Chapter VIII

Contributing to Change

This chapter addresses Research Question Four: What changes, outcomes, and results do organizers, facilitators, and participants ascribe to the study circle efforts in their communities? 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?

Main points in this chapter:

1. People reported that study circles in their communities contributed to significant change in individuals, organizations, and the whole community.

2. Many of the reported results or changes related to improving race relations or working to end institutional racism.

3. Of the changes related to race, the largest number of reported results fell within the category of actions that organizations, institutions, and communities took to improve race relations. Actions that organizations, institutions, and communities took to end racism constituted the second-largest category of outcomes.

This chapter presents the outcomes or changes people in the 17 learning sites said study circles had brought about in their communities or states. These changes were often complex and subtle. There are no agreed-upon standards for what constitutes an outcome, and there is no way to isolate study circles from other factors contributing to change. For all these reasons, this chapter presents these findings as descriptively as possible and organizes them into a number of different categories within two sections. Section A presents changes that people reported as associated with study circles in general. Section B focuses more specifically on changes associated with the topic of race.

Each category includes illustrative examples of changes that demonstrate one of the ways people in the learning sites said study circles produce results. Changes or results cited in one learning site often occurred in other places as well.

A. The ways study circles contributed to change

The information in this section is divided into three categories:

1. Ways study circles contributed to changes in people

2. Ways study circles contributed to changes in organizations

3. Ways study circles contributed to changes in communities and institutions

1. Ways study circles contributed to changes in people

Many people reported experiencing personal changes as they took part in study circles. They learned from each other, taught each other, inspired each other, gave each other courage, and stretched their mutual understanding of their community. The result, they said, was new ways of thinking, acting, and interacting.

I think we recognize that those who have been involved in the process, we've become educated about other points of view, we've broadened our knowledge base and become curious about other ways of looking at things. We learned new aspects about an issue. In essence, we've become educated. And for many reasons, I think that that's the norm.

--European American/white coordinator in Maine

a. People got information about differences in new ways and found it more compelling.

Many participants met, got to know, and formed relationships with people whom they otherwise would not have encountered, given their habits of living and working among people much like themselves. Here are some specific examples of ways people reported they or others had changed as a result of participating in study circles:

- In Colorado Springs, people said the conversations produced an inclination to look at others different from themselves in new ways. Some people described the experience as "mind-expanding."

- In Lima, an elderly European American/white woman and a 13-year-old African American/black boy intentionally learned to talk and to listen to each other. In addition, saying "People have opened their minds," one African American/black participant/organizer described the value of Christians and Jews getting to know each other through study circles.

- In New Castle County, participants reported learning to listen respectfully and valuing the ability to listen skillfully. A young person of color reported understanding European American/white people in a new way, as "clueless" rather than maliciously insensitive; this signified to the young person a need for patience and communication rather than aggression.

- In Twin Cities, people reported a greater interest in interacting with people different from themselves. In one group, Hmong people and European Americans/whites exchanged information about divorce and how it operates in this country.

b. People gained courage in study circles.

Some who participated in study circles gained courage — from new information, from the number of people participating in study circles with them, and from the stories of survival, defeat, or triumph that others told them — to make changes they had long wished to make.

- In New Castle County, some European American/white people reported that they became more willing to interrupt racist statements after participating in study circles.

- In Fayetteville, some people said they felt stronger about interrupting ethnic jokes or remarks that belittle people from different racial backgrounds. They also said they had more courage to interrupt behavior when they feel it is inappropriate.

- In New Castle County, some of the facilitators formed a mutual support network to encourage each other to take their commitment to end racism to a deeper level. An East Indian facilitator said, "Ours is a serious relationship in helping each other to grow."

- In Woodridge, one European American/white participant said that study circles had "fortified in me the need to say something" when people make prejudiced statements or take prejudiced actions.

c. People formed new relationships.

In many communities, people reported forming new relationships through their participation in study circles. Some of the most significant new relationships involved educators, parents, and students.

> And it's really . . . drawn a lot of us closer together. We got to get acquainted, deeper acquainted, with people that we were just passing acquaintances with before.
>
> *--European American/white organizer in Alread*

- In Alread, the first round of study circles changed the relationship among students, teachers, and administrators. Relationships between students and adults in the community also changed. For example, students began volunteering to teach adults about computers in a technology lab at the school. The adults in the community responded strongly and favorably. In addition, the study circles changed the relationship between the community and the schools, resolving a long-standing dispute over community use of school facilities.

- In South Portland, Maine, students, parents, and educators developed new relationships with each other as they worked to improve high schools and middle schools.

- Parents and educators in an elementary school in the Hartford metropolitan area in Connecticut began meeting together.

- In North Little Rock, relationships changed between students and the adults involved in the school community. In a significant change, the relationship between teachers and school board members, which had been strained to the point of a threatened teachers' strike, eased somewhat, and the strike was averted. Some of the people in North Little Rock attributed the positive outcome to the fact that teachers and board members really listened to each other during the round of study circles on education.

d. People became aware of the community in new ways.

Through meeting and listening to people they would otherwise never know, people in study circles came to see their community as more varied, broad, intricate, and potential-filled. This awareness seemed to make people become open to even more new information and new experiences about their community and the people who live in it.

- In Syracuse, a European American/white employer recognized he did not have any people of color on his staff because he hired through his connections, and he only knew European American/white people. As a result of relationships built through study circle sessions, he is beginning to hire more people of color.

- In Twin Cities, many facilitators became more aware of the issues facing the community and learned a lot about those issues. Meeting people different from themselves increased their interest in volunteering more to work on community problem solving.

I grew up in this community and I felt like that maybe this program could get people together a little bit better and make it more like the community that I grew up in. People knew each other a little better then . . .

--European American/white organizer in Alread

e. People built stronger attachments to their communities.

Reflecting the old adage that "people defend what they create," investing in study circles — either as a participant, an organizer, or a facilitator — caused some people to want to invest even more, and caused them to see their community as more worthy of their attachment and investment.

- In Alread, study circles brought the community closer by allowing people to get to know one another through in-depth conversations on issues that were meaningful to them. Both student-adult and school-community communication improved as a result of the first round of study circles. This, in turn, yielded improved feelings about the community in general.

- In Decatur, volunteering increased as a result of participation in study circles. Some of the people involved in study circles also formed a new political party, the Decatur Greens.

