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A TRAINING EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
Applied Psychology

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by  
Kyle Matthew Sager Christenson  
December 2022

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Accepted by:  
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## ABSTRACT

Demographic and attitudinal diversity can be powerful tools within the team and organizational contexts. However, when not addressed effectively, diversity can greatly strain interpersonal relations, and has been found to lead to a number of negative consequences at the individual, team, and organizational levels (Roth, Goldberg, & Thatcher, 2017; Harrison & Klein, 2007). Though there have been attempts to effectively mitigate these negative outcomes, few have found lasting success (Kessler, 2021). However, a training for students offered at a university nested in the southeastern region of the United States offers a relatively novel approach to handling these interpersonal differences. The training, known as Community Dialogues, focuses on increasing knowledge and awareness of social issues related to social identity, marginalization, and oppression as well as developing conversational skills needed to effectively engage in dialogue with others about these issues, especially with those with whom one doesn't agree. The purpose of this project is to explore whether Community Dialogues are an effective means of motivating people to be open to rethinking previously held attitudes and beliefs. Results shed light on for whom the training is most effective with regards to a number of important training-related outcomes including general trainee reactions, motivation to learn, perceived importance of dialogue and DEI-related topics, and engagement in belief updating.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Managing diversity within teams and organizations is an issue at the forefront of the minds of organizational scientists and practitioners alike largely due to the presence of mixed results as to whether and how diversity can improve individual, team, and organizational performance. To better understand the complexity that diversity can bring to interpersonal interactions, researchers distinguish between different types of diversity, the highest order of which are surface-level and deep-level diversity. Surface-level diversity, often called demographic diversity, is defined as differences amongst individuals within a group with regards to stable, visible, and physical characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, sex, and age). On the other hand, deep-level diversity is defined as heterogeneity among group members' attitudes, beliefs, and values. While evidence suggests that increasing team diversity can have a myriad of positive effects, it may also lead to increased interpersonal conflict, degradation of trust, lack of cohesiveness, and turnover behaviors if not handled effectively (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Hentschel, Shemla, Wegge, & Kearney, 2013; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Similarly, research on "group fault lines", which are hypothetical dividing lines that split a group into subgroups based on one or more individual attributes, suggests that highlighting differences between members of a group can lead to a number of negative consequences including increased relationship conflict, decreased team cohesion, and decreased team performance (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Thatcher & Patel, 2011).

For good reason, most research about diversity in organizations has focused on surface-level diversity with regards to discrimination related to race, ethnicity, age, and sex. However, there's been a recent push to understand the unique implications that deep-level diversity can have on teams and organizations. For example, Harrison, Price, & Bell (2017)



found that the longer a team works together, the less of an impact surface-level diversity has and the more of an impact deep-level diversity has on feelings of group cohesion. This finding is largely attributed to team members having more time to interact, which supports the individuation process, during which defining characteristics of others change from group-membership oriented to individual-oriented. Harrison, Price, Gavin, and Florey (2017) found further evidence supporting this claim, and added to it by finding that perceptions of team diversity, regardless of whether it was based in surface-level or deep-level diversity, has significant implications for team task performance as well. Thus, it is likely that deep-level diversity can have just as much of an impact on individuals and teams as surface-level diversity, and in many cases, mirrors the effects. These empirically supported findings suggest that the awareness, whether conscious or subconscious, of deeply rooted differences between people has the potential to cause negative consequences for individuals, teams, and organizations when not handled properly.

### **Addressing Deep-Level Diversity in Practice**

In an attempt to better manage deep-level diversity in the workplace, companies Coinbase and BaseCamp implemented new policies that banned workplace discussions on topics deemed polarizing, political, or taboo (Kessler, 2021). As a result of these changes, each company experienced both outspoken backlash from their employees as well as significant turnover. Not all of the turnover can be attributed to the banning of polarizing topics from conversation, as the policy revisions also included some restructuring of employee benefits. However, conversational censorship was by far the largest and most controversial change made. While there have not been any case studies published on either of these events, there exist quite a few theories that could explain the severity of employee reactions.

It's possible that the outrage sparked from these decisions stemmed from leadership breaking employee trust, as the overarching message sent by managers was that employees could not be trusted to engage in civil conversation about such topics. Violations of trust between managers and employees have been linked to increased counterproductive work behaviors and turnover, both of which can be costly and disruptive to organizations (Litzky, Eddleston, & Kidder, 2006). At a broader level, it's possible that this type of change to organizational policy greatly decreased perceived organizational support, which is associated with lower job performance, decreased job satisfaction, and increased turnover (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Research suggests that employees use information gathered from the actions of organizational "agents," organizational policies and procedures, and resources (i.e., pay, benefits, development opportunities) received from their organization to form a global impression of the quality of relationship between themselves and their organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The changes implemented by leaders of Coinbase and BaseCamp demonstrated negative feedback from all three of these information sources.

Mitigating the impact of deep-level diversity on organizational effectiveness seems to be a difficult task when done without careful consideration of consequences. Eliminating space for employees to express their deeply held values and beliefs in the workplace can cause severe forms of employee backlash, and ignoring deep-level diversity altogether can lead to fear of persecution, divisiveness, and conflict. An effective solution must provide employees enough autonomy to maintain healthy levels of trust as well as enough structure to alleviate employees' fears of persecution and stop conflict before it occurs. Fortunately, a relatively new form of training developed at the University of Michigan teaches a practical set of interpersonal

communication skills, commonly referred to as ‘dialogue’ skills, that may meet both of these conditions.

### **Intergroup Dialogue**

The Program on Intergroup Relations (IGR) at the University of Michigan is a social justice education program jointly administered by the Liberal Arts College and the Division of Student Affairs. The IGR offers a number of courses that are designed for students with special interests in social diversity and social justice, the most popular of which is a recurring “Intergroup Dialogue” course. Broadly speaking, the purpose of this course is to help students become more self-aware of the components of their own values as well as hone specialized communication skills oriented towards understanding the identities and values of others (Program of Intergroup Relations, n.d.). Now taught consistently each year, the courses are semester or year-long in duration, and focus on a single conflict between two groups of people, most often related to issues between racial or ethnic groups.

The curriculum mainly draws from psychological research on group identities, specifically the processes of decategorization recategorization. Coined by Brewer & Miller (1984), decategorization posits that an effective way to reduce intergroup prejudice, bias, and discrimination is to reduce the saliency of group identity or membership by encouraging individuals to get to know out-group members on a personal level. Within the intergroup dialogue context, the personalization process is facilitated through the sharing of stories that students tell about themselves as members of a particular group. Recategorization is a process in which members of two (or more) different groups form a new, singular group identity based around a common goal or shared experience (Dovidio et al., 2005), and acts as the next step in facilitating effective dialogue. Session facilitators promote recategorization by helping

participants find common ground amongst shared stories, emphasizing how bonds between groups can develop through intergroup collaboration, and pushing participants to develop a shared identity of people broadly committed to social justice (cite Guidebook).

Additionally, creators of intergroup dialogue put structures in place in line with the Contact Hypothesis from Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* to support positive intergroup interactions (Allport, 1979). The Contact Hypothesis outlines that to reduce prejudice between groups, there must exist an equal status among groups, the groups must share common goals, the groups must cooperate to achieve those goals, and there must exist institutional support of said cooperation (Allport, 1979). In the original Intergroup Dialogue spaces equal status was achieved by intentionally enrolling an equal number of students from each "side" of a conflict. Common goals and intergroup cooperation were ensured through a number of exercises and assignments throughout the duration of the course that required intergroup collaboration. Institutional support is believed to be evident in these courses simply by an educational institution agreeing to host them.

The design of these courses is now commonly referred to as the "Michigan Model," which outlines four key stages of creating effective dialogue spaces (Program for Intergroup Relations, n.d.). Stage 1 is "Forming and Building Relationships" among dialogue participants to create familiarity and establish rapport with others attending the dialogue. Stage 2 is "Exploring Differences and Commonalities of Experiences" related to the topic(s) at hand, which entails participants sharing stories and perspectives about broader themes being covered in the particular dialogue space. Stage 3 is "Exploring and Discussing Current Conflict," and involves unpacking current and divisive issues and events together. Stage 4 is "Action Planning and Alliance Building," which entails brainstorming actionable steps about how all participants can work

together toward a shared vision of the future. This model is now viewed as the gold standard of dialogue spaces, and has been used to create similar programs at other universities across the United States. One such program was recently formed at a university in the southeastern region of the United States.

