

AN EVALUATION OF DIALOGUE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POTENTIAL
FRIENDSHIPS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By

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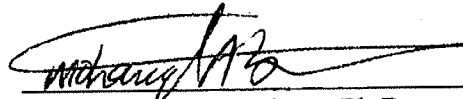
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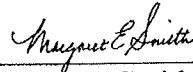
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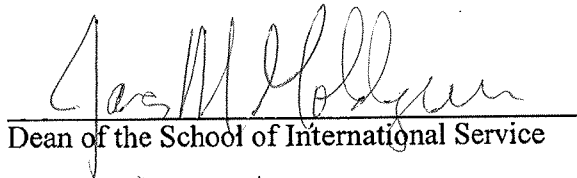
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ABSTRACT

Dialogue when successful is the product of honest conversations amongst those who have conflicting identities. The study presented here seeks to determine whether the relationship building process and the learning processes that happen here are related to each other within the whole transformation process that dialogue offers. A mixed method of research and background work in the theories of contact and dialogue provided a strong base for the voices of those dialogue participants at American University to be heard. Relationships built with the potential for friendships and learning in different ways facilitate the success of the dialogue process in this case. Finally, hearing first-hand accounts of the dialogue experience solidified that for a majority of the dialogue participants the magic of dialogue was evident through the transformation of opinions. These transformations occurred by being open to experiencing both the relationship building process and learning processes possible in dialogue.

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CHAPTER 1

A PATH TO DIALOGUE

Dialogue in an on-campus setting allows students to have an opportunity to learn and build relationships in an environment that is completely different from any other on a university campus. Since these on-campus dialogues are becoming more popular, it is important to research their implementation efforts and effectiveness. The following research will explore how both relationship building and learning happen independently within a dialogue, and the connection that follows between relationship building and learning that is made possible in on campus dialogue groups.

Also, it is important to recognize that the meaning of the word dialogue here is not just that of an everyday conversation between two people. Daniel Yankelovich describes well what this type of dialogue is and is not in his book The Magic of Dialogue. The dialogue spoken of here is an avenue to seek mutual understanding that can be used by anyone looking to find answers pertaining to the origins of strong disagreements (Yankelovich 14-15). According to Yankelovich, the skill that can transform everyday conversation into structured dialogue is discipline. The power of these structured dialogues is in the results that successful dialogues can bring about. Yankelovich gives the reader this list of extraordinary things dialogue can achieve: “long-standing stereotypes dissolved, mistrust overcome, mutual understanding achieved, visions shaped and grounded in shared purpose, people previously at odds with one another aligned on objectives and strategies, new common ground discovered, new perspectives and insights gained, new levels of creativity stimulated, and bonds of community strengthened” (16). The dialogue that can create these opportunities is the one to be researched here.

As a student at American University, I was presented with the challenge to become involved with dialogue through one of my graduate courses. While participating in the dialogue,

I found myself speaking about unique experiences of my own that were very personal that I hadn't expected to share with any group while still early in my time at the university. As this dialogue provoked me to reflect on important characteristics of myself as a person, I began to reflect on the process of dialogue and the reasons why this space could foster an internal learning experience I had not been able to experience in any other scenario before. Some of the other participants shared similar insights during our post-dialogue conversations and I began to feel compelled to find the answers to these questions of why dialogue had been such an effective tool of self-exploration, especially for those I spoke to within my group. As I began to research the topic of dialogue, I found theories on what dialogue could do for people and as a tool for conflict resolution, but found only limited case studies on the question of why dialogue was or was not effective for some. As I dissected my experience internally, I realized that it was unique for me because of the depth of conversation encouraged by a safe space that built strong relationships and opened a new door to learning. Dialogue proved to be a transformative experience for me, so much so that I brought dialogue to the center of my learning experience for the rest of my time at American University.

One of the unique things about dialogue is that students are able to make a personal and emotional connection to both the topic of the dialogue and the other participants with whom they are dialoguing. I have often heard that it is important to be emotionally invested in a topic, but there is not a lot of research out there to explain why. After participating in dialogue and becoming emotionally connected to the topic and other participants through intense and sensitive conversations and sharings, I was able to take a greater ownership of my learning experience, which involved recognizing the sincerity of my religious beliefs and how to share those with others that I have special connections to. So the question that continued to ring loudly in my

academic experiences was what really is the impact that emotions and relationships have on learning?

After continuing my involvement in dialogue through becoming a dialogue facilitator, I began to wonder if others were finding the same enhanced learning that I had found. It seemed to me as a facilitator and observer of a group of people speaking from personal experience on a specific topic that unique exchanges were occurring that led to greater trust amongst the participants. The scholars and advisors that worked with this group mentioned to both facilitators that this is what dialogue was all about. The questions in my head that arose most out of this experience revolved around figuring out why the dialogue process was unique in building these relationships that I had not seen in other learning environments, and how this difference impacted the learning experience that is to be had in dialogue.

This research will explore these questions by analyzing theories that exist on dialogue and through evaluating a dialogue program on the American University campus. The theoretical framework and methods, as well as details of the specific dialogue program and its participants will be detailed below. Finally, the importance, relevance, and implications on dialogue and relationships in the future will begin to be explored at the close of this introduction.

Dialogue at American University

As a student in a class on dialogue, I was exposed to the dialogue group on American University's campus, the Dialogue Development Group (DDG). DDG is a student-led dialogue organization on campus that was founded in 2006 by students who were enrolled in Professor Mohammed Abu-Nimer's Dialogue class and wanted an outlet to further develop their skills in dialogue. The students' interests in controversial topics that had an identity component led them to pull in other students from the campus and community who were not in their dialogue class.

With the help of the faculty in the International Peace and Conflict Resolution program and all other student led organizations, DDG formed and hosted six dialogues that involved forty one American University students. Faculty support helped boost the number of participants, making the programs more successful, especially when faculty offered academic credit for dialogue participation.

The format of a DDG dialogue is a sustained dialogue that first ran for six weeks straight at DDG's formation, but currently runs for seven straight weeks, sometimes skipping a week for an American University determined holiday. As a DDG facilitator, I have attended two facilitator trainings that prepare facilitators to follow the DDG model of dialogue and will now explain that model. DDG organizers first come up with topics for dialogues that have an identity component. The DDG organizers then pair two facilitators together, who represent the different identity groups involved, and assign them to each dialogue. Together, they lead the development of each dialogue. These two facilitators are also connected with a faculty advisor who will meet with them weekly to debrief the previous session and discuss a plan for the next session. As the dialogue begins, the facilitators are responsible for planning each session to benefit the participants. For example, the first few sessions should be prepared in ways that will help the participants get to know each other by focusing on their personal experiences early, before the truly sensitive issues are brought up in the dialogue. In the next few sessions, the facilitators must ask the questions that will allow the participants to dig deeper as they dialogue together, but also the participants' roles increase as they now take a greater ownership of the process and begin to ask meaningful questions of their peers during discussions. In the final session the facilitators must bring the participants to a feeling of closure so that they can evaluate what the

dialogue sessions has done for them and be ready to incorporate some of their new understandings into their daily lives.

As previously stated, the history of DDG dates back to the fall of 2006 when some of Professor Abu-Nimer's students introduced a pilot program within the school of international service with the help of the IPCR program and other student groups within that division of the university. This pilot program facilitated four dialogues to 41 students for a successful first semester. As DDG began to grow, the organization began reaching out to other parts of the campus community, leading to its establishment as a campus institution in 2010 under the auspices of the Office of Campus Life. Since spring of 2010, the dialogue groups facilitated by DDG have been cataloged on American University's website, which lists 35 dialogues occurring since that time. The average number of participants in these dialogues falls between 7-9 per group. DDG also trains between 12-16 facilitators per semester, with multiple facilitators participating in this training more than once. DDG participants and facilitators now come from different schools within the university, range from undergraduate to graduate students, and also represent the alumni and surrounding community as a whole. ("Dialogue Development Group")

Dialogue in the American University community serves as a way to get everyone involved in conversations surrounding issues that many may be afraid to discuss, and certainly do not fully understand. Dialogues in the past have been held around issues such as race, culture, gender, faith and/or secularism, sexuality, political identity, or any of these issues combined. Dialogue within the DDG community focuses on facilitating honest conversations that allow participants to listen to others, reflect on their own thoughts, suspend their judgments of others, and share personal experiences that are relevant to the dialogue and might encourage the others to do the same thing. These intimate dialogues are possible because of the safe space facilitators

are able to create for the participants. A safe space is a critical component of dialogue that allows participants to feel comfortable sharing and is developed usually in the first dialogue session by setting up ground rules that uphold confidentiality and respectful listening. This rules agreement can then be cited at any point in time when the participants might be harming the integrity of the space. The DDG model of dialogue is also explained in the first session in order to explain to those who may not know what dialogue exactly is or is not. Dialogue becomes a place where a group of people can express their concerns freely without repercussions, where they can share personal experiences without intellectualizing the situation, and where they can form a better understanding of the other if they open up to the possibilities within this dialogue process. DDG is also a very important part of this research and that will be detailed later in this text.¹

Research Question and Hypothesis

As mentioned above, continuous participation and facilitation with dialogue prompted questions around why dialogue was such an effective tool in this setting, which existing research did not seem to address in a comprehensive way. Theories around intergroup contact were researched that suggest that prolonged contact can affect the way people interact with each other, but what happens during that contact that changes previous feelings about the other? Conflict resolution theories suggest the importance of facilitation as a means of intervening in conflicts, but again this does not tell us what actually happens in the course of dialogue that alters people's outlook. With these curiosities in mind, I decided to explore the notion of building relationships in contact situations, as well as the way learning takes place through actually resolving conflicts.

¹ The information shared about DDG was from my personal knowledge of the organization as a participant and then facilitator in the organization. If you would like more information on this organization, you can find their website here: <http://www.american.edu/sis/ipcr/DDG.cfm>

This set of reflections produced the following central question of my research: Is there a correlation between building relationships or making potential friends in a dialogue group to the learning that is brought out of a dialogue situation? That question prompts many sub-questions within this research. Did learning cause participants to make friends or was learning a result of the friends made? Does an emotional connection or ‘friendship potential’ through relationship building have an impact on the learning experienced through dialogue? Does a learning experience have an impact on the relationships built or potential friendships made throughout the dialogue? If so, how? These questions will explore the possibility of a correlation between positive contact and learning, as determining causation is not feasible within the parameters of this research.

Also, the friendship potential will be explained through ideas from contact hypothesis literature, evaluation literature and my own personal experiences with dialogue in the past. I have assembled ten main facets by which to judge friendship potential. Some of the qualities highlighted by the contact literature are equality, positive communications, and empathy. From my past experience with dialogue, it seems that this friendship potential arises from respecting the other, gaining that respect in return, interacting with participants outside of the dialogue setting, and using personal sharing to build trust within the dialogue. Finally, from evaluation literature by Dessel and Rogge, having the ability to listen to the other, being listened to by the other, and maintaining the opportunity to reassess ongoing opinions or developments are all important qualities in building this potential for friendship. This friendship potential is used within this study rather than friendship per se, as a seven week dialogue session may not allow time for a true friendship to fully develop.