- In Inglewood, parents who took part in study circles became committed enough to the schools' well-being that they invested significant energy in campaigning for a school funding bond called "Measure K." This measure made $131 million available for school facilities improvements. It passed with a resounding 88 percent of the vote.

- Two participants in study circles ran for school board seats in North Little Rock after becoming more aware about what goes on in the schools and understanding the schools at a deeper level.

2. Ways study circles contributed to changes in organizations

People reported that organizations in their communities also changed as a result of study circles. These changes were somewhat different from those affecting individuals — or they played out in different ways — because organizations have rules, roles, and structures. Here are some examples of ways study circles have made an impact on these features of organizational life in the 17 learning sites.

a. Organizations developed new purposes.

- In New Castle County, the host organization, the YWCA, noted that through working with study circles it has shifted from a strictly service focus to an orientation that includes empowerment.

I think this effort did change people's optimism [and] had a positive effect: people are more optimistic, I think, about the future of this community and where it's going.

--European American/white organizer in Fayetteville

[At the Decatur Recreation Center] we are mixing everything up and will face the challenge to communicate that every place is a safe place and every program is a quality program. [We] will be challenged to communicate to the uninvolved that they are really wanted.
--European American/white organizer in Decatur

- Similarly, in Syracuse, the host organization, the InterReligious Council, reported that its work has expanded from primarily social service to a focus on social justice.

- In Decatur, a recreation center noted that as a result of employees' involvement in the Roundtables there, they have reallocated their budget, increased scholarships, and moved programs to different places in the community.

b. Organizations found new allies.

Through the process of building coalitions, organizations involved in study circles in nearly all of the 17 learning sites found themselves with new partners, new connections, and new ways of collaborating on their central missions.

- The YWCA in New Castle County, which has 105 partners for the study circle work there, found that the number of volunteers for other YWCA efforts increased, and that more African Americans/blacks became interested in serving on the YWCA board.

This can open up wonderful relationships not just on a personal level, but also in organizational linkages.
--European American/white organizer in New Castle County

- In Twin Cities, organizations that became partners in the Community Circles Collaborative then became more likely to become part of the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH). While there were other reasons why these organizations joined MICAH, a European American/white organizer said, "The fact that they took the time to become more involved as sponsors of Community Circles undoubtedly opened the door toward their receptivity to become more involved."

c. Organizations developed new ways of working.

- In Syracuse, study circle work was guided by a special Advisory Board — later reconstituted as the Advisory Committee — of the InterReligious Council. The Advisory Committee carried out some of its work through a dialogue similar to the study circle format. In addition, the Advisory Committee created specific action task forces that undertook work to address specific aspects of

institutional racism. This was a new undertaking for both the Advisory Committee and the InterReligious Council.

- A similar change took place in New Castle County, where the board of directors of the YWCA began using dialogue regularly as part of the way it accomplishes its work.

- In Decatur, Agnes Scott College and nearby residents had a history of disagreement. As a result of study circles, the college gained access to new information through a committee of staff, students, and faculty. The committee's responsibility was to consider some of the study circles' recommendations that pertained to the college.

- In Fayetteville, the city Human Relations Commission and the county Human Relations Commission voted unanimously to explore merging into one commission after this surfaced as one of study circle participants' key recommendations. Managers of both commissions began meeting to prepare a funding formula.

d. Organizations developed new capacity.

- Schools in New Castle County gained new skills when teachers received training in how to conduct study circles.

- In Ft. Myers, all elementary teachers gained an opportunity to add to their schools' skills by putting into use the new Teaching Tolerance materials they have received from the Southern Poverty Law Center.

- Schools throughout the state of Maine benefitted when 500 students became trained to facilitate study circles.

- The Beacon News, the local paper in Aurora, benefitted from new skills employees gained as a result of their participation in study circles. In particular, both the editor and many in the community believed staff members gained significant skills in understanding, reporting, photographing, and presenting news and editorials in a more inclusive and less biased way.

Some of these sponsors end up being the beneficiaries of what's going on in the circle. In other words while they are Cities at Work circles they also can be a circle that is helping to feed and serve the agenda of the sponsoring organization. I think part of the way this works is [that] you can show people the circle can really help them with things they're wrestling with.

--European American/white organizer in Twin Cities

e. Organizations hired new employees.

- Individual employers in Syracuse and Lima reported changing their hiring practices to include more people of color.

f. Organizations identified new funding or resources.

- The Education and Housing Equity Project (EHEP) in Twin Cities, one of the two primary host organizations for study circles there, gained a reputation as a resource on housing equity as a result of its sponsorship of study circles. The Minneapolis Foundation then involved EHEP in a public relations campaign, which the Foundation funded, to change the public image of people who need to live in affordable housing.

- In Colorado Springs, people noted that volunteering for community organizations has increased.

- In New Castle County, the publication of an action booklet in partnership with the Retired Senior and Volunteer program seemed to have contributed to a volunteer increase.

- In Inglewood, the school district received a massive infusion of new resources when Measure K passed. To some extent, the passage of Measure K grew out of enthusiasm for school improvement generated during a round of study circles on education.

g. Organizations gained new credibility.

- As a result of its work with study circles, the YWCA of New Castle County gained credibility as a force for racial justice, bringing new life to a key part of its mission.

- In Syracuse, the fact that the InterReligious Council took the lead in sponsoring study circles on race increased that organization's credibility as a sincere and genuine advocate for equity.

- In Fayetteville, the Human Relations Department and Human Relations Commission both gained credibility that resulted in expanding their work with neighborhoods.

Organizers there reported that people from all over the community became more likely to file bias complaints with the Commission and more likely to believe that those complaints would be handled fairly.

h. Organizations developed new rules or procedures.

- School administrators in Alread rewrote the student handbook after the first round of study circles there.
- Within the Department of Labor in Delaware, bias complaints began to be processed differently because of the study circles in New Castle County.
- The CEO of Lincoln Life Insurance in Syracuse established a policy that Lincoln Life would no longer make charitable donations to organizations that had no people of color on their boards.

i. Organizations found new opportunities to teach other communities and groups.