### **Community Dialogues**

All new undergraduate students at this particular southeastern university are required to complete an asynchronous course during their first semester aimed at helping students understand what it means to be a part of the university's community. The course is broken up into several short modules, each covering a specific topic, that may be completed at the students' discretion. Topics covered include but are not limited to the university's core values, academic success resources available to students, university standards, policies, and expectations, academic advising resources, and understanding the social identities of oneself and others. Community Dialogues are one of the modules included in this course.

Community Dialogues were designed to mirror the "Michigan Model" of dialogue, and intended to be spaces for open and honest conversation in which students of all backgrounds share their own stories and perspectives on community, identity, and socially divisive issues. Pairs of older students who have been trained to lead Community Dialogues by a specialized program in the University's Multicultural Center help these incoming students to understand what dialogue is and how to practice using dialogue skills. Further, students are encouraged to think about what it means to be part of a community, what kind of university community they'd like to build and maintain, and how to take action to nurture and support that vision. However, Community Dialogues diverge from the Michigan Model in a few key ways. First, Community Dialogues are single ninety-minute sessions that are required of all students, rather than

voluntary semester- or year-long courses. There are no assignments, readings, or follow up courses associated with the program. Second, Community Dialogues are not focused on a single, specified issue between two designated groups, but are rather open discussions about topics brought forward by participants. Lastly, many Community Dialogue sessions are offered throughout each Fall semester so as to accommodate for all student schedule types. Students are able to sign up and attend any session they choose. However, this means participant demographic composition is not controlled for, and thus equal social status among represented groups is not ensured in every session. However, decategorization and recategorization are still largely encouraged during Community Dialogues, as the bulk of the session content relies heavily on the sharing of personal anecdotes related to group membership and session leaders highly encourage the adoption of a shared university student identity.

The leaders of the PDF program have expressed an interest in developing a form of evaluation to better understand what is happening during Community Dialogues, as the current form of feedback relies solely on the anecdotes of Peer Dialogue Facilitators. Thus, the purpose of this project is twofold. First, this project aims to create a structured evaluation of Community Dialogues to help the PDF program understand what about the program is working well and provide actionable items to improve any identified areas for growth. To do this, the project will empirically explore the following questions: What are students taking away from Community Dialogues? Are Community Dialogues effective at achieving their desired outcomes? Are Community Dialogues equally impactful for everyone, and if not, for who are they more impactful and why? Second, this project aims to explore whether Community Dialogues are an effective means of motivating people to be open to rethinking previously held attitudes or opinions in the face of new and relevant information.

### ***Task Analysis: Community Dialogues***

The following list of characteristics of dialogue, provided by the head of the PDF program, was originally compiled by Ratnesh Nagda, Patricia Gurin, Jaclyn Rodriguez & Kelly Maxwell, and based on work by Diana Kardia and Todd Sevig (1997) for the Program on Intergroup Relations, Conflict and Community at the University of Michigan.

Dialogue is:

1. Collaborative - two or more people working together
2. Rooted in Common Understanding
3. Learning-Centered
4. Listening Actively
5. Cumulative - building on ideas and perspectives
6. Temporarily Suspending Judgements
7. Welcoming to Emotions
8. Re-Examining Assumptions and Biases

A task analysis on Community Dialogues was run by conducting an interview with the head of the PDF program about the history of the program, the content of curriculum covered during Community Dialogues, and major goals of the training. An initial list of desired outcomes for Community Dialogues participants was created based on that interview. However, due to turnover within the leadership of the PDF program as well as a curriculum change that occurred during the development of this evaluation program, that initial list was later edited by the Executive Director of the Multicultural Center. The updated list is provided below:

“Participants should be able to...”

1. Identify important aspects of their personal backgrounds
2. Articulate the value of understanding different perspectives
3. Describe and demonstrate principles of positive social engagement in communication with others

4. Understand how the core values of honesty, integrity and respect relate to being responsible members of the University Community

Based on these lists, a number of metrics were identified to assess the effectiveness of Community Dialogues, and were categorized using the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation.

### **Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation**

Training effectiveness was assessed using the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation, a widely popular evaluation framework. The Kirkpatrick Model breaks training into four levels: reactions, learning, behaviors, and results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2012). Reactions are subjective evaluations of the training and capture changes in participant attitudes towards the training (AlYahya & Mat, 2013). Popular metrics used to measure reactions include training reaction, motivation to learn, and motivation to transfer, which are all included in this project and explained in the methods section. Learning refers to the degree to which training participants acquire the desired knowledge and skills taught during the training (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2012). Measures of learning are often informed by and specific to the training at hand. Behavior refers to the extent to which participants either change old behaviors or engage in new behaviors based on participation in the training (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2012). Again, measures of behaviors vary greatly as they are informed by the goals of the particular training segment. Results are operationalized as the impact of the training seen on an organizational level (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2012).

### **Mapping Community Dialogues onto the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation**

A plan of evaluation was developed mapping information gathered about the structure and goals of Community Dialogues onto the four levels of the Kirkpatrick Model of Training



Evaluation. Several outcomes were measured to assess the degree to which this training affects students' experiences related to these constructs including general reaction to content, motivation to learn, perceived importance of topics covered, perspective taking, motivation to transfer, and belief updating. The evaluation plan passed through multiple rounds of revisions based on feedback from leaders of the University's Multicultural Center as well as the instructors of record of the asynchronous course within which resides Community Dialogues. While the overarching evaluation plan developed for the Multicultural Center contained and explored relationships between a host of different constructs, only a handful of select variables were considered within the bounds of this paper. A study timeline outlining the procedure can be found in Appendix C.

### **Trainee Characteristics and Training Outcomes**

When designing and implementing any sort of training program, regardless of the content, it is always important to tailor the training to the environment in which it will be delivered. This is why person- and organizational-analyses are deemed critical components of training program design (Brown, 2002). These tools help scientists and practitioners to answer questions such as “who is in need of this training?”, “who will benefit from this training?”, “what are the general attitudes of potential participants towards this training?”, “Is there organizational support for this training?”, and “what types of organizational resources are at our disposal?”. Answers to these types of questions can provide insights into trainee characteristics, such as pre-training attitudes, which are shown to be important antecedents of effective training delivery (Brown, 2002). One such important antecedent is trainee motivation to learn, a relatively self-explanatory term that's been positively, empirically tied to trainee learning and behavior outcomes (Noe & Schmitt, 1986).

In addition, most training evaluation systems gauge general trainee reactions to training content, as they've been shown to be useful for several reasons. From an empirical standpoint, positive trainee reactions are associated with greater motivation to learn, greater learning, and greater motivation to transfer knowledge gained (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & CannonBowers, 1991). From a practice standpoint, reaction data can capture trainee suggestions for improving the content and delivery of future training. It also sends a message to trainees that their input is valued and that the true intent of the training is to help them improve. Further, reaction data can provide insights into the overall effectiveness of the training to external stakeholders, who in the case of this evaluation represent the university's Multicultural Center as a whole.

Despite how essential and useful understanding trainee characteristics is to training design and delivery, a somewhat recent review by Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell (2012) found minimal previous research on the topic with respect to diversity training, subsequently calling for scientific and empirical attention. One of the few articles that does explore the topic found that participant pre-training competence significantly impacts participatory efforts and training reactions. In the study, participants who demonstrated more competence in declarative knowledge and skills related to diversity were more likely to participate in a voluntary diversity training and reacted more favorably to the experience (Kulik, Pepper, Roberson, & Parker, 2007). This relationship was explained through a means of the ability to identify personal needs for training. Traditionally, it is believed that low pre-training competency levels in the training domain trigger a perceived need for training, influencing trainee motivation and voluntary participation (Noe, 1986). However, Dunning and Kruger (1999) suggest that those who are less competent in a given area are more likely to overestimate their abilities in that domain, and are

less likely to be able to identify what competence in that given domain looks like. Therefore, those who are less competent in a domain are, in fact, less likely to seek out further education on the topic. While interesting, these empirical findings are limited to the context of voluntary diversity training. The relationship between pre-training competence and training engagement is seemingly yet to be explored.