In operationalizing the definition of learning outcomes to be used here, the traditional methods of determining learning outcomes, such as grades and testing, were avoided in order to highlight the alternative learning goals of dialogue. Allport, in The Nature of Prejudice, details how intergroup contact decreases people's natural prejudices. This decrease in prejudice is the main learning goal of the dialogue. Therefore, one of the ten ways to characterize learning within the dialogue setting is to identify a reduction in prejudices held personally. Other measures of learning outcomes came from literature within the education field, specifically the article "Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes" by Patricia Gurin, et al. One of the first situations the authors referenced that signals a learning experience is feeling a mental uncertainty or some type of cognitive conflict. Exploring this dissonance can lead to growth and learning. Some of the other ways to measure learning are to gauge active thinking, which is defined to research participants as continual and serious reflection on opinions and perspectives heard, engagement with the topic, perspective-taking, understanding the other identity, and having the capacity to distinguish the similarities and differences. Other ways to assess learning are to look at the self-assessed knowledge gained, problem solving skills, and critical thinking abilities. These latter points highlight another important learning goal of dialogue namely, a heightened sense of self-awareness. These definitions of friendship potential and learning outcomes will be the assumed definitions referred to within this research.

I hypothesize that there will be a correlation between relationship building and learning outcomes. Specifically, the emotional connections or friendship potential qualities will have a strong positive correlation to students' learning experience. With that in mind any correlation will be looked for and all findings will be detailed, but it is hypothesized that more participants will see the correlation in that direction. Expressed in the language of survey research, the

hypothesis would suggest that positive findings among friendship potentials would have a correlation with positive findings in learning outcomes. This research proposes that students will gain more knowledge and feel that they have learned more from the situation when students are personally connected to the experience. They may also feel an ownership of their own learning experience, which will cause them to be more invested in continuing to grow and share the knowledge that they have gained. The other of these more qualitative hypotheses shows things that are expected to be found within the open ended survey questions and/or interviews.

Relevance and Future Implications

As dialogue is a field that is still evolving and growing, it is useful to continue to evaluate dialogue and its uses and purposes in addition to its success. One difficulty noted while doing research was the inaccessibility of survey templates and all tools for evaluating intergroup dialogue that have been used in the past. Creating both survey and interview questions will allow another idea for evaluating intergroup dialogue to be published for future researchers to use.

Intergroup dialogue is now becoming more prevalent on college and university campuses. This study in particular is geared towards the students' connections made between dialogue and learning in order to begin to look at this style of dialogue as a successful tool for student-led learning initiatives and learning outcomes in general. The process and model developed by DDG that has been explored as part of the background information necessary within this research will allow for other ideas on how to construct intergroup dialogues on college or university campuses to surface in this literature. The main implications this study could have within college dialogue projects could be the recognition of the value of dialogue programs because of strong correlations between relationship building/friendship potentials and learning outcomes.

The long term implications of this could be likened to experiences of negotiations within the field of international relations, especially within terms of conflict resolution where dialogue is beginning to be seen as a credible tool. If emotional connections and relationship building help students feel more invested in their learning, then it could begin to help heal the wounds of those hurt by prolonged or protracted conflict within communities. If dialogue can have a positive effect on community members, those people could begin to change the attitude of the politics within that community. This could bring other intervention techniques such as dialogue facilitation throughout communities to the forefront when negotiations may not be possible yet.

There are limitations to this research just as all research. Specifically within this research, the sample size is not chosen at random and depends solely on the number of people who decide to apply to DDG within this semester of research and may not be consistent with other semesters of DDG. Also, there is no data to be collected over time which could strengthen the analysis of results by discovering if these findings held up through different groups of participants in DDG over additional semesters or even by looking at participants before and after feelings on dialogue within the same semester. Finally, this research is only suggesting correlations and not causations. With these limitations in mind, the possibilities of this research are still strong and could continue to bring dialogue to the forefront of conflict resolution by combining literature, theories, new data, and many other disciplines.

Organization of the Paper

This introductory chapter allowed the reader to see an insight into the researcher and the thoughts behind developing this research in particular. It also allowed the researcher to define some concepts that will be used throughout the text and to lay out the background information necessary to know the model of dialogue that is being referred to within this text. Most

importantly, in this chapter, the research question, central hypothesis, and significance of the research were explained. Chapter two reviews the literature involved in the research for this study, specifically meaning conflict resolution, contact theory, dialogue, and evaluation literature. The third chapter will then address the methodology used within this research to create the research design. The following three chapters will focus on the data collected in three different categories. First, in chapter four, there will be an analysis of the relationships dialogue participants did or did not form within their groups. Next, in chapter five, the learning that participants experienced within the dialogue groups will be detailed. In chapter six, these two facets will be brought together and the correlations will be explored. The concluding chapter will highlight the main findings of the research and offer recommendations for the future of dialogue programs and research studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on dialogue expands many different fields of study from philosophy and sociology to communications and conflict resolution. The theoretical basis for dialogue is necessary to understanding the thoughts behind developing true dialogue. In order to see the establishment and progression of dialogue, first theories of conflict resolution and contact theory will be discussed. Within that will be reference to the nature of conflicts themselves and how communication and contact theory connect into that conversation. The theoretical background of dialogue from all fields will then be discussed as an outcome of the combination of these above mentioned theories. Finally, the evaluation literature will be assessed and discussed in an attempt to preface the evaluation I have carried out. Within my research, it seemed that the connections between all of these types of literature had not often been made, especially not in an explicit or clear manner, and thus that is the hope of the structure of this literature review.

Establishing a Theoretical Basis in Conflict Resolution

According to John Burton, a founding international relations and conflict resolution scholar, conflict and communication have always been intertwined, even to the point that ineffective communication can directly cause conflict while effective communication can begin to resolve it. He wrote that “communication is a tool of conflict as much as it is a tool of peaceful relationships... Whether communication makes for harmonious or for conflicting relationships depends upon its content and perceptions of its content” (Burton, 49). Accordingly, the theory of conflict that Burton is working from within this text is that conflict arises from and can be alleviated by ineffective and effective communication. Many past conflict resolution theories before Burton did not take into account this important element of communication and looked to

resolve conflict through methods such as game theory followed by problem solving and some third-party intervention methods. When the role of communication in conflict is accepted, Burton champions a resolution technique that involves controlled communication. Ineffective communication of the past could include anything from the threat or actual use of force to communicate disapproval to hostile diplomatic actions that result in similar actions as the use of force. When communications and misperceptions are at the center of conflicts, especially those deep rooted in identity issues, “the resolution of the conflict depends upon effective communication, [and] it can come only from the parties themselves” (Burton, 55). Burton also details the role of the third party in this more controlled communication resolution approach as a less influential and more neutral role working towards helping both sides to understand the concerns of the other through the explanation of conflict and rephrasing of important points.

Gordon Allport focuses on the type of conflict that arises from prejudices people hold against the group that they consider to be the other, and argues that contact can help overcome these differences. In his text The Nature of Prejudice, Allport directly addresses prejudice and these conflicts of misperceptions. Allport claims that prejudice can be described most simply as “thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant” (Allport, 6). There is no definitive way to characterize a prejudice or sufficient warrant for one, but there is no doubt that people tend to overgeneralize and group types of people together in a category based on interactions with one person that falls into that group. Even with these things, not all people who make incorrect judgments of others are actually prejudice. One of Allport’s main indicators of prejudice is that the behaviors or feelings towards another cannot be changed in light of new knowledge of that group, as prejudiced people do not want to listen to any evidence that could prove them wrong. Allport lists a more in-depth and revealing definition of prejudice as “a pattern of hostility in

interpersonal relations which is directed against an entire group, or against its individual members; it fulfills a specific irrational function for its bearer” (Allport, 12). Burton also mentions this hostility in relations specifically in reference to the need for communication in identity, ethnic, or protracted conflicts. Identity groups often clash more and are even more unstable in conflict situations because of the thoughts or fears they hold pertaining to the other (Burton). Even though prejudice is not usually the sole cause of conflict, it can prevent communications to end the conflict or even escalate the conflict to a more personal level.

Taking a social psychological perspective, Herbert Kelman offers four proposals that assist our understanding of international conflict. These four proposals arise from Kelman’s view of “social interaction[s] and the relationship of individuals to social systems” (Kelman, 193), and are as follows:

“The first proposition holds that international conflict is *a process driven by collective needs and fears*, rather than entirely a product of rational calculation of objective national interest on the part of political decision makers. Second, international conflict is *an intersocietal process*, not only an interstate or intergovernmental phenomenon. Third, international conflict is *a multifaceted process of mutual influence*, not only a contest in the exercise of coercive power. And fourth, international conflict is *an interactive process with an escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic*, not merely a sequence of action and reaction by stable actors”

The first proposition concerning fears and needs comes into place often, especially as physical and psychological needs are threatened. As these needs are threatened, it often seems that resolution is not a possible end to the conflict situation in the minds of both parties. This is where the final definition Allport gave of prejudice can come into play, which Kelman describes as taking on existential characteristics, as the parties to conflict begin to take their fear of not having things such as identity or security as an imminent threat to the survival of the entire group and use that fear to attack the group as a whole on a more interpersonal level. Even though this seems to be a more natural progression of conflict in ethnic or protracted conflict situations,

every society bases their national interests at least partially on their needs and what they fear could be taken from them. In summary, Kelman allows the reader to relate conflict resolution with communications, interpersonal relations, and eventually the contact theory by recognizing different facets of conflict such as the collective mood of society or the actions of large groups of the society that could affect the thoughts or perception that society holds.

Another main argument that Kelman emphasizes is the fact that both societies should be examined from within and their relationship to each other must be taken into account. Conflict is such an intersocietal process because the needs and fears of both communities must be considered from both standpoints in order for the conflict to be resolved. “The real test of conflict resolution in deep-rooted conflicts is how much the process by which agreements are constructed and the nature of those agreements contribute to transforming the relationship between the parties” (Kelman, 201). A transformation of relationships is the key to resolving conflicts of this nature, that is where there is more at stake than material disparity, because if only the material needs are met then the psychological needs will continue to disrupt any settlement that is reached. If the fears around identity or security continue to persist, relations can reach a point worse than that of feelings of prejudice. As parties to conflict look for reasons to advance their negative view of the other, in extreme conflicts a dehumanizing process can take place (Kelman, 209). Dehumanization implies that one party has developed such negative thoughts of the other that they have placed them on a level even lower than those of their fellow humans depriving them of the rights and respect that all humans deserve. Kelman through the social-psychological stance has contributed another new way to consider relationships within these types of conflicts, and how knowledge of these relationships may be useful in solving conflicts that seemed to need more than a political settlement.

Abu-Nimer's Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change: Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel lays the theories of conflict resolution, intergroup relations, and contact side by side by breaking down each popular model of conflict resolution and intervention techniques in conjunction with the contact they elicit. Conflict resolution in the past has emerged from game theories and problem solving theories on to theories that add in other disciplines such as that of Kelman detailed above. One critique of the field at this point in history is that there is no one comprehensive or universal definition of conflict resolution theory. Despite this fact, there are still main themes to conflict resolution that can be brought out from Abu-Nimer's comprehensive overview of conflict resolution theory. Analyzing the present conflict and its history, using some method of intervention in the conflict, and working with problem solving techniques to get the greatest outcome for both parties which would meet the human, material, and psychological needs of both parties are each examples of the features in conflict resolution theory that Abu-Nimer details (Abu-Nimer, 13-14). Conflict resolution cannot be a cut and dried process as every conflict has different facets, but it is possible to use previous conflict resolution experience to develop ideas and tentative plans for resolution.