- In Minnesota, the Education and Housing Equity Project helped other organizations produce their own study circles. This included circles at McAlester College, Burnsville, and a League of Women Voters statewide effort on immigration.
- In New Castle County, the YWCA served as a consulting partner with the Delaware Department of Labor and other statewide initiatives and, working with SCRC, helped launch study circles in neighboring towns in Pennsylvania and New York.
- In Aurora, Aurora Community Study Circles (ACSC) provided assistance to several other communities in Illinois and Wisconsin interested in launching study circle programs.
- Since 1991, when the effort was initiated by the Maine Council of Churches, a central body in Maine has been advocating, coaching, cajoling, and supporting other organizations and communities in the production of their own study circles. The Roundtable Center has as its central purpose the initiation and support of study circles

I think one of the impacts we're having in our project is we're introducing community circles and other groups are picking up on the idea and using that for other purposes. And if you never succeeded in doing anything else with your community circle, you've stimulated another group to do another civic initiative using your model, using your initiative as an inspiration to go and do something else. That's a form of success.

--European American/white organizer in Twin Cities

in a wide number of communities. The breadth and scope of this work cannot be overstated. Although no accurate records exist of every effort since 1991, it is safe to say that at least 10,000 people in the state of Maine have participated in study circles on one of many topics. In addition, it seems safe to say that at least 30 communities (and probably many more) have hosted study circles in Maine.

3. Ways study circles contributed to changes in communities and institutions

Throughout the 17 learning sites, people reported significant changes in their communities. The changes fell within four categories:

a. Large-scale events intended to increase the visibility of issues and inspire and motivate people and organizations to make changes themselves

b. Changes affecting clusters or groups of people within the community (those choosing to participate plus those they influenced)

c. "Rippling out" changes that began with a limited impact on clusters or groups and then unfolded to produce a more pervasive impact

d. Systemic or extensive changes that had a wide radius and affected a large number of people who lived in a particular community, whether they participated in any of the change-making activities or not

a. Large-scale events increased the visibility of issues and inspired changes in people and organizations.

In some of the 17 learning sites, people perceived a need to sponsor events or efforts that would help citizens think differently about the place in which they lived. Some of these efforts had a quality of high visibility and symbolic importance in the community. Others were more subtle but related strongly to the almost implicit assumptions people made about their communities.

i. Communities created new celebrations.

- In Lima, a community-wide study circle celebration first took place in May of 1995. (The first round of study circles took place in the summer of 1993.) Allen Lima Leadership, on its own, had created a daytime "Diversity Day" program. Eventually the organizers of Allen Lima Leadership and study circles joined forces, and the event grew steadily. By 1998, it became a "Diversity Week." One of the high points came in April, 1997, when Maya Angelou was the guest speaker at the sold-out Civic Center. The presence in the Civic Center of a full house, which some people described as about equally divided between European Americans/whites and people of color, sent a strong signal to those who were present and to others who knew about the event that the climate for diversity in Lima was becoming more positive.

ii. Communities made existing celebrations more inclusive.

- In Woodridge, which celebrated its 40th anniversary as a Village in 1999, several events during the year of celebration took on a more multicultural flavor; some people attributed these changes to the round of study circles on diversity that took place in the fall of 1998.

- In Aurora, participants and allies of Aurora Community Study Circles marched in the city's Fourth of July parade to make a point about the kind of community Aurora is and how it welcomes diversity and conversation about race.

- In Fayetteville, the number of people attending the annual Human Relations Recognition Banquet increased from 150 in 1999 to 400 in 2000. Corporate sponsors increased from eight to twenty. People attributed the change to the study circles that had taken place in the interim.

b. Changes affected clusters or groups of people within the community (those choosing to participate plus those they influenced).

This category includes changes that people in communities created for themselves. People made choices about whether to participate in these opportunities for change. The changes affected those who participated in them, sometimes strongly.

i. Relationships between governing bodies and specific groups of citizens improved.

If the [school] board members had not participated [in the study circles] the groundwork would not have been laid for the teachers to change their perception of the board. . . . This process helps our board, because other people see from their participation and their attitude — being objective and not defensive — that they care.

--European American/white organizer in North Little Rock

- In Fayetteville, people noted that study circles had improved the relationship between neighborhoods and government. The study circle organizers in Fayetteville planned to capitalize on this change by addressing neighborhood topics directly through organizing study circles in neighborhoods, using the Building Strong Neighborhoods guide.

- In North Little Rock, as noted earlier, study circles changed the relationship between the school board and its employees, the teachers. This change was profound enough to contribute significantly to averting a threatened teachers' strike.

ii. Entertainment in the community became more diversified and inclusive.

- In Lima, the offerings at the Lima Civic Center began to change so that some events offered more appeal to African Americans/blacks. In addition, entertainment at community-wide events, particularly the Square Fair, became more inclusive of African Americans/blacks.

- In Lima, Ft. Myers, and New Castle County, mixed-race choruses formed and sang at some public events.

iii. The image of the community changed.

- In both Colorado Springs and Fayetteville, people associated with study circles described the ways their community's self-image had changed simply because one or two rounds of study circles on race had taken place there. People said that the way some citizens of those communities saw themselves changed because they learned that they lived in a place where people were willing to face up honestly to racism, faulty race relations, and racial inequities.

- In Syracuse, two men who had served as cochairs for the Community Wide Dialogue Advisory Board received a Men of the Year award. One of the men was African American/black and one was European American/white. The African American/black award recipient said that this recognition amounted to the community calling special attention to their efforts with the study circles and other work to address racism in Syracuse.

What I'm seeing is a shift of people feeling better about Lima, the downtown and the city. There is less isolationism and fewer turf holdings-on — you're from here and I'm from there. We're becoming able to see ourselves more regionally.

--European American/white organizer in Lima

iv. Those who listened and those who were listened to changed.

- In Alread, an oral history project grew out of study circles. This effort involved listening to people whose stories would otherwise go unheard.

- In Syracuse, people reported that European Americans/whites in positions of power were more sensitive to issues after participating in study circles, and that community organizers in the African American/black community were being taken more seriously.

- In Ft. Myers, Lee County Pulling Together sponsored regular forums in the predominantly African American/black Dunbar community to address issues identified by citizens there and begin taking action on them.

I think obviously it made a difference in that the people that participated felt that they had been heard, they had an opportunity to speak . . . nobody's been shoved aside. They have actually taken a part in the decision-making process for their school . . .

--European American/white organizer in Alread

- In Twin Cities, study circle participants took their findings and recommendations further by preparing and presenting reports and suggestions to policy-making bodies such as city councils, human rights commissions, school boards, church councils, and others.

