

Appendix D

Information Regarding Research and Interview Questions

This appendix includes the sets of research and interview questions the Best Practices team members developed and used to conduct the study.

A. First set of research and interview questions

This first set of questions was developed in Spring, 1999; it was used as the framework in Alread (with modifications); Colorado Springs (with modifications); Decatur; Ft. Myers; Hartford (first visit); Lima; Maine (first visit); North Little Rock (with modifications); and Oklahoma.

RQ1. What practices build effective, sustainable community-wide study circle programs?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

IN1.1. Tell me the story of study circles in this community.

Probes, if needed:

- Founders?
- Motivation?
- Crisis or not?
- Role race played?
- What attracted coalition members?
- What was going on in the community that made you think study circles might be worth trying?
- What was pilot/first round like?
- Leadership "genealogy"?
- Strong results
- Danger points/tough times
- Present situation

IN1.2. What components of your community-wide study circle program work well?
→ [If necessary, probe topics that stood out from the story.]

IN1.3. As you think about how study circles have developed in this community, from the beginning until now, what different developmental stages can you identify?

IN1.4. To what extent do you expect study circles to be an enduring feature of life in this community? To what extent is that vision based on the present model of "rounds" once or twice a year?

IN1.5. What would it take to sustain study circles here for the long haul? What would people here contribute? What outside resources would be required? What do you see as the most significant challenges in continuing to produce study circles in this community?

IN1.6. What aspects of study circles are most essential to sustain?

RQ2. How do effective community-wide study circle practices affect race relations in communities?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

IN2.1. How has your community-wide study circle program affected race relations here?

Probes, if needed:

- Impact of study circles on race
- How have race, racism, or racial difference been a factor in study circles on other topics?
- How have race, racism, or racial difference been a factor in the coalition? In recruitment? In retention? In facilitation and facilitator training?
- How do you measure your programs's impact on race, racism, and race relations?

IN2.2. What adjustments have you made to improve your program's fit with your community's particular situation regarding racial or other differences? Results?

IN2.3. What other efforts in your community address racial difference? How is your community-wide study circle program similar to and different from those efforts?

RQ3. In what ways are effective community-wide study circle programs beginning to affect (a) community building, (b) social change, and (c) public decision making?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

IN3.1. How does your community-wide study circle program address the issue of taking action?

IN3.2. Please describe the impact you see study circles having on the people who take part in them. In particular, tell us what you see happening with participants after the study circles end.

IN3.3. Beyond the impact study circles have on the people who take part in them, what effect is your community-wide program having on your coalition members? On the larger community? On racism and racial difference?

IN3.4. Could you describe how you are thinking about the link between study circles and action? What would you like to see that link be? What would it take to produce the kind of link you would like?

IN3.5. What impact is your community-wide program having on how people in your community work together for positive change?

IN3.6. What are your biggest dreams for study circles here?

RQ4. What potential do study circle practitioners see for the future of face-to-face deliberation?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

IN4.1. As a form of face-to-face deliberation, what do study circles offer that is unique or distinctive in your community?

IN4.2. What future uses and applications do you see for study circles and face-to-face deliberation in this community? What would you like to see?

IN4.3. What would it take for study circles to become a way of life in this community? How many people would need to be involved? What else could you say about what it would take for study circles to become a way of life here?

IN4.4. Going beyond this community, what insights or hopes do you have about the future of study circles and face-to-face deliberation in the United States?

RQ5. How can interested practitioners carry out workable, useful assessments of their own community-wide study circle programs' effectiveness?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

IN5.1. What do you already know about your community-wide program's effectiveness? How have you learned it?

IN5.2. What do you want to know about your program's effectiveness that you do not know now?

IN5.3. What do you definitely want to include and avoid in developing a self-assessment?

IN5.4. How could you use the results of your own assessment?

IN5.5. What kind of time would people here be willing to invest in understanding more about how to improve this program?

IN5.6. What kind of help would make it easier for you to assess the effectiveness of your own program?

B. Revised research and interview questions

The team developed this second set of questions in August, 1999; this set was used as a framework in Aurora; Fayetteville; Inglewood; New Castle County; Springfield; Syracuse (with modifications, first visit); Twin Cities (with modifications, first visit); and Woodridge.

