue leaders reported finishing the training semester feeling satisfied with their abilities as leaders and complimentary of the training they had received. Insights they acquired or that were reinforced about experiential learning included the importance of interaction with others, new understandings about their abilities to assess the needs of a group and make effective decisions in the moment, and the satisfaction and sense of accomplishment associated with "learning to do it on your own."

The purpose of Research Question 3 was to explore the dialogue leaders' overall characterizations of their learning from the training program. Through interpretive analysis of the data, many findings were revealed in four major categories of knowledge acquisition, skill development, self-awareness, and integrated transferability.

As this study is also an evaluative case study, specific aspects of the training program identified as playing key roles in enhancing student learning were also presented. In addition to the experiential opportunity to lead a four-session dialogue group in the leading phase of the program, aspects of the training program that were found to promote the students' learning, and especially their cognitive development,

included the emphasis throughout the program on teaching the concepts of "process" and "content"; the intentional teaching of fundamental principles and concepts of Perry's (1968/1970) theory; the expectation that the dialogue leaders assume the role of "neutral facilitator" when leading a group, which was found to promote listening and understanding in ways that would not have occurred otherwise and promoted self-reflection about their own views; and the on-going consultation sessions with the trainers.

Further discussion of these findings is presented in the next chapter. Implications are also discussed, including implications for theory, the training program, and broader applications to undergraduate multicultural learning.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter includes a general discussion of the major findings from this study as well as in-depth discussion of the three major findings to emerge. It also includes sections on the strengths and limitations of the study, implications for theory, and implications for practice, including suggestions for the Common Ground Dialogue Program as well as broader implications for undergraduate teaching and multicultural education. The chapter concludes with a discussion of areas for future research.

Discussion of Results and Findings

Discussion of results and findings related to the three research questions for this study about cognitive development and multiple perspectives, experiential learning, and the dialogue leaders' characterizations of their learning is presented in this section. It also includes a discussion of the three major findings to emerge.

Cognitive Development and Multiple Perspectives

This section is about the findings and results related to cognitive development and multiple perspectives from Research Question 1. It includes a discussion of the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) results and discussions of additional findings related to cognitive development and increased understanding of multiple perspectives.

MID Results

The results from the two administrations of the MID in this study revealed compelling evidence for change in cognitive development for the dialogue leaders over the course of the training semester. However, in considering these results, an obvious question emerges as to whether this same change would be detected among a typical

group of undergraduate college students of the same academic year and across roughly

the same timeframe, regardless of participation in the training program. Therefore, in

order to better understand these results it is important to consider them in a normative

context. How do the changes in cognitive development reflected in the MID scores

found in this study compare to typical change that would be expected for 19- and 20-year

old second-semester sophomores? Especially over a period of just three months (mid-

February to mid-May)?

The Center for the Study of Intellectual Development offers a table developed

from data compiled from several years of studies that provides general information about

MID scores by year in school, age, and gender that can be used for comparison purposes

(Moore, 2004a). The data from this source that are relevant to this study are replicated in

Table 5. The table shows the mean Perry (1968/1970) positions for the various selected

classifications (sophomores, juniors, age 19, and age 20) and the percentages of students

within each classification that scored in Perry Positions 2 through 5, including the

transitions ("Tr.") between the positions.

Although all of the students in this study were sophomores at the time of both

MID administrations, I have also included data for juniors in this table for comparison

purposes because the second administration of the MID occurred so close to the end of

the participants' sophomore year.

Table 5

Selected Data on Perry Positions from "Comparative File Data" Provided by the Center

for the Study of Intellectual Development (Moore, 2004a)

Classification	Mean Position	% in Pos. 2	% in. Tr.*	% in Pos. 3	% in Tr.	% in Pos. 4	% in Tr.	% in Pos. 5
Sophomores	2.88	1.9%	42.0%	37.6%	15.3%	2.7%	0.5%	0.0%
Juniors	2.91	2.5%	33.0%	47.2%	15.4%	1.4%	0.3%	0.3%
Age 19	2.81	1.3%	48.9%	38.9%	7.9%	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Age 20	2.87	0.5%	41.0%	44.5%	11.5%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%

* Tr. = In transition between positions

The next table, Table 6, shows the results from two MID administrations in this study as compared to selected data from the comparative file data (Moore, 2004a) presented in Table 5. As all of the participants in this study scored in Perry (1968/1970) positions (or transition positions) of 2/3, 3, or 3/4 in the MID administrations, only those three positions/transition positions are included in Table 6.

Table 6

Comparison of Participants' MID Results to "Comparative File Data" (Moore, 2004a)

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	% in. Tr.* 2 – 3	% in Position 3	% in Tr. 3 – 4
Comparative File Data (from Table 5)			
Sophomores	42.0%	37.6%	15.3%
Juniors	33.0%	47.2%	15.4%
Age 19	48.9%	38.9%	7.9%
Age 20	41.0%	44.5%	11.5%
MID Results for Study Participants			
Number Per Position – Admin. 1	4	3	1
Number Per Position – Admin. 2	1	4	3

_____

* Tr. = In transition between positions

Table 6 shows that at the first administration of the MID, in the middle of February of the participants' sophomore year, seven out of eight of the participants in the study scored in a range that was consistent with most students of their same age and class year. This table also shows that the score for Participant C at the beginning of the study (the one person scoring in transition between Positions 3 and 4 at Administration 1) was unusually high for someone of that age/year in school. By the time of the second MID administration, however, just three months later in the middle of May, three of the eight participants (37.5%, including Participant C) scored in that same high range. These

scores were unusually high for students of that same age and academic year. Further, this characterization stands when also comparing the scores from the participants in the study to the juniors in the data file.

In summary, given the compelling change that was found in the MID scores for the dialogue leaders over a short period of time and as compared to normative data for students of the same age and year, and given Moore's observation that the level of change detected for the participants in the study was "unusual for that amount of time, particularly with a sophomore sample" (W.S. Moore, personal communication, July 27, 2007), the results from the MID administrations provide strong support for the hypothesis that the experience of participating in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program has a positive impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory. Although the small sample size must be taken into consideration as a caution against drawing too many inferences from these results, they are compelling nonetheless.

Additional Results and Findings – Enhanced Cognitive Development

In considering the findings from the additional data analyses related to cognitive development, including the pattern matching analyses and the interpretive analysis, the overall findings become even more compelling with regard to the impact of participation in the training program on the participants' cognitive development.

The results from the pattern matching analyses provided strong evidence for the hypothesis that participation in the training program had a positive impact on cognitive development. As discussed in Chapter 5, two distinct pattern matching analyses were conducted on the data.

The first pattern matching analysis of earlier to later comments yielded several striking examples of potential increased complexity of thinking. These included examples of thinking that became less dualistic over the course of the training semester, examples of self-reported loosening of rigidity of the participants' opinions and perspectives, and views that were generally more "broadened" and characterized by increased complexity.

Examples of these changes included Cathleen's frequent characterization of the issue of affirmative action as "Black/White" in her first interview as compared to her second interview, and Keisha's comments in her first interview about the rigidity of her personal views as compared to her second interview when she said that she began to let new opinions "kind of tweak" what she already knew. In addition, consistent with Perry's (1968/1970) theory, several of the participants demonstrated a classic multiplistic, "I'm okay, you're okay" attitude in the first interview by voicing hesitation to critique the opinions of others, whereas in the second interview they were not as hesitant to critique views they found disagreeable or indefensible. For example, Sonia frequently emphasized the "validity" of the opinions of each individual in her first interview, but by her second interview, she came to view several of the opinions expressed in her group as "ridiculous." Taken together, all of these changes in thinking over the course of the training semester suggest increased cognitive complexity as defined by Perry's theory.

In identifying examples of potential change in complexity of thinking over the training semester, one of the patterns that was noteworthy was the fact that most of the examples of increased complexity of thinking came from the participants who also showed the greatest increase in their MID scores. Conversely, fewer examples of

increased complexity in thinking emerged for the two participants who did not show any change in their MID scores. As I conducted the interpretive analysis of the data before analyzing the MID scores, this finding did not result from a bias that stemmed from my knowledge of the scores. Overall, this suggests support for the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the findings related to cognitive development as well as the methods for Research Question 1.

Throughout the process of conducting the interpretive analysis related to cognitive development, one of the additional findings that was stood out for me was how a few of the major themes related to learning as a result of participation in the training program emerged independently, yet in the same or nearly the same language, as cues and characteristics associated with Perry's (1968/1970) theory and depicted in the *Learner Characteristics* table (Appendix R) that was developed later. These included the major themes of understanding the concepts of "process and content" and an increased capacity for "meta-thought." While I had pre-existing knowledge of Perry's theory that I took with me into the study that could have influenced the ways in which I interpreted the emerging categories and themes, I was genuinely surprised when I discovered that several of the themes that had emerged from the early analysis of the data would also appear in the *Learner Characteristics* table.

Again, this convergence of themes from multiple sources and research methods suggests support for the overall trustworthiness of the findings. It suggests support for the validity and dependability of the findings (Merriam, 1998), and it also provides evidence of triangulation or convergence of the data (Merriam; 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin,

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2003b) from multiple data sources, which is extremely desirable in establishing trustworthiness.

The six findings from the pattern matching analysis in which themes that emerged from the data were compared to the *Learner Characteristics* table have been detailed in Chapter 5. In addition to the participants learning about the concepts of "process" and "content" and describing an increased capacity for "meta-thought," these themes included a view of peers as a more legitimate source of learning, an ability to relate their learning from the training program to "real life" settings outside the program, an enhanced ability to critically evaluate sources, a general increased complexity in thinking, and an increased understanding of the contextual nature of knowledge. All of these findings are consistent with increased cognitive development according to Perry's (1968/1970) theory.

In the interpretive analysis for cognitive development, I looked for self-reported examples of changes in the participants' thinking that potentially showed movement from either dualism to multiplicity, or from multiplicity to contextual relativism as a result of participation in the training program. One of the earliest and most prominent themes to emerge from this analysis was the participants' frequent recollections and citing of Perry (1968/1970) terms including "dualism," "multiplicity," and "relativism" in responding to open-ended and general questions about what they had learned from the training program. Additionally, their frequent and direct applications of these terms to their own thinking and to the thinking of others was striking. My interpretation of this finding is that intentionally teaching undergraduate students concepts of Perry's theory promotes their "meta-thinking," or their thinking about their own thinking, which in turn enhances

their cognitive complexity. As I believe this was one of the three most significant findings to emerge from this study, it is addressed in more depth in the "Significant Findings" section later in this chapter.

Several additional important findings emerged from the interpretive analysis related to cognitive development. These included new insights that the participants gained into the opinions and perspectives of others, new insights into the participants' own opinions and perspectives, challenges to previously held stereotypes, and recognition of dualistic thinking in others. These findings all have common characteristics, including an increased overall awareness of self and others and an increased ability to put views, perspectives, and experiences into a more complex context.

Two of these themes were especially noteworthy. First, the participants described powerful learning associated with hearing first-hand stories from dialogue group participants that contradicted and therefore challenged stereotypes that some of the dialogue leaders had brought with them into the dialogue group. James, Leia, and Samantha all reported experiencing this as a result of leading their groups. Second, the frequency with which the dialogue leaders reported learning about *themselves* throughout the training semester, including an increased understanding of the complexity of their own views and opinions, was striking.

In reflecting on these findings, I thought a great deal about the unintended nature of much of this learning. Through the process of setting out to train a group of undergraduate students to lead dialogue groups with their peers, it appears as though the training program had the impact of teaching the dialogue leaders as much, if not more, about themselves in the process. I have always believed that in order to be an effective

dialogue leader, one must have a keen sense of self, including a sense of one's identity, strengths, weakness, biases, and hot buttons. However, I did not expect this overall theme of increased self-awareness and reflectiveness to emerge as strongly as it did, across all three of the research questions.

Another strong theme was the readiness with which the dialogue leaders applied what they had learned in the training program to personal, work, and academic contexts outside the program. There were multiple examples of this, some prompted by questions I asked and others that were volunteered by the participants. This seemed to demonstrate deep learning that had become integrated for them. There were numerous examples of this such as Elena's application of what she learned in her dialogue group about interracial adoption to her own family, and Keisha's application of Perry (1968/1970) concepts to her understanding of the Terry Schiavo case.

Of all the themes to emerge from the first research question on cognitive development, an additional compelling theme was the frequency with which individual participants expressed an explicit *desire* to become more complex thinkers. This seemed to demonstrate a yearning for insight and understanding into their own thinking and the process of their thinking. An example of this cited in Chapter 5 was Keisha's accounting in her final e-mail reflection of her goal of becoming a "Renaissance Woman" and her description of how she wanted to continue to work on improving the quality of her thinking in order to achieve that goal. In specifically citing Perry (1968/1970) terms and her belief that her current level of thinking was multiplistic, she said, "If I keep thinking multiplistically, I'll eventually start thinking relativistically and consider *all* sides of an issue, now that's exciting!"

Taken as a whole, the results and findings from this study related to cognitive development indicate that participation in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program had a strong impact on cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory. Analyses of relevant data including the dialogue leaders' self-reported changes in their thinking indicated that their thinking was generally more complex, contextual, and self-reflective at the end of the training semester and as a result of the training experience.

Increased Understanding of Multiple Perspectives

In an effort to fully understand the impact of the training program on cognitive development, I also explored the impact of participation in the program on the students' understanding of multiple perspectives. I found that the dialogue leaders encountered numerous different and multiple perspectives throughout their experience in the training program and as a result, developed an enhanced understanding of those perspectives.

In the preparation phase, they encountered various perspectives that were put forth by the other members of the training group and the trainer. In the leading phase, they were exposed to a variety of different perspectives through the student participants in their dialogue groups. In addition, one of the themes that emerged about multiple perspectives was that the training program often provided a first exposure to perspectives that were brand new to the dialogue leaders. Several reported hearing numerous views or ideas over the course of the semester that were brand new to them.

The findings from this study also revealed several positive outcomes associated with exposure to multiple perspectives. For example, while most of the participants reported that exposure to these views did not necessarily change their personal views or positions on the issues, they also said that their own views and perspectives had definitely

become more "broadened" with "much more substance," or they had "more information" as a result. They specifically attributed this to the exposure to different ideas, thought-provoking questions, and real life examples they heard in the training program.

In all, as a result of exposure to multiple perspectives, it was found that the participants learned more about topic-related content; gained a broadened understanding of the range of others' views, perspectives, and experiences; learned more about those diverse perspectives; gained new insights into the relationships between people's identity and their perspectives; gained increased self-awareness; were prompted to engage in increased self-reflection on their personal views; and gained new understandings of real life examples. With regard to this last finding, several of the dialogue leaders discussed the impact of hearing, often for the first time, the stories of other people who had real life experiences that they had never been exposed to before. For many of the dialogue leaders, this provided powerful learning and a new ability to say, "Now I've spoken with someone who…."

In summary, the findings from this study indicate that participation in the dialogue leader training program had a positive impact on the dialogue leaders' cognitive development and their understanding of multiple perspectives. It was also found that the benefits of these findings were numerous and included an enhanced understanding of self, others, and various ways of thinking and making meaning.

Experiential Learning

The second research question was designed to describe the nature of the experiential learning that occurs through participation in the training program. At least four components of the training program were found to promote or offer opportunities for

experiential learning, and several insights associated with these experiential components were identified. These included learning how to be a leader, in the moment and while a group is in process, making effective impromptu decisions, and having an opportunity to experiment with different leadership approaches. The students reported memorable learning associated with opportunities to "do it on your own."

As the findings began to emerge related to experiential learning, and as I began to intentionally identify elements of the training program that promoted learning and increased cognitive complexity, it became apparent that several of the major programmatic elements of the Common Ground program were consistent with a programmatic model based on Perry's (1968/1970) theory from the literature. This was the Developmental Instruction Model, by Knefelkamp and Widick (Knefelkamp, 1981, 1999). To put this observation in context, a brief overview of this model is provided here with commentary on its applicability to the Common Ground Program.

In an effort to translate Perry's (1968/1970) theory into a pedagogical application for use in classrooms and other educational settings, Knefelkamp and Widick created a model of "Four Developmental Instruction Variables" (Knefelkamp, 1981, 1999), known as the DI model. They suggest that to best facilitate student learning and intellectual development, educators should consider four fundamental "variables" relating directly to Perry's theory when designing curricular approaches: (a) *structure*, which refers the amount of framework and direction provided to the students; (b) *experiential learning*, which refers to the amount of "involvement, directness, and concreteness involved in an activity" (Knefelkamp, 1999, p. xxxiv); (c) *diversity*, which does not refer to a diversity of identities but instead refers to "the number of alternatives or perspectives that are

encouraged or presented in the material" (p. xxxv); and (d) *personalism*, which refers to the creation of an environment in which students feel safe to learn, dialogue with one another, take risks, and critically evaluate concepts and ideas. Knefelkamp and Widick suggest that each of these four variables exists on a continuum that represents either a greater degree or a lesser degree of incorporation of the variable into the instructional design. Based on the educator's knowledge of student needs according to Perry's theory, each variable may be emphasized or de-emphasized in order to provide the optimal balance of intellectual challenge as well as support (Sanford, 1966). The implication is that some degree of challenge is necessary in order to promote and encourage cognitive development. This is consistent with the concept of "plus-one reasoning" or "plus-one staging," a concept widely attributed to Kohlberg (1984) referring to the idea that exposure to ideas, tasks, or levels of reasoning that are slightly more advanced than the levels at which an individual is currently functioning provides the optimal amount of challenge which, in turn, promotes positive intellectual growth. For example, students who are in the earlier positions of Perry's theory such as early dualism would need and respond better to a greater amount of structure in a classroom, whereas students in the later positions of the theory would benefit intellectually from the freedom associated with less structure.