- In Syracuse, a group of African American/black women who took part in study circles realized that they shared a deep fear that their teenage sons would be stopped by the police for a minor traffic infraction and in some way become injured or killed. These women met with the police chief and asked him to redesign the police training to prevent this kind of possibility. After this, police officers took part in a significant number of dialogue groups during the following year.

v. Citizens' groups worked to improve where and how people shopped.

- In Ft. Myers, the study circle effort contributed significantly to the establishment of a shopping center in the Dunbar community, where it had long been sought without success.

- In Syracuse, because of concerns raised in study circles, an action task force of the Advisory Committee worked with a shopping mall on problems people of color experienced when shopping there. As a result, mall administration instituted a new training program for security employees and administrative employees and offered this training to other stores. The mall has now posted a "Shopper's Bill of Rights." Also in Syracuse, efforts by a group of study circle participants led to the opening of a small grocery store in a low-income neighborhood that had no nearby sources of good quality food.

vi. The information available to people improved.

- The Benchmark Report that grew out of study circle work in Syracuse offered a measuring stick for assessing where the community stood in terms

of several key aspects of racial justice. The report addressed the racial disparities that existed in the areas of (a) employment and income; (b) educational attainment; (c) board memberships; (d) entrepreneurship and services; and (e) health, safety, and criminal justice. Organizers plan to update the document annually and distribute it in the community. A European American/white organizer said, "We felt it was important to have a benchmark of where we started and then to do it again after we'd been doing the dialogues five years and just see, are we actually any further along?"

- In North Little Rock, citizens in the community knew more about their schools after the school board began televising its meetings and publishing minutes after each meeting. Both of these changes resulted from study circle participants' recommendations.

- In Decatur, a suggestion from the Roundtables about the need for citizen education resulted in a program called "Decatur 101," a one-night-a-week class that will educate interested citizens about local government. A leadership map of the city displaying almost every organization and community group, along with the names and addresses of contact persons, also resulted from the Roundtables in Decatur.

vii. People changed what they were willing to talk about with each other.

- People involved with study circles in Colorado Springs said that the Community Conversations on Race seemed to make it legitimate to conduct racial conversations in other places, such as at work.

- In Fayetteville, organizers reported that study circles made it safer for city employees to discuss issues of race.

- In Decatur, one teacher noted that the study circles helped surface "painful realities" in the Decatur school system.

c. "Rippling out" changes that began with a limited impact on clusters or groups later unfolded to produce a more pervasive impact.

The next several changes had a dynamic quality. They began with an impact on those clusters or groups of people who were participating in the change. Over time, however, that impact became more pervasive, reaching more people than those who participated.

i. Participation in community-building efforts changed.

In several of the learning sites, study circle organizers found ways to generate and sustain action-oriented efforts in addition to the dialogue sessions.

Well because something happened here, people will be more willing to volunteer and work on future projects, whatever they are.
--European American/white organizer in Alread

- In 1999, a person began working full-time in Hartford to support and encourage action groups linked to the Community Conversations on Race.

- In Syracuse, the Advisory Committee for the Community Wide Dialogue program formed action task forces. According to the organizers, each of these task forces included people "who have a certain amount of expertise in a particular area and they can move within the political circles and could do things that ordinary people . . . couldn't do."

- Ongoing action groups or task forces began work in Ft. Myers, Decatur, and Fayetteville, as well. Participation in these efforts was voluntary and grew out of participation in study circle dialogues.

ii. The manner of addressing disputes changed.

- In Yarmouth, Maine, study circles on a hot, divisive taxation issue calmed the "conversational waters" in the community. A European American/white organizer said:

> So it was educated dialogue, which to me was a wonderful opportunity for folks to really have a chance to understand that we all really care about the same things. (European American/white organizer in Maine)

- The averted teachers' strike in North Little Rock was another example of the way study circles helped change how disputes are addressed.

iii. Systematic planning processes became more inclusive.

- In Portland, Maine, the Community Asset Builders Coalition used study circles to build a citizen involvement base for a strategic plan that will guide the major child and youth service organizations in the city.

- In Decatur, the study circles fed into a strategic planning process that was seen as citizens' greatest opportunity to influence the growth of the city over the next few years. In addition, in Decatur the chief study circle organizer and the city's zoning board worked together to develop a way to use study circles in zoning decisions. They began with one specific development project and put together a broad-based committee to devise a process that would include all key stakeholders plus citizens from the two neighborhoods involved.

- A study circle organizer in Lima used planning for parks in the city as an example of something that had become more equitable since study circles began in Lima.

iv. Home ownership and where people lived changed.

- In Syracuse, an action task force of the Advisory Committee met with three bankers to work on getting past old habits and traditions of mortgage lending that had an unfair negative impact on people of color. A European American/white

study circle organizer said, "We had several of the bankers agree to work with us on that over this next year and one of them is now going to be the cochair of the Advisory Committee."

- In Twin Cities, where housing is a central focus of study circle work, one of the results of study circles was the development and production of a play about affordable housing. Eventually more than 3,200 people saw the play and filled out commitment cards to be involved in work on the issue of affordable housing. The play helped generate activity focused on the legislature where, a European American/white organizer said:

> We had a record year, a banner year in terms of housing legislation and the commitment to housing resources by the state legislature, the biggest amount in our history in the state of Minnesota. (European American/white organizer in Twin Cities)

d. Systemic or extensive changes had a wide radius and affected large numbers of people in a particular community.

Some results of study circles affected significant numbers of people in the community, including those who had neither taken part in study circles nor ever heard of them.

i. Citizens elected different leaders.

- In Colorado Springs, an incumbent moderate mayor who expressed explicit support for diversity work successfully fought off a challenge from a much more conservative opponent. Some people credited the Community Conversations on Race as a part of the reason for that victory.

- People in Syracuse created a mechanism for promoting more participation in school board races.

- Two study circle participants in North Little Rock chose to run for school board seats.

- In Fayetteville, an Asian American woman ran for a city council seat after participating in study circles.

ii. Governments created new mechanisms or strengthened existing ones to address equity.

- In Springfield, a new group, the Race Relations Task Force, resulted from the first round of study circles. Its members, appointed by the mayor, were visible, credible, powerful leaders of organizations and institutions that address racial and ethnic injustice. The Task Force had the job of "commissioning" study circle rounds, and was expected to take responsibility for setting action and responses in motion once study circles were completed.