There are many ways to approach conflicts and different methods, referred to as intervention techniques, for resolving each type of conflict situation. Abu-Nimer lists the following six but not all will be discussed throughout this work: "conciliation, facilitation, problem-solving, mediation, negotiation, and arbitration" (Abu-Nimer, 18). The technique of negotiation is the traditional type of conflict resolution that has been evolving from the beginning of the notion of conflict resolution through game-theory philosophies. Negotiation aims to get both parties to a table to find some place of common ground and compromise, but inevitably is mostly looked at as a win-lose situation at its end. Intervention processes differ based on the

involvement that third parties take within the conflict and its resolution. Processes such as negotiation and mediation involve extended commitment from a third party that might not be as necessary within interventions involving facilitation or problem-solving. Dialogue is a facilitated form of conflict resolution that relies on the facilitators to aid discussions around the conflict but does not encourage facilitators to share too many of their feelings on the conflict. There are also different models of conflict resolution that can be used along with these different styles of intervention. Three models influential to the field are Doob's Model, which is closely related to contact theories and intergroup contact, Burton's Model, which is focused on analyzing conflicts before moving forward, and Kelman's Model, which works to involve contact with analysis in the form of problem-solving. Conflict resolution as a field is still young and is always growing through research and combining other fields with the knowledge gained, but also has great potential to provoke and encourage change just as the contact theory does, which will be discussed next.

Intergroup Relations and the Impact of Contact

Gordon Allport, within his text The Nature of Prejudice, was also the first to look into contact as a means of reducing prejudice and therefore developing the contact theory from his work. Allport understood that it was not simply the contact that destroyed stereotypes, but the type of contact that people encountered. Initially, Allport looked into the effects of contact with regard to such variables as frequency, duration, status of contact members, competitiveness in contact, cooperation in contact, individual personalities of those in contact, and social atmosphere surrounding the contact (262). After looking into all of these situations and realizing that contact could both reduce or further prejudices, Allport stated the following on ensuring that contact caused the former rather than the later:

“Prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere) and if it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups.” (Allport, 281).

In other words, four conditions are necessary for contact to help successfully reduce prejudice, and those provisions are equal group status, the sharing of common goals, intergroup cooperation, and support from the authority figures. Allport’s chapter on contact found these qualifications through studying relations among mostly African Americans, Caucasians, and Germans. (Allport, 261-282)

After the contact hypothesis was put forward by Gordon Allport, Thomas Pettigrew, through his article *Intergroup Contact Theory*, further developed the theory to involve the concept of friendship potentials and developed four major points that would lead to a new fifth condition of friendship. First, it is believed that learning can have a profound impact between groups, because it can reduce the biased negative views that one had towards that other group, which to Pettigrew qualifies as the process of learning about the outgroup. The second process that can implement change within contact is that of changing behavior, which happens through repeated contact leading to behavior changes from which attitude changes will follow. Generating affective ties is the third process as contact can be richer when people have the ability to empathize with the other and can feel positive emotions within the contact experience. Finally, an ingroup reappraisal is necessary to change the previous norms that were considered acceptable to a new set of standards developed by the reduction of bias that has happened within the group (Pettigrew, 71-2). According to Pettigrew, intergroup friendships or this friendship potential between people within the contact experience can be invoked by these four processes within a contact experience (70). Friendship as a fifth condition establishes that contact should

create an opportunity for such a friendship to develop overtime, and this is one of the main theories that this research will look at proving moving forward, along with further exploring all of these points from this reformulated contact theory.

Intergroup Relations is a text authored by Stephan and Stephan that even further develops the contact theory out of a discussion of stereotypes and prejudices that intends to find ways to improve intergroup relations (1996). The contact theory is described as an idea that stems from desegregation and the theories that claim additional contact to the other allows for more positive attitudes to be formed about the other. Initially the contact hypothesis focused on the contact interaction itself and the individuals within that interaction, specifically looking for cooperation, an interaction that promoted equality among participants, personalized contacts, and support from organizations for the interactions, which are similar to the four factors Pettigrew looked for in the above mentioned article. The Intergroup Relations text went on to expand upon the important conditions that were key to all explanations of the contact theory. Cooperation is one of the most difficult factors to ensure and therefore Stephan and Stephan detail some of the studies that suggest ways to make cooperation happen or when cooperation is most successful. Their propositions include ensuring a balanced ratio of group members within small group situations, making sure that group assignments do not favor any one group, having an interpersonal focus, and eliciting participants who are similar in attitude (Stephan and Stephan 64-5). Also, there are many questions surrounding the need for equal status, especially concerning whether the equal status should refer to the status inside or outside of the contact situation. An equal status could bring those within the interaction closer together, but most importantly an unequal status could promote the stereotypes or prejudices that exist. The most

ideal situation and keys to dealing with non-ideal situations are stated by Stephan and Stephan as such:

The ideal arrangement for intergroup contacts would be to have equal status both on demographic factors external to the situation and on relevant dimensions (e.g. role assignments) within the situation. If equal status on external factors cannot be achieved, at least an attempt should be made to create equal status within the contact situation. When status inequalities do occur, it would appear to be better for the minority group members to have higher status than the majority group members. (Stephan and Stephan, 66)

Personalized contact refers to treating those in the group as individuals versus the possibility of treating them as members of their group. Finally, the contact interaction seems to improve and have greater effects with more support from institutions and/or society itself (Stephan and Stephan, 66-68).

Since this initial development of the contact hypothesis, many additions have come to be included in the theory. Many of these extensions come from the shift in focus from the actual contact situation to the societal and historical factors surrounding the groups to enter the contact situation. Societal factors that have been looked into are ones such as prior interactions between individuals, cultural differences, and the inclusion of interactions that would intentionally dispel stereotypes. Also, more individual characteristics were looked into as the theory progressed. Research began to look into the qualities that individuals possessed that made them more successful in the contact situation such as high self-esteem, age, education, or competence with a certain needed skill. Finally, with all of these elements added to the contact approach, researchers began to also look into the possible consequences in society for those who participate in the contact situation, especially looking into how it would affect them as a person in their group (Stephan and Stephan, 69-71).

A more recent response to the contact hypothesis underlines that contact is largely valuable because it gives information about more productive future contact. Within his text

Ethnic Conflict: Commerce, Culture, and the Contact Hypothesis, Forbes shows how the contact hypothesis is not just the simple idea that “if only different groups could experience more contact with each other, their relations would automatically improve” explaining contact as a secondary factor to other things that are going on within the situation of contact (Forbes 22). Therefore, the contact isn’t the deciding factor for people’s changing opinions, but it can enhance or diminish specific group experiences. He argues that the true test in contact theory is to provide useful information on which experiences or group interactions can lead to enriched contact. In some of the most recent literature Forbes cites, an emphasis is placed on the types of thinking required within the contact experience. For example, those interactions that are thought-provoking or cognitive in nature seem to produce more favorable contact between groups. Contact theory is especially useful within this research as contact theory attempts to look for correlations between contact and behavior, which will be a strong focus of the research to be detailed in this text.

Culture is an undeniable factor in any contact situation and Casmir and Asuncion-Lande argue that individual personalities and how people perceive each person and their culture will have significant effects on the outcome of the communications within that contact environment. Within the article “Intercultural Communication Revisited: Conceptualization, Paradigm Building, and Methodological Approaches”, the authors detail an interesting dichotomy that arises within the field of intercultural communications around the topic of communicating across cultures. Typically, people have felt that communication is successful because of commonalities between those communicating, but an inherent trait in intercultural communications is that those communicating are coming from backgrounds that may have no commonalities. Their answer to why this isn’t a detrimental paradigm in situations with intercultural communication is that this idea does not take into account the effects of individual personalities. The emphasis here is also

shifted to how those people within the contact situation perceive it and approach the communications that come from that situation. Also, if individuals are ready to work towards an understanding in the contact situation then they may be more inclined to work through the cultural differences or even consider them as just part of the process. If the cooperation that others have mentioned as so important is not there, then communication could be perceived negatively because cultural differences could hinder communication in a way that may make the contact less effective. There are many approaches to and models of intercultural communication, but those will not be detailed here. Culture can be a very important concept to be cognizant of within contact situations and may have positive or negative effects on the outcome of the communications. (Anderson, 278-285)

Along with providing a thorough overview of the contact theory, Abu-Nimer's Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change: Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel calls attention to a main critique of the contact theory which suggests that it is not applicable past a personal level. It was theorized by many in the contact theory approach that extended interactions with those of the other group would "strengthen interpersonal relations and thereby change participants' attitudes and opinions toward one another" (Abu-Nimer, 1). Abu-Nimer takes time here to look into some of the criticisms of this theory as his text will work towards developing more theories that will overcome them. The criticisms are equally as important to realize here as this research looks to move forward past them as well. First, Abu-Nimer details Reicher's belief that collective action not contact will overcome prejudice. Another critique from Taylor and Pettigrew is that the initial contact theory describes contact that is "subtly biased so that it is more 'illusory than real' (8). These criticisms show the main theme that in some opinions dialogue cannot move past a personal level and create change on a collective level, making that the challenge for contact and

specifically dialogue in the future (Abu-Nimer 8-9). Dialogue will be explored throughout this research as an effort to combine these two theoretical bases keeping in mind both the arguments that have been detailed for and against it.

Defining Dialogue

Coming from the discipline of philosophy, David Bohm describes dialogue as “a *stream of meaning* flowing among and through us and between us” (Bohm, 7). With this statement, Bohm is describing a process, not just a conversation or discussion, within which the participants will analyze their entire thought processes. This analysis comes in many ways that become useful tools in dialogue. First, if one is to examine their thought processes, they have to be able to recognize their assumptions and then suspend them. In dialogue, a cultural problem or question is usually the reason behind this exchange of meanings. In order to be able to learn about this problem, people must be able to recognize the stereotypes that they hold about this issue and not use those stereotypes to understand what happens within the group.

Dialogue becomes a process of not only learning about other cultures, but also learning about oneself. According to Bohm, in a dialogue, a person has to be both the observing party and willing to be observed by the other participants within the group. This leads to each person in the group being involved in a collective process, even collective thought. It is important to make the distinction between groupthink and collective thought. Bohm is not suggesting that everyone will agree to what everyone else has to say, but that all can become open to hearing these ideas in efforts to better understand the issues. Using these tools for becoming aware of entire thought processes allows people to have unlimited opportunities to transform themselves and their understandings individually and collectively with the group.

In accordance with David Bohm's philosophical analysis of dialogue, William Issacs introduces dialogue as a "conversation with a center, not sides" (Issacs, 17). With a similar philosophy on dialogue, Issacs also uses the approach of laying out some tools for the reader to use within a dialogue in order to reach the center of this conversation. The four tools that Issacs suggests are listening, respecting, suspending (in reference to assumptions as mentioned above), and voicing. After defining these tools, Issacs takes the next step and offers what should be the first step or concern in the actual process of dialogue: "setting the container" (Issacs, 239). To set a container in dialogue is essentially to create the space where all participants will feel comfortable using the tools that are suggested by both Bohm and Issacs. Because the group is asking so much of the individual in terms of being honest and divulging their true feelings on an issue, a safe space is needed so that "deep and transformative listening [can] become possible" (Issacs, 242).