In this section about experiential learning, there is a clear connection between the DI model the Common Ground program; one of the strong themes to emerge from this study was that the experiential, hands-on opportunities provided by the training program were instrumental in enhancing the dialogue leaders' learning. In applying Knefelkamp's (1981) definition of the DI variable of "experiential learning" to this finding, the

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experiential components of the Common Ground program provided a great deal of "involvement, directness, and concreteness" (1999, p. xxxiv) for the dialogue leaders. This finding is also consistent with Bandura's (1997) ideas about the relationship between mastery experiences, or personal experiences with success or failure, and self-efficacy, which involves a belief in one's capability to exercise control over one's own level of functioning (Bandura, 1993).

Additional programmatic elements of the Common Ground that were found to promote the dialogue leaders' learning can also be analyzed using the other three DI variables of "structure," "diversity," and "personalism." First, the dialogue leader training program offers a good balance of structure. The preparation phase, with the training manual and pre-determined curriculum, provides a moderate amount of structure. By the leading phase, however, the experience of leading the dialogue groups is much less structured.

Second, one of the hallmarks of the Common Ground program is exposing students to a "diversity" or variety of alternatives, perspectives, opinions, and ideas. This occurred for the Peer Dialogue Leaders throughout the training semester, in both the preparation and the leading phases. The dialogue leaders were exposed to a variety of perspectives and ideas in the preparation phase from the trainers and the training group, and they were also exposed to additional complexities about multicultural topics through the experience of leading the dialogue group and interacting with the group members.

Third, the trainers in the program strive for personalism, or creating a climate in which the students feel free to discuss and critically evaluate various ideas and perspectives. This observation is also supported by one of the "constructive leadership

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practices" that is foundational in the Leadership in a Multicultural Society class that advises leaders to "Create a climate in which people feel welcome to draw upon their diverse cultures and experiences while not making members of groups feel obligated to constantly represent or speak for 'their people'" (see Appendix D).

As discussed in Chapter 3, Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development informed the overall design of the four-session Common Ground format and many specific elements of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. However, the DI model (Knefelkamp, 1981) was not explicitly used in the design and development of the Common Ground program. The findings from this study regarding the similarities between the Peer Dialogue Leader training program and the DI model have strong implications for the further enhancement of the Common Ground program and are discussed later in "Implications for Practice."

In summary, the Common Ground program was found to offer several positive opportunities associated with experiential learning. Additionally, the DI model (Knefelkamp, 1981) provides a constructive framework for considering and evaluating key programmatic elements of the Common Ground program on the variables of "experiential learning," "structure," "diversity" of ideas and perspectives, and "personalism," or creating a climate that is inclusive of multiple perspectives. The DI model was developed specifically for the purpose of promoting cognitive complexity according to Perry's (1968/1970) theory. In retrospect, after having completed the analyses for this study, it is quite compelling how closely the major elements of the Common Ground program align with these four variables. This finding suggests implications for theory, including Perry's theory as well as the DI model, and also

implications for the Common Ground program. All are discussed in later sections of this chapter.

The Dialogue Leaders' Characterizations of their Learning

The third research question was an exploratory, open-ended question designed to assess how the dialogue leaders themselves characterize their learning from participation in the training program.

One of the most interesting findings to emerge from the process of data analysis for Research Question 3 was how the four major categories of findings emerged in a pattern that was consistent with those offered by theorists such as Pedersen (1988) and Pope and Reynolds (1997) who have written about the three general categories of awareness, knowledge, and skills as necessary to the overall capacity of individuals to successfully navigate the complexities of a multicultural environment. The major categories of self-described learning that emerged from this study emerged similarly, with the addition of one. These four categories were (a) knowledge acquisition, (b) skill development, (c) self-awareness, and (d) integrated transferability.

In considering the findings from the third research question, several aspects were noteworthy. First, I was not expecting the large number of themes and categories to emerge in response to open-ended questions about the dialogue leaders' learning from the training program. The depth, breadth, and specificity with which they relayed their learning were continually noteworthy. The passion with which many of them described their learning was also striking; in so many cases, it was clear that these students had gained valuable knowledge, skills, and insights that they would carry with them into the future.

The other aspect of the findings from this research question that was perhaps most rewarding as a trainer and coordinator for the program was the detail with which the participants described their learning in the last category, "integrated transferability." My colleagues and I have often discussed that one of the emphases of any multicultural program should be constructing the experience for students in such a way that the learning becomes a part of who they are; it becomes instinctual, equipping them to successfully adapt to new and continually evolving dilemmas and complexities that they will inevitably continue to encounter throughout their lives. Therefore, the study participants' comments about learning that became "a part of" who they are and "ingrained" were especially important and meaningful findings. The participants in the PDL alumni focus group provided a great deal of support for this theme; these former trainees with some distance from the training program consistently felt that they had learned valuable life skills and knowledge that had changed the ways they think about and carry out their interactions with others. Further, they described the program has having had positive implications for future opportunities for them beyond the training program.

While several specific findings stood out in this section, one stands out as particularly noteworthy. This was the finding that almost all of the dialogue leaders, including those such as Leia who initially expressed hesitation about her abilities, seemed to emerge from the experience with an enhanced and generalized sense of self-confidence as well as a sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) with regard to their ability to walk into a dialogue group and successfully handle any complexities the group might present. The review of the literature revealed that it is rare for sophomores to have opportunities to co-

lead dialogue groups of their peers. The findings from this study indicate that despite the challenges that some of the dialogue leaders faced in the training, the experience ultimately seemed to provide an enhanced sense of self-confidence.

*Significant Finding*s

Although many of the findings that emerged from this study were important and have noteworthy implications for the program, for theory, and for practice, three stood out as especially significant. These were the findings about learning associated with exposure to Perry's (1968/1970) theory, learning about the concepts of process and content, and being a neutral facilitator. My interpretation of these three findings is that (a) teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory to undergraduate students promotes cognitive complexity, (b) teaching undergraduates about the concepts of "process" and "content" promotes cognitive complexity, and (c) being placed in the role of "neutral facilitator" promotes listening, understanding, and self-reflection in ways that may not occur otherwise.

The Impact of Teaching Perry's Theory to Undergraduates

One of the primary findings from this study was the frequency with which the participants volunteered recollections of specific terms and concepts about elements of Perry's (1968/1970) theory in response to open-ended questions about what they had learned. While it was not necessarily unexpected that teaching these concepts to the students would make an impression upon them, I did not expect them to cite these particular elements of their learning so readily, over other aspects of the training program experience that had been covered in more time and depth. While the primary purpose of teaching Perry's theory to the dialogue leaders as a component of their training

curriculum was to enhance their effectiveness by encouraging them to consider the various modes of thinking that participants might exhibit in a dialogue group, an unexpected aspect of this finding was that learning key concepts and terms from Perry's theory prompted the dialogue leaders' thinking about their *own* thinking in ways that were often intense, powerful, earnest, and challenging. Therefore, one of the major findings from this study is that teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory to undergraduate students, in an appropriate manner and context, seems to have the powerful effect of promoting students' meta-thinking. According to Moore (1990) and as cited in the *Learner Characteristics* table (Appendix R), this is a cue for increased cognitive complexity.

One way this finding might be explained is through the application of Vygotsky's (1987) ideas about concept formation. Vygotsky was a developmental psychologist and cognitive development theorist who wrote extensively about the ways in which people acquire concepts. Although his primary interest was the cognitive development of young children, his ideas have application to this finding.

Vygotsky (1987) identifies two types of concepts: spontaneous and scientific. Spontaneous concepts are learned informally, through everyday activities and interaction. Scientific concepts are those that people learn through formal or academic instruction, or in Vygotsky's words, "have their source in school instruction" (p. 214). Vygotsky theorizes that learning and increased cognitive complexity occur as a result of the interaction of the acquisition of both spontaneous and scientific concepts. However, he considers scientific concepts to be higher order thinking as they are more easily generalized to new situations than spontaneous concepts, which tend to remain more

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situated in the contexts in which they were learned. He also stresses that in order for the learning of any concepts to be meaningful, they must be intentionally taught through pedagogical principles that encourage application and interaction with the material and do not treat students as passive recipients. This intentional teaching of scientific concepts is critical to his view. In his words, "*Conscious* instruction of the pupil in new concepts (i.e., in new forms of the word) is not only possible but may actually be *the source for a higher form of development of the child's own concepts, particularly those that have developed in the child prior to conscious instruction*" (p. 172, emphasis in the original). Vygotsky also argues that when opportunities are created for students to gain psychological tools such as language that provide names for concepts or diagrams that depict various relationships within a larger set of concepts, the learning of concepts is enhanced.

In applying Vygotsky's (1987) ideas about concept formation to this finding from the study, the intentional teaching of Perry's (1968/1970) theory to the students in the dialogue leader training program is teaching "scientific concepts" that, according to Vygotsky, promote higher order learning. In addition, it seems that equipping the dialogue leaders with the specific terms from Perry's theory (e.g. *dualism*, *multiplicity*, and *contextual relativism*) as labels for the three stages of thinking is consistent with his concept of providing students with psychological tools (in this case, language) that enable them to learn concepts, apply them to their own thinking, and generalize them to outside experiences.

Kegan's (1994) view of the "subject-object relationship" (p. 32) with regard to cognitive organization also provides a framework that may help to explain this finding.

According to Kegan, "object" refers to elements of our knowing that are in our past, elements that we can reflect on and can relate to one other. In contrast, "subject" refers to elements of our present; components of our knowing or organizing that are immediate, ultimate, and absolute. In Kegan's words, "We *have* object, we *are* subject" (p. 32, emphasis in the original). He suggests that meaning-making and solidification of cognitive concepts occurs when one interacts with concepts and translates them from the present ("subject") and into the past ("object"). In other words, the process of interacting with a concept causes it to become incorporated into a person's cognitive repertoire in a way that allows that person to consider, analyze, and reflect on it and its meaning. In Kegan's view, through "consciousness" (p. 34), the subject becomes object.

One aspect of this finding about the impact of teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory to undergraduates that I found especially intriguing was the ways in which several of the participants repeatedly connected increased complexity of thought with being more "open-minded" and "less judgmental," as compared to a "dualistic" person who might develop a judgment beforehand and may not necessarily take someone's varied life circumstances into account. While this is not necessarily typical of the ways in which these Perry terms are often conceptualized, I found it to be a fascinating connection and especially relevant to the leading of dialogue groups, which clearly benefits from a degree of empathy, curiosity, and open-mindedness about different life perspectives.

Another aspect of this finding that was striking was the strength with which several of the participants described a desire "to become a more complex thinker" based on what they had learned about the "three levels of thinking." Four of the participants spoke to this directly including Soraya, Samantha, Keisha, and Leia. The fascinating

aspect of this finding was how they were almost always accurate in their characterizations of their own current levels of thinking (usually in multiplicity), but spoke so earnestly about wanting to challenge themselves to become "more complex" thinkers and eventually learn how become more "relativistic" in their thinking. I interpreted this to be in the spirit of "contextual relativism" as conceptualized by Perry (1968/1970) and discussed in Chapter 2.

A quote from Keisha presented earlier in this chapter provides an excellent illustration of wanting to become a more complex thinker. In reflecting on her current multiplistic thinking, she said, "If I keep thinking multiplistically I'll eventually start thinking relativistically and consider *all* sides of an issue, now that's exciting!" What I loved about this quote was how it reflected her burning desire to improve the complexity and quality of her thinking, through work and dedication. However, given her comment about wanting to eventually be able to consider "*all* sides of an issue," it also unintentionally betrayed her current level of multiplistic thinking. According to Perry (1968/1970), most contextually relativistic thinkers would acknowledge that it's never possible to truly learn about *all* sides of an issue as that knowledge is unknowable. Nonetheless, her enthusiasm for eventually getting to the point where this would be clearer to her was endearing and inspiring.

An additional element of this finding about teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory to undergraduates that was compelling was the frequency with which the participants applied their new knowledge about dualistic, multiplistic, and contextually relativistic thinking to situations outside the training program and to the thinking of others. This is also consistent with Vygotsky's (1987) assertion that when students learn concepts

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through formal academic learning or instruction ("scientific concepts"), they are better able to generalize this learning to outside contexts and settings than if they had learned the concepts through more informal means.

It is legitimate to consider the possibility that asking the participants questions about their thinking throughout the study prompted some of their specific responses in which they recalled Perry (1968/1970) terms. While I did ask them to reflect on their learning related to their thinking in the e-mail reflection prompts (see Appendix N), the questions I asked in the interviews were more related to their overall perceptions of their learning rather than their thinking per se (see Appendixes K and L). While a few of the questions I asked were designed to assess their thinking according to Perry's theory, the vague nature of the wording of these questions would have made it unlikely that this focus would have been evident to the students. Further, I never referred to the terms "Perry," "dualism," "multiplicity," "relativism" or "levels of thinking" in either the e-mail reflection prompts or the interview questions unless the participants raised them first in their interview responses.

It is also reasonable to question whether the students truly grasped the terms and concepts from Perry's (1968/1970) theory, or whether they were simply repeating terms they had learned in the preparation phase ("dualism," "multiplicity," and "relativism") back to "authorities" who had taught them that language. Indeed, it is possible that their ready incorporation and use of the terms reflected a dualistic and superficial understanding of the concepts and not necessarily the sophisticated understanding that I was often interpreting. However, the specificity and frequency with which they used the

terms, and the appropriate contexts in which they applied them, suggested to me that their understanding was more than superficial.

As this theme of their recollection of Perry (1968/1970) terms from the training began to emerge, I tried to get a sense of whether their new and apparent understanding of the theory could be directly attributed to having learned about it in the training program, or whether they might have been exposed to it through some other source. While many of the participants said that they had heard similar concepts before, all of them said that the specific terms from the theory were new to them. Having the language to discuss the three levels of thinking, as well as a clear understanding of the concepts, seemed to be critical in prompting their meta-thinking. This is also consistent with Vygotsky's (1987) ideas about the relationship between the availability of "psychological tools," including language, and concept acquisition.

After several years working with the Common Ground program and also teaching undergraduates in the classroom, I can speculate about why this learning might have resonated so strongly with the participants. As Perry's theory (1968/1970) indicates, undergraduate students, especially sophomores, are typically in a time of great transition and often turmoil with regard to their cognitive processes. Many have said to me that this often feels like their mind is racing and that they have difficulty managing or understanding their thoughts. In support of this, Moore (2004b) cites a community college student who said, "I got into the classroom with 60 people and three teachers and my mind exploded" (p. 1). Therefore, I believe that many students yearn for a way to make sense of some of the cognitive chaos that is occurring for them during this point in their development. Exposure to Perry's framework provides a potential anchor; it seems

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to help them understand that what they are experiencing is typical of what other students experience, and that cognitive development is a process and a journey with potentially calmer destinations ahead. A factor that likely compounded this reaction for the participants in this study was that they were high achieving, bright, motivated, and often intense in their pursuit of their studies. These characteristics may have exacerbated some of the intensity they reported about coming to terms with their own thought processes.

Finally, it is important to note that while Perry's (1968/1970) theory is the theoretical frame that I chose to use throughout this study, there are other lenses and theoretical perspectives, many of which were presented and reviewed in Chapter 2, that could have been used to inform the curricular design of the training program and could have been taught to the students in the dialogue leader training program with similar results. Therefore, while the findings from this study suggest developmental benefits associated with teaching Perry's theory to undergraduate students, it is certainly reasonable to speculate that teaching other cognitive developmental theories and perspectives could result in similar findings.

Teaching about Process and Content

A second significant finding to emerge from this study was the students' learning associated with having been intentionally taught the terms and concepts of "process" and "content." While this was not a theme I set out to explore at the outset of the study, in retrospect it makes sense that it emerged so strongly given that one of the most important aspects of the dialogue leaders' training is helping them to develop an understanding of the importance of attending to *process* in leading the dialogue groups as compared to going into the group solely with a rigid *content* agenda.