From conversations held with the leadership of the PDF program as well as information gathered from the Intergroup Relations Program at the University of Michigan, two of the most important training outcomes of Community Dialogues are increased awareness/declarative knowledge about the topics covered in the training and increased competency in perspective taking. This entails putting aside one's own attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and, for lack of a better term, perspectives to "take a walk in someone else's shoes." There has been a vast amount of psychological research that highlights the social benefits of perspective taking including reducing stereotype application, reducing in-group biases, increasing empathy, increasing prosocial behaviors, and increasing positive attitudes felt towards others, desirable outcomes for both the PDF Program, the University Multicultural Program, and the University at large. (Galinsky, & Moskowitz, 2000; Chopik, O'Brien, & Konrath, 2017; Vaish, Carpenter, & Tomasello, 2009; Batson, 1997). However, one recent study by Catapano, Tormala, & Rucker (2019) found that perspective taking might actually decrease one's openness and receptiveness to attitudes and beliefs counter to one's own. Participants in the study were told they would have a conversation about universal healthcare with someone of the opposite political ideology, though the interaction never happened, and were asked to generate arguments that their conversational partner might use. Participants who were asked to engage in perspective taking while coming up with these arguments were much less receptive to the counter attitude. The results from this

study may not apply to Community Dialogue settings, as participants in the study were asked to generate arguments for a counter attitude on their own while participants in Community Dialogues are faced with real people who hold these counter attitudes. Additionally, in dialogue spaces, interpersonal interaction and connection are established before the sharing of attitudes and beliefs. These key distinctions may mitigate any potential for perspective taking to lead to close mindedness during Community Dialogues.

In an ideal training setting, those who demonstrate the lowest amount of competence in the domain of “dialogue” will be more motivated to engage in their Community Dialogue session than those who already possess sufficient skill in the area. However, due to the findings of Kulik, Pepper, Roberson, & Parker (2007) it is expected that those who demonstrate more pre-training competence in the domain of “dialogue” will react more favorably and be more motivated to engage in Community Dialogues. More specifically, it is hypothesized that:

*H1: Participants higher in reported perspective taking and perceived importance of the topics covered in the training will also report higher motivation to learn.*

*H2: Participants higher in reported perspective taking and perceived importance of the topics covered in the training will also report more positive reactions to the training.*

### **Trainee Reactions and Motivation to Transfer**

One of the overarching, desired outcomes of Community Dialogues that emerged throughout the training needs assessment was the increase in knowledge and awareness of social identity and the power of dialogues. However, leaders of the PDF program understand limitations in learning that come from delivering their curriculum within a single ninety-minute training session. Thus, Community Dialogues are structured and framed to act as introductory experiences that spark motivation in participants to apply what they’ve learned and seek further

information about related topics. Within the training literature, this is commonly referred to as motivation to transfer, a learning outcome that is believed to help act as a bridge between positive trainee reactions and subsequent changes in trainee behavior (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2012).

While motivation to transfer knowledge and skills can often be contingent on positive training reactions (Tannenbaum et al., 1991), Tews & Noe (2019) remind us that trainee reactions are not necessarily required for a training session or program to achieve its desired learning and behavioral outcomes. Motivation to transfer, and actual training transfer, can be largely impacted by other factors such as the number of opportunities to practice newly acquired knowledge and skills, the presence of a formalized feedback structure, and perceived manager support (Noe, 2020, Chapter 4; Mayer, 2008). However, Community Dialogues lack many of these factors, namely opportunities for continued practice and formalized feedback, which may increase the importance that training reactions play in promoting motivation to transfer. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

*H3: Trainee reactions will be positively related to reported motivation to transfer.*

### **Belief Updating/Prejudice Reduction**

Previous evaluations of Intergroup Dialogues at other institutes consistently demonstrate that the experience encourages participants to engage in belief updating about topics covered within their sessions and significantly reduce intergroup prejudice among participating members (Gurin, Nagda, & Ximena, 2013). As previously stated, this outcome is largely achieved through the decategorization and recategorization processes, which in this context are heavily dependent on feelings of interpersonal closeness between attendees. For the past two years, Community Dialogues were forced to be delivered in a completely online format in response to the

COVID-19 pandemic. Research on virtual collaboration and teamwork suggests that virtual settings change the manner in which interpersonal ties are developed and maintained among work groups. Weiser and colleagues (2018) proposed the use of medium naturalness theory to help us understand reasons for these differences, explaining that face-to-face communication is peak normalcy and thus commands the highest level of participation engagement. The closer virtual communication is to traditional face-to-face interactions, the better. Work by Gibson and Gibbs (2006) supported this idea, finding that decreased “naturalness” of interactions reduces engagement and makes it take longer for key components of interpersonal liking, (e.g. trust) to develop among students within educational spaces. It is yet to be understood whether Intergroup Dialogues can be effectively delivered in virtual environments.

An important part of training-related best practices is making sure training sessions are delivered to and training curriculum is tailored to those who will truly benefit from the experience (Grossman, Thayer, Shuffler, Burke, & Salas, 2015). Traditional Intergroup Dialogue courses take this into consideration through the voluntary nature of training participation and the careful practice of ensuring equal representation of social groups among participants, and for good reason. Research demonstrates that members of social majority groups tend to demonstrate pushback towards diversity related initiatives within organizations (e.g. policies, practices, training, etc.), as they tend to view diversity initiatives as unfairly benefiting some groups over their own or as harmful to their ingroup even in the face of contrary evidence (Brown, & Jacoby-Senghor, 2021). Further, there tend to be group differences between majority and minority groups with regards to diversity training outcomes (Bezrukova, K., Jehn, K. A., & Spell, C. S., 2012; Karp & Sammour, 2000). Minority group members, specifically people of

color, tend to see more value in diversity related initiatives and perceived skills associated with diversity as more job-relevant than do majority group members, in this case white people, due to minority group members' significantly greater number of experiences with prejudice and discrimination in the workplace (Alderfer, Alderfer, Bell, & Jones, 1992; Bell et al., 1997). Evaluations of Intergroup Dialogues demonstrate non-significant differences in training effectiveness between members of different relevant social groups (Gurin, Nagda, & Ximena, 2013)

Community Dialogues are delivered to all incoming students with somewhat of a blanket assumption that everyone is in need of the training and will benefit from participation. Due to the sheer number of students at this university and the lack of control over which students participate when, little is done to understand or control for participant training needs before each session is delivered. Thus, there may be greater variance in training effectiveness between participants of different social groups as functions of unequal group representation and differences in training needs. This may be of particular importance at this particular university, as a survey conducted in 2020 found that roughly 80% of the university's undergraduate population was white (how to cite this). Thus, the present study aims to explore whether Community Dialogues are able to achieve the same outcomes in prejudice reduction through the promotion of openness to viewpoints that oppose one's own attitudes and/or beliefs given their structural differences. A prominent guiding research question of this study is:

*RQ1: Are Community Dialogues effective at motivating people to engage with new knowledge that may be counter to their own opinions and/or beliefs? If so, what makes that possible? If not, is it more effective at doing so for some rather than others?*

This paper will explore this question by examining whether or not there are group differences between majority and minority group members (white v. non-white) in the changes in perceived importance of dialogue-related topics, the likelihood of updating one's attitudes towards DEI/Dialogue, and the content of what about participants change their attitudes.

### **Methodological Considerations**

To further inform the design of this evaluation, the researchers referred to the ideas of methodological fit proposed by Edmondson & McManus (2007). These authors proposed a framework outlining which methodologies were most appropriate to fill in the gaps of prior theory and research based on the 'maturity' of said theory and research. The maturity of theory can be thought of as a spectrum. On one end, mature theory holds well-developed and widely studied constructs and models that have been studied over a long period of time and are largely agreed upon by a variety of scholars. Nascent theory, on the other hand, still seeks to understand the questions of how and why, often focused on suggesting new connections among observed phenomena. Intermediate theory, which falls in between the two, often introduces new constructs and proposes relationships between it and previously-established constructs. The types of questions being asked in intermediate theory allows for the development of testable hypotheses, as is common in mature theory, while still allowing room for the involvement of less well-defined constructs, as is similar to nascent theory research.

The decently established literature on Intergroup Dialogue evaluation paired with the novel and unevaluated structure specific to the Community Dialogue setting led the researcher to judge the current literature on dialogue training evaluation to be intermediate in nature. Thus, based on the recommendations of Edmondson & McManus (2007), a mixed-methods approach was adopted.



## CHAPTER 2: METHODS

This study assessed the effectiveness of Community Dialogues on building knowledge and awareness about issues related to social identity, equality, and marginalization as well as honing competencies associated with effectively navigating conversations about ‘hot topic’ issues to create a more socially aware and engaged student body. As previously mentioned, Community Dialogues are a training module that all incoming students at this particular university must complete as part of the required course, which is in part meant to help acclimate new students to the culture, community standards, and values the university is committed to upholding. To measure the effectiveness of Community Dialogues, participants completed survey measures at two different points in time; once before their scheduled Community Dialogue session and once immediately following their participation.