Another argument made for dialogue is Leslie Baxter's main concept that dialogue "brings coherence to the whole" (Baxter 108). Baxter forms this concept by exploring and interpreting Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas on dialogue. She begins with the following quote from Bakhtin: "The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue" (Baxter, 170). Baxter uses this article to pick five of Bakhtin's points and further expand upon them as she sees fit, picking points that contribute to her thoughts on interpersonal relations between those within pre-established relationships unlike those without previous contact in some other dialogue situations. First, she looks at dialogue for its role as an epistemological consideration by describing how dialogue exists through a relationship between self and other that looks into differences and similarities simultaneously allowing for the most

learning. Second, she expands upon this simultaneous dichotomy by acknowledging that there is a centrifugal and centripetal paradox within dialogue, meaning that dialogue inherently involves communication that is both united and conflicting. Third and most enlightening for this research, through all of the differences dialogue can create brief moments of completeness that could not have been reached without this space. Fourth, dialogue can be used as a study of language and utterances. Finally, Baxter addresses an obligation of dialogue that promotes the equality of every voice in the dialogue which is the obligation to challenge the majority voice. (Baxter)

Yankelovich advocates that dialogue is a process of “taking in others’ viewpoints in the deepest sense of the term” (14). This view of dialogue is displayed in his text The Magic of Dialogue where he works to differentiate dialogue from other common terms that he claims are confused with dialogue, namely debate, discussion and deliberation. In order for dialogue to be successful, three conditions must be present: equality and absence of coercive influence, listening with empathy, and bringing assumptions into the open (Yankelovich, 41-4). These requirements seem to be a compilation of common points from other’s views on dialogue and contact, and the so called magic that happens within dialogues that hold these three things is the inspiration of the refreshing yet whimsical book title. On a deeper level, Yankelovich describes that these three things present in a dialogue setting will compensate for cultural differences and allow for a perception changing experience. The main idea here truly is that dialogue done correctly, where there is more than just talk or discussion, can have a magical quality to it which can help people advance their own learning and relationships.

Shifting from definitions of dialogue to tools for dialogue, Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change details many of the different forms dialogue can take when using tools to achieve interactions like the ones mentioned throughout the discussions above. First, the

authors look into the qualities within the interactions in dialogue that can help make it successful. Some of these include deciding on a clear purpose for dialogue from the beginning, asking good questions throughout the process, and strategic design and strong modeling skills from facilitators. It is also important to choose participants wisely prior to the interactions in order to have the people in the room that can fulfill your purpose, which could be anything from increasing awareness to resolving conflict (Bojer, et al, 18-33). The second part of this text details the forms that dialogue can take from the traditional circle to newer ideas such as world café. For example, world café is a dialogue setting where participants move through tables set up such as those at a café would be to discuss high-quality issues, while one table host remains at each table the entire time to encourage new ideas and spread previous ideas that were mentioned (Bojer, et al, 114). The traditional circle brings people together in a space with no visual hierarchy and allows meaning to flow within and through the circle, which is the original intention of dialogue (Bojer, et al, 55-56). Deep democracy is another style of dialogue that is explained within this text. Deep democracy strives to make sure that the minority voice is not missed within dialogue. In order to promote this emphasis on missed voices, the focus shifts more towards roles and relationships that people experience individually, rather than just focusing on the individual person (Bojer, et al, 64-65). Another type of dialogue is sustained dialogue, which is carried out over an extended period of time. In this dialogue, the focus is on in-depth exploration of the elements of relationships and working through the five stages of sustained dialogue (Bojer, et al, 105-110). A final technique of dialogue is the World Café model. Within this dialogue, more people can be involved in successful dialogue at once by splitting participants into café tables which they will move through throughout the allotted dialogue time (Bojer, et al, 114-115). These are a few examples of the different structures that

dialogue can take but even though these structures are present, dialogue is a free flowing development that should never be structured so greatly that spontaneous opportunities are missed.

Evaluating Dialogue

In an introductory chapter to Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community, and Workplace, a collection of articles on dialogue and its evaluation, Sylvia Hurtado argues for dialogue as a beneficial tool for all of those who use interpersonal skills, especially in the work place, on a daily basis. . There is specific mention here that after dialogue, “participants think and see the world differently” (Hurtado, 22). Many of the things Hurtado details involve gaining the interpersonal and intergroup relational skills that are useful in everyday life. One of the greatest reasons for needing these skills in today’s society is to work with the diverse situations and groups of people that one might encounter in today’s schools or workforce. Hurtado references also that it is more and more common for employers to look for these skills when seeking potential employees. The skills that Hurtado connects to dialogue the most in this discussion are “the ability to work effectively in groups with other of diverse backgrounds, openness to new ideas and perspectives, and empathy with other workers’ perspectives” (Hurtado, 23). Hurtado also then turns the reader to the literature on contact theory for more information which I have mentioned in great detail above.

Also in this collection, chapters are set aside to elaborate on the analysis and evaluation of dialogues that were completed in a university, community, and workplace setting, with the university and community articles being of most use for my needs in this study. The evaluation process is recounted differently in every situation, as is necessary when completing dialogues in different settings around different topics. It seems that one critique of these evaluations is that

they are all focused on the short-term and how to immediately improve their dialogue program, especially since many of these programs are barely a few years old. The need for evaluation techniques that could span dialogue programs and settings is referenced but not pushed within this collection or my research. A variety of methods are also noted as used in different dialogue situations from interviews and focus groups to surveys. Evaluation literature has been more difficult to find, especially references to specific surveys or interview questionnaires, which helps to solidify the importance of this research.

Along with the Hurtado collection, Adrienne Dessel and Mary Rogge decode the evaluation techniques of twenty three different studies in dialogue programs using different designs and methodologies. “Evaluation of Intergroup Dialogue: A Review of the Empirical Literature” provides the reader with a concise and clear chart that allows the reader to easily see the design, instruments used, goals of the research, sample size, variables and outcomes of each research project examined within this study. The article then offers an analysis of which methods have been most effective and in which situations. This article is very helpful in directing other researchers to places for gathering more information on evaluation of dialogue programs; those of which were important to this study will be included within the references section. One of the challenges that remains is finding attachments that include the actual surveys or interviews used within these research projects. Even those articles the authors direct the researchers to for example surveys are not posting their research tools with their articles. Designs cited within this article range from quasi-experimental research to pre-experimental research that have both qualitative and quantitative tools. (Dessel and Rogge)

“Evaluating Intergroup Dialogue: Engaging Diversity for Personal and Social Responsibility” is an article that speaks specifically about dialogues held for students while in

college. Within this research, nine universities conducted dialogues around the topics of race and gender in order to promote more diversity in learning during higher education. Intergroup Dialogue within this study acted as an avenue for bringing together students of two different identity groups to discuss intellectual and experiential similarities and differences. The end goal of these dialogues was three fold and wanted to promote understanding within the group, develop positive relationships between group members, and encourage intergroup cooperation leading to more collaboration. Within these dialogues across the universities, three things were specifically focused on in order to get the most out of the dialogue which were “active and engaged learning”, “structured interaction”, and “facilitated learning environments” (Nagda et al, 4). The conclusions of this research found that dialogue created positive outcomes towards all three goals. In all facets of intergroup relations, those who participated in dialogue were more interested in working towards the successful building of group understanding and bridges to cooperation. Finally, higher education can have the ability to encourage more diverse learning as dialogue programs continue to spread throughout institutions (Nagda et al, 6).

Joshua Miller and Susan Donner held a single race dialogue to look into the effects a racial dialogue can have on racism within the field of social work, and argue that challenging racial stereotypes can positively affect people’s views of the other race. Their article, “More Than Just Talk: The Use of Racial Dialogues to Combat Racism,” details racial dialogues and also intergroup conflict as perpetuated or developed by racism. Race is a controversial subject because it is not only a biological characteristic, but also a socially constructed trait that brings stereotypes and prejudices along with it. Therefore, this racial dialogue epitomizes the large challenge that almost all dialogues undertake: to challenge “the social hierarchies and systems of privilege that sustain it while also challenging the attitudes and beliefs that support this system”

(Miller and Donner, 34). Dialogues centered on race are hoped to bring about the effects of the contact theory that has been detailed above. If diverse groups can come into a safe space together, it is thought that through personal sharing, reflecting, and listening to others, a more positive relationship between groups can be built. Since racism can be a large contributor to group conflict, race dialogues must address these conflicts through dispelling common stereotypes that can promote racist behaviors.

Dialogue can take many forms according to this article, but there are six main factors to think about when determining the dialogue to be used. These factors include the following: the participants, the sponsors and its location, the time allotted, the facilitation, the structure, and the goals of the dialogue. In this particular dialogue, the structure was created around a one-time dialogue that involved eighty participants. The structure of this specific dialogue began with a facilitator conversation as a way to model race dialogue for the participants, then fishbowl activities, discussions amongst the entire group, and reflection processes, and closed with a short video. The information gathered from this dialogue came from a survey that asked students to respond to fifteen questions on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and then followed with open-ended questions that could elicit more thorough answers. In order to have less variables within the data collected, surveys about the dialogue were only completed by the fifty eight Master's students that attended. The results of this experiment were mostly positive in that all participants recognized this notion that racial dialogues could be used to counteract racism. A large number of the participants agreed that the event was helpful, desired to interact further in this way, and were given a newfound sense of hope from the dialogue that diverse groups of people can listen to and learn from one another (Miller and Donner, 45). Other questions put forth on the questionnaire involved things such as personal connections to the

dialogue and the desire to work against racism further in the future. The main consideration for the future from this case is that a single event of dialogue did not seem to be enough for those highly interested in the subject and work dialogue can do. Dialogue is looked at as a way to work towards having less racism, because, as the authors note, “if the talk is genuine talk, informed talk, and persistent talk, it will identify the waste, cost, evil, and tragedy of institutional racism. Action will follow because there will be no other viable choice” (Miller and Donner, 51).

“Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes” examines diversity as a central theme of dialogue to argue that diversity within dialogue groups provides a greater opportunity to learn. The article recognizes that it has long been stated that the best atmosphere for students to learn in is the most diverse setting that can be obtained, even without solid evidence as to why this is most effective. With focuses now turning to intergroup contact within the educational systems, some emphasis is being placed on diversity of contact within situations, especially if that contact is frequent and high quality, as this can help promote a more diverse learning experience. This article particularly defines hoped learning outcomes from diverse educational experiences, which is extremely important in the evaluation of diverse dialogue programs. Diversity is said to have a positive effect on the following educational outcomes:

“Learning outcomes [including] active thinking skills, intellectual engagement and motivation, and a variety of academic skills. Democracy outcomes [including] perspective-taking, citizenship engagement, racial and cultural understanding, and judgment of the compatibility among different groups in a democracy” (Gurin et al, 334)

Cognitive functions are also reviewed in some depth to describe how learning occurs through questioning knowledge and actively being engaged in the processes. The discussion of these learning and democracy outcomes influenced particularly the survey that will be used within the research detailed below. The evaluation completed by this research on diversity in higher

education involved looking into two large cases of University of Michigan students and data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, and intergroup dialogues were assessed as part of the Michigan students' portion of the research. The study's wide scope and specific details will not be detailed here but more information can be found through the article for those who are looking to do research on a larger scale for dialogue or all educational learning processes. (Gurin, et al.)