However, a compelling aspect of this finding was the relationship of this learning about these concepts to increased cognitive complexity. Insights into the concepts of process and content are mentioned explicitly as cues for increased complexity of thinking according to Perry's theory (1968/1970, see Appendix R), especially for thinking associated with multiplicity and contextual relativism. The time and energy some of the participants devoted to reflecting on this theme was also compelling. Soraya and James especially spoke at length about how hard it was for them to learn the distinction between process and content, as they came into the training program having always emphasized content in previous similar leadership experiences. When they did break through to an understanding of the difference between these concepts, it was as if a whole new world of possibilities had opened up for them. While they were able to apply this directly to leading Common Ground dialogue groups, it was especially noteworthy that learning about process and content also prompted them to reflect on the relationship between these concepts and their own thinking. Additionally, the findings from this study suggest that learning the specific *terms* also helped them to learn about the *concepts*. As with the previous finding about Perry's (1968/1970) theory, this is consistent with Vygotsky's (1987) ideas about the importance of the acquisition of psychological tools such as language in enhancing learning, and Kegan's (1994) views about the subject-object relationship.

This finding about process and content, as well as the previous finding about the value of teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory, also calls to mind the concept of "plus-one reasoning" (Kohlberg, 1984) mentioned earlier in this chapter. For each of these findings, the students were challenged to think at levels that were slightly more advanced

than their current levels of thinking. In many cases, these challenges prompted them to wrestle with the complexities they presented in ways that ultimately seemed to enhance the complexity and quality of their own thinking. They also both relate to Vygotsky (1987), who emphasizes the importance of intentional teaching of higher order concepts to students and who discusses the value associated with gaining language that will enable one to think more critically about concepts and apply them readily.

Being a "Neutral Facilitator" Promoted Listening and Understanding

A third major finding to emerge from this study was that requiring the dialogue leaders to assume a role of "neutral facilitator" when leading the dialogue groups, a process role, promoted cognitive complexity and also strongly influenced the dialogue leaders' overall learning and self-reflection. Two sub-themes emerged from this finding. First, it was found that being a neutral facilitator forced listening to others' views and perspectives versus "shutting off," and second, this "forced listening" prompted the dialogue leaders to reflect more deeply on their *own* views.

Throughout the study, the dialogue leaders consistently identified this aspect of the program as being especially powerful in forcing them to listen and actually consider, often for the first time, views that were different from their own. This was because they were unable to respond with their own points and counterpoints as many said would have been their natural tendency. This was interesting in that it implied a consciousness on the part of the dialogue leaders that involved an intentional setting aside of their own predispositions in order to really hear the views of others. Additionally, this forced shift into a group maintenance role as opposed to a group member role could have created a relatively safe space for the dialogue leaders to listen and process information, without

the pressure of having to give an opinion. Regardless, most of the dialogue leaders characterized this as a very "difficult" shift to make and maintain, especially in the beginning. Several described how hard it was for them to simply listen to others talk without interjecting their own views and opinions, especially when the views and opinions expressed were different from their own.

Similar to the other two significant findings discussed in this section, one reason this aspect of the dialogue program seemed to create such memorable learning for the dialogue leaders was because for many of them, it offered a significant challenge. In striving to meet this challenge, however, they described powerful learning resulting in increased insights into the opinions and perspectives of others as well as increased insight and self-reflection on their own views.

It is also important to note that of the three major findings, the "neutral facilitator" finding was one that was consistent with what I expected to find. In fact, it was a speculation I put forth in preparing the proposal for this study; I cited it as a rationale for using Perry's (1968/1970) theory to study the impact of the dialogue leader training experience on cognitive complexity (see Chapter 1). Based on my experience with the dialogue leaders prior to this study, it did seem that the "neutral facilitator" requirement forced listening in a way that, in turn, enhanced their learning and understanding. The aspect of this finding that was unexpected, however, was the strength with which it emerged in this study. While I was not surprised that the dialogue leaders cited it as important to their learning, I did not expect the specificity and detail with which they described it. In addition, the two sub-themes that emerged were compelling, especially

the finding that being a neutral facilitator not only forced listening to other's views, but it also prompted the students to reflect so deeply on their *own* views.

A common characteristic across all three of these significant findings is that each involved elements of the training program that challenged the students to work through a concept or task that they initially found difficult or confusing. Again, this speaks to Sanford's (1966) concept of providing challenge as well as support for optimal learning and also Kohlberg's (1984) ideas about of the value of effective plus-one staging.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

There are several strengths and limitations of this study. One of the major strengths is that the case was "bounded" per the definitions of case study by Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995); the case was the Peer Dialogue Leader training program that began on January 27, 2005 and continued through May 13, 2005. Additional boundaries for the case were established by the three research questions that focused on the specific areas of (a) cognitive development and multiple perspectives, (b) opportunities for experiential learning, and (c) the students' characterizations of their overall learning as a result of their participation in the training program.

Another strength of the research design was that multiple sources of data and several different techniques for data collection and data analysis were incorporated in order to achieve triangulation. This is a critical element of effective case study design as described by Yin (2003b), Merriam (1998), and Stake (1995). Additional strengths of the study included the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Stufflebeam, 2001) and the use of a relevant, sound, and validated

theory in developing the hypothesis for the first research question about cognitive development (Yin, 2003a, 2003b).

My previous and continuing involvement with the Common Ground program and my knowledge of it was also a strength for this study. This knowledge of the program enabled me to seek deeper meanings and interpretations in developing the findings. It also enabled me to conduct the study in such a way as to maximize its usefulness for the further improvement, refinement, and establishment of the Common Ground program.

After the study began, one of the most significant strengths to emerge, in my view, was the racial/ethnic diversity of the participant group and the alumni focus group. Six of the eight students in the participant group identified as students of color and two identified as White. In the focus group of PDL alumni, three identified as students of color and two were White (see Chapter 5 for demographic information for the participants). While this was not an aspect of the study I could control because the research design called for me to study this particular training group and specifically those trainees who were willing to participate in the study, I considered it to be very fortunate for the study that the participant group was so racially and ethnically diverse. While race/ethnicity was not a specific variable I set out to study in the three research questions, I believe that because of this diversity in the participant groups, the overall findings from the study create strong support for the supposition that learning from the training program has relevant application to students from a variety of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. While the small participant groups and design of this study does not lend to the direct exploration of whether students from different racial or ethnic backgrounds experience the program in different ways, the overall findings suggest that learning from

the training experience applies to a wide variety of students, regardless of race or ethnicity.

A limitation of the demographic composition of the participant group was the lack of gender diversity. The participant group of eight consisted of seven women and one man. The alumni focus group was more diverse, however, with three men and two women. Therefore, one of the limitations of this study relates to the applicability of the findings to male dialogue leaders. Although the participation and comments of the three men in the focus group mitigate this concern to some degree, this is a potential limitation that is important to note.

While my on-going role with the Common Ground program and my knowledge of before and during the study could be considered as helpful in many ways to my role as researcher (Yin, 2003b), these factors also presented several potential limitations that needed to be considered throughout. Four of the eight participants in the study knew me well as one of their co-instructors for their Fall 2004 Leadership in a Multicultural Society class. The other four who were in the other section of the course most likely knew that I had been closely involved with the Common Ground program for a lengthy period of time. In addition, all of them were aware of my full-time job in the Department of Resident Life and that I worked closely with the trainer for the Spring 2005 dialogue leader training program.

These factors presented several potential limitations in terms of the way the participants might have reacted to me and also in the ways I might have interpreted the data and the findings. Given the participants' knowledge of my prior role, experience, and connection with the program, they might have been eager to convey positive and

multiple examples of their learning, hesitant to convey criticisms of the training or the program, or reluctant to say anything that might hurt my feelings. In addition, the fact that they were offered the opportunity to participate in this dissertation study could have subtly conveyed to them that the program offers a learning experience that is worthy of such intense study, which could have influenced their perceptions of their learning. Similarly, the attention given to these participants throughout the study, especially through the two personal interviews, could have created a desirability effect that influenced their perceptions of their learning. All of these issues raise potential problems related to desirability and the possibility that the students may have told me what they thought I wanted to hear as opposed to what they were really thinking, feeling, and learning.

Another possible limitation is that the experience of participating in the study and receiving additional attention from me as researcher throughout the training semester could have prompted the participants to reflect on their learning in ways they may not have otherwise, in the absence of such attention. In other words, the intensity of the experience as not only dialogue leader trainees but also as participants in the study, and the additional time they spent with me in the individual interviews and also in writing the e-mail reflections, could have inspired increased self-reflection about their learning above and beyond what might have occurred in the absence of the study. As a result, their interactions with me and with the study could have prompted enhanced self-reflection or learning, or it may even have enhanced their cognitive development over the course of the training semester.

An additional potential limitation associated with my on-going involvement with the Common Ground program related to my own biases and potential desires about the outcomes of this study. My knowledge of the goals of the program and the anecdotal information I had gathered over the years through working with other training groups had suggested to me that the experience of participating in the training program has a positive impact on the Peer Dialogue Leaders' cognitive development and their overall learning. These biases could have influenced the way I conducted the study. For example, they could have led me to subconsciously ask leading questions, or they could have influenced my interpretive analysis of the data and my perceptions of the emerging findings. Although measures designed to achieve trustworthiness were built into the research methodology, such as the use of a peer debriefer and an inquiry auditor, this limitation associated with my potential biases needs to be acknowledged.

Another potential limitation with regard to my interpretation of the findings about cognitive development relates to my level of expertise in Perry's (1968/1970) theory. The Center for Study of Intellectual Development provides extensive training on the Perry scheme to produce trained expert raters (Moore, 2004a). I have not participated in this training and I do not claim to be an expert in Perry's theory. Therefore, a legitimate question can be raised as to my ability to develop accurate interpretations and findings from the data, especially with regard to the research question about cognitive development through the theoretical framework of Perry's theory. However, given my years of study at the master's and doctoral level in student development theory and experience as a practitioner in higher education, I consider myself to be informed on the

theory in a manner that allowed me conduct the analyses that were called for by the design of this study.

One of the other factors that potentially influenced the findings from this study was the fact that all of the student participants in the Spring 2005 Common Ground dialogue groups were students from the RA training course. These were students who all went through a rigorous and competitive selection process for the RA position, were academically talented, and as a group tend to be high achieving, motivated, engaged, and positively predisposed to multicultural discussions. The potential limitation relates to their presence as dialogue group participants and the ways in which this factor might have influenced the richness of the co-leading experiences for the Peer Dialogue Leaders and their overall learning.

Finally, one of the limitations of this study is that much of the previous research on cognitive development has shown that college students do not generally show significant gains in cognitive development over a period of time as short as one semester (Moore, 2004a; W. S. Moore, personal communication, July 27, 2007). With this limitation in mind, I looked for evidence of movement toward increased complexity and the ability to acknowledge and understand the existence of multiple perspectives, and not necessarily dramatic change from one Perry (1968/1970) position to the next. However, the overall results and findings from this study suggest that positive movement did occur over the course of the training semester, to a degree that would not be expected given the typically slow rate of developmental growth.

Implications for Theory

The results and findings from this study suggest several implications for theory. First, this study supports and reaffirms the application of Perry's (1968/1970) theory of intellectual development to undergraduate students. Further, given the small yet racially and ethnically diverse participant group, this study provides support for the relevance of Perry's theory to the contemporary student population. Strong evidence was found of increased complexity of thinking according to Perry's theory for the diverse student participant group in this study.

Throughout the study, I was not only interested in the cognitive development of the participants, I was also interested in the use of Perry's (1968/1970) theory as a "program theory" (Stufflebeam, 2001). Perry's theory had been used to inform the original development and design of the Common Ground program as well as the Peer Dialogue Leader training program, and one of the evaluative purposes of this study was to identify various components of the training program that seemed to enhance cognitive development. In all, five elements of the training program were identified and presented in Chapter 5. Of these five, several were either directly or indirectly informed by Perry's theory. These included the intentional teaching of Perry's theory to the trainees and the emphasis on exposure to multiple perspectives. Additional program elements identified as having promoted cognitive development, such as the requirement that the dialogue leaders be "neutral facilitators," indirectly grew out of the process-oriented nature of the program that was also informed by Perry's theory. Therefore, while the findings from this study provide support for the use of Perry's theory to better understand, predict, and

promote cognitive development, they also provide strong support for the effective use of Perry's theory as a "program theory" in informing curricular designs.

The findings from this study also provide support for Knefelkamp and Widick's DI model (Knefelkamp, 1981). Although I did not begin this study with this framework in mind, it was striking in retrospect how many of the elements of the Common Ground program that were found to promote cognitive development aligned with the four DI variables of structure, experiential learning, diversity (of alternatives or perspectives), and personalism. This finding suggests strong support not only for the validity of the DI model, but also for its use and application in developing undergraduate curricular approaches that promote cognitive complexity.

<div align="center">Implications for Practice</div>

The results and findings from this study also suggest several implications for practice in higher education. These are presented in two sections, one addressing the implications for the Common Ground program and the other addressing implications for undergraduate teaching and multicultural education.

Implications for the Common Ground Dialogue Program

This case study was also a program evaluation and the results and findings have several direct implications for the Common Ground Dialogue Program. Overall, the findings suggest that the program is effective in training the dialogue leaders and setting them up for success in leading the dialogue groups. This was demonstrated most clearly through the findings from the second research question about experiential learning in which the dialogue leaders' sense of confidence and preparation for leading were studied. At the end of the semester, the participants reported a sense of success that was ultimately

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true for all of them, even those who expressed less confidence in their abilities coming out of the preparation phase.

The findings from this study also suggest several specific recommendations for the program. First, with regard to the program's impact on cognitive development, I recommend keeping or enhancing the five elements of the training program that were identified in Chapter 5 as playing a role in promoting cognitive development. These were (a) the emphasis on "process" as distinguished from "content," (b) intentionally teaching terms and concepts of Perry's (1968/1970) theory to the trainees, (c) requiring that the dialogue leaders assume the role of "neutral facilitator," (d) the on-going consultation sessions with the trainer(s) during the leading phase, which at times promoted intentional linkages to theoretical understandings about cognitive development, and (e) specific elements of the Leadership in a Multicultural Society class, especially those that involved the study and consideration of societal dilemmas and multiple perspectives.

The experiential elements of the training program were also found to be valuable in promoting student learning. These included the opportunity for the trainees to take turns planning and teaching aspects of the training curriculum to each other in the preparation phase, the informal dialogues that occurred in the preparation phase, the dialogue group simulations in the preparation phase, and the opportunity to co-lead the four-session group in the leading phase. With regard to the simulations, my recommendation is to review the nature of the role-playing, as some of the dialogue leaders criticized it as too "over the top," but to continue to be intentional about exposing the trainees to multiple perspectives, even those that may seem outlandish at the time. At

least one of the participants explicitly noted that she initially felt that some of the views and perspectives in the preparation phase were unrealistic, but they eventually proved to be very helpful to her and were not so unrealistic once she began leading her dialogue group.

In reviewing the findings from this study as a whole, three overall recommendations emerge with regard to the Common Ground program. First, the value of emphasizing Perry (1968/1970) concepts to the dialogue leaders and repeatedly helping them make connections between the theory and thinking demonstrated by participants in the dialogue groups, as well as their own thinking, can not be overemphasized. The trainers should make every effort to point out connections to Perry principles and general principles of cognitive development throughout the program and encourage the trainees to do the same.

Second, several of the trainees discussed the importance of learning about the concept of "consensus" through their experience in the training program. Developing an understanding of this concept not only relates closely to an understanding of multiple perspectives, it also encourages the students to think more complexly; dualistic ideas of good and bad or right and wrong generally do not lead to consensus. In order to achieve consensus, the students must learn to recognize and set aside some of these dualisms and search for areas of compromise. This process seemed to promote complexity of thinking.

Third, one of the most powerful findings to emerge from this study related to the benefits associated with exposure to multiple and competing perspectives, especially in a climate of "personalism" (Knefelkamp, 1981, 1999) that is truly supportive of a variety of different views. It is recommended that this aspect of the program be continued and

enhanced. Trainers should be intentional about soliciting a variety of different perspectives from the group, and if multiple perspectives don't emerge naturally, the trainers should interject them themselves. Similarly, while the role-playing was often critiqued as "over the top," all of the participants acknowledged that it helped to introduce multiple views. Similar strategies should be explored and encouraged.

Fourth, as discussed earlier in this chapter, it is recommended that the Peer Dialogue Leader training program be evaluated in the context of Knefelkamp and Widick's DI model (Knefelkamp, 1981) and the four DI variables of structure, experiential learning, diversity, and personalism. Although it was found in this study that many of the elements of the training program are already consistent with pedagogical practices that would be suggested by the DI model, the program could benefit from a systematic and intentional evaluation in light of the model.

Finally, given the rich findings revealed in this study through the individual interviews conducted with the Peer Dialogue Leaders over the course of the training semester, I recommend exploring the possibility of incorporating similar individual interviews with the dialogue leaders as a matter of practice throughout the training program. Although this would be labor-intensive for the trainers, the potential learning that such a strategy could promote for the dialogue leaders, as well as the potential feedback about the program and the training experience that individual interviews could generate, would be worth the investment.