### **Participants**

Participants were undergraduate students who participated in a Community Dialogue session during the Fall 2021 semester, which were mostly incoming freshmen, but included some transfer students. Compensation was offered to participants who completed both the pre-training and post-training survey in the form of a drawing for one of ten \$50 gift cards. A total of 124 valid responses to the pre-training survey and 234 responses to the post-training survey were collected. 45 of these participants completed both surveys.

Demographic data including age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, year in school, and area of study were collected. 53% of participants reported identifying as female and 46% reported male. 73% of those participants reported being white, followed by 9% being biracial, and 8% being black. Further 71% of participants were freshman while 21% were sophomores, and the remaining 8% were juniors and seniors.

## **Procedure**

The required, asynchronous class containing Community Dialogues requires that all class modules be completed by the end of the enrolled semester. Thus, Community Dialogues are offered at multiple times each week of the fall semester and students can choose when they participate. An invitation to participate in the experiment was sent out to students a week in advance of their set Community Dialogue time slot. Those who agreed to participate were sent a survey of pre-training measures, which captured demographics, motivation to learn, perspective taking, and perceived importance of dialogue- and DEI-related issues. The post-training survey, which captured participants' emotional reactions to the training, perceived importance of training content, motivation to transfer, and attitude changes, was sent to participants immediately following their Community Dialogue session.

## ***Point of Contact***

The Associate Director of Multicultural Engagement and the head of the PDF program served as the main point of contact for all evaluation efforts. Additionally, a Graduate Assistant in the University's multicultural center served as a secondary point of contact.

## **Measures**

The effectiveness of Community Dialogues was assessed using the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation, which measures training effectiveness at 4 distinct levels: reactions, knowledge, behaviors, and (organizational-level) results. The measures to be used in this study have been organized below using those four levels. However, the required nature of the Community Dialogues training created a few methodological constraints that rendered tying changes at the organizational level to the training itself impossible. Additionally, the leaders of the PDF program were much more interested in the impact of the training at the individual level,

specifically the change in knowledge and awareness about the issues covered during Community Dialogues in students, rather than at the organizational level. For these reasons, no measures were used to assess organizational-level results of the training. Full measures can be found in Appendix I.

### ***Baselines***

Six questions were used to capture demographic information about participant age, gender expression, race, ethnicity, year in school, and academic major. All baseline measures will be included in the pre-training survey.

Additionally, Previous Experience with Topics Covered was captured with the question “On a scale from 1 to 10, how knowledgeable are you about the following topics?” A list of topics covered during Community Dialogues was developed with help from members of the PDF program. The list of topics includes University Core Values, Social Identity, Diversity and Inclusion, Taking Action to Improve the University Community, and The Practice and Philosophy of “Dialogue.” As demonstrated in the question, participants responded on a scale from 1 to 10, 1 representing “not at all” and 10 representing “extremely important.” This measure was included in the pre-training survey.

### ***Reaction: Trainee Reaction to Program Content***

Trainee reaction to the content of the Community Dialogue curriculum was captured using a 3-item measure adapted from Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2012). The first item measures perceptions of overall training effectiveness on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very ineffective) to 5 (very effective). The other two items were open ended questions asking participants what they liked about the training and what they would want to improve about the training. These open-ended questions were included at the request of the PDF leadership.

Responses were reviewed to identify common themes as part of the thematic analysis portion of this study.

***Reaction: Motivation to Learn***

Motivation to learn was captured using a six-item scale adapted from Noe & Schmitt (1986). Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores representing greater motivation to learn. Sample items include “I am genuinely interested in the content of this training program.” and “I will try to learn as much as I can from this training program”. The wording of the items was adjusted to fit the setting of this study, and did not impact the reliability of the measure as the Cronbach Alpha score was  $\alpha = .94$ . This measure was included in the pre-training survey.

***Learning: Motivation to Transfer***

Motivation to transfer knowledge and skills acquired during Community Dialogues was captured using an 11-item scale adapted from Machin & Gerard (2004). The items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). One of the original items that asks about intentions to discuss training content with a supervisor was omitted due to its irrelevance in this particular setting. However, reliability was unaffected by this change, as the Cronbach Alpha score was  $\alpha = .97$ . This measure was included in the post-training survey.

***Behaviors: Perspective Taking***

Perspective taking was assessed using the six “perspective taking” items from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, which was originally developed by Mark (1980, 1983) to capture four distinct dimensions of empathy. Originally a seven item scale, item one was removed to improve the reliability of the scale, increasing Cronbach Alpha score from  $\alpha = .67$  to  $\alpha = .71$ .

Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Does not describe me well) to 5 (Describes me very well). Perspective taking behaviors were included in the pre-training survey.

### ***Learning: Belief Updating***

Several open-ended questions were developed by the experimenter to assess if and how the opinions participants held going into the training about any of the topics covered changed over the course of the training. Depending on the participant's answer to the yes-or-no question “Did your experience with your Community Dialogue lead you to change your mind and/or opinions about any of the topics you discussed”, they were prompted to explain either which opinion they changed and why or what may have hindered them from changing their opinion. Participants were also asked, “What, if anything, will you take away from your dialogue experience?”.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESULTS**

All quantitative statistical analyses associated with this project were performed in RStudio. The required nature of the training, the set timeline of Community Dialogues, and the unfortunate timing of significant turnover within the multicultural center late in the lifespan of this project made it impossible to utilize a control group for the purpose of analysis. Thus, multiple regression was used to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 regarding the prediction of motivation to learn and training reaction using participant trait perspective taking and perceived importance of topics covered in the training. Hypothesis 3 regarding the relationship between trainee reactions and motivation to transfer was assessed using a Pearson’s correlation test.

The study’s main research questions were explored using a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures. An independent-samples t-test, an ANCOVA, and a slew of Levene’s tests were used to examine group differences in changes in perceived importance of topics covered

between white and non-white participants Thematic analysis was used to analyze responses capturing changes in participants' opinions about topics covered during Community Dialogues. A team of researchers reviewed and categorized responses in order to identify what about the Community Dialogue experience effectively encouraging participants to rethink previously held beliefs, notions, and opinions about the topics covered. Responses to these questions were split between white and non-white participants for the purpose of analysis and comparison.

A table listing each hypothesis/research question, the respective measures used, and the form of analysis run can be found in Appendix A.

### **Trainee Characteristics and Training Outcomes**

To test hypothesis 1, motivation to learn scores were regressed on reported perspective taking and perceived importance of discussed topics. Overall, the model was statistically significant,  $F(2,112) = 26.96, p < .001$ , though only accounting for 31% of the variance in motivation to learn. Both regression coefficients were statistically significant (See Table 1). As the perceived importance of topics increased, motivation to learn increased ( $B = .51$ ) when controlling for perspective taking. Similarly as perspective taking increased, motivation to learn increased ( $B = .19$ ) when controlling for perceived importance of topics covered. Note that both estimated coefficients were positive and in the predicted direction. In addition, an examination of the standardized regression coefficients suggested that perceived importance of topics covered had a larger effect on participant motivation to learn than did perspective taking.

To test hypothesis 2, trainee reaction scores were regressed on reported perspective taking and perceived importance of discussed topics. Overall, the model was statistically significant,  $F(2,32) = 4.01, p < .05$ , though only accounting for 15% of the variance in trainee reaction. Interestingly, only the regression coefficient associated with perceived importance was

statistically significant (See Table 2). Thus, as the perceived importance of topics increased, motivation to learn increased ( $B = .44$ ) when controlling for perspective taking.

### **Trainee Reactions and Motivation to Transfer**

A simple Pearson's correlation was run to examine the relationship between general trainee reactions and motivation to transfer. A strong correlation was found between trainee reactions and motivation to transfer,  $r(34) = .87, p < .001$  (See Table 3).

Participants also responded to two open-ended questions about what they liked about their Community Dialogue experience and what they thought could be improved. Thematic analysis was used to develop a qualitative coding scheme specific to the responses, which was then used to identify general trends and popular answers.

Of the 234 responses to the post-training survey, 117 participants indicated what they liked about the training. 23% of respondents indicated that they liked the session/conversational environment, specifically how open, safe, and inclusive it was. 18% of respondents said they liked the demeanor and level of competence expressed by their session leaders. Lastly, 14% of participants said they liked the general content of the Community Dialogue curriculum. See these results in Appendix D.

Further, 115 participants responded to the question asking what they'd like to change or improve about Community Dialogues. Surprisingly, the most common answer, appearing in 18% of responses, was that participants wouldn't change anything. ~15% indicated they wanted to improve the session content by having more time for structured discussion. Another ~15% said that they wanted more participation from their peers. Lastly, 14% of respondents reported that they would like to change the format of the session delivery from virtual to in-person and to generally make the training more engaging. See these results in Appendix D.