RQ1. What are the most effective practices for creating a broad-based, diverse organizing coalition? Specifically, what are the most effective practices for creating a coalition that is racially and ethnically diverse?

We're interested in how effective study circle programs build strong, diverse coalitions. You may call it your management group or steering committee. I'm talking about the core group that makes the decisions about how the work will get done. What have you learned about how to build that group so it has the broad-based, diverse membership? I'm specifically interested in racial and ethnic diversity.

Probes:

- In what ways have you recruited coalition partners from your community's different racial/ethnic populations?
- What have been successes?
- [With which groups?]
- Why?
- What have been challenges? Why?
- What about community-wide study circle work makes participation on the coalition attractive for partners from different racial/ethnic communities?
- How have you addressed needs that may differ by coalition partner?
- How have you informed potential coalition members of the opportunity to be part of the effort?

RQ2. What are the most effective practices for recruiting a diverse group of facilitators? For training and supporting facilitators so that they can do their work effectively?

We want to learn all we can about how a study circle program recruits a diverse group of facilitators, and then trains and supports them so they do good work. What have you done here about recruiting and training a diverse group of facilitators, and what have you learned about what does and doesn't work?

Probes:

- What does your facilitator pool look like in terms of racial and ethnic diversity?
- How does it compare with the ideal racial and ethnic mix in the whole pool of facilitators in your community?
- How have you recruited for ensuring diversity among facilitators?
- What have been successes? Why?
- What have been challenges? Why?
- What attracts facilitators to this work?
- Do you see facilitators from different racial and ethnic communities having different reasons for being involved in this work?
- What kind of support mechanisms do you have for facilitators?
- How have you learned to build on facilitators' interests to keep them involved?

RQ3. What are the most promising practices for recruiting participants from all parts of the community? What strategies are most promising for recruiting for racial and ethnic diversity? What program elements besides recruitment strategies (such as the issue being considered, the up-front connection to change and action) are most important in recruiting for racial diversity?

We're interested in how effective programs recruit participants who will make study circles diverse. We are particularly interested in what you have learned about how to recruit people from all parts of the community, people who will make your individual study circles racially and ethnically diverse. Tell us what you do, what works, and what doesn't. Tell us how such factors as the topic and a specific approach to action affect your recruiting.

Probes:

- How have you recruited participants to ensure participation from all parts of your community?
- How have you recruited participants to ensure racial and ethnic diversity?
- What have been successes? Why?
- What have been challenges? Why?
- How have you sustained the participation of people from different communities in the study circle process?
- Are there some program elements that are more appealing to certain participants than others?
- If yes, please elaborate.
- How do you juggle the different needs?

RQ4. What are the outcomes/results of community-wide study circle programs? If on racism and race relations, what is the range of outcomes? If on another issue, how do the outcomes take into account the racial divisions and dynamics of the community?

Tell us about the outcomes or results from your community-wide study circle program. What have study circles helped bring about with individuals, organizations, and the whole community? [If study circles are on race] Particularly, how have the study circles here affected racism and race relations? [If not on race] What do the outcomes tell you about the dynamics of race and racial divisions in this community?

Probes:

- Study circles can have an impact on many different levels: individual, community, institutional. Can you identify outcomes of your program on each of these different levels?
- Are there any others you would add?
- What impact on racism and race relations would you say your program has?

RQ5. What are the most effective practices for connecting study circles to community change? Specifically, how are programs linking to individual, collective, and institutional change on the issues of racism and race relations?

This question is linked pretty closely to the previous one. In addition to studying the outcomes of study circles at the individual, organizational, and institutional level, we want to understand what makes those outcomes happen. What are the practices you have put in place here that lead to the outcomes you described earlier?

Probes:

- In what ways do you sustain participants' involvement in bringing about change?
- What ideas about change, action, and results seem to motivate people to take part in your study circles?
- How have you been able to build on those motivations?
- How do ideas about community change differ among people of different races and ethnicities?
- How do you help connect participants to community change efforts regarding race and racism?
- How do they continue their learning and involvement after participating in a round of study circles?
- Can you please give some specific examples?