In considering the overall findings from this study, it is also important to recall the context in which this dialogue program is situated, specifically the CIVICUS Living and Learning program at the University of Maryland. All of the participants in this study

were CIVICUS students. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I have found that CIVICUS students tend to be engaged in issues related to community and generally drawn to opportunities associated with living and learning with people who are different from them and come from a variety of different backgrounds. Therefore, it could be that the participants in the study, all of whom were CIVICUS students, were generally predisposed and open to discussions about multicultural issues and the learning associated with the Common Ground program. If so, this could have had an impact on the overall findings and could have implications for how the dialogue program might be replicated or adapted in other settings or institutions.

Implications for Teaching, Practice, and Multicultural Education

The results and findings from this study also suggest several implications for practice in higher education, with regard to undergraduate dialogue programs specifically and undergraduate multicultural education more broadly. They also have implications for several other areas including student and staff training and development, programming, and curriculum development.

Based on the findings from this study, educators can take many cues from the recommendations offered above for the Common Ground program. They offer recommendations for creating more effective learning experiences in a variety of different programs and settings.

This study also provides strong support for the potentially powerful benefits associated with teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development to undergraduates. While Perry's theory is a standard component of the curriculum for many graduate courses in student affairs and human development, it is not as widely

taught to undergraduates. This unexpected finding from this study suggests that undergraduate learning and cognitive development could be strongly enhanced if educators were intentional about introducing the theory to undergraduates in contextually appropriate ways, helping them to make linkages between the theory, their own thinking, and the thinking of others, and encouraging them to be self-reflective about their own thinking (their meta-thinking).

Additionally, educators should find opportunities to incorporate teaching about process and content, not only as these concepts relate to the management of a group, such as a dialogue group, but also as they relate to the adaptability of one's own thinking and contextual approach. Content will always change and knowledge will evolve. However, if educators emphasize teaching students skills and adaptive ways of thinking that will allow them to creatively and constructively approach the evolving content, problems, and complexities they will face throughout their lives, students will not only have been challenged to think more complexly in the moment, they will have been helped to develop and shape adaptive and effective approaches that they will carry with them throughout their lives.

Although the finding about learning associated with being a "neutral facilitator" is somewhat limited in that its direct applicability is to the role of a dialogue leader, it has potential applications to numerous other settings in which the students may find themselves in facilitative roles later in life such as work groups and community organizations. Several important lessons can also be drawn from it. The key to this finding seems to be that challenging students to withhold their opinions for a specified period of time prompts them to engage in active listening that enables them to gain new

and deeper insights into the perspectives of others. This could easily be adapted to a classroom context. For example, techniques such as debate, which call for students to study and argue a view that is different from their own, hold promise for generating a similar effect of withholding one's own views in order to achieve a deeper, more empathic understanding of the views of another.

The findings from this study also indicate that when students are developmentally ready, their learning is enhanced when they are given experiential opportunities to make decisions on their own and learn about the consequences of those decisions. Therefore, experiential learning opportunities should be incorporated into educational opportunities whenever possible. A good example of one way this can be accomplished that was illustrated by the study is allowing students to take turns developing and teaching aspects of the curriculum to each other.

Another major finding from this study relates to the importance of exposing students to multiple perspectives, especially after having created a climate that is respectful of various views and positions. Even if some of the perspectives are difficult to hear, as was the experience of many of the dialogue leaders in this study, all of them commented on the powerful learning associated with being exposed to different views, ideas, and ways of thinking. These findings are consistent with the literature presented in Chapter 2 about the relationship between diverse learning environments, exposure to multiple perspectives, and increased cognitive complexity (e.g. Adams & Zhou-McGovern, 1994; Gurin, 1999; Kogler, 2004; Smith et al., 1997). Therefore, the findings from this study provide strong support for developing pedagogical approaches that facilitate exposure to multiple perspectives, whether in the classroom or in other

co-curricular settings. With regard to my own teaching, I have been reminded and inspired by the findings from this study to be more intentional about incorporating methods that encourage students' exposure to and understanding of multiple perspectives. This includes encouraging them to be candid about their own views. Not only does this promote cognitive complexity and critical thinking, I believe that providing students with an opportunity to say what they are really thinking is the only way to get at the "real" issues that often underlie multicultural issues.

Similarly, the findings from this study support the use of multicultural "dilemmas" in classroom and program settings that expose students to the various facets of complex issues and reinforce that there is always more than just one or two sides. This is very similar to King and Kitchener's (1994) work on the reflective judgment model in which they studied how people approach "ill-structured" (p. 11) or complex problems. Throughout this study, the frequency with which the participants referred back to the topics of their dialogue groups, which were all examples of multicultural dilemmas, in order to make a point or illustrate a comment was compelling. This supports the idea that multicultural dilemmas are effective stimuli for discussion and learning.

Finally, this study has implications for the general ways in which undergraduate multicultural programs and courses are conceptualized and implemented. The findings from this study suggest positive learning and development associated with programs that include students from a variety of different identities and backgrounds, are intentionally designed to promote cognitive complexity and critical thinking, are intentional about the genuine incorporation, consideration, and inclusion of multiple perspectives, encourage the analysis of multifaceted and complex multicultural dilemmas, and emphasize process-

oriented thinking. The findings from this study also underscore the importance of crafting undergraduate multicultural programs that are developmentally appropriate for an undergraduate student population, incorporate effective use of plus-one reasoning, and create climates in which students are comfortable expressing their views and feel supported in meeting the challenges associated with learning about themselves and the complexities of living in a multicultural society.

<div align="center">Areas for Future Research</div>

Several areas for future research are suggested by this study. These include additional research on the three major findings from this study as well as additional research on dialogue leaders, dialogue group participants, the peer-led nature of the program, the Common Ground program specifically, and the larger arena of undergraduate multicultural education more generally.

The three major findings that emerged from this study suggest several areas of further research. These include further study on the relationship between teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory to undergraduate students and the impact on cognitive development, teaching the concepts of "process" and "content" to undergraduates and the impact cognitive development, and undergraduate student learning associated with being a "neutral facilitator."

Several unique angles for each of these areas can also be identified. For example, the findings from this study suggest a link between enhanced cognitive development through the use of a process-oriented approach, which involves making impromptu decisions, as opposed to a content-oriented approach. Therefore, one area of further

study could be the impact of opportunities to make impromptu leadership decisions on cognitive development.

This study was unique in that it focused on the experience of the dialogue leaders, and not dialogue group participants as has been the focus of most studies in the literature on educational outcomes associated with college and university dialogue groups. While the findings from this study contribute to the literature about learning associated with participation in dialogue programs for the dialogue leaders themselves, further research in this area would also be beneficial. This could include additional research on how students from differing identity groups (e.g. race, ethnicity, or gender) might experience being a dialogue leader. It could also include research on the different background experiences that students bring with them into the training and leading experiences (such as differing levels of exposure to diversity and cross-cultural interactions prior to college) and whether these differing experiences have an impact on their receptivity, learning, and dialogue leading experiences.

Additionally, an obvious area for further research is the impact of the Common Ground dialogue experience on the dialogue group participants. There are many directions this inquiry could take, including several of the questions that were asked in this study such as impact of participation on cognitive development, the impact of participation on understanding of multiple perspectives, and overall learning. Additionally, as one of the goals of the program for the dialogue group participants is to increase their future willingness to constructively engage with others who have views and/or identities that are different from their own, this could be an area for future research. While there are several limitations associated with this kind of study, most

notably the fact that the dialogue group participants are only engaged with the program for a maximum of four sessions or a total of four to six hours, which minimizes the likelihood of detecting change due to the program, it is a potentially valuable area of research and of course would have important implications for the Common Ground program specifically and for dialogue programs more generally.

One of the areas that has been especially intriguing to me over the years, and has been bolstered by the findings from this study, is the impact of the "peer-led" nature of the program on the students' experiences and learning. In other words, how does the fact that the dialogue groups are composed of peers and led by peers impact the quality of the experience, for both the dialogue leaders and the group participants? My own anecdotal observations have led me to speculate that there is something distinctly unique about the "peer" experience that has potential to create discussions that are different in character from discussions that are facilitated by authority figures such as teachers, trainers, and experts.

In analyzing this through the lens of Perry's (1968/1970) theory, perhaps the undergraduate dialogue participants in these groups are reacting to the absence of an authority figure. Or perhaps they are viewing these peer leaders, simply because of their stated positions as "leaders", as a different type of authority, which influences the tone and quality of the dialogue. The use of Perry's (1968/1970) theory could inform this area of inquiry in terms of students' varied views of "Authority" depending on their current Perry positions.

While this study yielded many findings that have direct implications for the Common Ground Dialogue Program, there are several other specific aspects of the

program that were not explored in this study that could benefit from further research. In addition to research on the impact of the program on the dialogue group participants, the Common Ground program could benefit from additional research on the Leadership in a Multicultural Society course as preparation for the dialogue leader training program, and also on the dialogue leaders' involvement in the CIVICUS living and learning program and its corresponding influence on their experience in Peer Dialogue Leader training program. How does the fact that all of the dialogue leaders are from CIVICUS inform their experience? As only one non-CIVICUS student has participated in the training program, this is an important question to explore and has implications for the potential growth of the program to other student populations.

Additionally, several of the findings from this study prompted my curiosity about evaluating the four-session model used in the Common Ground program, and how the specific elements of that model might impact student learning. While this study focused on much broader questions, I found myself curious about examples of learning the dialogue leaders reported, on behalf of themselves as well as the dialogue group participants, as a result of the guiding task-oriented questions for each of the four dialogue group sessions. Further research on this four-session model would be relevant and beneficial.

Finally, the results and findings from this study suggest several implications for further research that relates to undergraduate multicultural education. Specifically, I am intrigued by learning more about the possibilities associated with multicultural programs, classes, and activities that are intentionally designed to promote cognitive complexity and critical thinking about diversity, involve students from a variety of different identities and

backgrounds, are intentional about exposure to multiple perspectives, encourage the use of multifaceted and complex societal multicultural dilemmas, and emphasize process-oriented thinking and approaches. Additional research on learning and development associated with any of these specific components, either singularly or in combination, would be extremely helpful in furthering understanding about approaches that provide effective undergraduate multicultural education.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Moore (2004b) describes four of the fundamental goals of American higher education as "critical thinking and analysis, ability to work with others and an appreciation for diverse perspectives, connection-making and integration of learning, and involvement in one's own learning process" (p. 1). He also notes the importance of the *transformation* of learners, which occurs through engagement that includes not only exposure to content knowledge, but also to experiences and processes that stimulate transformations in the ways students think and apply their learning to all aspects of their lives and experiences. In reflecting on these goals, I considered their relationship to the goals of the Common Ground program, which encourages engagement with others in ways that have been shown through this study to stimulate this kind of transformational learning.

In this evaluative case study, I sought to explore the nature of the learning that occurs in the Common Ground Dialogue Program, specifically for the undergraduate Peer Dialogue Leaders in the dialogue leader training program. Specific areas of interest included the impact of participation in the training program on cognitive development as defined by Perry's (1968/1970) theory of intellectual development, the impact of the

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program on understanding of multiple perspectives, the nature of the experiential learning that occurs through participation in the training program, and the dialogue leaders' own characterizations of their learning.

The results and findings from this study suggest that the training program was a developmentally powerful learning environment for the dialogue leaders. Participation in the program was found to promote and enhance cognitive development, encourage students' understanding of multiple perspectives, provide opportunities for experiential learning, and promote several additional kinds of learning that were identified and reported by the dialogue leaders in the four areas of knowledge acquisition, skill development, self-awareness, and integrated transferability.

Three themes emerged as especially significant. The findings from this study suggest that intentionally teaching Perry's (1968/1970) theory to undergraduate students promotes cognitive development, teaching concepts of "process" and "content" also promotes cognitive development, and requiring students to assume a "neutral facilitator" approach enhances their understanding of the views of others and also deepens their self-reflection, self-awareness, and understanding of their own views.

This study has several implications for theory. The findings reaffirm the application of Perry's (1968/1970) theory of cognitive development to undergraduates, support its use as a "program theory" (Stufflebeam, 2001), and support Knefelkamp and Widick's DI model (Knefelkamp, 1981) as a sound pedagogical model that promotes cognitive development.

As this study was also an evaluative case study, the findings also have several implications for the Common Ground program. These include keeping or enhancing the

elements of the training program that were found to promote cognitive complexity, retaining or enhancing the experiential elements of the training program, and continuing to emphasize exposure to and analysis of multiple perspectives.

This study also has implications for undergraduate multicultural education. The findings suggest several elements that can be incorporated into pedagogical or curricular approaches to enhance undergraduate student learning and development. These include approaches that involve students from variety of different identities and backgrounds, promote critical thinking about diversity and multicultural issues, and expose students to multiple perspectives by encouraging them to speak freely. They also include approaches that encourage the analysis of societal multicultural dilemmas, emphasize process-oriented thinking, and recognize the evolving nature of knowledge by helping students to develop adaptive strategies that will enable them to successfully navigate a continually changing world. The findings from this study also underscore the importance of crafting undergraduate multicultural programs that are developmentally appropriate for undergraduate students and support them in meeting the challenges associated with learning about themselves and others in the context of a multicultural community and society.

MID Essay Prompts

MEASURE OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

ESSAY PROMPTS

ESSAY A **(Knefelkamp & Widick, 1974)**

Describe the best course you've experienced in your education. What made it positive for you? Feel free to go into as much detail as you think is necessary to give a clear idea of the course. For example, you might want to discuss areas such as the subject matter, class activities (readings, films, etc.), what the teacher was like, the atmosphere of the class, the evaluation procedures – whatever you think was most important in making this experience so positive for you. Please be as specific as possible in your response, describing as completely as you can why the issues you discuss stand out to you as important.

ESSAY AP **(Knefelkamp & Widick, 1974)**

Describe a course that would represent the ideal learning experience for <u>you</u>. Please be as specific and concrete as possible about what this course would include; use as much detail as you think is necessary to present clearly this ideal situation. For example, you might want to discuss what the content or subject matter would be, what the teacher/s would be like, your responsibilities as a student, the evaluation procedures that would be used, and so on. Please explain <u>why</u> you feel the specific course aspects you discuss are "ideal" for you.

ESSAY Q **(Moore & MacGregor, 1992; Moore, 2002)**

Look back on your experiences in this course or program and reflect on your learning in the course as well as discoveries about yourself as a learner. Please be specific and concrete; provide as much detail about what stood out for you as you think is necessary to offer a clear idea of your learning experience. For example, you might want to discuss any or all of the following topics: the content/subject matter, the kinds of teachers and teaching you experienced, the classroom atmosphere, your role as a student, the evaluation procedures that were used. What elements have made a difference in your learning, and why?

ESSAY C **(Knefelkamp & Slepitza, 1976)**

One of the major issues in many individuals' lives concerns career planning and vocational decision-making. Individuals approach this issue in very different ways; please discuss in detail the things you consider when thinking about the question of career decision-making in your own life. Please be as specific as you can, providing examples whenever possible so that we can understand how you think about the issue of careers.

STRUCTURED PERRY INTERVIEW FORMAT

1. What is your view of an ideal college education? How, if at all, should a student change as a result of that educational experience?

2. Have you encountered any significant differences in beliefs and values in your peers in college or other people you've met in your experiences here? What is your reaction to this diversity; how do you account for these differences? How do you go about evaluating the conflicting views or beliefs you encounter? How, if at all, do you interact with people who have views different from your own?

    [NOTE: The focus here is on the process of evaluating and/or interacting, not on specific beliefs or reactions per se.]

3. Facing an uncertain situation in which you don't have as much information as you'd like and/or the information is not clear cut, how do you go about making a decision about what you believe? Is your decision in that situation the right decision? Why or why not? If so, how do you know?

    [NOTE: Try to get the student to describe the process of coming to a judgment in that kind of situation, which in many cases will involve generating a concrete example of some personal relevance but not too emotionally-charged – preferably an academic-related context, related if possible to their major field.]

4. How would you define "knowledge?" How is knowledge related to what we discussed earlier in terms of a college education? What is the relationship between **knowledge** and your idea of **truth**? What are the standards you use for evaluating the truth of your beliefs or values? Do your personal beliefs/values apply to other people--in other words, are you willing to apply your standards to their behavior? Why or why not?

Possible follow-up probes in each area:

- How have you arrived at this particular view of these issues? Can you remember a time when you didn't think this way and recall how your view changed over time?
- To what extent do you think the view you have expressed is a logical and coherent perspective you've defined for yourself? What, if any, alternative perspectives have you considered?
- How likely is it that your view will change in the future? If you think it's likely to change, what kind of experiences or situations might produce such change?

ALTERNATE PERRY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. LOOKING BACKWARD (COLLEGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE)

* We're interested in learning how you view your overall educational experience in college. Later I'll ask you some specific questions, but for now, I'd just like you to tell me what seems important to you as you think about it – what stands out to you as you think about your experience here?