## Race and Belief Updating

To assess differences in perceived importance of topics covered between white and non-white participants, a host of different statistical tests were conducted. First, a two sample t-test was performed to compare pre-training perceived importances scores between white and non-white participants. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between white ( $M = 6.49$ ,  $SD = 1.946$ ) and non-white ( $M = 7.04$ ,  $SD = 1.922$ ) participants;  $t(60) = -1.458$ ,  $p = .15$  (see Table 4). Then, a one-way analysis of covariance was conducted to examine group differences in the post-training environment. Controlling for pre-training perceived importance of topics covered, post-training perceived importance of topics covered was the dependent variable and a binary variable capturing whether a participant was white or non-white was the independent variable. Race was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 42) = 25.02$ ,  $p < .01$  (see Table 5). In addition, the effect size ( $\eta^2 = .014$ ) indicated that 1.4% of the variance in post-training perceived importance of topics covered can be explained by race. Analysis for an interaction effect also came back non-significant (see Figure 1).

In order to further explore whether there were differences in changes in perceived importance scores, variances of average scores were assessed both within and between groups. Assessing within-group differences, two Levene's test showed that the variances in perceived importance scores for white,  $F(1,125) = 3.58$ ,  $p = .061$ , and non-white participants,  $F(1,38) = 1.31$ ,  $p = .259$ , did not significantly change from pre-training to post-training (See Table 6 and 7). When assessing between-group differences, two more Levene's tests demonstrated that there were no significant differences in the variances of perceived importance scores between white and non-white participants before,  $F(1,119) = .013$ ,  $p = .907$ , or after,  $F(1,43) = .257$ ,  $p = .615$ , participation in a Community Dialogue (See tables 8 and 9).



In an attempt to better understand changes in attitudes, qualitative analyses were conducted on responses to the questions “Did your experience with your Community Dialogue lead you to change your mind and/or opinions about any of the topics you discussed?”, “What opinion did you change or topic did you rethink?”, and “What about your experience led you to change that opinion?” First, ratios of responses to first question were calculated for white and non-white participants for comparison. Fifteen of the thirty nine white participants (~38%) indicated that they engaged in belief updating and two of six nonwhite participants (33%) indicated the same.

Next, thematic analysis was conducted to explore trends in answers to the second and third questions. The top three topics white participants changed their minds about were as follows:

1. DEI - specifically related to race, social identities, and socioeconomic status
2. Perspective Taking - specifically cognitive blindspots
3. The importance and power of Dialogue - general

Only two of the six non-white participants responded to the question asking what specifically they changed their minds about. These participants indicated they changed their minds about:

1. DEI - general
2. Perspective Taking - specifically cognitive blindspots

Due to the small number of usable responses from non-white participants for this section, qualitative analyses were also conducted aggregating all responses to the post-training survey. Of the 234 total responses to the post-intervention survey collected, 146 participants indicated whether or not something about their participation in a Community Dialogue session caused

them to engage in belief updating about one of the topics covered. Of those 146, about 52% reported having changed an opinion. However, only 45 participants responded to the question asking what belief or opinion they updated. Of those 45, 19 participants (~42% of respondents) reported that they changed their opinion on the topics related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, more specifically DEI in general, race, and socioeconomic status. 12 participants (~26% of respondents) reported that they rethought their opinion on the perspectives of others, more specifically the topics of blindspots and assumptions and general consideration of the perspective of others. 4 participants (~9% of respondents) reported they rethought their opinion about dialogue and the power of conversation, more specifically its importance and helpfulness.

42 of those 45 participants responded to the question of what about their experience led them to rethink a previously held opinion. 12 of these participants (~28% of respondents) reported that listening to the stories of others, and more specifically hearing firsthand accounts of experiences with societal issues, encouraged them to update an opinion. 10 participants (~23% of respondents) reported that engaging in conversation with others, more specifically simply talking about the topics covered and connecting their own experiences to the experiences of others, encouraged them to rethink an opinion. Lastly, 6 participants (~14% of respondents) reported that their experiences with the leaders of Community Dialogues, more specifically engaging with the lecture presentation held at the beginning of their Community Dialogue session, encouraged them to rethink their opinion.

Participants were also asked if anything about their session stopped them from being open to reconsidering a previously held opinion. Only 6 participants in total responded to this question. Half of these participants indicated that their experience with the leader, more specifically their perceptions of leader competence and attitude, turned them off to engaging with

the new information presented during their session. Interestingly, all six of these participants were white.

Summary tables of all previously discussed qualitative trends can be found in Appendix F-H.

## **CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION**

### **Trainee Characteristics and Training Outcomes**

Perspective taking and perceived importance of topics were both significant predictors of motivation to learn, which indicates that Community Dialogues are effective at exciting those with aligned interests about attending a session. These results are largely in line with findings by Dunning and Kruger (1999) regarding domain competence and training motivation, providing some initial, though tentative, evidence about the relationship within mandatory diversity training environments. Interestingly, only pre-training perceptions about the importance of dialogue-related topics, not perspective taking, predicted trainee reaction to content. It's likely that those high in perspective taking were excited about participating in a Community Dialogue session, as the general conversational skill of dialogue heavily relies on perspective taking, a domain in which they already feel confident in their abilities. However, qualitative analyses demonstrated that many participants did not like the virtual nature of the training and wanted more time for conversation and participation from their fellow trainees. It's possible that the reality of the training experience, especially the lack of conversational participation from others stemming from virtuality, was disappointing to those highly motivated to learn, especially as so much of the training session relies on the quality of conversation held with other trainees, and thus impacted their reported reaction to their Community Dialogue.

## **Motivation to Transfer**

Analyses revealed a strong, positive relationship between trainee reaction and motivation to transfer, indicating that this relationship is still present and important in the online training settings. Building on this finding, qualitative analysis revealed that trainees reacted positively to the conversational environment that Intergroup Dialogues and Community Dialogues aim to build. It could be interpreted that this trend was even present in the question asking what participants would change about Community Dialogues, the top answer to which was “nothing”. However, it is worth noting that it is not possible within this study to tell whether those responses of “nothing” were given out of apathy or genuine enjoyment of the training.

Another result worth noting is that the second highest cited aspect of Community Dialogues that participants reported liking was their trainers. This finding is largely in line with research on the topic, which suggests that trainee feelings towards trainers are important in determining training outcomes (Glerum, Joseph, McKenny, & Fritzsche, 2021). On a positive note, this is a relatively promising finding for the University’s multicultural center, as those leading the Community Dialogue sessions are pairs of other students who have received a semester’s worth of training from the Peer Dialogue Facilitator program. It acts as positive feedback about both trainer competence and the effectiveness of trainer training.

## **Race and Belief Updating**

No significant differences were found between white and non-white participants with regards to pre-training perceived importance, post-training perceived importance, or belief updating. The only visible group difference found was that answers to the question about if anything about Community Dialogues stopped participants from wanting to change their minds only came from white participants, but there were only 6 total respondents to that question. Thus,

the analyses conducted in this study provided no evidence of the group differences in training effectiveness outlined by Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell (2012). However, results in this area may have been impacted by small sample size. Both the ANCOVA run to test group differences in post-training perceived importance scores and the qualitative analyses run to explore belief updating only had 45 usable responses, eliminating 76 possible other entries due to missing data. Further, the vast majority of the usable sample was made up of white participants, with only 6 non-white participants represented. Such a small sample of non-white participants leaves questions of the stability and representativeness group-level aggregate scores and qualitative responses.

Records show that there were over 4,600 incoming undergraduate students the year that this evaluation project was conducted, meaning that the sample of 45 participants represented less than 1% of the total number of Community Dialogue participants. The data missingness may also be an indication of general dislike or apathy towards Community Dialogues. Generally, only those highly motivated to answer surveys do so; that motivation is usually based on strong positive or negative emotional reactions to the content of the survey (Furnham, 1986). Thus, it may be unwise to draw population-level conclusions based on the small sample present in this study. It would be useful to replicate this study to increase the number of usable responses related to group differences and belief updating.

Again, because there were no significant group differences found in what participants changed their minds about, responses were aggregated. The top 3 answers overall for what people changed their minds about the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion (1), cognitive blindspots (2), and dialogue (3). Responses to the question about people's experiences lead them to change their minds largely cited engaging in conversation, both sharing their own stories and

listening to the stories of others, and paying attention to the powerpoint presentation given at the beginning of each Community Dialogue, which mostly review definitions of terms related to the university's core values and the topic of dialogue. These answers indicate that exposure to new information that participants had not encountered before, either from an instructor or peer, was enough to change their minds. This, too, is largely in line with the university's multicultural center's goals of increasing declarative knowledge and awareness of topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and dialogue. Interestingly, no participants made mention of the carefully crafted session environment, which is set up specifically to help people feel more comfortable engaging with subjects of conversations that may under different circumstances be uncomfortable. However, few responses went beyond one sentence, limiting the richness of understanding of mechanisms underlying attitude change.