RQ6. To what extent do study circles that are initially based on an issue such as education or criminal justice impact on race relations? (Do people move more explicitly to consider race relations, or does the topic of race relations diminish in importance or consideration if it is one of many themes in a set of study circles not specifically on race?)

[Combining Questions 6 and 7] We are interested in learning more about how topic choice affects a program's ability to have an impact on race relations.

[For programs that have not used a race relations topic] How has the choice of topic in this community made a difference in whether or not study circles address issues of race, racism, and race relations here?

[For programs that have considered both race and other topics] In terms of ability to impact on race relations in your community, what have you learned about the differences in study circles on race in contrast with study circles on other topics?

[For programs that have considered only race topics] In terms of making the most impact on race relations in your community, how are you thinking about choice of topic for the future? Is it important to continue using the race topic, or can you envision continuing to work on race relations by addressing other topics?

IN6.1. If your study circles did not start with talking about race issues, did it come up later? How did that happen? Was it built into the guide, or did it emerge from the participants/facilitators?

IN6.2. Do you have a sense of how the introduction of issues of race into the conversation affected the study circles and participants/facilitators? Any examples?

RQ7. Do more people of color get/stay engaged if study circles name race relations explicitly in the first round(s) and then move to other issues, such as education or criminal justice?

IN7.1. If you have done different study circle topics, what have you noticed about the participation of people of color in the different topics? How well is that participation sustained when the circles are on the topic of race? How does participation compare with study circles on topics other than race, where race is treated as a subtheme?

IN7.2. Thinking more particularly about people of color, in your experience, are they more likely to become or stay engaged if the study circles explicitly address the topic of race and racism? Can you give us any examples of how this has worked in your community?

C. Questions for facilitators (used in Aurora facilitator focus group)

What are the most effective practices for recruiting a diverse group of facilitators? For training and supporting facilitators so that they can do their work effectively?

1. Please introduce yourself and your involvement in the study circles.
2. How did you get interested in facilitation?
3. Can you please describe your facilitation/participation experience?
4. What were the effective aspects of your training? How did you use them in your facilitation experience?
5. How was your effort in facilitating sustained throughout the study circle process?
6. What were some interesting challenges in facilitation?
7. What was the diversity like in your groups? Did you notice any differences in participating from different participants who were white people or people of color?
8. How did participants connect dialogue and action? Was this a concern expressed in the beginning?
9. What kind of outcomes did you see coming out of the study circles? How did these connect to community-level change? What anecdotes can you share?
10. Can you please describe the impact of this experience on you?

**D. Moderators' agenda for study circle participants:
Best Practices Winter 2000 focus groups on RQ6 and RQ7
(used in Syracuse and Hartford)**

RQ6. To what extent do organizers and participants consider study circles an effective tool for addressing racism?

RQ7. What impact does the study circle topic have on (a) study circle programs' effectiveness in addressing racism, and (b) participation by people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds?

Elapsed time 0:05

Real time _____ Welcome, introductions, preliminaries, ground rules

- Thank people for coming, invite them to enjoy food.
- Mention general focus of conversation: study circles as a vehicle for addressing racism and improving community race relations.
- Check verbally on comfort factors: refreshments, any needed materials.
- Introduce self [and comoderator.] Give yourselves titles ("*I'll be your moderator.*"); avoid giving personal information that could sway opinions.
- Turn on tape recorder, explain its use.
- Do introductions, using first names only. Please tell me about your history with study circles.
- State the ending time for the discussion.
- Remind people how much they are appreciated.
- Explain the nature of this structured conversation. Like study circles or dialogue in some ways, slightly different in other ways.

It is aimed at getting a lot of information in short amount of time.

It is somewhat structured. (I came with QUESTIONS.)

The moderator is fully in charge of pace (participants can relax).

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We are asking the same questions of individuals and groups in nine groups in three communities.