Hopefully, this detailed literature review has helped to connect the dots from early forms of conflict resolution theory to the dialogical theories that are to be tested within this research. Conflict Resolution theories and intergroup contact theories have played large roles in creating the theories of dialogue that exist today. As suggested before, there is not a lot of literature on why dialogue works in the manner that it does to build relationships and enhance learning. The goal of the research to be explained in the following sections of this thesis is to develop a work that would begin to answer those questions and be the logical next step in this progressive literature review. Before entering into this study, the researcher may not have had an explanation other than 'magic', but even Yankelovich's 'magic' argument is broken down into points that begin to define a more concrete explanation for the success of dialogue. Therefore, the goal of this research is to delve deeper into those theories on the requirements of dialogue by testing those theories and asking what else is involved in this 'magic' to continue to build upon these already established points confirming that dialogue is not in fact only magic but a definable and re-creatable process. With that in mind, this work will now move to the methodology section to detail how the research design for this project was created and what methods will be used to carry out this original research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method design incorporates different research styles and works particularly well with studies that need to look at variables both quantitatively and qualitatively. This chapter will look into the rationale for using a mixed method design as well as the actual design that is chosen for this study. Then, methods of data collection and analysis will be explained, followed by a look at the limitations and/or challenges of the method chosen.

Research Method Rationale

In order to conduct extensive yet feasible research throughout this project, a mixed methods research design was used. Mixed methods designs allow a researcher the opportunity to bring together qualitative and quantitative data in an effort to show proof through both narrative and numeric evidence. Also within mixed method designs, the researcher is able to “use whatever methodological tools are required to answer the research question under study” (Teddle and Tashakkori 7). Specifically, Teddle and Tashakkori describe the mixed methods process to be completed here as a parallel mixed design. Throughout this section of the chapter, I will describe why a mixed methods design is most appropriate, and also explain the design that I have chosen to use to carry out this project.

The mixed methods design is appropriate here in order to get a wider picture of evaluating the variables involved in this study. The variables that are involved would be inherently hard to study if only using a quantitative method. When trying to assess the type of relationship formed or the depth of learning experience, quantitative numbers would only go so far. At the same time, getting interview responses from around a third of a population available in the dialogue setting at American University may not present a representative sample, so using

a quantitative method, such as surveys, allows for more information to be collected in an effective manner. In this research, quantitative data was kept to a scaled survey and qualitative data allowed for expanded investigation of those quantitative findings. Qualitative data took the form of an open-ended interview process and a participant observation. The great thing about qualitative data in this study is that it allows the researcher to study attitudes. Attitudes towards learning and relationship building are really what change through dialogue, and that ability to perceive things in a different way or have a change in attitude towards another is the most important thing to measure within this study.

This mixed methods rationale works by incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research into the study through a mixed methods survey that asks questions that require both qualitative and quantitative replies, and a deeper qualitative component through interviews and a journal keeping process. The evaluation design for the survey method used will be a pre-experimental design termed a posttest-only design with nonequivalent groups as described by Rubin and Babbie. Pre-experimental designs are designs that have a low degree of internal validity or the confidence “that the results of a study accurately depict whether one variable is or is not a cause of another” (Rubin and Babbie, 1976). The posttest-only design just means that the variable is only assessed after intervention has occurred. These designs are used widely within dialogue evaluation according to Dessel and Rogge as it is difficult to randomize the sample used within dialogue research. Also, most evaluation research of dialogue programs does not involve comparing the results to a control group, which is the signature of pre-experimental designs. The parallel portion of the mixed methods design comes by acknowledging when the methods will be carried out. A parallel design suggests that qualitative and quantitative data is gathered concurrently or over a short time lapse period (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 1998). This study involved

a short time lapse in data collection for the different tools of research. The participant observation took place during the dialogue sessions. The surveys were then distributed at the last session meeting of each dialogue, and collected before participants left the meeting. Finally, the interviews took place within the following weeks, as soon as participants were available and able to find the time to meet with the researcher. (Rubin and Babbie, 178-9; Dessel and Rogge, 218-9; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 12-13).

Data Collection

Data collection happened through three methods, which were a participant observation, survey, and interview, and Teddlie and Tashakkori describes this as a between-strategies mixed method of data collection. One important thing to recognize before the process of data collection could begin is the IRB process, or the Institutional Review Board process required when working with human subjects. After submitting copies of those survey questionnaires and interview question sheets, the IRB at American University was able to determine that this study would not place undue or unnecessary harm on any of its participants and was allowed to move forward with the data collection phase. The IRB also acknowledged that receiving verbal consent from participants was sufficient and their names would not be recorded anywhere in connection to the publishing of this thesis. (Teddlie and Tashakkori. 242-244)

First, a posttest-only survey was used for this design as the variables being looked at are only variables that would show up at the conclusion of a period of intergroup contact (See Appendix A for survey). Pretest surveys were considered, but the surveys would not be able to ask the same questions and therefore would not be able to show more longitudinal results. The surveys have questions that elicit both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was to be asked for in an ordinal form with subjects rating things using a scale of one to five (the scale

will be listed under each question to prevent confusion). At the conclusion of the quantitative questions, there were three open-ended questions that asked specific questions about the friendship potential, learning outcomes, and the way the relationship between these two things is perceived. Surveys were to be distributed at the end of the final dialogue session within the environment that the participants had created in order to maintain anonymity, encourage honest responses, and help the researcher have a higher rate of completion of these surveys. Every dialogue participant was given the survey and encouraged to complete it as they were also completing an exit-questionnaire provided by the Dialogue Development Group that was completely separate from the survey I distributed. DDG was not privy to the survey responses from my questionnaires and vice versa.

Along with surveys, interviews were conducted as a deeper form of qualitative data collection. Interviews were used as they are a commonly trusted source of uncovering people's attitudes on different situations. The open-ended nature of the interviews also allows interviewees to divulge information that could not have been predicted or asked about (See Appendix B for interview guide). In the case of this research, some of these disclosures will be most useful. In all, fifteen interviews were conducted. Twelve were conducted with dialogue participants, targeting two interviewees from each dialogue group that is running on campus through the Dialogue Development Group. Because of the nature of dialogue, it is even more important to retain anonymity, and therefore stratified sampling for interviewees was used with the help of those that work with the Dialogue Development Group. DDG keeps a spreadsheet of their dialogue participants that keeps participants in a random number order within their system. The random numbers of 2, 6, and 5 were chosen, and the contact information for the corresponding participants within each dialogue group in the DDG system was distributed to me.

Before the completion of each dialogue, the facilitators announced that there was a possibility that as many as two participants from each group could be solicited for an interview and no one objected to their name being in the selection process. After emailing those that were suggested from the first round of stratified sampling, some groups had no participants still that would agree to an interview. The random numbers of 3 and 1 were then chosen to be additional backups to contact for interviews. It was important to use a random sample within this research as the results would have been skewed in the favor of dialogue if volunteers were taken. The audience for dialogue at American University is already less diverse than the total population, so a random sampling would ensure the least biased results (Teddlie and Tashakkori 172). The participants were then contacted and asked if they would agree to do the interview, and if they do not consent, one of the additional backups would be contacted. The remaining three interviews were done with facilitators of dialogue groups running through DDG this semester pending their consent. DDG also provided a list of facilitators and every third person was contacted in regards to being interviewed. Consent forms were still given to all interviewees in case of questions, even though they were not required to give more than verbal consent (See Appendix C for informed consent form). Interview questions resembled survey questions but were structured in a more open-ended way in order to get comparable yet more detailed information.

I also maintained a journal of the process observations that I noticed as a facilitator of a dialogue session on campus in the spring of 2012 through the Dialogue Development Group. This entailed keeping a journal of interactions and patterns that were noticed specifically around learning outcomes or friendship potentials building. The value to this particular type of observation lies in the unstructured nature of interactions that will be observed (Teddlie and Tashakkori 220). This process happened without attributing names to any of the other

participants within the dialogue. This method was at first only a hope because it was contingent on the consent of the members of the dialogue group. If consent had not been received from every member of the group, this research method would have had to have been dropped and information would have only been used from the remaining tools of research. Consent was gained from each member of the dialogue in the form of verbal consent as they were more comfortable with keeping a copy of the consent form instead of signing their name to the document in any way.

As mentioned above, participants were selected by using those that are participants within dialogue groups already in that spring semester with the student group DDG, or the Dialogue Development Group. I have participated in a dialogue with this group in the past and completed my second facilitation with this group the same semester as this research, and have thus formed a relationship with this club that made this evaluation possible. DDG organized and provided facilitators for six dialogue groups on campus in the spring semester of 2013 with topics ranging from religion and sexuality to race and politics. Participation in this group is open to the entirety of American University and the community at large. In the past, a range of people have participated from graduate students to undergraduate students and alumni to AU faculty or staff. The number of participants for that spring semester was determined by how many applied to be in dialogue groups and how many the DDG board saw fit to keep along in a dialogue process. I am very appreciative of the partnership that I was able to create with DDG, and their willingness to provide a convenient sample of subjects for my research.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis began as soon as the dialogue sessions ended in April of 2013 as I was able to begin analysis on my observations immediately and the surveys were collected by a DDG

representative and passed along to me after detaching their post-dialogue survey. Analysis on the interviews took a significant amount of time longer to begin as the interviews had to be transcribed after they were completed in mid-May. Overall, a parallel mixed data analysis was incorporated within this parallel mixed design strategy.

The interviews were used as the main source of detailed information, since that was the most detailed information to come straight from people participating in dialogue, so the transcription process began immediately after each interview. A recorder was used to record each interview that lasted anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour. The transcription however was a process that was done completely by the researcher in order to maintain anonymity and was completed with accuracy by the middle of July 2012. The transcriptions produced over 100 pages of single spaced research to use throughout the process. Once the transcriptions were completed, the thematic analysis began. Categorical strategies “break down narrative data and rearrange those data to produce categories that facilitate comparisons, thus leading to a better understanding of the research questions” (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 253). These strategies were implemented during theming, and then each category was separated and themed again. Descriptive statistical methods were also used to extract valuable statistics from the survey responses. Data analysis was a thorough process that continued throughout preliminary writing and into the beginning of 2013.

Limitations and Challenges

As with any research project, there were limitations and challenges to research design and data collection. One of the limitations involves the process of becoming a DDG participant. DDG is a student organization on campus that places students who apply to their programs into an on-campus dialogue. Inherently, those that participate in DDG are those that want to be

involved in some type of dialogue situation, and have some faith in the dialogue process itself to be transformative. Along with acknowledging that those that participate in DDG are a biased group, those that would agree to interview are suspected to be an even more optimistic group about dialogue and its possibilities. Also, there were some challenges within interview transcription as there was background noise present during a few of the interviews. Only one interview was able to be obtained from one dialogue group, so three participants from another group were interviewed instead of only two as desired. A final challenge involved ensuring that each facilitator distributed their surveys, as one group only returned 2 out of 7 surveys at the completion of the dialogue. These limitations and challenges only provide room for improvement if another research project of this kind is to be conducted again in the future. The researcher had satisfied herself that the research design was the best manner in which to research this particular subject matter at this time and institution.

CHAPTER 4

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

One of the central ideas of this thesis is that relationships are built while interacting in a dialogue space. According to much of the contact theory literature, it is inevitable that some sort of relationship will form when a group experiences prolonged contact. Contact per se cannot be the only reason for that relationship forming, so the crux of this chapter will look into what other factors go into the development of those relationships. Also, yes, relationships are formed, but the nature of that relationship is something that was rarely mentioned while reviewing the literature on building relationships through contact. The Pettigrew article especially suggested that when people build relationships, they do so because they feel a potential for friendship. In hypothesizing about the results of the surveys and interviews regarding relationship building, it is suggested that participants who go through this dialogue process, especially the one specified within this project at American University, will form a “potential friendship”. One hypothesis to be explored is that this potential for friendship relationship that is formed is what will lead to the learning and development that a particular participant goes through within this dialogue process.