[Alternatives: What about your college experience has influenced you the most – what stands out in your mind that has really made an impression on you and influenced you? or What overall sense do you make of your educational experience in college?]

(PROBES: request examples, tie together threads of narrative, relate to earlier experience/s)
- Who has been important to you in your learning? (peers, faculty/ administrators, family, others)
- How have you changed in the way you approach learning since you've been in college?
- How would you describe yourself – in general, and specifically as a learner?
- Are there any ways in which you are different than before as a result of your experience in college? [Possible follow-up: If you could have your way, what kinds of changes in yourself would you have hoped to see as a result of your educational experience in college?]

2. CLARIFYING CONVICTIONS

* Does it seem to you that usually there is only one opinion, idea or answer that is really right or true, or do you think there can usually be more than one? Explain.

FOLLOW-UP PROBES
(variable, depending on what seems appropriate with student)
- What makes an opinion right? Are all opinions right? Can you say some opinions are better than others? How do you know? In terms of what makes an opinion "right," what role do you think experts and authorities need to play?
- Is it important to obtain support for your opinions? What kind of support?
- Do you think your outlook on this diversity of opinions has changed in recent years? What/who led to this change?

* It seems that with all the various ways of looking at things and all of the different opinions that exist, there's a very confusing variety of choices to make. Do you have any strong convictions to help guide you in these choices? Could you describe an example? [If necessary, define "conviction" as a point of view that one develops about an issue or subject over time, **not** an unexamined belief one has grown up with or inherited from one's parents or upbringing.]

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FOLLOW-UP PROBES

- How did you come to hold this point of view? Can you describe how your thinking developed? What alternatives did you consider in this process, and why did you discard them?
- Do you feel or have you ever felt that you would like to convince others of your ideas?
- What do you think when others have strong convictions and try to convince you?
- If someone attacks your belief [about opinions], how do you defend yourself?

(OPTIONAL)

* React to each of these statements, describing how and to what extent they apply to you:

- "I never take anything someone says for granted. I just tend to see the contrary. I like to play the devil's advocate, arguing the opposite of what someone is saying, thinking of exceptions, or thinking of a different train of logic."
- "When I have an idea about something, and it differs from the way another person is thinking about it, I'll usually try to look at it from that person's point of view, see how they could say that, why they think that they are right, why it makes sense to them."

3. LOOKING FORWARD (GOALS FOR FUTURE & CAREER)

* What are your educational or career goals at this point? How have your educational or career goals changed since you started – for instance, do you have any goals now that you didn't have before, or do some you started with seem less worthwhile or realistic?

* In what ways has the college specifically contributed to the achievement of your goals up to this point?

* How do you think your experiences or accomplishments in college will connect or relate to what you do after college?

<u>IN EACH QUESTION SET, EXPLORE FOR:</u>

- SYNTHESIS/INTEGRATION – pulling threads of narrative together
- CONNECTION-MAKING – between ideas, between discipline and personal experience, etc.
- SELF-REFLECTION – e.g., understanding of self-as-learner, as person considering career choices, etc.
- META-THINKING – analysis of own thinking over time (i.e., how it's changed/evolved)

BSOS 301 – Class Syllabus

Leadership in a Multicultural Society – BSOS 301

Fall Semester, 2004

Section 0201: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30-1:45 PM
Somerset Classroom

Instructors _____

Steve Petkas
Department of Resident Life
2101 Annapolis Hall
(301) 314-7608
spetkas@umd.edu

Rhondie Voorhees
Department of Resident Life
2101 Annapolis Hall
(301) 314-7608
rhondie@umd.edu

Teaching Assistants _____

[Information withheld]

Guest Instructor _____

Dr. Carlos E. Cortés
Professor Emeritus of History, University of California – Riverside
Campus Address: 2101 Annapolis Hall, (301) 314-7608
Guest Instructor/Visiting Scholar

Course Texts and Readings _____

Required Text:

Blank, R. & Slipp, S. (1994). *Voices of Diversity: Real People Talk about Problems and Solutions in a Workplace Where Everyone Is Not Alike.* New York: AMACOM.

Additional required readings will be handed out in class.

Optional Texts:

Cortés, C. E. (2000). *The children are watching: How the media teach about diversity.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (1998). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Course Description _____

The purpose of this course is to teach students concepts and insights needed for successful leadership in 21st century American multicultural society. There are three major elements:

(1) Developing an understanding of <u>major dimensions of multicultural identity</u>;
(2) Developing an understanding of <u>constructive leadership practices for effective leadership in a multicultural society</u>; and
(3) Developing an understanding of the major dimensions of identity and constructive leadership practices in the context of <u>dilemmas</u> that arise in a multicultural society.

This course will emphasize active participation of students in on-going class discussions and dialogue about course content.

Course Objectives _____

- Students will develop an understanding of **nine dimensions of 21st century multicultural identity**: race/ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, class, language, and citizenship.

- Students will attain a grasp of the **five multicultural societal dynamics of perception, balance, equity, interaction, and limits** and how they occur within the context of **change**.

- Students will examine several **constructive leadership practices** that are important to successful leadership in 21st century American multicultural society.

- Students will learn about multiple dimensions of, and the relationships between, **individual and group identities**.

- Students will gain an increased understanding of the complexities associated with **dilemmas** that arise in 21st century American multicultural society.

- Students will understand the role of **constructive dialogue in positive intergroup relations** and will have opportunities to engage in dialogues about current multicultural issues and dilemmas.

Course Requirements _____

1. **Attendance, Preparation, and Participation**

   Class attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to arrive on time; attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Absences must be excused in advance by contacting one of the instructors. More than one unexcused absence will endanger your final grade. Documentation from a physician is expected for illness.

   In order for us to achieve the course objectives, it is critical that students prepare for and participate actively in class discussions. Class members will learn much of what this course has to offer through interchange, discussion, and dialogue with other class members. Therefore, 20% of your course grade will be based upon class preparation and participation.

2. **Reading Assignments and Homework**

   Students are expected to complete all reading assignments, homework, and papers prior to the class session for which they are assigned. Readings and homework assignments are designed to complement class discussions and facilitate optimal learning of the course material and objectives. In discussion-oriented classes, it becomes obvious when students have not adequately prepared. Therefore, students who frequently demonstrate a lack of preparation will endanger their final grade for attendance, preparation, and participation.

3. **E-mail Reflections**

   Each student is expected to write e-mail reflection entries approximately once every three weeks and send them to the instructors for comments and reaction (at least five entries, due dates are noted on the syllabus). *E-mail reflection content is confidential between the individual student and the instructor(s) and is not graded.*

   Students who communicate regularly with instructors benefit in several ways:

   - They enhance their own learning of the course objectives by writing about their reactions and receiving comment and clarification;
   - They are able to gain individual assistance in applying course concepts to their academic and personal experiences; and

- Instructors are better able to individualize their teaching efforts and to more accurately and regularly assess students' understanding of the class material.

Studies at the University of Maryland and elsewhere have shown that students who regularly correspond with their instructors via e-mail are significantly more satisfied with their courses than students who do not.

Assignments and Grading _____

Assignments & Due Dates:

In addition to the assigned readings, students will be required to complete two papers, one midterm exam, and one final exam. A detailed description of each assignment will be provided later in class.

1. Paper 1: Identification of a leader, application of dimensions of identity   20%
2. Paper 2: Topic to be discussed later in class   20%
3. Midterm exam   20%
4. Final exam   20%
5. Attendance, preparation, and participation   20%

Grading Criteria:

Ultimately, each student's grade will be based on how successfully he or she achieves the course objectives. In deciding upon a grade, the instructors will consider the following:

- *Grasp of the course material:* The degree to which a student indicates his or her recall and understanding of the material and concepts covered in the course; the student's success in applying course concepts to hypothetical or actual situations.

- *Contribution and participation:* The extent to which a student makes active and relevant contributions to class activities, discussions, and dialogues.

- *Form:* The care and clarity with which a student completes papers and presentations. Written assignments should be of very high quality. Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and structure of written assignments should support and enhance the concepts that the student intends to convey.

- *Introspection:* The degree to which a student is thoughtful, insightful, innovative, and self-aware in the application of course concepts to his or her individual learning and experiences.

- *Elaboration:* The degree to which a student provides detail, depth, and development in written work. Specifically, instructors will be looking for the student's ability to reason and provide rationales for conclusions, the extent of critical thinking, and the development of examples and analogies.

- *Synthesis:* The degree to which the student "brings it all together" and incorporates course material into the creation of new insights, unique products, and/or creative solutions to hypothetical or actual situations studied in the course.

Academic Integrity

The University of Maryland is one of a small number of universities with a student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge. The Honor Code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on academic assignments or exams, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures.

The instructors will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this course and will actively investigate any alleged or apparent incident. Consistent with the spirit and intent of the Honor Code, students in this course will be asked to write the following signed statement on each exam and assignment: ***"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination."***

Compliance with the Honor Code at the University of Maryland is administered by the Student Honor Council. For additional information about the Honor Council or the Honor Pledge, see the Office of Judicial Programs and Student Ethical Development's website (http://www.jpo.umd.edu).

Religious Observances

The University System of Maryland policy on religious observances provides that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. If you experience a conflict in this course due to your personal religious observances, please consult with the instructor(s) in advance so we can give careful consideration to your conflict.

Students with Disabilities

Students with physical, mental, psychological, and/or learning disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructors if reasonable accommodations can be made to assist learning and evaluation in this class. In addition, the Office of Disability Support Services at the University of Maryland (301-314-7682) provides a variety of services to students with disabilities; staff are available to consult with students at any time. Students are encouraged to take advantage of this resource if needed.

Class Schedule

OVERALL CONTEXTS – IDENTITY AND CHANGE

Week 1	**Introduction to the Course**
Tuesday 8/31	Introductions, Overview of Course Syllabus
Thursday 9/2	Identity and Change

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Week 2	**Identity & Change, Continued**
Tuesday 9/7	Dimensions of Identity – Identity Exercise
Thursday 9/9	Identity Case Study & Capstone Options

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Week 3	*Skin Deep*
Tuesday 9/14	Film: *Skin Deep*
Thursday 9/16	Discuss Film *E-MAIL JOURNAL DUE: Identity*

DYNAMIC 1 – PERCEPTION

Week 4	**Media Context, Challenge of Perceptions of Self and Others** Guest Instructor: Dr. Carlos Cortés
Tuesday 9/21	Mass Media as Diversity Educators
Thursday 9/23	Creation, Content, and Reception

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Week 5	**Perception & Leadership Practice 1**
Tuesday 9/28	Generalizations, Stereotypes, and Labels
Thursday 9/30	Labels *PAPER 1 DUE*

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Week 6   **Media Context, Challenge of Perceptions of Self and Others,**
                              Continued

Tuesday, 10/5   Leadership Practice 1 & Perception Case Study

Thursday, 10/7   Analysis of Media Journals - Guest Instructor: Dr. Carlos Cortés
                              MEDIA JOURNAL DUE
                              E-MAIL JOURNAL DUE: Perception

DYNAMIC 2 – BALANCE

Week 7   **Balance and Leadership Practice 2**

Tuesday 10/12   Leadership Practice 2 & Strengths of Diversity

Thursday 10/14   Balance Case Study

DYNAMIC 3 – EQUITY

Week 8   **Equity and Leadership Practice 3**

Tuesday 10/19   Equity and Equality

Thursday 10/21   Equity Case Study
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Week 9   **Equity, Continued & Midterm Exam**

Tuesday 10/26   Leadership Practice 3

Thursday 10/28   MIDTERM EXAM
                              E-MAIL JOURNAL DUE: Balance & Equity

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LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Week 10   **Theories of Leadership & Leadership Practice 4**

Tuesday 11/2   Theories of Leadership

Thursday 11/4   Leadership Practice 4 & Climate

DYNAMIC 4 – INTERACTION

Week 11	**Interactions**
Tuesday 11/9	Identity Group Interactions
Thursday 11/11	Identity Group Interactions, Continued

DILEMMAS

Week 12	**Multicultural Dilemmas**
Tuesday 11/16	Tame vs. Wicked & Leadership Practice 5
Thursday 11/18	Tame vs. Wicked Case Study *E-MAIL JOURNAL DUE: Leadership/Interaction/Dilemmas*

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Week 13	**Review Midterm Exam / Thanksgiving**
Tuesday 11/23	Review Midterm Exam
Thursday 11/25	No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday

DYNAMIC 5 – LIMITS

Week 14	**Limits & Leadership Practice 6**
Tuesday 11/30	Limits & Leadership Practice 6
Thursday 12/2	Limits, Continued *PAPER 2 DUE*

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Week 15	**Limits, Continued**
Tuesday 12/7	Limits Case Study
Thursday 12/9	Final Case Study & Course Wrap Up *E-MAIL JOURNAL DUE: LIMITS*

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Week 16	**FINAL EXAM**
Friday 12/17	Scheduled Exam Time: 1:30-3:30 PM

BSOS 301 – Constructive Leadership Practices

Leadership Practice 1:

Draw constructively and flexibly on knowledge about groups while using that knowledge as a clue, not as an assumption about individuals.

Leadership Practice 2:

Build upon the strengths of diversity in order to work toward a common goal.

Leadership Practice 3:

Work toward equality by determining when it is appropriate to treat all people alike and when it is appropriate to treat them differently.

Leadership Practice 4:

Create a climate in which people feel welcome to draw upon their diverse cultures and experiences while not making members of groups feel obligated to constantly represent or speak for "their people."

Leadership Practice 5:

Distinguish between those problems that can be resolved merely by establishing a rule and those that additionally will require long-range, continuous action to modify attitudes, perceptions, and behavior.

Leadership Practice 6:

Accommodate constructively to diversity while also determining which accommodations are reasonable and which need to be limited.

Common Ground Dialogue Program Participant Evaluations:
Helpfulness of Peer Dialogue Leaders

Spring 2001 – Fall 2004

Question 3:

Please comment on the extent to which the Peer Dialogue Leaders had an influence on your experience:

_____ they were helpful   _____ had no effect   _____ they were unhelpful

Comments by students who checked "they were helpful":

- They were good at coordinating the discussion.
- They let group participants voice their opinions before putting forth any clarifying information.
- They led discussion without being too influential.
- Organized discussion.
- Well researched. Knew what they were talking about. Good at keeping conversation on track.
- Good mediators and to keep the group on track.
- During dead moments, the dialogue group leaders were able to get the discussion going again.
- Good job keeping the dialogue going.
- The leaders were great influence further discussion about issues of the topic.
- They led the discussions and just kept everything straight.
- They were good.
- Helped start discussion and keep it going.
- They kept the conversation going productively.
- I learned a lot about other races and people's experiences.
- They were laid back but still had control of the group.
- They threw in follow-up questions, directed the conversation, kept it in focus.
- Gave ideas that I never would have thought of.
- They helped facilitate communication.
- They directed the discussion on the right path/got us back on track by asking questions.
- Helped us stay on track. Discussions ran smoothly.
- They were great moderators.
- Very helpful – facilitated talks nicely
- Very good at guiding conversation and keeping group on task.
- They would lead us in a new direction if we hit a roadblock and would provide thought-provoking questions.
- They were good at moving the discussion along at slow points.
- They contributed, but let us do most of the talking. Asked thought-provoking questions.
- They were both very helpful managing and steering the discussion.
- They really wanted the group to discuss. They helped us to speak our minds.
- They were helpful and entertaining. When there was a lull in discussion they prodded our minds in a different direction.
- They're great!
- Very good at facilitating discussion. Good group/team dynamic.
- They made sure conversation was started without telling us what to say. Helped to get all members involved.
- They really helped us to focus and were great at facilitating our conversation.
- Good job.
- They did a good job facilitating the discussion.
- Both were awesome leaders.
- When things slowed down, they helped move the dialogue along.
- They were very well informed about how to keep the discussions going while not taking a stance on the issue.