- Explain the way in which confidentiality is protected: no names or identities are ever used in the reports from the sessions. First names used during the session are taken out of written transcripts. If we want to quote you in the final report, we'll have to track you down, show you the quote, and get your permission.
- Emphasize that all comments and opinions are right and valued. You will not be asking questions that have wrong answers.
- The purpose of the session is to see how many opinions there are about each topic. This is not about forced choice. The purpose is not to reach consensus or persuade each other. Strongly encourage people to state their personal opinions, no matter what opinions others in the group may hold.
- Explain that you will be the guide. As much as possible, encourage people to speak one at a time, but assure them that if they get animated, you will help sort it all out and get it recorded for analysis.
- Let people know that you may occasionally rush some section of the discussion they find interesting, and may even have to interrupt some people to move on to new topics or new speakers. On the other hand, they may notice you pulling more information from more people than they think is necessary. Remind them that you will be the one to worry about all this, and you will make your decisions based on what the sponsor needs to know.
- Ask people to speak for themselves alone.
- Check for agreement. (***"Those are my ground rules. Can you agree to live them for the next hour and a half?"***)
- Ask if there are any questions.

Elapsed time 0:40

Real time _____

[Section on Topic Choice]

1. Now I would like to ask you to think back to the time you decided to be part of a study circle. What was it about the topic that invited you to be part of a study circle? [Ask people to call out short answers — whoever wants to speak.]
2. Based on the topic, what did you expect they would talk about?

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→ And what actually happened? What did they talk about?

Listen for:

- Race
- Racism
- Diversity
- Race Relations

→ When people talked about _____, what do you think they meant?

→ When you talked about _____, what did you mean?

3. We want to understand how people think about the relationship between the topic of a study circle and the ability of the community to make real changes on racism and race relations. Some cities address topics like **Criminal Justice, Immigration, Building Strong Neighborhoods, and Youth Issues, Youth Voices**. Can you give us any more insights into what kinds of topics get people to sign up and come to study circles to work on race, racism, and race relations, and which topics make them stay away?
4. [If the group includes experience with more than one topic] Those of you who took part in the study circles on _____, how did that topic itself make it either easier or harder to talk about issues of racism in this community? [Repeat, if needed, for second topic.]
5. Now I invite you to give some advice to the people who organize study circles in this community and in other places because they want to make a difference in racism. When is it a good idea to choose a topic that is explicitly about race, and when is it a good idea to use a different topic?

Elapsed time 1:15

Real time _____

[Section on Race and Racism]

When you think about the study circles here in _____, what difference have they made?

Probes, if needed:

	Beliefs	Knowledge	Action
For you			
For other people			
For organizations			

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	Beliefs	Knowledge	Action
For community institutions			
For the whole community			

[We aren't exactly trying to fill in every little box, but we are trying to make sure we know which ones they volunteered, and then, until they wear out on this, we keep putting more opportunities in front of them?]

[Ways we might ask the probing questions:

"You've been talking about ___ but I haven't heard anyone yet talking about ___. Did anyone see any change there?"

"One of you mentioned ___. Could anyone give me some examples of that?"

"You have talked a good bit about the ways individual people changed. Did you see any changes in any of the community's organizations?"

"You have talked a good bit about different kinds of change. What about changes in the community's institutions, things like government and schools?"

7. Overall, how effective do you think study circles are for helping a community work on racism?

[Addressing a portion of RQ7]

8. How would you describe attendance and participation at your study circle?

Probes, if needed:

→How would you describe those who came regularly? How about those who didn't come to all the sessions?

→How would you describe participation by the people who attended?

9. If you could change one thing about study circles, what would that be?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add about the things we have talked about tonight?

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Elapsed time 1:57

Real time _____

Thank you for coming tonight. We appreciate it.

Elapsed time 2:00

**E. Moderators' agenda for study circle organizers:
Best Practices Winter 2000 focus groups on RQ6 and RQ7
(used in Hartford and Syracuse)**

RQ6. To what extent do organizers and participants consider study circles an effective tool for addressing racism?

RQ7. What impact does the study circle topic have on (a) study circle programs' effectiveness in addressing racism, and (b) participation by people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds?