Those points made within the literature on dialogue and contact theory were detailed within the literature review chapter, but will be looked into again here as the factors that are suggested to affect the building of relationships within a dialogue group are introduced. Some of the things that were proposed by the Intergroup Relations text that would lead to these relationships were equality among participants, personalized interactions, and cooperation (Stephan and Stephan). Allport established four essential needs that Pettigrew used when looking to build intergroup friendships which were equal status, common goals, cooperation, and support from authority (Allport; Pettigrew). After thinking about these two texts and previous experience

in dialogue participating and facilitating, the researcher developed a longer list of qualities that would encourage the building of these relationships that could be tested within the bounds of statements on a survey. The qualities that were developed and included within the post-test survey questions were the following: equal treatment, give respect, receive respect, experience positive emotions, ability to empathize, deep personal sharing, actively listen to others, be listened to by others, outside interactions, and finally forming friendships. Within this list, positive emotions refer to having any type of good feeling during the experience such as happiness, caring, or a feeling of growth. Personal sharing refers to the stories that one is able to tell the group that are of a personal nature. Actively listening here is defined as hearing what others have to say and suspending judgment while trying to really understand where the other is coming from. Forming friendships is at the end of this section because the previous qualities are those that should help build up to a friendship. After reading Pettigrew, it seemed that people would be able to say that they were forming a potential friendship with those whom they were experiencing prolonged contact, and that is also something that was directly asked of the participants of this study in both the interview and the post-dialogue survey.

The following analysis will focus solely on the results of the interviews and surveys that dealt with the forming of relationships within the dialogue setting. Within this chapter, the qualities that the interviewees stated helped them form their relationships will be compared with those that were speculated would be most helpful from the beginning. Then, the survey results will be brought forward to compare those results with the openly generated results of the interviews. Following how relationships were built, an analysis will take place concerning how those relationships were characterized once built in contrast to the potential for friendship that

was hypothesized. Finally, any outlying circumstances that were brought to the surface within the interviews or surveys will be discussed.

The Formation of Relationships

Along with the ten qualities that this research predicted would be important in building relationships, twenty three other qualities were mentioned when interviewees were asked any variation of the open-ended question “could you state explicitly the qualities you felt were important in these interactions?” During the interviews, no one claimed that a relationship was not formed within the dialogue space but there was dissonance as to what type of relationship resulted. Within the surveys, participants were asked more specifically about friendships rather than all relationships that could be formed within the dialogue and only six participants out of thirty five, or 17%, answered not at all to the statement “I was able to form friendships with those in my group”. These results indicate that relationships are definitely formed within the dialogue space, but the real questions left are what qualities form those relationships and how are they ultimately characterized.

This section within the building relationships chapter will address all of those qualities that were brought up during the interviews as well as those feelings concerning the qualities put forth within their surveys. First off, in efforts to section the chapter by themes within the findings, a lot of time will be spent addressing those qualities that eight or more of the interviewees, or more than 50%, put forth on their own without knowledge of qualities others had suggested. The five qualities that met this standard were willingness to express, comfort, trust, sharing vulnerable experiences, and participation in small group activities, or activities that encourage pairs or groups of threes to get to know each other by looking into a specific topic or question together. There are also nine other qualities that at least five participants brought to my

attention that they felt were important in building relationships, and those qualities were the following: finding a commonality, respect, discussing topics as sensitive issues, understanding the dialogue process, interacting in informal spaces, the role of Facebook, learning about other participants, listening, and specific dialogue activities were mentioned by some. After these most mentioned qualities are discussed, there will be a brief assessment of the final qualities mentioned by fewer than five interviewees (See next page for Table 1).

Qualities Important to More than Half of the Interviewees

The response that was given most frequently when asking participants what qualities enabled them to build a relationship with their peers was the sharing of vulnerable experiences. This sharing was talked about in each direction such as from another participant to the interviewee and the group and vice versa. The first participant interviewed almost immediately brought up the topic of vulnerability by stating that sharing “vulnerable experiences was very important especially with dialogue just because that’s an ample part of having ... true discussions” (Interview 1). Another participant who was a part of a gender dialogue within DDG mentioned that it is easier to be vulnerable when someone else goes first. That participant continued to explain this during the interview and really seemed to feel more willing to share vulnerable experiences after those in the dialogue group led the way (Interview 2). Another participant interviewed commented on a time within the dialogue group that she shared a vulnerable experience that did not necessarily push the dialogue in the direction she thought it would. The thought of the gender dialogue participant was apparent throughout the interviewees being that if one person shared a vulnerable experience, others would follow. This particular female participant did not see this happen after sharing something particularly vulnerable to her.

Table 1. Relationship Building Qualities Mentioned By Interviewees

	Quality	Number of Interviewees Mentioned
Qualities mentioned by 8 or more interviewees	Sharing Vulnerable Experiences	13
	Comfort	12
	Trust	9
	Participation in Small Group Activities	9
	Willingness to Express	8
Qualities mentioned by 5-7 interviewees	Understanding the dialogue process	7
	Listening	6
	Specific dialogue activities	6
	Finding a commonality	6
	Interacting in informal spaces	6
	Facebook	6
	Learning about others	6
	Respect	5
Qualities mentioned by less than 5 interviewees	Discussing sensitive issues	5
	Size or make up of group	4
	Environment	4
	Challenging each other	4
	Maturity	3
	Prolonged interactions	3
	Tolerance	3
	Caring	1
	Humor	1
	Confidence	1
	Encouraging risk taking	1
	Patience	1
	Nature of a forced relationship	1

An immediate thought and question sparked to ask this interviewee was how did this affect her future participation and did this make her feel less like sharing vulnerable experiences was helpful. She answered by saying, “I think what I said helped people to understand me as a person... I feel like it was helpful that I shared that for the dialogue. I think it helped me [and] even though it was an uncomfortable moment, it may have helped the whole process” (Interview 4). Finally, another participant commented that when they were all being vulnerable they were all on common ground together (Interview 10). Thirteen out of fifteen people, or 86%, interviewed talked about vulnerability in some way, mentioning how it helped them build relationships with those in their groups.

Another important piece to relationship building according to those interviewed is comfort or being able to feel comfortable in the space and with those in the group. This can build off of what was mentioned above about the willingness to be vulnerable after another has already gone first. Twelve people, or 80% of those interviewed, mentioned a comfort level or being comfortable within their discussions, including one participant who continually went back to this comfort saying after every question that it just goes back to the comfort with the other participants (Interview 3). Comfort was something that was talked about a lot in an opposite way from the previous vulnerable sharing topic. Comfort seemed to always be tacked on to another issue in some way such as commenting that something made the participant more comfortable, or being comfortable made the participant willing to share more or participate in different ways. One participant in particular stated that from the beginning she was very intent on listening and determining her feelings before participating greatly. She expressed her feelings by saying, “I would be thinking something through in my head and trying to figure out ... exactly what I want to say, because I want it to come out correctly. I don’t want to ... say anything that I don’t

actually mean, and so I think that once I became more comfortable I didn't have to do that as much" (Interview 8). The level of comfort seemed to be what really allowed participants to dive into these situations and really work to get a lot out of the dialogue. The topic of comfort will come up again later in the chapter especially as things are mentioned about the ways relationships change as they are moving forward.

Two other factors that seem to go hand in hand with those already detailed above are trust and a willingness to express. It is one thing to share a vulnerable experience here and there, but it is another to trust the space enough to be willing to share in multiple ways at many different points of the dialogue experience. An interviewee from the race and politics dialogue stated that a "willingness to ... express what you are really thinking both builds the relationship and builds the conversation" (Interview 1). One participant in particular that was a part of a gender dialogue was very big on trust which that person characterized as built through an honest and frank relationship within the space. Building off of this trust and also a willingness to share, this participant reached the following conclusion: "All this sharing made me understand and appreciate their honesty [and] that they are sharing and I did the same. I also shared different experience[s] from childhood and other times, and that's what built the trust and understanding" (Interview 6). Willingness to share is something that can be noticed quickly by all participants, and therefore the opposite of non-willing participants is also easy to spot. One participant stated nicely some thoughts on those that seemed less willing, which were very similar to more than half of the interviewees' thoughts on those that were not as forthcoming as participants. "There [were] ... a couple in our group who you could tell were holding back a little bit, and we didn't really know about that much which didn't hurt the dialogue per se but it could have been richer if they didn't [hold back]" (Interview 10). Overall nine interviewees, or 60%, valued trust, while

eight interviewees, or 53%, valued a willingness to share. These qualities will come up even more in some of the discussion about those other qualities that participants mentioned that were not discussed by more than half of the participants, such as respect.

The final puzzle piece to building relationships that was mentioned by over half of the interviewees was working in small group activities. Small group activities within the dialogue groups that DDG had this year may have been smaller than normal. In the researcher's past dialogue involvements with DDG, there have been some pair activities and some small group activities of three to four per group. Within some of these dialogue groups during the spring of 2012 semester, the actual groups were so small that any of the smaller group activities completed within the dialogue were really only groups of two or three participants. One participant from a group concerning race commented that "when you would work one on one with the person, I think that was the best opportunity to really get to know them" (Interview 5). Two participants particularly referenced the fact that many facilitators encourage and practice the use of icebreakers which allow the participants chances to get to know each other first in small group settings and then with the entire group. Another participant from a similar group thought this way about relationships regarding small group interactions: "I think that initially they were built ...at the group activities [by] how you sort of work together ...to... figure out how you viewed a certain thing about race or politics, or to see how your personal experience has helped you and I think that was one of the bigger things, [communicating] one on one with the person" (Interview 11). Some participants began talking about group activities as well as they transitioned in their process of talking about small group activities, but this happened with less than 50% of the participants so it will not be explored in great detail here.

Qualities Important to More than 33% of the Interviewees

In addition to the above mentioned 5 factors, others were referenced by participants that were obviously important to their personal journey of building relationships but were acknowledged by less than 50% of the interviewees. Due to the number of additional qualities specified, a division will be made between those mentioned by more than 33% of the participants and those mentioned by less than 33% or less than five interviewees. The following are things that fit into the first category: respect, sensitive discussion topics, understanding the dialogue process, interacting in informal spaces, listening, learning about other participants, and finally Facebook. Everything else will be briefed following the discussion of the before-mentioned qualities, but the following is an exhausted list that compiles the remaining qualities mentioned: nature of a forced relationship, prolonged interaction, humor, maturity within the space, caring, the environment, challenging each other, tolerance, confidence, encouraging risk taking, patience, and finally size or make up of the group itself.

One of the conditions that stuck out the most in this section of the research was the importance that was placed on the interactions that happened during informal spaces. The interactions that people talked about the most were those that happened within the dialogue room before the dialogue, after the dialogue, and during the breaks. Participants also mentioned walking with other participants to the coffee shop within the buildings at the university to continue chatting in an informal way. After asking one of the facilitators interviewed about this concept of building a relationship during a break she commented the following: “they ... would continue conversations almost every break and it was easier for them to feel like it wasn’t structured... they can breathe and talk a little more loosely [and at] that time they loved talking about dating and boyfriends and girlfriends, so during the break I think they could talk more about themselves than they could in the dialogue” (Interview 13). Another facilitator realized

that “the first time that [the participants] actually started really engaging with each other was probably during the break in the second session” (Interview 14).