- They did a really good job. They furthered the conversation, and also nurtured us to speak freely about the issue. Overall a comfortable environment.
- Very good facilitators! They tried their best to keep the discussion going.
- They listened and did not impose their own beliefs.
- Helped focus discussion to help us come to conclusions on how we felt.
- They were very helpful in facilitating a dialogue, keeping track of all important and key points, and helping us in analyzing quotes and discussed topics.
- Went off topic a few times – they could've helped us get back on track.
- They helped get discussion rolling when all was quiet.
- Good leaders. Approachable, realistic, and helpful. Maybe a little too inactive some times but still very good.
- Both were extremely knowledgeable and understanding. They led the group in a direct, non-biased, easy-going manner.
- They threw out some ideas when we were stuck and let us take it from there. Participated in some discussion as well to add perspectives.
- Helped give some comments and directed the group.
- Facilitated the discussion well and did a good job of helping things along without steering the group in any specific direction.
- Friendly, informed; helped dialogue when we got stuck.
- They did a good job of monitoring the group, added in helpful facts.
- Kept us on the right topic. Told us facts we did not know.
- They helped break the ice.
- Good job, very good and etc.
- They let us discuss the issue without any interruptions from them. However, they interrupted when necessary.
- Good job guys.
- They were cool, kept the group in line.
- Very knowledge and helpful in continuing the conversation.
- They kept us on task, helped more the discussion along.
- Yes, they were very informative and directed the flow very well.
- They were both very easy to talk to and friendly. They were like participants and in the group and leaders only when needed.
- Very helpful in moving the discussion along.
- Funny, energetic. Stimulated conversation very well.
- They shared as we did and helped move things along.
- They were fun.
- They were very carefree and open-minded. They encouraged dialogue and understanding.
- Very friendly and confident, helped with flow and offered their own opinions to help foster a feeling of closeness.
- They were very effective in facilitating our dialogue in an unbiased manner.
- Kept the conversations on track.
- Helped reword particular thoughts so everyone understood, gave all participants chance to speak.
- Good job – neutral.
- They were very good in working through and administering conversations on the topic.
- Stayed neutral and led discussion. Guided the group. Helped fill in conversation kept things under control.
- Very impartial and great listeners – able to sum up important points and regulate/focus discussion.
- In order to give us perspective, the leaders said that chances are nothing we say or do in this group will have an impact in the outside world, so I was able to be more objective because I knew the real purpose was to learn how to discuss issues in a civil manner.
- They really helped the movement of conversation.
- Very helpful, excellent job making sure nobody was offended.
- They were great.
- They helped move from one topic to the next and helped clarify what we wouldn't put into words.
- They used to initiate the discussions, which always helped the group to throw out ideas/thoughts.
- They were very good about restating our thoughts and keeping things going in a productive direction.
- They helped to guide the group when a topic became redundant and no new points were raised.
- Excellent leaders, always helpful and involved.
- Stepped in at the right times.
- They kept comments brief, stopped people from going on to tangents.
- They helped structure the dialogue in the first sessions. This lead to open and informative discussions in later sessions.
- They did not impose their views on us; rather they let us talk out our own opinions.
- Very well trained, competent, capable.
- They explained the goals and objective of each discussion really well and helped in getting the group going.
- Very informative – kept dialogue going.

- When we were on tangents, brought us back to issue. Also kept things civil and diverted attacks on individual views.
- The leaders were great at facilitating the dialogue. They were very effective in assisting the group to discuss in a respectful and appropriate manner.
- I enjoyed how much (name) was devil's advocate, sparked discussion.
- They were a lot more helpful then the pamphlet.
- Greatly facilitated dialogue at moments when group was stuck.
- Very knowledgeable on the subject.
- Helped keep us civil and on topic.
- Clarified issues.
- Friendly and considerate – helpful in conversation.
- I learned how to communicate my views.
- (Name) and (name) were excellent. They always kept the conversation to the topic and had great suggestions when we were stuck.
- Both were respectful and facilitated an effective dialogue.
- They helped facilitate discussion.
- They did not put forth their opinion but were very good in helping us stay on topic and create topics.
- They brought us back on track and gave us all the impression of some form of ordered control, it wouldn't have worked without them, but they didn't provide facts that may have helped.
- They brought up different issues to think about.
- They helped us stay focused and directed us when necessary.
- They were extremely helpful in that they posed new questions when we ran out of ideas. They also knew when to mediate if topics got too heated.
- They were very nice and kept the discussion in control.
- Dialogue group leaders kept the group focused on the discussion and made it easier for us to express our opinions.
- (Name) is very good. (Name) was not as familiar with the topic.
- Very knowledgeable.
- Good in mediating.
- They provided unbiased information.
- They were fair and led well.
- They helped guide the conversation and steered us away from personal attacks.
- Both my leaders were very good and excellent at guiding the discussion.
- Awesome leaders.
- They encouraged us to keep coming up with ideas.
- Always controlled discussion.
- When the conversation lagged, the facilitators knew exactly what to say to get it going again. They were both nice and allowed us all to talk but also chimed in when it was necessary. Very good group leaders!
- The group leaders ran things very smoothly.
- (Name) and (name) were very effective; they were personally considerate but were assertive when needed.
- They were very good at finding issues to bring to us to make us think more critically.
- Kept the topic moving and gave all people a chance to express themselves.
- They helped suggest different perspectives.
- They guided me in the right directions during the discussions and they mediated.
- They helped to keep the discussion going when it stalled or slowed down.
- Definitely helped in facilitating our conversations.
- (Name) is a funny guy.
- I learned a lot about how others felt.
- They were very helpful to keep us talking, gave us lots of insight and led us to new ideas.
- Kept conversations in order.
- Kept conversations flowing.
- They were good in keeping us on track.
- Very flexible and helped keep the conversation going.
- They kept everything in order.
- Good facilitators, promoted discussion.
- Knew how to lead the group.
- Kept discussions moving and allowed for silence and thought.
- Good leaders – encouraging.
- Stayed calm and neutral.
- (Name) and (name) were chill.
- Knowledgeable.
- Both leaders really created a relaxed environment that was conducive to discussion.
- Cool people.

- (Name) and (name) were fantastic.
- Kept everything calm.
- Made good points that furthered the discussion but didn't interject except when the group was quiet.
- Very good, enjoyed them.
- They facilitated the discussion pretty well. Guided it in the right direction.
- Instructors were great! (Name) and (name) were great leaders.
- They helped guide the discussion.
- They directed the conversation.
- They were good, unbiased facilitators. They simply led the discussion, they didn't sway opinion.
- They did a good job of guiding us back to the topic.
- Awesome.
- Good job keeping on subject.
- They helped lead the discussion and bring focus.
- They jumped in when the conversation reached dead points.
- They led conversation and encouraged critical thinking.
- They led very well and made it active.
- Did a good job with concerns, issues, and guiding conversations.
- They were enthusiastic.
- (Name) and (name) did a wonderful job.
- Led the group well, made sure the discussions flowed and did not fall apart, made it fun and enjoyable.
- Helped to begin and carry on conversation; made sure everyone spoke and had a turn.
- They kept discussion on track.
- They facilitated the discussion very well.
- They did well managing the group.
- Very nice, good, sincere people.
- (Name) and (name) were really nice and understanding.
- Brought up good points, but also shielded certain issues/viewpoints from being further discussed.
- Checked in with me privately about how I felt. Both (name) and (name) were wonderful.
- I really appreciated their input.
- The leaders did a great job facilitating the time. I felt that their viewpoints hindered the fairness of the discussion.
- They helped us to stay on track and look for a consensus.
- They stimulated discussion and kept us on track.
- Guided us and encouraged us to speak even if we were a little off topic. Prevented arguments by offering objective analysis of the particular debate.
- They brought up good points that led to many discussions. They were also helpful in straightening out the facts.
- They were extremely outgoing, mediating, and carried the discussion professionally. Excellent job!!
- They facilitated and stopped us when necessary.
- Let us talk when we needed too; interrupted when points were overstated. Excellent job!!
- They helped guide the topic of conversation very well.
- Very helpful in leading and directing discussion.
- They helped move the discussion along.
- Directed discussion productively and towards consensus and away from vicious confrontation.
- Very good at facilitating.
- We had great leaders and they helped tremendously.
- It was good to have group leaders who know about the topic and had some input also.
- I liked them both. They helped the discussions.
- Good facilitators.
- Kept the group on track, when we wanted to talk about related topics.

Comments by students who checked "had no effect":

- They were decent. They're not supposed to take sides and they didn't.
- They kept us on track, but their presence really wasn't felt.
- I like them.
- I feel I've already been aware of those topics.
- They were just letting us try to control the conversation but sometimes I think they could have interjected more during the stale periods with questions from other sides of position or other opposing thinking questions.
- They moved things along without giving opinions. Raised good questions yet let us stray.

Comments by students who checked "they were unhelpful":

(No comments).

Development of Quality of Thinking – PDL Training Document

As people mature and become educated, even "enlightened," their thinking changes over time. A number of theorists have studied these changes and have proposed a theoretical picture of the nature of the changes (e.g. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; King & Kitchener, 1994; Perry, 1970, 1981). Intellectual changes move across several parameters including the following:

CONCRETE THINKING ----------becomes---------ABSTRACT THINKING

Works with only observable factors	Able to see connections to other topics
Needs very clear, hands-on examples	Able to generalize from what is observed to hypothetical examples
Sees only the obvious	

SIMPLE THINKING-----------------becomes--------- COMPLEX THINKING

Considers one thing at a time	Tolerance for intricate, multifaceted problems
Solves one problem in isolation from others	Able to weigh numerous factors and components at the same time

EXTERNAL AUTHORITY---------becomes--------- INTERNAL AUTHORITY

Relies on others and experts for opinions and assurance	Has developed own sense of assurance and expertise
Unable to be autonomous	Has developed own standards, ethics and basis for decisions

CERTITUDE-------------------------becomes--------- COMFORT WITH DOUBT, UNCERTAINTY & INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

Belief that one either knows what one needs to know or that someone can give knowledge necessary for problem-solving and decisions	Not deterred by uncertainty
Assumption that one knows everything there is know (in some areas)	Accustomed to making decisions and plans in the absence of 100% predictability of outcomes
Demands certainty in order to make decisions and plans	Motivated to learn and investigate novel or confusing areas of knowledge
	Understands the saying, "The more I learn, the less I know"

Three general stages or "states of mind and thinking" have been hypothesized to describe the way that thinking changes and matures. These stages are relevant to multicultural learning as well as learning in other areas.

I.   DUALISTIC AND RECEIVED KNOWING

The dualistic thinker sees situations and problems in stark, *black and white, "either – or"* terms. This person believes there is a right and wrong answer to most any situation and that if he or she does not know what the right answer is, there is an expert who does know.

This is called "received" knowing due to the assumption among dualists that one can rely on experts and authorities for instruction in all the areas where one is not informed. Dualists assume that in order to become educated in a particular subject area, they must find the proper authority or expert and learn the necessary knowledge from them. The dualist is impatient with an "expert" who expresses tentative or provisional conclusions.

Dualists tend to strongly defend views that they hold as fact and may attack and ridicule opposing views. They may feel inadequate or guilty if they are proven or perceived as being "in the wrong."

II.   MULTIPLISTIC AND SUBJECTIVE KNOWING

Dualists who have faced enough problems and situations in which they were presented with *multiple* opinions, when so called "experts" disagreed, and when they saw similar situations turn out in different ways, accommodate these contradictions by learning that many people have many different opinions, views, and standards. Thus, they begin to take a multiplistic point of view. They learn that all perspectives have some validity.

Multiplists may be so overwhelmed by the "multiplicity" of views, opinions and standards that they assume an "anything goes" mentality and use personal or "subjective" standards to make decisions. Multiplists believe in the validity of their own views and theories and respect those of others as pretty much equally valid, with an attitude of "To each his own." As a result, multiplists can be reluctant to judge any view as patently wrong.

Multiplists become more comfortable with complexity, confusion, and uncertainty. They draw upon their own intuitions, feelings and views as a basis for their authority. Multiplists may reject their earlier views on what constitutes an authority or an expert and start to see those who serve in such roles as little more than individuals who are operating on their own subjective knowledge instead of expertise.

III.   RELATIVISTIC AND CONTEXTUAL KNOWING

The old saying, "It's all relative" actually describes the view of a multiplist who is about to become a relativistic thinker. A true relativist understands that there are such things as truth and objective fact, but the *context* in which facts exist can make for fact in one situation and falsehood in another.

Relativists have learned to think in complex and contingent ways. They often suspend judgment until they believe they have examined a large number of interacting factors, and even then their judgments may be changed as they come upon new information and insights. As such, their thinking changes contingent upon new data, research, or experience.

Relativists respect expertise while at the same time try to constructively second guess the degree to which an expert's view actually applies to the specifics of any given situation or problem. Relativists are comfortable with the view of an "expert" as someone who has arrived at objective fact through study and analysis, but who is also subjectively involved and potentially biased to a given view, type of thought, or strategy for analysis.

Relativists try to integrate concrete facts and abstract theory. Their approaches to thinking about, sizing up, or analyzing situations usually start with gathering facts, asking lots of questions, and looking for all the factors that are at play in a specific situation and context.

While relativists often have a strong sense of their internal authority and a set of principles or maxims that guide their thinking, they apply these to their thinking about any specific problem or situation in a flexible way. They look first at the uniqueness of the specific situation they are presented with and then see how principles and theories apply, rather than making the situation conform to their principles, theories, or assumptions.

This is not to say that relativists do not have a foundational set of personal assumptions, values, principles, and beliefs. They do, and they do not just alter them impulsively the way a multiplist might. Relativists have a solid sense of who they are and an understanding of their own style of thinking, biases, and assumptions. Relativists have a well-developed "process" of thinking that enables them to adapt to and accommodate different types of complex and intricate problems and challenges for their thinking.

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Adapted from:

Adams, M., Bell, L., and Griffin, P. (1997). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook for teachers and trainers*. New York: Routledge.

References:

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing*. New York: Basic Books.
King, P. M., & Kitchener, K. S. (1994). *Developing reflective judgment: Understanding and promoting intellectual growth and critical thinking in adolescents and adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Perry, W. G. (1968/1970). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
Perry, W. G. (1981). Cognitive and ethical growth: The making of meaning. In A. W. Chickering & Associates (Eds.), *The modern American college* (pp. 76-116). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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APPENDIX G

Informed Consent Form for Study Participants

Project Title: The Impact of a Peer Multicultural Dialogue Leader Training Program on Cognitive Development of College Students and Overall Perceptions of their Learning: An Evaluative Case Study

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Statement of age and participation: I state that I am over 18 years of age and wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Dr. Susan R. Komives in the Department of Counseling and Personnel Services at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this research is to study the impact of the Spring 2005 Peer Dialogue Leader training program on cognitive development, to assess the Peer Dialogue Leaders' learning and experiences in the training phase of the program as compared to the leading phase, and to explore perceptions of their overall learning from the program.

Procedures and obligations of participants: The obligations for participants in this study are two written essays that will take 30 to 40 minutes each to complete, two individual interviews that will last 1 to 1 1/2 hours each, weekly e-mail reflections to the researcher throughout the course of the training semester, and a log of experiences related to co-leading the dialogue group. Additional procedures for the study include researcher observations of selected training sessions and group conversations with study participants about perceptions of their learning. Each student who participates in the study will receive a $100 gift certificate at the conclusion of the Spring 2005 semester. ***Tape recording of interviews***: Each of the two individual interviews will be tape-recorded. Access to the tapes from the interviews will be limited to the researchers only and the tapes will be destroyed after the case report for the study has been finalized.

Sample interview questions:

- What are your overall impressions of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program so far? What has stood out for you? What aspect(s) have you liked the most? What have you liked the least?
- In your training thus far, have you encountered any significant beliefs and/or values among the other Peer Dialogue Leaders or the trainers that are different from your own? What is your reaction to this diversity? How do you account for these differences?
- As you prepare to begin co-leading your dialogue group, how confident do you feel? How prepared to you feel? Which aspects of training do you think will help you most in leading your group? In which areas do you feel least prepared or underprepared?
- As you reflect on your experience co-leading the dialogue group, discuss the diverse views and perspectives in the group. Did you encounter any significant beliefs or values among the group members that are different from your own? How have you gone about evaluating the conflicting views or beliefs you encountered?

Duration of the study: This study will begin in February 2005 and continue through May 2005. The total time commitment for each participant beyond the regularly scheduled training sessions for the Spring 2005 Peer Dialogue Program will be approximately 6 hours, which will include the two individual interviews and time required for writing e-mail reflections and logs. Both written essays will be administered during regularly scheduled training sessions.

Confidentiality: All information collected in this study is confidential to the extent permitted by law. I understand that the data I provide will be grouped with data others provide for reporting and presentation and that my name will not be used. However, since the number of participants in this study will be small, there is the possibility that some of what participants say or write might not be totally anonymous because of the unique identifying information associated with each individual. To mitigate this concern, participants will be given opportunities to read interview transcripts and the final report and add, delete, or correct any statements attributed to them.

Risks: There are no known risks related to participation in this study.

Benefits, freedom to withdraw, ability to ask questions, and freedom to decline to answer questions: This study is not designed to help me personally, but to help the investigators learn more about students' learning in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. I am free to ask questions or withdraw from participation at any time and without penalty. In addition, I am free to decline to answer any question in any interview associated with this study.

Contact information of investigators:

Rhondie Voorhees   Dr. Susan R. Komives
2101 Annapolis Hall   Department of Counseling and Personnel Services
Department of Resident Life   2211 Benjamin Building
University of Maryland   University of Maryland
(301) 314-4838   (301) 405-2870
rhondie@umd.edu   sk22@umail.umd.edu

Contact information of Institutional Review Board:

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact

Institutional Review Board Office
University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742
Telephone: (301) 405-4212   E-mail: irb@deans.umd.edu

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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

MID Cover Sheet (Both Administrations)

ESSAY COVER SHEET

The attached essay asks you to describe what you believe to be the most significant aspects of your learning in different settings. Instructions are provided at the top of the essay page; please respond to the directions in the space provided, using the back of the sheet if necessary.