Elapsed time 0:05

Real time _____ Welcome, introductions, preliminaries, ground rules

- Thank people for coming, invite them to enjoy food.
- Mention general focus of conversation: study circles as a vehicle for addressing racism and improving community race relations.
- Check verbally on comfort factors: refreshments, any needed materials.
- Introduce self [and comoderator.] Give yourselves titles ("*I'll be your moderator.*"); avoid giving personal information that could sway opinions.
- Turn on tape recorder, explain its use.
- Do introductions, using first names only. Please tell me about your history with study circles.
- State the ending time for the discussion.
- Remind people how much they are appreciated.
- Explain the nature of this structured conversation. Like study circles or dialogue in some ways, slightly different in other ways.

It is aimed at getting a lot of information in short amount of time.

It is somewhat structured. (I came with QUESTIONS.)

The moderator is fully in charge of pace (participants can relax).

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We are asking the same questions of individuals and groups in nine groups in three communities.

- Explain the way in which confidentiality is protected: no names or identities are ever used in the reports from the sessions. First names used during the session are taken out of written transcripts. If we want to quote you in the final report, we'll have to track you down, show you the quote, and get your permission.
- Emphasize that all comments and opinions are right and valued. You will not be asking questions that have wrong answers.
- The purpose of the session is to see how many opinions there are about each topic. This is not about forced choice. The purpose is not to reach consensus or persuade each other. Strongly encourage people to state their personal opinions, no matter what opinions others in the group may hold.
- Explain that you will be the guide. As much as possible, encourage people to speak one at a time, but assure them that if they get animated, you will help sort it all out and get it recorded for analysis.
- Let people know that you may occasionally rush some section of the discussion they find interesting, and may even have to interrupt some people to move on to new topics or new speakers. On the other hand, they may notice you pulling more information from more people than they think is necessary. Remind them that you will be the one to worry about all this, and you will make your decisions based on what the sponsor needs to know.
- Ask people to speak for themselves alone.
- Check for agreement. (*"Those are my ground rules. Can you agree to live them for the next hour and a half?"*)
- Ask if there are any questions.

Elapsed time 0:40

Real time _____

[Section on Topic Choice]

1. One of the things we want to learn is what difference the topic of the study circles makes. Could you talk about the way you chose the topic(s) for study circles here in _____?
2. What have you learned about how people respond to the topic of _____? [Repeat with each topic.]

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→Did you have any surprises? (In how people responded to the topic)

3. Have you noticed any differences based on race or ethnicity in the way people respond to the _____ topic? The _____ topic?
4. Did you see any patterns in attendance that might be related to race or ethnicity?
5. Clearly you can see that we are trying to understand what makes people decide that some topics, but not others, are good risks, something that they would be willing to talk with other people about for several nights. We are particularly interested in what topics work best for getting people to address racism in their communities. Can you give us any more insights into what kinds of topics get people to sign up and come to study circles, and which topics make them stay away?

Elapsed time 1:10

Real time _____

[Section on Race and Racism]

6. When you think about the study circles here in _____, what difference have they made in addressing racism?

Probes, if needed:

	Beliefs	Knowledge	Action
For you			
For other people			
For organizations			
For community institutions			
For the whole community			

[We aren't exactly trying to fill in every little box, but we are trying to make sure we know which ones they volunteered, and then, until they wear out on this, we keep putting more opportunities in front of them?]

[Ways to ask additional probes...

"You've been talking about ___ but I haven't heard anyone yet talking about ___. Did anyone see any change there?"

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“One of you mentioned __. Could anyone give me some examples of that?”

“You have talked a good bit about the ways individual people changed. Did you see any changes in any of the community’s organizations?”

“You have talked a good bit about different kinds of change. What about changes in the community’s institutions, things like government and schools?”]

7. Overall, how effective do you think study circles are for helping a community work on racism?
8. As people who have organized and carried out study circles, you know there are many decisions and many steps. We have talked about the choice of topic, and we are talking with participants in other focus groups to learn what they think makes a difference inside the study circle itself. Keep your organizer hat on, and tell me what organizers do, outside the study circle sessions themselves, to make study circles an effective approach for working on racism in communities.

Probes, if needed:

- coalition membership and participation
- build direct link between dialogue and action

9. If you could change one thing about study circles [to make them more effective? to make them more beneficial?] what would that be?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add about the things we have talked about tonight?

Elapsed time 1:57

Real time _____

Thank you for coming tonight. We appreciate it.