A perspective given by a participant within a gender dialogue is that relationships were able to slowly begin developing “outside the formal dialogue space; so maybe when we were sitting down, putting our stuff down, starting to chat or whatever; then we would go into what we were talking about; then we would break for a break or when we were done there would be a little more joking” (Interview 2). Another participant tried to describe how the progression of the relationships can be seen during breaks. The participant felt that breaks in the beginning of the dialogue process are a little painful and awkward because no one knows what to say to each other, but by the middle of the dialogue and throughout to the end of the dialogue, participants have things to say to each other during breaks which means that their relationship has developed (Interview 5). Now, on the other hand of this perspective from the interviewees, those responding to the survey were not as keen on outside interactions affecting the building of relationships within the dialogue space. The average score amongst those surveyed when asked if they interacted with their peers outside of the dialogue space was a 2.02 on a one to five scale, with five being the highest. This could be because some participants taking the survey may not consider breaks interactions outside of the dialogue space. Vagueness in the survey statement on the part of the researcher could have left survey takers to presume that the outside space meant away from the university in a casual setting. Overall, interactions during informal settings around the dialogue seemed much more important than was predicted from the beginning.

Another aspect that seemed very important to some of the participants that was not thought of during the initial hypotheses within the research was Facebook. There were two specific things mentioned about the use of Facebook and its role in helping participants to build

relationships with one another. First, six participants talked about how it helped people get to know the other participants and their personality outside of dialogue to friend them on Facebook. Second, several of these participants mentioned how much it helped their group to build a group dynamic with the intention of becoming more than just peers in the dialogue space, if they created a Facebook group to share ideas about the dialogue and also to keep in touch and build further friendships. One participant shared that because the dialogue group set up a Facebook group it shows that “there’s some sort of you know future want to continue discussing or conversing or at least trying on a face level to have some sort of interaction” (Interview 7). So, whether or not the group was able to interact outside of the space, there was a desire to form some sort of friendship past the required seven week span of interactions. Facebook was the main response by one participant from a faith dialogue when asked about how it was that she felt she was able to become friends with those in her group. That participant described the connection of Facebook by saying that “we became Facebook friends ... and now we talk tons more because we comment back and forth on stuff and ... we continuously are posting on each other’s wall or making jokes back and forth and you know going back to old stories. Now we have inside jokes” (Interview 9). Facebook is becoming more and more popular as a tool for building relationships among the young generation, and it was definitely evident in the role it played within this past spring’s dialogue semester. Many participants said it was important to get to know the other members of the dialogue group, and both break conversations and Facebook have proved to be valid venues of building relationships in this setting.

The next pieces of relationship building to be discussed are those that could be interrelated when looking at them within the context of dialogue, and those are understanding the dialogue process, finding commonalities, and the discussion topics themselves. A few

participants remarked that it seemed to be easy to find commonalities in some situations because you would expect certain types of people to join dialogue, namely those that would be open-minded and interested in what others have to say. One participant gave a more specific example of finding a commonality with another participant that helped foster the relationship. She said of another participant, “I learned that she had a Swedish background and I studied abroad in Sweden in college and ... we were kind of excited about that, and I felt more comfortable with her knowing that we had this thing in common” (Interview 4). Other participants claimed that the only reason there was this space to allow participants to find these commonalities was because of the nature of the discussion and dialogue itself. A female participant spoke about the nature of discussing sensitive issues. There is a need when discussing these issues to go to a deep place in order to have a true dialogical discussion, so participants would need to understand the process of dialogue to get to the level of depth desired by many participants and the process itself (Interview 1). A few other participants and two facilitators were really championing the role that the dialogue process and space held in the formation of friendships. Issacs, who is referenced within the literature review, teaches that dialogue should form a container in which its participants will feel safe. The comments of the interviewees allowed conclusions to be drawn that true dialogue spaces were created where these sensitive issues really could be delved into with all the participants in the group.

Qualities Important to Less than 33% of Interviewees

Many of the other details that were mentioned in regards to building relationships seemed to be more personal to the individual or dependent on personality type. Those things that would fall into this category would be a sense of caring, maturity levels, humor, confidence, and patience. One participant referenced the fact that her peers seemed genuinely concerned about

her as she was sick one dialogue session. This person claimed that from that point on she felt that her peers cared about her and that allowed her to feel more comfortable and open up as the sessions went on (Interview 12). Another participant talked about how important humor was to her personally, and how she was mostly friends with those people she felt could make her laugh or understand her humor and sarcasm at times (Interview 9). Because this was important to her personally, it was important to her in this setting where relationship building was crucial to the chemistry of the situation. Another participant and two facilitators talked about having maturity in the situation. They spoke of being mature as important because of the sensitivity in the situation. It was said that the maturity shown and commitment to the dialogue allowed trust to be built easier in the space, especially when knowing the depth of stories that could be shared. Separating the interviewee responses in the three above sections allowed this research to decipher which qualities were important foundational qualities for building relationships in dialogue and which qualities are those that are based on participants and their personalities. When fostering a space for relationships, focus can be on those responses that were given by more than 50% of the interviewees, but when working with particular individuals, it is important to notice the qualities that may fall in the group of qualities mentioned by less than 33% of those interviewees.

Incorporating the Survey Responses

Within the results of the survey, reasoning and meaning were not shared because there was no space to elaborate simply on the process of building a relationship. See Appendix A. The first ten statements in the survey, which were to be ranked on a one to five scale with one meaning not at all and 5 meaning totally, were all interested in the qualities that were predicted to be important to the relationship building process in the dialogue space. For the most part, there

was an overwhelmingly positive response to those statements on the survey, with the one exception of interacting outside the dialogue space that was referenced earlier in this chapter. The three statements within the survey surrounding feelings of equality and the giving and receiving of respect were answered with an average of above 4.5/5. Four other statements were answered on average above 4/5. Those statements inquired about experiencing positive emotions, the ability to empathize, the ability to listen, and the feeling of being listened to. These mirror the responses that were mentioned by more than 33% of those interviewees. The final two statements that had tallied averages of less than 4/5, aside from the one previously mentioned, were about level of personal sharing and changing perceptions of the other. When shown the statement “I was able to reach a deeper level of personal sharing with my group,” the average out of thirty five responses was a 3.85, while the statement about changing perceptions of the other was slightly lower at an average of 3.57.

The combination of survey results and interviewee responses confirming that some type of relationship was built leads even further to the question of what type of relationships it was. First of all, before that question is addressed, many interviewees commented on the seven week period being a very short amount of time to build a relationship, even though they felt like it was successful in this space. This leads to the point that as the dialogue progressed, so did the relationships. One participant from a faith dialogue described the process of building relationships in a way consistent with dialogue. That participant suggested that the relationships start off very face value, which has also been stated by others as starting with small talk or at a surface level. Next, by the third or fourth session according to different participants, dialoguers began to take a part in leading the discussion and seemed interested in the topics and willing to ease into conversations smoother. Participants commented that after this point dialogue just

started to happen more naturally. After this moment, the best way to gauge the build of the relationship is “to see ... how personal the stories get and how soon they get that personal” (Interview 7). A facilitator pointed out that this comfort that is gained by most around weeks three and four is the moment where many participants begin challenging each other and working to really learn and grow personally and as a group (Interview 14). Another facilitator suggested that it was almost as if session seven could be the most casual, because the participants have truly figured out how to carry out this spirit of dialogue without much help from the facilitators. They have been able to reach a more comfortable level and develop a stronger relationship with each other throughout the earlier sessions, which enables them to have strong conversations in a more relaxed way at this point (Interview 15). It is important to participants to experience this progression in the relationships that they make over the course of dialogue so that they can truly understand the relationship and articulate their views on how that relationship should be characterized.

Defining Those Relationships

Within the interviews, the results showed that the interviewees felt that there was a significant relationship among those that were in the dialogue space so much so that there was a potential for friendship felt. The survey results on the other hand bring back more even numbers between those that did and those that did not feel a potential for friendship. There were two survey questions specifically about the characterization of the relationship and one open ended question at the end of the survey that touched on the nature of potential friends. These three questions will also be looked at, and then their results will be compared and discussed alongside the interview results. The most basic way to begin defining the relationships is by looking at the two ordinal survey statements inquiring about those relationships.

The first question asked about the nature of the relationship brought back the most negative results. The response to the statement “I was able to form friendships with those in my group” returned an average result of a 2.82 on a scale from one to five. Even though this number is still technically on average above half, respective to the rest of the survey it is the third lowest result of the twenty two statements on a scaled answer. There were six participants that answered one, meaning not at all, to this statement, but the most frequent response was three, meaning sometimes. The second statement on the questionnaire regarding the nature of the relationship inquired about the depth the relationship was able to get to throughout the process. This statement returned an average result of 3.14 meaning that most people felt their relationship only got deep sometimes.

Now, this is the only statement that was judged with different meanings on the scale. When thinking about depth, one can think of its opposite as the surface or surface level interactions. The statement asked “How would you describe the relationships that the dialogue experience helped you form”. The scale numerically here was again one to five, but this stood for surface level, a little deep, sometimes deep, deep, and very deep respectively. The main difference in the answers given with this statement and the previous one, which followed each other in this order on the questionnaire, was the number of 1 answers recorded. Only one participant claimed here that the relationships were only surface level. It was thought that these questions would be closely related in their answers, but it seemed that there would not be as many differences in the one category as there were. This may be a result of the wording of the statement regarding friendships. One participant in particular voiced well the idea that the word friendship was a big word to her. It would not seem possible to her to say that she had formed friendships after only seven weeks, but when friendship potential was discussed, she was much

more open to that idea (Interview 12). Still true for this statement was that three, meaning sometimes deep, was the answer that returned the most results. The breakdown of answers on the one to five scale for each question respectively was {6, 7, 12, 7, and 3} and {1, 8, 15, 7, 4}. The majority of the answers for both questions fell in the middle of the scale which seems to bring a balance back to the answers that were received within the interviews (See Table 2).

Table 2. Nature of Relationships Survey Responses

Responses						
Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Avg.
Key	Not at all	A little	Sometimes	Most of the time	Totally	
"I was able to form friendships with those in my group."	6	7	12	7	3	2.82
Key	Surface Level	A little deep	Sometimes deep	Deep	Very Deep	Avg.
"How would you describe the relationships that the dialogue experience helped you form?"	1	8	15	7	4	3.14

These two statements both only hinted at the main idea of building potential friendships, which perhaps looking back is a shortcoming of the wording itself, but the first open-ended question at the end of the survey allowed the contributor to really focus in on that main idea. The question specifically asked about the potential for friendships with those that were with them in the dialogue space. The overall scheme of answers ended with twenty-two participants, or 68%,

saying yes, they could feel potential friendships, ten participants, or 29%, saying no they could not, and three, or 8%, not completing the question. As is the nature of open-ended questions, no two participants gave the same reasoning for their answers, but their answers have been split into three different categories for those that said yes and three for those that said no. Those that said yes to potential friendships seemed to give reasons that centered on respect, comfort, and outside interaction. Those that answered no focused on the nature of the dialogue space, outside interactions, and fundamental differences. The open-ended questions asked to the survey respondents were similar to those that were asked to the interviewees. The open-ended interview questions elaborated in great detail on those baseline questions asked of the survey respondents.