- In Fayetteville, one of the strongest, most well-received recommendations from the first round of study circles in 1998 was to create a joint city/county Human Relations Commission. The vision of this new mechanism and the likelihood that it would come to pass sent a significant message to people in Fayetteville about how much their community has changed.

- In Decatur, a position in city government was restructured so that the task force processes that stemmed from study circles could have active and steady support. This meant that government funds were being invested in continued citizen participation in community building and problem solving in Decatur.

iii. Print media changed what counted as news.

One of the most profound changes across a significant number of learning sites took place in the newsroom and on the pages of the community's print media.

- In Aurora, The Beacon News had an unspoken policy, as recently as 1990, that no images of people of color could show up on the front page. People reported that after all employees took part in study circles, the newspaper began portraying people of color in Aurora in ways that were more equitable. This change applied to stories, photographs, placement, tone, quotations, and editorials.

- In Ft. Myers, people said the newspaper changed how it covered negative events so that it became more fair to people of color. Similar changes have taken place in newspapers in Colorado Springs and Syracuse.

- In North Little Rock, the newspaper began offering more positive coverage of schools and school events after the editor attended the action forum at the end of the round of study circles on education.

iv. Laws changed.

- The first round of study circles in 13 communities in Oklahoma had about 1,000 participants and influenced the state legislature as it considered "one of the most radical revisions of the criminal justice system in the history of the state." The resulting legislation, which passed with only two dissenting votes, incorporated two major goals study circle participants had identified for the corrections system — the incapacitation of violent offenders and rehabilitation of all offenders.

- In Twin Cities, as noted earlier, legislation offering a beneficial housing policy as well as funding for affordable housing stemmed from the effective advocacy of people whose commitment to change was aroused after they saw the play about affordable housing.

This completes a look at the ways study circles contributed to changes in people, organizations, and communities. The following section offers a different approach to understanding

the range of changes produced by study circles by examining outcomes related specifically to race, some of which have already been presented in Section A. Section B offers a more in-depth look at these important results.

B. Types of changes related to race

This section focuses specifically on changes relating to race that organizers, facilitators, and participants attributed to the study circle sessions themselves and to the action components associated with study circles in several communities. The examples cited reflect the breadth and variety of changes study circle programs are producing.

These are the four main categories:

Changes aimed at improving race relations

1. Changes related to improving race relations, with the result of increased awareness or preparation for action.

2. Changes related to improving race relations, with action as a result.

Changes aimed at ending racism

3. Changes directed toward ending racism, with the result of increased awareness or preparation for action.

4. Changes directed toward ending racism, with action as a result.

Each of these four categories includes two subcategories, based on whether individuals were the main actors producing the changes (or experiencing them), or whether the main actors were organizations, institutions, or communities.

1. Improving race relations by increasing awareness or preparation for action

This category includes changes that were focused on improving race relations, which the Best Practices team defined in this way: ***how people view each other; how they understand, regard, and respect each other as people coming from different racial and ethnic backgrounds; whether and how people relate across racial and ethnic differences.*** The changes in this category had the result of increasing awareness or preparation for action. People in more than half the learning sites described changes that fit within this category.

a. Organizational, institutional, or community level actors improved race relations by increasing awareness or preparation for action.

This category is quite small and includes changes reported in only a handful of the learning sites. The most typical changes in this category involve improved intergroup relations.

- In Hartford, an insurance company reported that as a result of study circles in the workplace, relationships changed "on the floor."
- In Colorado Springs, the newspaper demonstrated more cultural sensitivity after two rounds of study circles there.
- In Syracuse, the InterReligious Council began requiring all staff to participate in study circles, with the aim of improving organizational effectiveness.

I think that's just turned the light bulb on for those type of organizations and made them realize that we do need to have more dialogue and talk about our differences and when we actually get in and talk about them, we realize that we really have more alikes than we do differences.

--African American/black organizer in Fayetteville

b. Individuals increased their awareness or preparation for action.

Most of these changes had to do with increased knowledge.

i. Individuals increased knowledge of people different from themselves.

- In Fayetteville, Lima, Hartford, and Twin Cities, people reported that they themselves, or fellow citizens, had changed their views or increased their understanding of people who were different from themselves in terms of race, culture, or ethnic background.
- In Woodridge and Twin Cities, participants reported that a valuable sharing of cultures took place in the study circle sessions.

It definitely has had an impact on racial relations. Key people were involved, and there is greater sensitivity to some of the issues.

--African American/black organizer in Ft. Myers

ii. Individuals gained new experiences and skills in race relations.

- In Decatur, some participants acknowledged that the Roundtables provided them with their very first experience in discussing race relations with a

group of people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

- In New Castle County, participants reported learning to listen and valuing the ability to listen skillfully.

- In Lima, an African American/black participant who later served as a facilitator reported that the study circle experience made it possible to have more honest conversations with European American/white people at work.

I have gotten to know so many more people in the community than I would have known before that. Just because you wouldn't have the avenue to reach out to them and . . . you wouldn't know that they were interested in the same thing you were or whatever. So that in of itself is a really good outcome.

--European American/white facilitator in New Castle County

iii. Individuals formed new relationships with people of a different race or ethnic background.

- In several places, including New Castle County, Hartford, Ft. Myers, and Fayetteville, people described the excitement and value of making new friendships across former barriers erected by differences in race, cultures, or ethnicity.

- In Twin Cities and other places, people said the amount of interaction across traditional barriers had increased, and that people's interest in more interaction with people different from themselves was noticeable.

- In Inglewood, relationships between African American/black and Latino/Hispanic parents whose children attend school together improved as a result of study circles. School-parent relationships also improved.

iv. Individuals experienced significant personal transformations.

In some places, people reported that study circles had a profound impact on them or on others. This impact was in the realm of personal transformation.

- In New Castle County, Hartford, Lima, Syracuse, and Colorado Springs, people reported that study circles helped them "open their minds" or "open themselves" and grow.

- In Fayetteville and New Castle County, people said that study circles gave them hope for transformation that went beyond the personal level. They described hopes that the community would improve and become more open. Some participants in New Castle County said the study circles yielded hope for healing old wounds in individuals and then, maybe, in the community.