Elapsed time 2:00

F. Moderators' agenda for Maine organizer focus group (May 27, 1999)

[This focus group was conducted with study circle organizers in Maine.]

Elapsed time 0:05

Real time _____ Welcome, introductions, preliminaries, ground rules

- Thank people for coming, help yourselves to food.
- Mention general focus of conversation: study circles as a vehicle for community problem solving.
- Check verbally on comfort factors: refreshments, any needed materials.
- Introduce self and comoderator. Give yourselves titles ("**I'll be your moderator.**"); avoid giving personal information that could sway opinions.
- Turn on tape recorder, explain its use.
- Do introductions, using first names only. Help me understand your history with study circles.
- State the ending time for the discussion.
- Remind people how much they are appreciated.
- Explain the nature of this structured conversation. Like study circles or dialogue in some ways, slightly different in other ways.

It is aimed at getting a lot of information in short amount of time.

It is somewhat structured. (I came with QUESTIONS.)

The facilitator is fully in charge of pace (participants can relax).

We are asking the same questions of individuals and groups in 16 other Best Practices communities.

- Explain the way in which confidentiality is protected: no names or identities are ever used in the reports from the sessions. First names used during the session are taken out of written transcripts. If we want to quote you in the final report, we'll have to track you down, show you the quote, and get your permission.

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- Ask group members to hold each other's identities and opinions in confidence.
- Emphasize that all comments and opinions are right and valued. You will not be asking questions that have wrong answers.
- The purpose of the session is to see how many opinions there are about each topic. This is not about forced choice. The purpose is not to reach consensus or persuade each other.
- Strongly encourage people to state their personal opinions, no matter what opinions others in the group may hold.
- Explain that you will be the guide. As much as possible, encourage people to speak one at a time, but assure them that if they get animated, you will help sort it all out and get it recorded for analysis.
- Let people know that you may occasionally rush some section of the discussion they find interesting, and may even have to interrupt some people to move on to new topics or new speakers. On the other hand, they may notice you pulling more information from more people than they think is necessary. Remind them that you will be the one to worry about all this, and you will make your decisions based on what the sponsor needs to know.
- Ask people to speak for themselves alone.
- Check for agreement. (*"Those are my ground rules. Can you agree to live them for the next hour and a half?"*)
- Ask if there are any questions.

Elapsed time 0:40

Real time _____

1. Please help me understand the origins and history of study circles in Maine. (IN1.1)

Follow up, if needed:

- What was going on in the community that made you think study circles might be worth trying?
- Describe the first efforts
- Developmental stages
- Leadership "genealogy"
- Strong results (and how you "measured" them)
- Danger points/tough times
- Present situation

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Elapsed time 1:00

Real time _____

2. [Write individually first; then speak] Looking back, what were the best and most important things you or others did to produce study circles (and their deliberation predecessors) in Maine?

Elapsed time 1:15

Real time _____

3. To what extent do you expect study circles to be an enduring feature of life in Maine? (IN1.4)

Follow up, if needed:

- To what extent do you envision the future as an ongoing series of “rounds” of study circles once or twice a year? (IN1.4)

Elapsed time 1:25

Real time _____

4. What aspects of study circles are most essential to sustain? (IN1.6)

Elapsed time 1:35

Real time _____

5. What would it take to sustain study circles in Maine for the long haul? (IN1.5)

Follow up, if needed:

- What would people here contribute, and what outside resources would be required?
- What do you see as the most significant challenges in continuing to produce study circles in Maine? (IN1.5)

Elapsed time 1:45

Real time _____

6. What would it take for study circles to become a way of life in Maine communities? How many people would need to be involved? What significant changes would need to take place? (Modified IN4.3)

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If time allows, I will also invite conversation on these questions:

7. Going beyond this community, what insights or hopes do you have about the future of study circles and face-to-face deliberation in the United States? (IN4.4)
8. What impact is your community-wide program having on how people in Maine communities work together for positive change? (IN3.5)
9. Could you describe how you are thinking about the link between study circles and action? What would you like to see that link be? What would it take to produce the kind of link you would like? (IN3.4)

Elapsed time 2:00

Real time _____

Adjourn.

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