There are no right or wrong responses; what is most important is that you present clearly the way you think about the specific aspects of the course or learning environment you describe. Your opinions are very important to us as we study how students think about teaching and learning issues, so we ask that you take this task seriously and give your responses some careful thought. We appreciate your cooperation in sharing what you find most important in your own learning.

Before responding to the essay, please provide us with the basic information below. Such information is helpful to us in identifying different perspectives among different groups of people and will be held in strict confidence. At no time will any information be used to identify you as an individual, although in some cases your code or social security number may be used to allow for a follow-up contact with you in the future.

NAME (Pseudonym):_____ **DATE**:_____

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (or Student Code): _____

SEX (check one):   Male ___ Female ___ **AGE**:_____

ETHNIC HERITAGE (optional): _____

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE: Number of college-level credits to date _____
(Check one: Semester _____ or Quarter _____)

MAJOR (If undeclared, please indicate): _____

CURRENT GPA: _____

MID Essay Prompt – Administration 1

ESSAY A **(Knefelkamp & Widick, 1974)**

Describe the best course you've experienced in your education. What made it positive for you? Feel free to go into as much detail as you think is necessary to give a clear idea of the course. For example, you might want to discuss areas such as the subject matter, class activities (readings, films, etc.), what the teacher was like, the atmosphere of the class, the evaluation procedures – whatever you think was most important in making this experience so positive for you. Please be as specific as possible in your response, describing as completely as you can why the issues you discuss stand out to you as important.

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MID Essay Prompt – Administration 2

ESSAY Q **(Moore & MacGregor, 1992; Moore, 2002)**

Look back on your experiences in this course or program and reflect on your learning in the course as well as discoveries about yourself as a learner. Please be specific and concrete; provide as much detail about what stood out for you as you think is necessary to offer a clear idea of your learning experience. For example, you might want to discuss any or all of the following topics: the content/subject matter, the kinds of teachers and teaching you experienced, the classroom atmosphere, your role as a student, the evaluation procedures that were used. What elements have made a difference in your learning, and why?

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APPENDIX K

Interview Protocol – Mid-Semester Interview (First Interview)

Purpose and Notes for the Interviewer

The overall purpose of the mid-semester interview (the first interview) is to assess students' experiences in the preparation phase of the Peer Dialogue Leader program related to the three research questions for this study. Specifically, this interview will focus on (a) the student's characterizations of his or her overall learning during the preparation phase of the program; (b) the impact of the preparation phase on cognitive development, especially the student's understanding of multiple perspectives; (d) the student's current thoughts about the topic of the dialogue group that he or she will be leading, including an understanding of multiple perspectives about it; and (d) the student's thoughts about how well-prepared they were in the preparation phase of the program and expectations of the leading phase.

The interviewer should "ask general questions and [encourage] the student to describe experiences and ideas to avoid structuring the student's thinking" (Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 411). In addition, the student should "be encouraged to talk freely and elaborate or explain as necessary after each question to allow maximum freedom of response" (p. 411).

The interviewer will also bring copies of the student's first essay written for the MID and copies of e-mail reflections and follow-up on any comments of interest at relevant points throughout the interview.

Introduction

Thank you for being here today. As you know, I am conducting this study on the Peer Dialogue Leader training program this semester for my dissertation research as a doctoral candidate in the College Student Personnel Administration Program in the College of Education. I have several questions I'd like to ask you today regarding your experience in the training program, your thoughts about your overall learning in the program so far, and your thoughts about co-leading your upcoming dialogue group.

This "will be an open-ended interview in order to allow you every opportunity to offer your ideas on each aspect of the learning experiences we will discuss. Feel free to talk about any experiences or ideas that come to mind as we discuss each area" (Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 411).

The interview should last approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours. I'd also like to remind you that if I quote or refer to anything you say in either of the two interviews we will do for this study, it will be under the pseudonym you have chosen and your real name will never be attached to any of your comments. I am the only one who will know your identity. In addition, I will provide you an opportunity to review the final transcript from this interview to check it for accuracy. Do you have any questions?

To keep an accurate record of this session and so I can focus on listening to what you say, I'm going to tape-record the remainder of the session. Do I have your permission to record? (Turn on the recorder.)

Questions

A. **Introductory questions (to establish rapport).**

1. Tell me about your <u>overall impressions</u> of the Peer Dialogue Leader training program so far. What stood out for you? What aspect(s) have you liked the most? What have you liked the least?

B. **The student's overall characterizations of his or her learning from the preparation phase of the program.**

2. Please reflect on your experiences in the first seven weeks of training.

   - <u>What did you learn</u>?
   - Do you have any examples of something you learned *in* training that you applied to experiences or interactions you had this semester *outside* of training? If so, please elaborate.
   - During the first part of this semester, did you have other things going on in your life *outside* of training that reinforced what you learned *in* training? If so, please describe.
   - Which aspects of training were easiest for you to learn? Which were the most challenging or difficult?

C. **Impact of the preparation phase of the program on cognitive development.**

3. As you look back on your experience in the training program thus far:

   - Tell me about any <u>significant beliefs and/or values among the other Peer Dialogue Leaders or the trainers that you encountered that are different from your own</u>. Please give specific examples.
   - What is your reaction to this diversity in opinion or perspective? In other words, how do you account for these differences?
   - How do you go about evaluating conflicting views or beliefs that you encounter? In other words, how do you evaluate the quality of them; what makes a "good opinion" and what makes a "bad" opinion?
   - In general, how, if it all, do you interact with people who have views that are different from your own?

   (Note: The focus here is on the <u>process</u> of evaluating and/or interacting, not on specific beliefs or reactions per se.)

4. I want to focus on <u>the topic of the dialogue group you will be leading after Spring Break</u>. Although I know you are trained to remain neutral on the topic while co-leading your group, I'm curious about your personal views.

   - What is you personal view on (dialogue group topic)?
   - How have you arrived at this particular view?

- Can you remember a time when you didn't think this way and recall how your view changed over time?
- What, if any, alternative perspectives are you aware of related to this issue? (e.g. What are all the things that other people think about this issue?)
- Which of these other perspectives, if any, have you considered incorporating into your own view?

5. Please <u>review the essay</u> you wrote for the study at the beginning of the training program.

- Have you learned anything during training that might have caused you to alter your response in any way? If so, what? Have you learned anything in any other setting this semester (e.g. in another class, from the news, or in an interaction with other students, friends, or family members) that might have caused you to alter your response in any way? If so, what?

D. Thoughts about preparation in the preparation phase of the program and expectations of the leading phase.

6. As you <u>prepare to begin co-leading</u> your group after Spring Break:

- How confident do you feel? How prepared do you feel?
- What do you think it's going to be like?
- Which aspects of training do you think will help you the most (will be most beneficial or useful to you) in leading your group?
- In which areas do you feel least prepared or underprepared?

E. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Closure

Thank you so much for coming today. As you know, I would like to do one more interview with you after you have finished co-leading your dialogue group. In addition, I will be following up to offer you the opportunity to review the transcript from this interview to make sure I've captured everything accurately. Therefore, I'll be back in touch soon.

_____

Questions adapted from:

"Structured Perry Interview Format," Revised August, 2002, Center for the Study of Intellectual Development, Olympia, Washington.

Reference:

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (1992). *Knowing and reasoning in college: Gender-related patterns in students' intellectual development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

APPENDIX L

Interview Protocol – End-Semester Interview (Second Interview)

Purpose and Notes for the Interviewer

The overall purpose of the end-semester interview (the second interview) is to assess the student's overall experiences in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program – in both the preparation phase and the leading phase – related to the three research questions for this study. Specifically, the interview will focus on (a) the student's experiences leading the dialogue group; (b) the student's experiences in the leading phase of the program as compared to the preparation phase; (c) the impact of the overall experience on cognitive development, especially the student's understanding of multiple perspectives; (d) the student's thoughts about the topic of the dialogue after having had the experience of leading the group; and (e) the student's overall characterizations of his or her overall learning from program, including BSOS 301.

The interviewer should "ask general questions and [encourage] the student to describe experiences and ideas to avoid structuring the student's thinking" (Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 411). In addition, the student should "be encouraged to talk freely and elaborate or explain as necessary after each question to allow maximum freedom of response" (p. 411).

The interviewer will also bring copies of the student's e-mail reflections written since the first interview and follow-up on any comments of interest at relevant points throughout the interview.

Introduction

Thank you for being here today. This is the second in-depth interview for this study. I have several questions I'd like to ask you today regarding your overall experiences in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program, your experiences co-leading your dialogue group, and your thoughts about your learning from the program.

This "will be an open-ended interview in order to allow you every opportunity to offer your ideas on each aspect of the learning experiences we will discuss. Feel free to talk about any experiences or ideas that come to mind as we discuss each area" (Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 411).

The interview should last approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours. I'd also like to remind you that if I quote or refer to anything you say in either of the two interviews we have done for this study, it will be under the pseudonym you've chosen and your name will never be attached to any of your comments. In addition, I will provide you an opportunity to review the final transcript from this interview to check it for accuracy. Do you have any questions?

To keep an accurate record of this session and so I can focus on listening to what you say, I'm going to tape-record the remainder of the session. Do I have your permission to record? (Turn on the recorder.)

Questions

A.   Introductory questions (to establish rapport).

1. Tell me about your <u>overall experience co-leading the dialogue group</u>:
   - What stood out for you?
   - What aspect(s) did you like the most? What did you like least?

B.   Experiences in the preparation phase of the program as compared to the leading phase.

2. As you reflect on the <u>experience of co-leading the group</u>:
   - How was it similar to your expectations of what it would be like? How was it different?
   - How prepared/confident did you feel?

3. In the last interview I asked you which <u>aspects of the training</u> you thought would help you most with leading the group.

   - Now that you've had the experience of leading the group, which aspects of training really *did* help you most?
   - Which aspects helped you least?
   - What would have been helpful to have been included in the training that was not included?

C.   Impact of the program on cognitive development.

4. As you reflect on your experience co-leading the dialogue group:

   - Tell me about the <u>diverse views and perspectives</u> in the group.
   - Did you encounter any views or beliefs that were new to you or that you hadn't heard before? If so, tell me about them.
   - What is your reaction to this diversity of opinions or perspective? In other words, how do you account for these differences?
   - How do you go about evaluating the conflicting views or beliefs you have encountered? In other words, how do you evaluate the quality of them; what makes a "good" opinion and what makes a "bad" opinion?
   - Do you think the experience of co-leading the group changed how you evaluate conflicting views? If so, how?

   (Note: The focus here is on the <u>process</u> of evaluating and/or interacting, not on specific beliefs or reactions per se.)

5. I want to continue to focus on <u>the topic of the dialogue group you led</u>. Although I know you were trained to remain neutral on the topic while you co-led your group, I'm curious about your personal views.

   - After having led the group, what is you personal view on (dialogue group topic) now?

- What is your understanding now of the multiple perspectives that exist on this topic?
- Did anything thing else happen to you during the time you were leading the group – perhaps in another class or outside of class – that taught you about the multiple perspectives that exist on this topic? If so, tell me about it.
- (Summary) Do you think the experience of leading this group caused you to re-evaluate your overall view of this topic in any way? If so, how?

D. The student's overall characterizations of his or her learning from the program, including BSOS 301.

6. Please reflect on your <u>overall experience in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program</u>, including the first seven weeks of training and the last four weeks co-leading the dialogue group.

   - What did you learn?
   - Since the first interview, do you have additional examples of something you learned *in* the training program that you applied to experiences or interactions *outside* of the program, perhaps in another class or in conversations with friends, or family, or other students?
   - Since the first interview, did you have other experiences *outside* of the program that reinforced what you learned *in* the program?

7. Finally, please think back to <u>BSOS 301</u>, which is really the first component of this overall training program.
   - Which section of the class were you in?
   - As you reflect on your training as a Peer Dialogue Leader and your experiences co-leading the dialogue group, what did you learn in BSOS 301 that was most helpful to prepare you? What was least helpful?
   - What would have been helpful for you to have learned in the class that would have prepared you for this experience that *wasn't* covered in the class?

E. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Closure

Thank you so much for coming today. As I finish this second round of interviews, I'll be continuing to analyze the data in order to develop themes, categories, and interpretations of the findings. As I discussed before, I will also following up to offer you an opportunity to review the transcript from this interview to make sure that everything has been captured correctly. Therefore, I'll be back in touch soon. Thank you again for your participation!

_____

Questions adapted from:

"Structured Perry Interview Format," Revised August, 2002, Center for the Study of Intellectual Development, Olympia, Washington.

Reference:

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (1992). *Knowing and reasoning in college: Gender-related patterns in students' intellectual development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

APPENDIX M

Template for Field Notes from Training Session Observations

Purpose of the Observations

The purpose of the field observations of the training sessions and consultation sessions is to observe the Peer Dialogue Leaders in the natural setting of the training program (Merriam, 1998) and to note examples of comments made by the participants that relate to any of the three research questions for this study. In order to develop a holistic view of the case, the researcher will also note aspects of the setting and environment as suggested by Merriam including a brief description of the participants, the trainers, the physical setting, training activities, subtle factors such as informal and unplanned activities, symbolic meaning of words and terms, non-verbal communication, "what does not happen" (Patton, 1990, p. 235), and the researcher's own thoughts and behavior.

Role of the Observer

The researcher will assume a modified *observer as participant role* (Merriam, 1998) for this study. This means the researcher will observe the training sessions primarily in the role of researcher and observer but will interact with the group occasionally by asking clarifying questions.

In the first observation session, the researcher will provide a brief overview of the researcher's role and the purpose of the study to the training group.

Categories for Field Notes

A.   Observations Related to the <u>Research Questions</u>

The researcher will take note of examples of comments, discussions, or interchanges between the trainers and the Peer Dialogue Leader training participants related to:

- Cognitive development as defined by Perry (1968/1970)

- Multiple perspectives

- Learning in the preparation phase as compared to the leading phase (experiential learning)

- Overall characterizations of the students' learning

B.   Observations Related to the <u>Setting and Environment</u>

- Training participants (e.g. visible identities, self-disclosed identities, and demeanor)

- Trainers (e.g. brief description)

- Physical setting

- Training activities

- Subtle factors (e.g. informal or unplanned activities, symbolic use and meaning of words and terms, non-verbal communication)

- What does not happen

C.   Observations Related to the <u>Researcher's Thoughts and Behaviors</u>

Examples include the impact of the researcher's presence on the session, what the researcher said or did, the researcher's own thoughts about the observations.

E-Mail Reflection Prompts

___

REFLECTION ENTRY 1

DUE: by 6:00 PM on Tuesday, March 15 (before your training session that evening)

Part A: Overall Learning

Please reflect on your <u>overall experience</u> so far in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. <u>What have you learned</u>? (e.g. about yourself, other people, and/or about how to lead a dialogue group). What has stood out for you?   Please describe and be as specific as possible with examples.

Part B: Learning Related to Your Thinking

As you reflect on your overall experience in training, <u>what have you learned or experienced that has challenged your thinking</u> in any way or caused you to think about something differently? Please describe and be as specific as possible with examples.

_____

REFLECTION ENTRIES 2– 5

Weekly Reflection Prompts During the Leading Phase:

(Four entries total, one after each group)

A. Your Experience Leading the Group

- What was it like to co-lead the dialogue group this week? How was it similar to what you expected? How was it different?
- As a co-leader of the dialogue group, what was easy for you this week? What was most challenging or difficult?

B. Your Learning from Leading the Group

- *Your overall learning:* What did you learn this week as a result of co-leading the group (e.g. about yourself, other people, and/or about how to lead a dialogue group)? Please describe and be as specific as possible with examples.

- *Your thinking about the dialogue group topic:* As a result of co-leading the group this week, did you learn or experience anything that caused you to reflect on the topic of your dialogue group or think about the topic in a different way (either during the group or after)? If so, please describe and be as specific as possible with examples.

APPENDIX O

Interview Protocol – Focus Group with PDL Alumni

Introduction

The overall purpose of this focus group is to assess former and returning PDLs' perceptions of (1) your overall experiences as a PDL, (2) your learning as a PDL, (3) your recollections about your experiences in the preparation phase of the program as compared to the leading phase, and (4) overall evaluation and critique of the Common Ground Dialogue Program.

I will ask general questions to prompt you to describe your experiences. Each of you is encouraged to talk freely and elaborate or explain as necessary in response to each question.

The focus group will last approximately 1-½ hours.

I'd also like to reiterate that if I quote or refer to anything you say in this focus group, it will be under the pseudonym you've chosen and your name will never be attached to any of your comments. In addition, I will provide you with an opportunity to review the focus group transcript and correct any statements attributed to you.

Do you have any questions?

To keep an accurate record of this session and so I can focus on listening to what you say I'm going to tape-record the remainder of the session. Do I have your permission to record? (Turn on the recorder.)