It turned out to be one of those "a-ha" experiences that really was life-changing.
--European American/white organizer in Aurora

2. Improving race relations by taking action

In this category the focus is on improving race relations, and the changes are considered to be actions. People in about half of the learning sites reported individual changes in this category. The results with regard to changes in race relations reported in the first half of this subsection reflect changes in organizations, institutions, or communities, and constituted the most frequently cited changes in the study.

a. Organizational, institutional, or community level actors took action to improve race relations.

This category includes actions that organizations, institutions, and communities took to improve race relations as a result of participating in study circles. People in every learning site that addressed the topic of race identified some changes that fit in this category.

i. Organizations and institutions opened formerly closed doors.

- In Decatur, a community strategic planning process intentionally included people of color in each major task force for the first time.

- In Hartford, the MetroHartford Millennium Project, a public-private economic development effort, created a "Diversity Task Force." The Diversity Task Force placed members inside all other task forces with the aim of making racial equity a constant and central focus of all the economic development work.

- One of the most pointed examples of the impact of study circles on public life and public process occurred in Springfield. At the conclusion of a round of study circles, the city government, led by the mayor and the Community Relations Commission, invited citizen advice on how to improve race relations and address racism within local government. As a result of suggestions from study circle participants, Springfield's mayor formed a Race Relations Task Force that had the express purpose of developing strategies, serving as a clearinghouse, acting as a rapid response team, and developing/promoting community-wide events that emphasized racial harmony.

- In the realm of private institutions, several communities — including Lima, New Castle County, Syracuse, and Aurora — reported that religious congregations met together for worship for the first time or began collaborative community projects that crossed traditional lines of race or ethnicity.

ii. Organizations and communities cultivated multicultural festivals and arts events.

Study circles influenced arts events, arts organizations, multicultural events, and multicultural festivals in several of the learning communities.

- The Notre Dame choir appeared in an African American/black church in Lima and drew a richly mixed, racially diverse audience.

- Entertainment at the Civic Center in Lima changed to become more appealing to African Americans/ blacks, as did entertainment at the annual Square Fair.

- In Woodridge, activities surrounding the 40th anniversary celebration in 1999 took on a more multicultural flavor following one round of study circles there.

iii. Organizations took small steps away from segregation.

In some places, a seemingly small change in a traditional pattern of segregation took on a larger symbolic significance.

- The organizers of the Edison Festival of Lights Ball in Ft. Myers invited an African American/black couple to the ball for the first time since its inception.

iv. Study circle programs themselves took new action.

Study circle programs themselves carried out the action work within this category. In some cases, the study circle programs created new activities that addressed a community's historic racial and ethnic divisions.

- In Ft. Myers, Lee County Pulling Together published a countywide ethnic cookbook as a fund-raiser, formed a mixed-race softball league, and began work to form a community chorus.

- In Aurora, Aurora Community Study Circles cosponsored a teleconference on "building hospitable communities," hosted a showing and follow-up discussion in a civic auditorium about a public television series called Making Peace, and cosponsored a citywide "Unity Dinner" during Latino Heritage Month.

- In Hartford, study circle organizers arranged for facilitators for conversations held after 36 performances of the Hartford Stage Company's production of Dutchman, a provocative play about racial divisions by Amiri Baraka.

- In Lima, study circle organizers worked with others to create a multicultural festival in conjunction with the Week Without Violence, and to add to the education offerings about diversity that were available during Diversity Week (formerly Diversity Day).

It can connect to other activities that are going in the community but it can also be meaningful for the individual sponsors, too, in terms of what they need to work on, what they need to adjust as organizations.

--European American/white organizer in Twin Cities

Some study circle organizations concentrated efforts on expanding study circles on race in new arenas.

- In Aurora, Program Director Mary Jane Hollis worked with students in two middle schools and with staff in high schools in two school districts. She also worked extensively with students in the Aurora Communities in Schools Academy for vulnerable ninth- and tenth-grade students.

- In New Castle County, corporations such as Dupont, MBNA, and Andersen Consulting implemented study circles on race in their workplaces.

- In Hartford, a new diversity leadership council in the state Department of Public Works launched its first conversations in the fall of 1999, and efforts were made to host conversations on race in a large Hartford law firm. The Hartford Courant, the daily newspaper, has committed to hosting study circles that will include at least 20 percent of its 1,300 employees.

The results of the survey evaluation of Twin Cities community circle participants by the Wilder Research Center indicate that over 60 percent of circle participants have followed up with some kind of individual or community action following their participation in a community circle.

b. Individuals took actions to improve race relations.

i. Individuals behaved in new ways in the community.

Many of the actions reflected new ways of behaving in the community; people attributed these new behaviors to the study circle experience. Here are some examples:

- In some communities, including New Castle County and Ft. Myers, people began new, explicitly multiracial, multicultural efforts such as community choirs and softball leagues.

- In Lima, participants reported that, following study circles, they were asked to participate in producing community events that formerly were produced solely by people not of their own racial or ethnic group. For example, a European American/white executive reported being invited to help produce a formerly all-African American/

black event. In other communities, people of color reported being invited into formerly all-European American/white groups.

- Also in Lima, people rallied to support the first African Americans/blacks who were invited to join the Elks club there (one of the largest in the country) after the newly inducted African American/black members began experiencing difficulty.

- In Hartford, some study circle participants developed reading groups that made it possible for them to engage personally with people from different racial groups.

As an outsider, when I came here I felt not accepted. I feel accepted now.
--Latina/Hispanic organizer in Fayetteville

ii. Individuals built new organizations and began participating more in existing ones.

In a significant number of learning sites, people reported that study circles had led to organization building, increased participation in existing organizations, and increased volunteering in organizations working on race relations.

- In Hartford, study circle participants joined with the local chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice in the first annual "Walk As One" walk-a-thon to raise money for youth leadership programs that will promote racial, religious, and cultural understanding.

- A study circle participant formed a successful multicultural dance troupe in Aurora.

- In Lima, participation by both European Americans/whites and people of color in the annual Diversity Day and Diversity Week activities increased each year.

- In New Castle County, volunteering for community organizations went up after the study circle program published an action booklet in partnership with the Retired Senior and Volunteer Program.

- In Syracuse, a group began working on faith-based organizing after taking part in study circles.

iii. Individuals worked to increase the number of study circles and participation in them.