### **General Discussion**

Initial results from this study are mostly promising. Important antecedents of trainee motivation to learn and training reaction were identified. Further, no racial group differences were found in the perceived importance of dialogue related topics, the most impactful antecedent identified in this study. However, it may be difficult to use these findings in practice, as the antecedents of perceived importance of topics and perspective taking by nature may be difficult to change or even identify in the pre-training environment due to organizational limitations.

Sentiment analysis revealed that those who enjoyed the training were motivated to use what they learned outside of the training environment. Further, the most popular responses about what participants would like to see change about Community Dialogues were related to session delivery and student participation rather than content, structure, or trainer competence.

Lastly, qualitative analyses revealed that many participants are critically engaging, or re-engaging, with the topics in their Community Dialogue curriculum in a meaningful way. This finding provides partial evidence supporting the claim that Community Dialogues are effective at achieving their goal of raising awareness about issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This study has the potential to impact the future of Community Dialogue content and delivery by providing leaders of the University's multicultural center with empirically-based evidence about important antecedents of training effectiveness and trends regarding participant sentiment. However, further research is needed to identify other individual differences that may be better predictors of important training outcomes and to further explore mechanisms underlying changes in opinions related to topics covered in the training in order to help leaders of the University's multicultural center further refine Community Dialogues.

### **Limitations**

Applied research is rarely if ever conducted without limitations, and this project was no exception. The most significant limitation in this study is that it was not a true experimental design. Thus, all analyses exploring relationships among variables were merely correlational, not causal. At the recommendation of this thesis committee, a proposed model involving all variables that could be tested in an experimental setting was still built, which can be found in Appendix B. Further, the required nature of the training mixed with the altered and accelerated project timeline due to turnover within the partnering organization left little to no room to identify a control group before the training began and surveys needed to be released. The organizational turnover included the director of the Community Dialogue training program itself, which halted project progress for an extended amount of time. Further, the hiring of a new Community Dialogue director required that project components and milestones be reassessed

with minimal time to make appropriate changes before the beginning of the training. During this short window, it was relayed to the research team that a number of measures needed to be excluded in order for the survey to be approved for distribution, limiting the types of research questions that could be asked and empirically pursued. Thus, the research team wasn't able to ask directly about constructs such as participant attitudes towards diversity, political affiliation, or prejudice, which may have been interesting antecedents of training effectiveness to explore

From a methodological perspective, all constructs measured in this project were done so using the same method, self-report via survey response. It's likely that relationships between present variables are partially inflated due to the common method bias (Podsakoff, & Organ, 1986). Nothing was done from the experimenter side to control for this.

Lastly, Community Dialogues are part of a required course for all university students, and poor performance in the course has the potential to impact student GPA. While steps were taken to communicate to participants that answers shared on the surveys would not impact grades at all, it's unlikely that those concerns were fully alleviated in all participants. Due to the messages taught during the training, it would not be difficult for participants to figure out what the socially-desirable answers to survey questions were and fake their responses accordingly. No steps were taken to control for the potential of impression management/faking in survey responses.

### **Future Research**

Overall, the main goal of all training programs is real transfer of the knowledge and skills acquired to outside of the training environment. While able to look at changes in some relevant constructs pre- and post-training, this thesis project did not look at if these changes lasted beyond immediately following the training. Future studies evaluating Community Dialogues should



consider assessing participants throughout their college experience at this particular university to better understand the longevity of changes associated with the training. These additional assessment timepoints could capture changes in dialogue-related behaviors, an equally important portion of the Kirkpatrick Model of Training Evaluation that was largely unstudied in this particular project.

Assuming this is possible within a given organization, research should also focus on making direct, empirical comparisons in training effectiveness between traditional Intergroup Dialogue sessions and Community Dialogues sessions to draw stronger evidence-based conclusions about necessary components of effective training in this space.

Further, it would be worth making comparisons of training effectiveness between sessions delivered virtually vs. in-person to help better assess whether the types of interpersonal skills associated with dialogue are learnable in virtual settings. This may be relatively easy to accomplish as Community Dialogues are scheduled to resume in-person sessions as of Fall 2022. Positive results regarding virtual Community Dialogue delivery may make this type of training more widely accessible to organizations across the country, removing barriers related to in-person delivery (e.g. trainer travel and accommodation expenses).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, participants who already perceived the topics covered by Community Dialogues reacted more favorably to the training, which was strongly associated with motivation to transfer what was learned to outside of the training context. Further, there did not seem to be any significant group differences between white and non-white participants when it came to engaging in belief updating, though a limited sample of non-white participants may render this finding inconclusive. Overall, Community Dialogues seem to be relatively effective at increasing

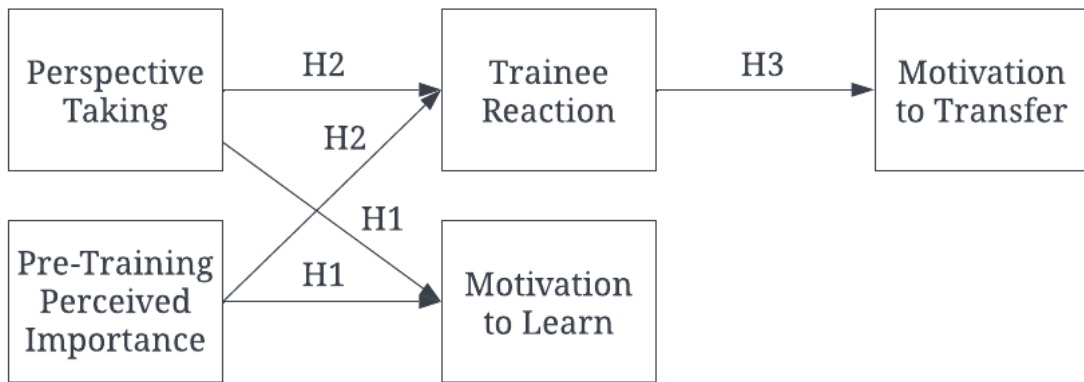
declarative knowledge of participants, especially those who already enjoyed the topics covered in the training but knew little about the domain of intergroup dialogue prior to the training.

## APPENDICES

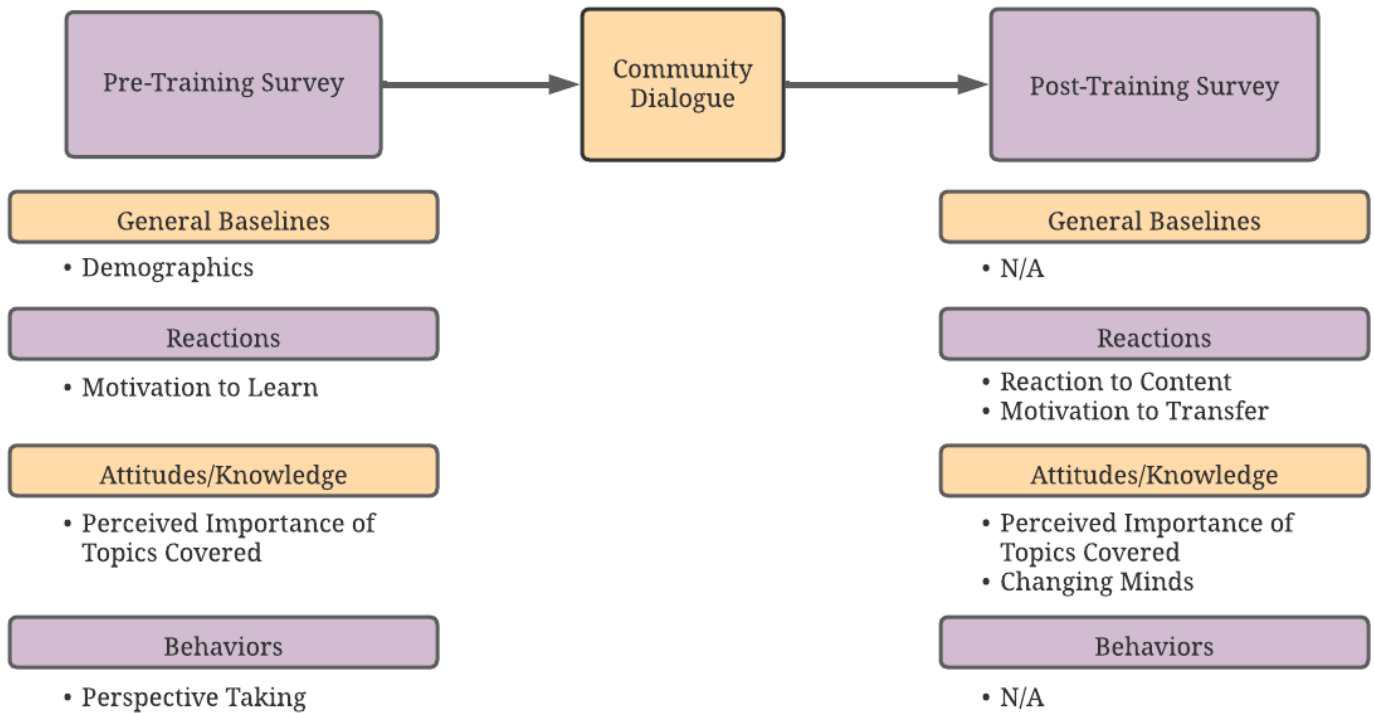
### Appendix A: Hypotheses, Measures, and Analyses