Questions

A.   Introductory question (to establish rapport).

1.   Please reflect on your experiences in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program and the Common Ground Dialogue Program:

- What stood out for you?
- What aspect(s) did you like the most?
- What did you like least?

B.   Experiences in the preparation phase of the program as compared to the leading phase.

(Research question: *How do the two phases of the training program – the preparation phase and the leading phase – differ in their impact?*)

Please reflect on your experience in the PDL training semester:

- How prepared/confident did you feel?
- Which aspects of training helped you most?
- Which aspects helped you least?
- What would have been helpful to have been included in the training that was not included?

C. The students' overall characterizations of their <u>learning</u> as a Peer Dialogue Leader.

Please reflect on your <u>overall experience in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program</u>, including BSOS 301, PDL training, and your experiences co-leading dialogue groups:

- What did you learn?
- Do you have examples of something you learned as a result of your participation in the program that you applied to experiences or interactions outside of the program, perhaps in another class or in conversations with friends, or family, or other students? Please elaborate.
- Did you have other experiences outside of program that reinforced what you learned during the program? If so, please explain.

D. Impact of the experience on the ability to see multiple perspectives.

Read research question: What is the impact of the training program on (a) cognitive development, and (b) understanding of multiple perspectives?

- How, if at all, did being a PDL impact you in this area?
- Could you elaborate with specific examples?

E. Overall, what has being a Peer Dialogue Leader meant to you?

F. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Closure

Thank you so much for coming today. I will be continuing to analyze the data I've collected in this study in order to develop themes, categories, and interpretations of the findings. I will also be following up to offer you an opportunity to review the transcript from this interview to make sure I've captured everything accurately. Therefore, I'll be back in touch soon. Thank you again for your participation.

APPENDIX P

Informed Consent Form for Focus Group Participants

Project Title: The Impact of a Peer Multicultural Dialogue Leader Training Program on Cognitive Development of College Students and Overall Perceptions of their Learning: An Evaluative Case Study

_____

Statement of age and participation: I state that I am over 18 years of age and wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Dr. Susan R. Komives in the Department of Counseling and Personnel Services at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this research is to study the impact of the Spring 2005 Peer Dialogue Leader training program on cognitive development, to assess the Peer Dialogue Leaders' learning and experiences in the training phase of the program as compared to the leading phase, and to explore perceptions of their overall learning from the program.

Procedures and obligations of participants: The obligation for participants in this aspect of the study is participation in a 1½-hour focus group. Each student who participates in the focus group will receive a $25 gift certificate after the group is concluded. *Tape recording of interviews*: The focus group will be tape-recorded. Access to the tapes from the group will be limited to the researchers only and the tapes will be destroyed after the case report for the study has been finalized.

> *Sample focus group questions:*
>
> - Tell me about your overall experiences in Peer Dialogue Leader training and the Common Ground Dialogue Program.
> - As you reflect on the training you received as a Peer Dialogue Leader, how prepared or confident did you feel to lead dialogue groups? What aspects of training helped you most? What aspects helped you least?
> - What did you learn as a result of being a Peer Dialogue Leader?
> - Overall, what has being a Peer Dialogue Leader meant to you?

Duration of the study: This study began in February 2005 and will continue through August 2006.

Confidentiality: All information collected in this study is confidential to the extent permitted by law. I understand that the data I provide will be grouped with data others provide for reporting and presentation and that my name will not be used. However, since the number of participants in this study will be small, there is the possibility that some of what participants say or write might not be totally anonymous because of the unique identifying information associated with each individual. To mitigate this concern, participants will be given opportunities to read interview transcripts and the final report and add, delete, or correct any statements attributed to them.

Risks: There are no known risks related to participation in this study.

Benefits, freedom to withdraw, ability to ask questions, and freedom to decline to answer questions: This study is not designed to help me personally, but to help the investigators learn more about students' learning in the Peer Dialogue Leader training program. I am free to ask questions or

withdraw from participation at any time and without penalty. In addition, I am free to decline to answer any question in any interview associated with this study.

Contact information of investigators:

Rhondie Voorhees   Dr. Susan R. Komives
2101 Annapolis Hall   Department of Counseling and Personnel Services
Department of Resident Life   2211 Benjamin Building
University of Maryland   University of Maryland
(301) 314-4838   (301) 405-2870
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Contact information of Institutional Review Board:

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact

Institutional Review Board Office
University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742
Telephone: (301) 405-4212   E-mail: irb@deans.umd.edu

_____

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Demographic Characteristics of Spring 2005 Dialogue Group Participants

During Spring 2005, there were seven four-session Common Ground groups with 91 undergraduate student participants from the RA training course.

The participant application for the dialogue groups includes voluntary, open-ended questions about five dimensions of identity: gender, race/ethnicity, religious/spiritual affiliation, sexual orientation, and citizenship.

The results from these self-reported data are as follows for each dialogue group:

Group 1 – Intentional Methods in College and University Admissions:

Dialogue leaders:	**Cathleen** and **Soraya**
Total participants:	14
Gender:	7 women, 7 men
Race/ethnicity:	8 White, 3 Asian American, 2 Black or African American, 1 Asian/Middle Eastern
Religious/spiritual affiliation:	3 Christian, 3 Jewish, 2 Catholic, 1 Muslim, 5 did not respond
Sexual orientation:	11 Heterosexual or straight, 3 did not respond
Citizenship:	All 14 U.S. citizens

Group 2 – Interracial Adoption:

Dialogue leaders:	**Elena** and another trainee
Total participants:	13
Gender:	8 women, 5 men
Race/ethnicity:	4 White, 3 Asian American, 2 Black or African American, 2 Latino or Hispanic, 1 Black/Liberian, 1 Bi-racial (Black and White)
Religious/spiritual affiliation:	5 Christian, 4 Catholic, 1 Jewish, 1 Muslim, 1 Atheist, 1 did not respond
Sexual orientation:	10 Heterosexual or straight, 3 did not respond
Citizenship:	9 U.S. citizens, 2 dual citizenship (one U.S./India, one U.S./El Salvador), 1 from India,1 from Tunisia

Group 3 – Same-Sex Couples Fostering or Adopting Children:

Dialogue leaders:	**James** and a returning PDL
Total participants:	13
Gender:	8 women, 5 men
Race/ethnicity:	7 White, 4 Black or African American, 1 Black/Haitian, 1 Black and Asian
Religious/spiritual affiliation:	5 Catholic, 4 Christian, 1 Buddhist, 1 Jewish, 1 "none," 1 "not sure"
Sexual orientation:	8 Heterosexual or straight, 2 gay, 3 did not respond
Citizenship:	12 U.S. citizens, 1 from Eritrea

Group 4 – Racial Profiling:

Dialogue leaders:	**Keisha** and another trainee
Total participants:	10
Gender:	7 men, 3 women
Race/ethnicity:	3 White, 2 Black or African American, 1 African, 1 African American/Nigerian, 1Latino, 1Nigerian, 1 South Asian/ Indian
Religious/spiritual affiliation:	4 Catholic, 2 Christian, 2 Jewish, 1 Hindu, 1 did not respond
Sexual orientation:	9 Heterosexual or straight, 1 did not respond
Citizenship:	8 U.S. citizens, 1 dual citizenship (U.S. and El Salvador), 1 from India

Group 5 – Same-Sex Marriage:

Dialogue leaders:	**Leia** and a returning PDL
Total participants:	15
Gender:	10 women, 5 men
Race/ethnicity:	6 White, 2 Asian American, 2 Black or African American, 1 African, 1 African American/Indian, 1 Indian American, 1 Middle Eastern, 1 South Asian
Religious/spiritual affiliation:	7 Christian, 3 Catholic, 2 Muslim, 1Buddhist, 1 Hindu, 1 did not respond
Sexual orientation:	5 Heterosexual or straight, 3 gay, 7 did not respond
Citizenship:	13 U.S. citizens, 1 dual citizenship (U.S. and Pakistan), 1 from Nigeria

Group 6 – Death Penalty:

Dialogue leaders:	**Samantha** and another trainee
Total participants:	15
Gender:	8 men, 7 women
Race/ethnicity:	7 White, 2 Black or African American, 2 Indian, 1 African, 1 Asian Indian, 1 Hispanic, 1 Nepalese
Religious/spiritual affiliation:	5 Christian, 3 Jewish, 2 Catholic, 2 Hindu, 1 Muslim, 1 Agnostic, 1 did not respond
Sexual orientation:	13 Heterosexual or straight, 2 did not respond
Citizenship:	12 U.S. citizens, 1 from Argentina, 1 from India, 1 from Nigeria

Group 7 – Abortion:

Dialogue leaders:	**Sonia** and a returning PDL
Total participants:	11
Gender:	7 women, 4 men
Race/ethnicity:	5 White, 2 Black or African American, 1 Pakistani American, 1 Pakistani, 1 White and Chinese, 1 White and Middle Eastern
Religious/spiritual affiliation:	3 Catholic, 3 Christian, 2 Muslim, 2 "none," 1 did not respond
Sexual orientation:	9 Heterosexual or straight, 2 did not respond
Citizenship:	10 U.S. citizens, 1 from Pakistan

APPENDIX R

Learner Characteristics Implied by the Perry Scheme

	Position 2 Cues **Dualism**	**Position 3 Cues** **Early Multiplicity**	**Position 4 Cues** **Late Multiplicity**	**Position 5 Cues** **Contextual Relativism**
View of Knowledge	<u>All Knowledge is Known</u> There is a certainty that Right and Wrong answers exist for everything True Authorities are Right; the others are frauds Knowledge is a collection of information The best knowledge has a simple, direct connection to career	<u>Most</u> Knowledge is Known All knowledge is <u>knowable</u> (first view of learning as a *process* that the student can learn) Certainty that there exists a Right way to find the Right Answers Realization that some knowledge domains are "fuzzy" Views uncertainty is temporary Emphasis on the relevance/practicality of knowledge	In <u>Some Areas</u> We Still Have Certainty About Knowledge; <u>In Most Areas We Really Don't Know Anything for Sure</u> Certainty that there is no certainty (except in a few specialized areas) Hence – "Anything goes" perspective; all opinions can be just as valid as all others "Do your own thing"	All Knowledge is <u>Contextual</u> All knowledge is disconnected from any concept of Absolute Truth However, right and wrong, adequate and inadequate, appropriate and inappropriate can exist within a specific context and are judged by "rules of adequacy" that are determined by expertise and good thought processes "Facts in a context"
View of Role of <u>Authority/ Instructor</u>	Teacher is the SOURCE of Knowledge Role is to give the knowledge to the student; learning is an information exchange "Teacher (Authority) is all" – Teacher is the source of Right answers Good Teacher = Absolute Authority and Knower of Truth	Teacher is the Source of the RIGHT WAY to FIND Knowledge Teacher is the source of the Right methods/ processes of finding knowledge	Teacher is the Source/Facilitator of the PROCESS of Thinking; "The *way* they want us to think" Teacher is the model for good methods of scholarship Teacher can also be completely discounted	Teacher is the Source/Facilitator of EXPERTISE Role of expert-guide-consultant within the framework of "rules of adequacy" and within context Teacher as a catalyst for learning/seeking Mutuality of learning (student and teacher) One earns authority through having expertise

View of Role of **Student** as Learner	Student's role is to <u>receive</u> the information and to <u>demonstrate having learned the right answers</u>	Student's role is to <u>learn how to learn</u>	Student's role is to <u>learn to think for oneself</u>, to learn to use supportive evidence	Student's role is to <u>exercise the use of the intellect</u>, to shift from context to context, and to apply rules of adequacy to information, concepts, perspectives, and judgments
	Student is passive; responsibility is to reproduce information	Student's role is to learn how to do the process called for, to apply oneself, to work hard	Values independence of thought	Active seeker of knowledge
		Notices/enjoys learning about self	Can play the intellectual "game" fairly well	Mutuality of learning (student and teacher)
		Enjoys new freedom in learning		
View of Role of <u>Peers</u> in the Learning Process	Peers are <u>not a legitimate source</u> of knowledge or learning	Peers are <u>now a more legitimate source</u>; can be a source of interesting diversity/discussion (often in small group discussions)	Peers are a <u>quite legitimate source</u> of knowledge or information….	Peers <u>can be legitimate sources</u> of learning…
	Peers only interfere with learning	Peers are a big source of support	…But peers (and others) may not really be listened to, as everyone's opinion is just as good (or bad) as everyone else's	…If they use appropriate rules of adequacy and contextual presentation of perspectives
		Instructor is still Final Authority		
View of the Role of <u>Classroom Atmosphere</u> and <u>Activities</u>	Like structure/clarity	Likes "safe" and/or relaxed class atmosphere	Endorses loosely-structured format	Emphasis on qualitative supporting evidence
	Simple comfort in classroom (and/or physical environment)	Focus is on being challenged	Focus is on method/process of thinking/analysis; *how* should we approach this?	
	Rejects diversity of sources	Concerned with quantity of work	Rejects rote learning and memorization	
	Often focuses on "fun" without a discussion of learning	Responds favorably to Teacher as "entertainer"		
View of <u>Evaluation</u>	Evaluation and grading should be <u>clear-cut and straightforward</u>, because questions asked and answered should be clear-cut	Evaluation is the <u>primary issue</u>	New "Truth": <u>Independent thought</u> should get good grades	See evaluation as a <u>legitimate process and/or part of learning</u>
	Concern if teacher/content/evaluation are fuzzy	Often focus on the amount of time, hard work, and quantity of work required	Can play evaluation game of "give them what they want" no matter what you think	Evaluation of work can be separated from evaluation of self
		Primary question: How are my answers judged?		

View of Evaluation, continued		Emphasis on <u>fairness</u>: in judging, assignments, in amount of work. A fair evaluation rewards the effort of the student	Learning to accept qualitative criteria as legitimate in evaluation Value the courage of independence	Understands that a good critique has positives and negatives; sees evaluation as an opportunity for feedback, improvement, and new learning Evaluation as an opportunity to clarify an argument
Primary Intellectual Tasks	Learning basic information and definition of words and concepts Learning to identify parts of the whole Beginning to be able to compare and contrast things Learning to provide explanation of why they answered as they did	Can do compare-and-contrast tasks Can do multiples – perspectives, part, opinions, evaluations Can do basic analytic tasks Uses supportive evidence First understanding of *process* as a concept; sees difference between process and content for the first time	Good at analysis; can do some synthesis Can do critique with positives and negatives Uses supportive evidence well Can relate learning to other issues in other classes or to issues in "real life" Learning to think in abstractions	Can relate learning in one context to learning in another with some ease; looks for relationships in the learning Sees complexity Can evaluate, conclude, support own analysis; can synthesize; fluidity of thought and analysis Can adapt, modify, and expand concepts because they understand the concepts Good with abstraction
Use of Language	Uses absolutes and/or dichotomies Uses rule structure/s	Simple listing Uses quantity terms/ qualifiers Emphasizes concrete details	Uses supportive evidence framework	Demonstrates meta-thought (thinking about one's thinking)
Sources of Challenge for the Student	Ambiguity Diffuseness or its appearance Multiple perspectives Uncertainty (especially by an Authority)	View that uncertainty isn't just temporary Complexity (initially seen as quantity, not quality) Evaluation	If asked to use evidence to support an opinion Learning to sort out which are good sources and which are not	Requirement of choice or commitment; how to choose between equally good alternatives? Intellectual excellence

Sources of <u>Challenge</u> for the Student, continued	Any disagreement between two respected Authorities Request for the student's interpretation	Learning *processes* as opposed to facts Trying to determine which of the multiples is *really* right	Learning to accept responsibility in the learning process For some, learning to listen to Authority again; for others, learning to think independently	Good role modeling of scholarship that is still beyond their capabilities New contexts
Sources of <u>Support</u> for the Student	High degree of structure Concrete examples of experiential learning Careful sequencing and timing of presentation of diversity Modeling on the part of the instructor Chance to practice skills and evaluation tasks	Still need structure to help as they move into more diversity and ambiguity Clarity of evaluation procedures and assignment instructions Comfort still in the thought that someday we *will* know it all Comfort that the *Right* answer and the *Right* process is out there waiting to be found	Enjoy diversity (of views, perspectives, sources, etc.) Opportunities for independence; tend to balk at structure. Like class atmosphere that is free and independent Comfort with different formats although clearly prefer one Enjoy some of the thinking tasks	Truly enjoy all the diversity and options until they become a new form of the old Position 3 confusion Feel comfortable moving across contexts and have the intellectual tools to do so Feeling of intellectual mastery Comfortable seeking aid of appropriate authority or expert
General	Simplistic	Sense of early opening to new learning (multiplicity)	Comfort with multiplicity	Strong sense of self-possession, self as agent

Adapted from:

Cornfeld, J. L. & Knefelkamp, L. L. (1979). Analysis of the learner characteristics of students implied by the Perry scheme. In W. G. Perry (1999). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme* (pp. xxxi-xxxii). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Original work published 1968/1970).

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