One of the most frequent types of actions that individuals took to address race relations was the development and advancement of study circles in new arenas.

- In one significant example, the managing editor of the daily paper in Aurora participated in the pilot round of study circles there. He found the experience so valuable that he required all staff at the newspaper to participate in study circles in order to receive raises. The nature of news coverage, photos, editorial writing, and other content changed in significant ways as a result.

iv. Individuals found new freedom to talk about race.

I think, honestly, what people are doing is getting more and more ready to talk about the race issue.
--European American/white organizer in Aurora

- People in Colorado Springs reported that the Community Conversations on Race seemed to make it legitimate to conduct racial conversations in other places, such as at work. In particular, employees in city government started to talk about race-related problems they were having. In general, in Colorado Springs, people felt that they could say things in the community that weren't allowable before.

3. Increasing awareness and preparing for action toward ending racism

This category includes changes that have the effect of increasing awareness and preparing for action directed toward ending racism. The Best Practices team defined racism in this way: *policies, actions, and behaviors (conscious or unconscious) of individuals, groups, and institutions that negatively impact upon people of color and give advantages to European American/ white people. Racism is a combination of negative prejudice and the power to be able to act on such negative belief systems (can be both aware and unaware).*

Although this is a relatively small category, nearly half of the communities reported changes related to individuals that fit here. On the other hand, changes in this category that involved organizations, institutions, or communities constituted the smallest group in the study.

a. Organizational, institutional, or community level actors increased awareness and prepared for action aimed at ending racism.

This category includes changes aimed at awareness and preparation for action that are produced by organizations, institutions, and whole communities and are directed toward ending racism. The changes included in this category represent efforts by organizations, institutions, or whole communities to make the impact of racism on communities clear. The small number of changes in this category suggests that organizational efforts to end racism may rarely be aimed at the awareness end of the spectrum, and instead may primarily be aimed at action itself.

I believe that there will come some point in time when we've done this enough and we've brought this issue before the broader community enough, and we've heard the same message enough, that eventually we will begin to create a community consciousness on what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in race relations.

--African American/black organizer in Springfield

- In Colorado Springs, people involved with public schools called for training around issues of race and ways to address it.
- In Syracuse, following the death of a young man at the hands of a police officer, the newspaper took the lead in increasing community awareness of the need to talk about race and work on racism.
- In Twin Cities, the explicit linkage between education, housing, and racial justice fostered by the Education and Housing Equity Project increased public awareness of the housing issue and helped people in the community understand its complexity and its links to education and race.

b. Individuals increased their awareness and prepared for action aimed at ending racism.

- In several learning sites, including Colorado Springs, Ft. Myers, and Twin Cities, people reported that participants in study circles came to understand racism more deeply and with more accuracy.

I got to meet people who never knew there was discrimination, because I was the first black person they've ever known.

--African American/black facilitator in Ft. Myers

- In Colorado Springs, prior to the conversations there, someone in the coalition referred to racism in that community as "death by a thousand cuts." The Community Conversations on Race gave voice to some of those perceptions.

- In Syracuse, a person reported becoming more aware of the power of racism after she learned of a student who chose to leave a mixed-race college and transfer to an all-African American/black school where race would not be an issue. In another instance, an African American/black woman reported learning through study circles that some European Americans/whites care about racism and actively want to address it.

- In some places, people described increased awareness of racism as extending to include its impact on the community.

- In Ft. Myers, people said that study circles had increased their understanding of inequity, increased the motivation of European Americans/whites to work toward ending racism, and expanded the capacity of the whole community to work across traditional divisions to address those issues.

- In Syracuse and Hartford, people reported talking about white privilege in their study circle groups and becoming aware of that issue in a new way.

Some individuals reported that study circles increased their awareness of the need for diverse representation on boards of directors. (As noted below, people in some learning sites moved beyond awareness at the individual level and became involved in action on the group level on this issue.) Across the learning sites, people described the way their sensitivity to racial and ethnic jokes had increased as a result of study circles. Individuals in several communities also said that study circles helped them understand the racist nature of these remarks and jokes, and indicated they now feel both better equipped and more committed to interrupt this type of behavior.

- In Twin Cities, facilitators said they had become more aware of community issues and how they related to race. They said that study circles had offered them an

opportunity to meet people different from themselves and had increased their commitment to volunteering in the community in other ways in addition to facilitating study circles.

- In Woodridge, a group of senior citizens, emboldened by study circles, decided to take direct action and tour the site of a new building and development project themselves, rather than listen to rumors or fears about what it would introduce to their part of the community.

4. Taking action toward ending racism

This category includes actions directed toward ending racism. The changes individuals produced constitute a small but significant group, since each represents an instance of breaking an old habit or demonstrating a higher level of courage.

a. Organizational, institutional, and community level actors took action aimed at ending racism.

This category includes action-oriented changes that organizations, institutions, and whole communities produced and that were directed toward ending racism. This large category includes items from every community that addressed race as a topic.

i. Organizations that addressed equity grew stronger.

- As noted earlier, in Fayetteville, the Human Relations Commission, which is responsible for investigating bias complaints for the city, gained strength and credibility as a result of the study circles.

ii. Newspaper organizations and news coverage changed.

Based on a new understanding of racism and its negative impact, newspapers in several communities changed the way they covered the news, wrote editorials, displayed photographs, assigned attribution to perpetrators and victims of crime, and much more.

There seems to be a lot more of a focus on reporting and just covering the entire community instead of just one aspect of the community. But they've been moving in that direction all along. I just think this helped accelerate that whole trend.

--European American/white organizer in Fayetteville

The way I monitor things is anecdotal. I watch the interaction with people. I look at the general interactions, the working relationships and the way they are formalized. Working relationships are better with pastors. I pay attention to the police department community relation issues, and they are good now. I have stronger working relationships with the neighborhood associations. It is trending positively.

--European American/white organizer in Lima

- People in Aurora, Syracuse, Ft. Myers, New Castle County, and Colorado Springs reported significant changes in their local newspapers.

iii. Police-community relations improved.

- In Lima and Syracuse, people reported a significant improvement in police-community relations. In Syracuse, a problematic police chief left his position.

iv. Private sector equity increased.

In some communities, study circle efforts contributed to equity advances in the private sector.