Kirkpatrick Model Evaluation Level	Hypothesis	Measures	Analysis
Reaction	Hypothesis 1: Those higher in reported perspective taking and perceived importance the topics covered in the training will also report higher motivation to learn.	Perspective Taking, Perceived Importance of Topics Covered, and Motivation to Learn	Multiple Regression
Reaction	Hypothesis 2: Those higher in reported perspective taking and perceived importance of the topics covered in the training will also report more positive reactions to the training	Perspective Taking, Perceived Importance of Topics Covered, and General Reaction	Multiple Regression
Attitudes/Knowledge	Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant, positive relationship between reaction to content and motivation to transfer.	Reaction to Content and Motivation to Transfer	Correlation and Thematic Analysis
Attitudes/Knowledge	Research Question: Are Community Dialogues effective at increasing perspective taking behaviors and motivating people to seek out new knowledge that may be counter to their own opinions and/or beliefs? If so, what makes that possible? If not, is it more effective at doing so for some rather than others? What might be the cause of this trend?	Perceived Importance of Topics Covered and Changing Minds	Independent-Samples T-Test, ANCOVA, and Thematic Analysis

## Appendix B: Ideal Proposed Model



## Appendix C: Experimental Timeline



**Appendix D: What did you like about your Community Dialogue?**

Code	% of Responses	Tier 2 Codes	Example Response
1. Session Environment	23.08%	1. Safe	"I liked that people were comfortable enough to open up and tell personal details about themselves and their life story."
		2. Inclusive	"It was very inclusive."
		3. Open	"It was an open space that everyone could contribute to and nobody was judged for their opinion."
2. Leaders	18.80%	1. Competence	"I liked the openness of the people running the program. They were very nice and made sure everyone felt included."
		2. Attitude/Demeanor	"How inclusive and energetic the hosts were"
3. Session Content	14.53%	1. General - Topics Covered	"I liked how we talked about topics that don't normally come up in normal conversation."

**Appendix E: What do you think could have been improved about your Community Dialogue?**

<b>Code</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>	<b>Tier 2 Codes</b>	<b>Example code</b>
1. Positive Reaction	18.26%	1. "Nothing", "It was great"	"I liked how it operated. I wouldn't change anything."
2t. Student Participation	14.78%	1. Increase participation	"Need to find a way to get students more involved in discussion"
2t. Session Content	14.78%	1. More/improved structured discussion	"More structure to the discussion"
3. Session Delivery	13.91%	1. Zoom (negative)	"Still, I think having this session in person would have been more impactful for all participants involved."
		2. Organization	"I think there could be more spots in the sessions to make the sign up process easier"



**Appendix F: General - What opinion did you change or topic did you rethink?**

Code	% of Responses	Tier 2 Codes	Example code
1. DEI	42.22%	1. Race	"I re-evaluated the difference between race vs. ethnicity, as well as what identities people chose as opposed to what identities they are given."
		2. SES	"I realized socioeconomic status has a lot of influence at [our university]."
		3. General	"Opinions on diversity and its importance."
2. Perspectives of Others	26.67%	1. Blindspots and Assumptions	"The topic of blind spots is something I had never heard of."
		2. General Consideration	"We never know what is going on in someones personal life. We should always be kind."
3. Dialogue and the Power of Conversation	8.89%	1. Importance/Helpfulness	"That a debate is not dialogue."

**Appendix G: General - What about your experience led you to change that opinion?**

Tier 1 Code	% of Responses	Tier 2 Codes	Example code
1. Listening	28.57%	1. Hearing Firsthand Accounts of Societal Issues/Social Identity	"Seeing people different than me talk about something I was somewhat oblivious to made
2. Talking	23.81%	1. Engaging in Conversation	"The conversations in my breakout room"
		2. Connecting your Experience to Those of Others	People talked about how race has affected them in their day to day and since I'm Latino I could relate to those instances. I have connected to a few stories.
3. Leaders	14.29%	1. Presentation	"[The fascilitators] were very informitive when it came to the differences between dialgoe and debate. Conversation can be open ended and didnt have to be forced into a debate."

## Appendix H: General - What stopped you from wanting to change your mind?

Tier 1 Code	% of Responses	Tier 2 Codes	Example code
1. Leader	50.00%	1. Leader Competence	"My instructor made me not want to change my mind. She was telling us to be more open and accepting while she told us what carefree bumps on a log we were."
		2. Leader Attitude	"The way our [fascilitator] talked about certain things really didn't sit well with me as well as others in the class"

## Appendix I: Measures

### Demographics

1. What is your age (in years)?
2. What is your gender identity? (expand)
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Non-binary/gender non-conforming
  - c. Other – Please Specify
  - d. I'd prefer not to disclose.
3. What is your race/ethnicity? (can select multiple)
  - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black/African American
  - d. Hispanic/Latinx
  - e. Middle Eastern/North African
  - f. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  - g. White
  - h. Other - Please Specify
  - i. I do not want to disclose
4. What year in school are you?
  - a. Freshman
  - b. Sophomore
  - c. Junior
  - d. Senior
  - e. Other
5. What is your major or area of study?

## **General Reaction to the Training**

**Citation:** Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2012). Evaluating training programs: the four levels. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

### **Instructions:**

- Item 1 is graded on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not a valuable experience at all) to 10 (An extremely valuable experience)
- Items 2 and 3 are open response questions.

### **Measure:**

1. Overall, my Community Dialogue was:
2. What did you like about the training?
3. What would you improve about the training?

## Motivation to Learn

**Citation:** Noe, R. A., & Schmitt, N. (1986). The influence of trainee attitudes on training effectiveness: Test of a model. *Personnel Psychology*, 39(3), 497–523.  
[https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/80969/Putter\\_colostate\\_0053A\\_12035.pdf?sequence=1](https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/80969/Putter_colostate_0053A_12035.pdf?sequence=1)

### Instructions:

Graded on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree), 5 (Strongly Agree)

Please think about your own learning and development. Use the rating scales below to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

### Measure:

1. I am motivated to learn the concepts that will be covered in this training program.
2. I will try to learn as much as I can from this training program.
3. I want to increase my understanding of the material that this training program covers.
4. If I can't understand some part of the training program, I will try harder.
5. I intend to learn the concepts in this training program.
6. I am genuinely interested in the content of this training program.

## Motivation to Transfer

**Citation:** Noe, R. A., & Schmitt, N. (1986). The influence of trainee attitudes on training effectiveness: Test of a model. *Personnel Psychology*, 39(3), 497–523.

### Instructions:

### Measure:

1. I will discuss with my supervisor ways to develop the skills that I have learned.  
(removed)
2. I will discuss with my co-workers ways to develop the skills that I have learned.
3. I will spend time thinking about how to use the skills that I have learned.
4. I will evaluate how successfully I can use the skills that I have learned.
5. I will look for opportunities to use the skills that I have learned.
6. I will review course materials in order to develop the skills that I have learned.
7. I will practice using the skills that I have learned.
8. I will set specific goals for maintaining the skills that I have learned.
9. I will seek expert help/advice in order to maintain the skills that I have learned.
10. I will examine my work environment for potential barriers to using the skills that I have learned.
11. I will monitor my success at using the skills that I have learned.

## **Perceived Importance of Issues Covered**

**Instructions:** On a scale from 1 to 10, how important are the topics covered in Community Dialogues to you personally?