- In Ft. Myers, study circle participants and leaders helped bring to fruition a new shopping center in the predominantly African American/black Dunbar community.

- In Syracuse, study circle participants persuaded a supermarket to run bus service into underserved parts of the community to improve the grocery shopping options for people of color and those living in low-income neighborhoods. The participants eventually convinced the owners of a small grocery store to open a business in a community where people had no other good grocery shopping options.

- Also in Syracuse, study circle organizers persuaded a mall to train its employees to treat people of color with respect as customers. In addition, three banks agreed to work with the Advisory Committee to address inequities in mortgage lending practices.

v. Housing options improved.

- In Twin Cities, a study circle idea resulted in a dramatic play about housing — Like Waters Rolling Down — that actors presented to 3,200 members of faith communities. This led to increased activism for improved housing, with the

final result of increased state legislative resources for housing. In addition, an initiative for inclusionary housing succeeded in the state legislature.

vi. Equity in organizations, institutions, and governments increased.

In a significant number of communities, people reported that public processes, institutional processes, and government practices became more open, more equitable, and more participatory.

- *Institutions increased equity in board membership*.
  - In Syracuse, the Lincoln Life CEO announced that the insurance company would no longer make donations to organizations with no people of color on their boards.
  - In New Castle County, the YWCA, which sponsors study circles there, reported that its own board had experienced an increase in African American/black members.
- *Public processes became more equitable.*
  - In Lima, people of color who participated in study circles reported that they were then more likely to be invited to participate in planning for public improvements, like park planning.
- *Planning processes emphasized an increase in citizen participation.*
  - In Decatur, the strategic planning process was structured so that each citizen who wanted to have a voice in the process had one. The strategic plan was viewed as Decatur citizens' greatest opportunity to influence the growth of the city over the next few years. The strategic planning team assured that the important ideas and

products from the Roundtables were squarely on the strategic planning team's agenda.

- *Citizens started new volunteer organizations or strengthened existing ones.*

  In some communities, volunteer organizations that addressed racism formed or became stronger as a result of study circles.

  - In Colorado Springs, the Pikes Peak Human Relations Coalition, a volunteer effort established when the city's Human Relations Commission was dismantled, took on an education campaign aimed at raising awareness about racial issues through ads, news spots, and other publicity approaches.

  - In Syracuse, other organizations with issues related to racism requested and used the facilitators trained for the Community Wide Dialogues.

- *Government hiring became more equitable*.

  - In Springfield, the city government agreed to change its hiring practices in the police and fire departments, following identification of unfair hiring practices by participants in the first round of study circles there. The changes resulted in the first African American/black, the first Latino/Hispanic, and the first female to be hired in the last ten years, all in one firefighter class.

- *Government services improved.*

  - The Department of Labor in Delaware implemented workplace study circles; outcomes included, as one organizer said, "an increased ability to actually interface with your coworkers," leadership trainings,

and efforts at targeting institutional racism. One person reported that the Department of Labor now processes bias complaints differently as a result of deeper understanding of the reality of race issues in the workplace.

vii. Study circle programs' ability to address racism grew stronger.

Some of the strongest examples of organizational action to end racism came from study circle programs themselves.

- In Syracuse, people involved with study circles produced a report as a result of study circles. This Benchmark Report documents racial disparities in employment and income, educational attainment, board membership, entrepreneurship and services, and health, safety, and criminal justice. It is intended to serve as the basis for analysis, decision making, and strategy development to accelerate the work on social justice and racial equity.

- Aurora Community Study Circles participated annually in the YWCA of the U.S.A.'s Week Without Violence. Typically, study circles in Aurora hosted their kick-off on the Friday of that week, the Day for the Elimination of Hate and Race Crimes. This raised the profile of study circle work as a direct approach to reducing racism in Aurora.

Some of the most significant changes took place inside the decision-making structures for the organizations that host and sponsor study circles.

- In New Castle County, the YWCA is the sponsoring organization. Its leaders report that as a result of study circles, the working culture of the board has changed to include dialogue at every meeting. In addition, while the YWCA gained public visibility through the study circles, the sponsorship of study circles also caused a shift in

> It has been incredibly enriching to our organization . . . this has allowed us to create a much broader bonding with far broader community — people know more about us, what we do, may be able to participate as volunteers or donors. We have only begun to see the power of that.
>
> *--European American/white organizer in New Castle County*

the profile of the YWCA from a strictly service organization to a new orientation that includes empowerment. As noted earlier, the YWCA saw an increase in African American/black board members, volunteers, and donors. Increasingly, the YWCA was treated as a resource in the community, as seen in the requests the YWCA receives for assistance with facilitation.

- In Syracuse, the InterReligious Council (IRC) gained more credibility as an organization that works effectively on racial justice issues after it began sponsoring study circles. The Community Wide Dialogues are seen as helping redirect IRC's focus from a mostly social service organization to one that also does social justice work. In addition, the IRC took seriously its own responsibility as an organization to "walk the talk" of study circles. The head of IRC asked all staff members to go through study circles and the IRC began examining its hiring practices with the intention to create a staff that includes more racial and ethnic diversity.

b. Individuals took action toward ending racism.

- In Woodridge, an African American/black participant reported that the study circles had given her the fortitude to interrupt prejudice in conversations and then to go even further by asking the persons making racist statements not only to stop but to consider the source and reasons for their actions.

- In New Castle County, facilitators formed a mutual support network to encourage each other to take their commitment to end racism deeper.

Virtually all of these changes are products of programs that addressed the topic of race directly. The Best Practices learning sites included five communities where the programs did not address race or diversity as a significant, explicit component of the dialogue sessions. Of those five, Alread has no people of color living in the community. Two of the remaining sites are the states of Maine and Oklahoma, where the study circle experiences are in some ways so singular that they are difficult to

compare with the other fifteen sites, all of which are individual towns, cities, or metropolitan regions. As a result, the Best Practices team could not learn a great deal about changes related to race that have emerged from study circle rounds on other topics.

In conclusion, study circle programs in the 17 learning sites have already contributed to a significant number of changes on the personal, organizational, and community or institutional level. Some of these changes were related to improving race relations or ending racism, while others had more general application. In some cases, organizers intended for certain changes to occur, while in others, changes resulted from study circle participants' own energy and commitment. As study circle programs continue to refine their approach to bringing about changes in their communities, it is likely that the range, number, and impact of results will increase.

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