**Measure:**

1. University Core Values
2. Social Identity
3. Diversity and Inclusion
4. Taking Action to Improve the University Community
5. The Practice and Philosophy of “Dialogue”



## Perspective Taking/Empathic Concern

**Citation:** Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 44(1), 113.

### Instructions:

“The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter next to the item number. **READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING.** Answer as honestly as you can.”

5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Does not describe me well) to 5 (Describes me very well)

### Measure:

1. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other person's" point of view.
2. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
3. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
4. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.
5. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
6. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
7. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

## Belief Updating

**Instructions:** All items except for question 1 are open responses. Questions 2 and 3 will be asked only if participants respond “yes” to question 1. Question 4 will be asked only if participants respond “no” to question 1.

### Measure:

1. Did your experience with your Community Dialogue lead you to change your mind and/or opinions about any of the topics you discussed?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. If yes,
  - a. What opinion did you change or topic did you rethink?
  - b. What about your experience led you to change that opinion? Please describe your experience in as much detail as possible.
3. If no,
  - a. Was there anything about the dialogue itself that stopped you from wanting to change your mind?
  - b. What stopped you from wanting to change your mind? Please provide as much detail as possible.
4. What, if anything, will you take away from your dialogue experience?

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Race_Binary	124	0	1	.73	.444
Perspective Taking Score	116	2.14	5	3.82	.63
Motivation to Learn Score	120	1.0	5.0	3.88	.94
General Reaction	36	0	10	6.31	3.19
Motivation to Transfer Score	45	1.0	5.0	3.55	1.23
Importance Score 1	123	0	10	6.59	2.04
Importance Score 2	47	0	10	6.97	2.62
Valid N (listwise)	35				

**Table 2*****Motivation to Learn Multiple Regression***

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.932	2	15.466	26.963	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	64.243	112	.574		
	Total	95.176	114			

<sup>a</sup>. Dependent Variable: Motivation to Learn Score

<sup>b</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Perspective Taking Score, Importance Score 1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.365	.468		2.915	.004
	Importance Score 1	.227	.035	.512	6.527	<.001
	Perspective Taking Score	.276	.113	.190	2.430	.017

<sup>a</sup>. Dependent Variable: Motivation to Learn Score

**Table 3*****Trainee Reaction Multiple Regression***

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.071	2	31.535	4.010	.028 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	251.672	32	7.865		
	Total	314.743	34			

<sup>a</sup>. Dependent Variable: General Reaction

<sup>b</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Perspective Taking Score, Importance Score 1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.841	3.340		.252	.803
	Importance Score 1	.708	.253	.443	2.802	.009
	Perspective Taking Score	.239	.747	.051	.321	.751

<sup>a</sup>. Dependent Variable: General Reaction

**Table 4*****Trainee Reaction and Motivation to Transfer Correlation***

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		General Reaction	M. to Transfer_10
General Reaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.755 <sup>***</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	36	36
M. to Transfer_10	Pearson Correlation	.755 <sup>***</sup>	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	36	45

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup>. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 5**

***White vs. Non-White Pre-Training Perceived Importance T-Test***

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Importance Score 1	Equal variances assumed	.033	.857	1.469	121	.072	.144	.607	.413	-.211	1.424
	Equal variances not assumed			1.505	59.75	.069	.138	.607	.403	-.200	1.413

**Table 6*****White vs. Non-White Post-Training Perceived Importance ANCOVA***

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Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	146.931 <sup>a</sup>	2	73.466	26.267	<.001	.550
Intercept	4.135	1	4.135	1.479	.231	.033
ImportanceScore1	146.272	1	146.272	52.298	<.001	.549
Race_Binary	1.656	1	1.656	.592	.446	.014
Error	120.267	43	2.797			
Total	2602.654	46				
Corrected Total	267.198	45				

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<sup>a</sup>. R Squared = .550 (Adjusted R Squared = .529)



**Table 7*****Within White Participant Perceived Importance Comparison Levene Test***

White Importance Score

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.921	1	13.921	2.535	.114
Within Groups	713.861	130	5.491		
Total	727.781	131			

*Tests of Homogeneity of Variances*

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
White Importance Score	Based on Mean	1.982	1	130	.162
	Based on Median	1.134	1	130	.289
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.134	1	127.713	.289
	Based on trimmed mean	1.569	1	130	.213

**Table 8*****Within Non-White Participant Perceived Importance Comparison Levene Test****ANOVA*

## Non-White Importance Score

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.216	1	.216	.045	.833
Within Groups	181.754	38	4.783		
Total	181.970	39			

*Tests of Homogeneity of Variances*

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Non-White Importance Score	Based on Mean	1.493	1	38	.229
	Based on Median	1.312	1	38	.259
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.312	1	27.263	.262
	Based on trimmed mean	1.378	1	38	.248

**Table 9*****Pre-Training White v. Non-White Perceived Importance Levene Test***

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Importance Score 1	Between Groups	8.883	1	8.883	2.159	.144
	Within Groups	497.979	121	4.116		
	Total	506.862	122			

***Tests of Homogeneity of Variances***

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Importance Score 1	Based on Mean	.033	1	121	.857
	Based on Median	.012	1	121	.914
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.012	1	119.076	.914
	Based on trimmed mean	.030	1	121	.862

**Table 10*****Post-Training White v. Non-White Perceived Importance Levene Test***

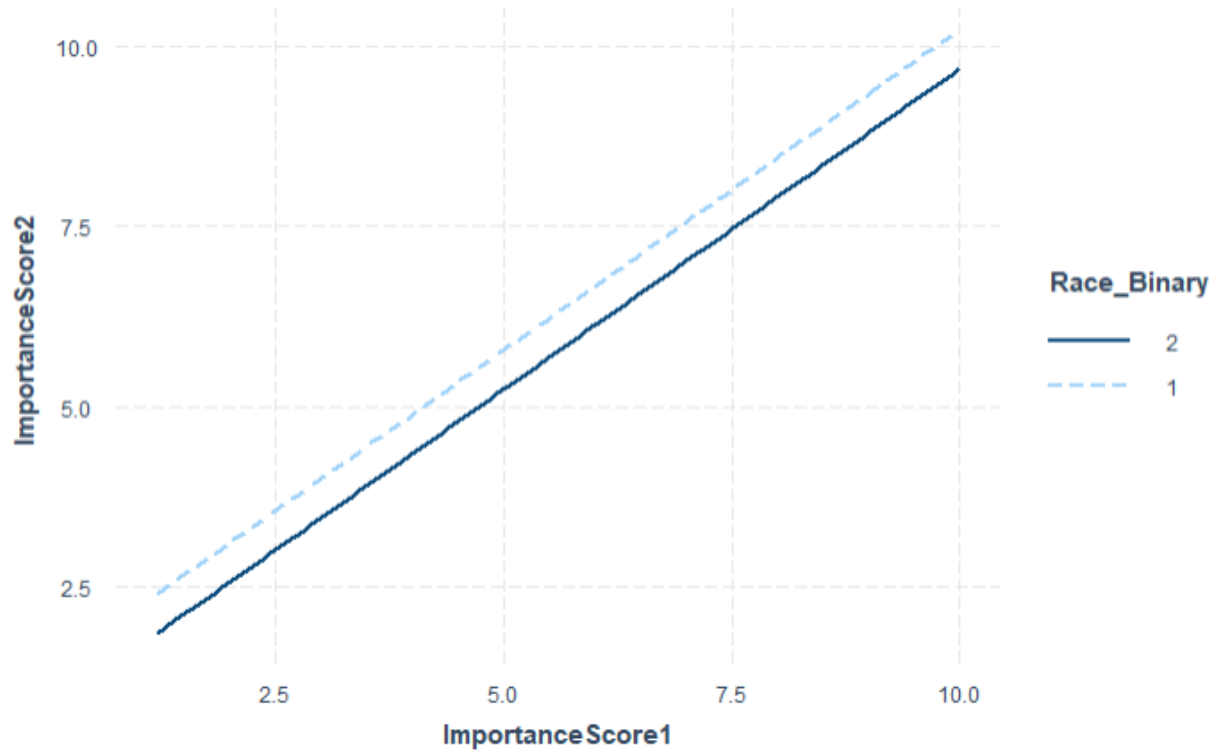
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Importance Score 2	Between Groups	.141	1	.141	.020	.888
	Within Groups	316.748	45	7.039		
	Total	316.889	46			

Importance Score 2	Based on Mean		.074	1	45	.786
	Based on Median		.105	1	45	.747
	Based on Median and with adjusted df		.105	1	44.000	.747
	Based on trimmed mean		.084	1	45	.773

**Figure 1**

*White vs. Non-White Post-Training Perceived Importance ANCOVA Interaction Plot*



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