The main questions that were asked to the interviewees in order to spark conversation on characterizing the relationships that they developed with other participants were the following: Did you feel as if you were becoming friends or that there was a potential friendship building with the other participants? If so, could you give examples of how that process was happening? If not, how would you describe the relationship? This opened the door to the idea of potential friendships within the dialogue space for those participants who were merely thinking of their best friends outside of the dialogues, and for those who did not see that potential to describe whatever relationships it was that they developed with others. At first glance of their responses, twelve participants, or 80%, claimed that there was a potential for friendship within the space. Three of those twelve were skeptical and went on to further explain how they may define the relationship differently, but they still agreed with the potential because that did not require the friendship to actually build after the seven weeks. Two participants went farther than the potential for friendship that was suggested to say that they were able to form friendships with those in their groups definitely, and with most if not all participants. A final participant

characterized the relationship differently altogether and said that she felt no potential for friendship even within the space. In the following analysis, different participants' responses will be detailed and thus the different ways to characterize the relationships that are formed within a dialogue process will be examined.

True Friendships

First, there were two participants who believed that true friendships were emerging and had a strong desire to continue to build those relationships in the future. These two participants in particular were also very strong advocates of the role that Facebook played in the building of their relationships. One participant who claimed that the relationship at the end of the dialogue was that of friends said that the participants were able to act as if they were friends from the very first session of the dialogue. The example that suggested that they were still friends that this participant gave was that most of them made a plan to go to the dialogue closing ceremony together. This group also made a Facebook group after completing the dialogue, and the participant mentioned that this group allowed them to plan times to try to get together for a meal or coffee with his peers. There was a desire to know each other in a more informal environment, and this allowed them to become friends and stay in touch after completing the seven weeks (Interview 3). The other participant who was able to become friends with those in the dialogue group is someone who relied heavily on those personal characteristics that made those people appealing to her in particular and not just strong participants in dialogue. She spoke a lot about humor and maturity levels amongst the participants. The one interesting thing that this participant noted that will be brought up in the final section of this chapter is that her group did not seem to go as deep into the dialogue experience as she thought they could have or should have. Even though this person claimed to know a lot about the other participants "non-dialogue

personality,” the whole experience seemed to come up a little short for this person (Interview 9). Facebook was definitely the common link in the comments that these participants made about becoming friends with those in their group, but there may be more merit in the friendship potentials that were reached within the space instead of just the Facebook friend status that was reached for these participants.

Potential Friendships

There were a few different ways that other participants explained the potential for friendship that was felt within their dialogue sessions. One of the most obvious reasons that was suggested for feeling a potential for friendship was the size of the group. The group size was so small that it allowed the participants to grow closer to one another even more so than in previous dialogues. One participant spoke of being in a small dialogue group that also did a number of small group activities. In these small group activities, he was able to connect with almost every participant in the group in a deeper way, which carried over strongly into the group as a whole. The small nature of the group allowed everyone to really feel that potential for friendship or that relationship building according to this participant (Interview 11). Another participant said that the small nature of the group simply helped foster relationships quicker, because people had to talk more since there were not a lot of people in the group (Interview 7). This is very much in line with the comment that another participant made about feeling a bond between members in the group. It seemed that those who were in smaller groups were able to develop bonds quicker, but that did not mean that other groups did not experience a bond between participants. Another similarity between the comments from this participant and previous comments about size helping foster relationships is that this participant who felt a bond claims that that bond was developed with each individual and not just with the group (Interview 8). This is similar to the construction

that strong relationships were built when interacting in small group or one on one situations. A facilitator of a faith dialogue agreed also that relationships will develop easier within a smaller group, but he also weighed in on the reason behind potential friendships building in a dialogue setting. This facilitator noted that there is potential in the space because “you’re sharing such personal things, it’s like the hard part is out of the way... you know all these things about me and you still like me ...so I have nothing to hide” (Interview 15).

The potential in the space was truly described and recognized in ways similar to hypothesized, but some interviewees wanted to make note that it was not the same potential that builds in a normal relationship. One participant noted that it is a somewhat forced relationship on one hand. She spoke of normal relationships starting on a willing basis, while dialogical relationships form as people are placed in a room and expected to form a relationship in order to dive as deep into the topic as they would like. Therefore, the relationships formed differently but they ended up reaching that level of comfort that enabled people to build more natural relationships (Interview 1). Another participant also agreed unknowingly with this statement by saying that the relationships sometimes start as only intentional dialogical relations (Interview 2). Finally, one participant and one facilitator commented on this definite potential within the space but the unlikelihood of it developing. The participant commented that the potential was very strong for friendship, but she would not be pursuing it because she was not a student at American University, and therefore was not in a setting convenient to her for developing that potential (Interview 4). Finally, a facilitator detailed something that her participants said to explain the difference in the friendship potential and the act of actually becoming friends afterwards. Some of these particular participants realized that the conversations had in dialogue are not conversations that they would have just with their friends. Part of the reason they enjoy coming

to dialogue is because they do not have these conversations anywhere else, but this is also part of the reason that it may be complicated to intertwine outside friends with dialogue friends. These personal things that are being shared could be things that participants would not be interested in outside friends knowing about them (Interview 13).

As mentioned above, there were twenty-two participants who felt the potential for friendship within the space provided by dialogue. Similar to the interviewees, there were a few participants who were skeptical of the likelihood of these friendships manifesting outside of the space. Five survey takers mentioned something to the effect of people lead different lives and/or they may not cross paths outside of this space. One of those five also mentioned that this was a different situation because of the things that people knew about one another, so that participant was not sure of how the relationship would manifest outside of the space. Overall though, people gave three reasons that they were able to feel a potential for friendship within the dialogue space. One of these reasons was respect. A female participant mentioned that she felt respect as she would in the beginning stages of any relationship and that made her feel the potential. This participant was one of four that really emphasized a connection between respect and friendship. Another reason given by those that completed the survey was reaching some form of comfort with their peers. This was mentioned in a few different ways, as some participants specifically mentioned being comfortable with others while some stated that they enjoyed the connection felt or appreciated the deep personal sharing. Others talked about the space that the dialogue experience provided and how they did not feel judged. Finally, a participant mentioned how easy it is to build a relationship when you have such a deep understanding of another person. The final category that was talked about was outside connections. At the beginning of this question's analysis, it was mentioned that some were skeptical of the friendship really building

because it was not likely that there would be more outside interactions with those people, but others saw the opposite point here. Some mentioned that they were in the same school as some of their peers in the dialogue and would now definitely be able to interact easier with them when they saw them around.

Skeptics and Their Reasoning

There were four people altogether, three participants and one facilitator, who admitted to a potential for friendship, but were skeptical of its hold on participants once the dialogue was over. One reason that a specific participant was skeptical of the friendship potential was because of the fundamental differences in ideals some of the people in that group shared. For this reason, this participant would not have a desire to become friends outside of the space with some peers, and the comment suggested that the feeling would be mutual (Interview 12). Another participant who came into the situation as what she described as an outsider claimed that she could see the potential but that was never her intent within the dialogue process, so she would not be carrying that potential through. In her view, peers in the dialogue group were more colleagues with equal respect as opposed to friends, because she was not looking for anything more out of the relationship (Interview 5). Another participant was skeptical of using the term potential friends, because she was unsure that enough time had passed in the relationship to warrant that term. She described the participants as her close acquaintances, but said that if the dialogue or even just the relationships were to continue, she could see a potential for friendship grow stronger (Interview 10). Finally, a facilitator commented that potential for friendships are there, but because it is a different experience, not everyone will follow through on those potentials. This facilitator commented that it was definitely apparent within her group that some participants were going to

try to continue to build the relationship while others were not (Interview 14). This skepticism will also be seen in later discussions referencing the survey results.

Finally, there was one participant who said that she did not see a potential for friendship at all. She described the relationship as one that you would have with team members with whom you were working on a project. This participant stated that the relationship was not even as close as that of a relationship with a colleague. The one thing that this participant acknowledged that was similar to other participants is that this relationship developed over time no matter what type of relationship it was. It was said that “[the relationship] gets to more and more as it [progresses]; when they shared different personal experience(s) I could understand where that perspective was coming from [and] how they found their ideas” (Interview 6). Now this participant had a few specific reasons as to why the friendship potential was not there. This person focused a lot on the fact that she was not a student like most of the other participants. There was also talk of this participant as an outsider to the group. It seemed that this comment brought together the fact that she wasn’t a student with the fact that she did not study dialogue and was of a different cultural background than the other participants. As can be seen here, finding commonalities with other participants can make or break the potential for friendship within the space. A couple of participants brought up the word outsider, so it will be explored a bit later in this chapter, but this participant is the only one who felt that it kept her from feeling any type of friendship potential at all.

People gave a variety of reasons to explain why they felt blocked from forming potential friendships. Some of these reasons involved the actual physical setting of the dialogue. First, a few people stated that there was no chance that they would see these people again so there was no friendship potential from the beginning, and another participant claimed that the chances were

just very low and that deterred the friendships for them. Next, three participants talked about how dialogue was not really a space for friends, saying it is a serious event not a social one. Finally, interviewees stated that the people in the space were fellow dialoguers rather than people that participants were looking to become friends with.

The next cluster of reasons people gave as blockers to potential friendship was about the people within the space and specifically their fundamentally different beliefs. The smallest of these differences mentioned was age whereas other participants simply stated that they did not agree with anything the others had to say. When participants pointed out the differences, it showed how concrete their feelings were on not being friends with other participants. One statement from a female participant was as straight-forward as “I do not agree with their ethics”. Another factor that has already been brought up multiple times is the affect that being an outsider has on people’s outlook of the dialogue. One female stated that because she was an outsider she “never went in thinking about forming relationships or forming friendships” (Interview 5). Two other participants who identified themselves as outsiders, which they considered a person that does not attend classes at American University, stated that it was not something that was meant to form friendships. One claimed that this was because this person was a staff member who had completely different views as the other peers in that group did, and another focused on the fact that because they were not going to be around they and others looked at themselves as just a member of the dialogue group.

There were also three qualities that were mentioned that have not been brought up by other interviewees. These qualities that were friendship inhibitors to some participants were humor, a small feeling of judgment, and a sense that people were being reserved. Humor was said to stunt the growth of the dialogue because there could not be an air of seriousness to have a

deep relationship, and a sense of being judged also kept a participant from feeling comfortable enough to engage in a deep dialogue.

Finally, the most mentioned reason for a hesitancy to form dialogue relationships and then further friendship relationships was because that person already had another friend in the room. One interviewee especially talked about the way that a previous relationship affected the group dynamic within that dialogue space. This participant stated that there were two other participants in her dialogue space who were friends way before the dialogue began. At first this did not seem to be a problem, but when it was time for the dialogue to go to a deeper level, the two friends stated that they did not want to enter into that deep of a discussion because they did not want to risk their friendship by saying something that could possibly be offensive to the other (Interview 12). Another participant mentioned similar troubles in her group and had this to say: “I think it helped them at first but then maybe because they had that friendship they had this outside external relationship [and] it might have held them back when we started to talk about deeper things” (Interview 8). Another person ended their discussion about having friends in the dialogue space by saying that they feel that the seven week dialogue model is best for strangers (Interview 9). When interviewing the facilitators about this phenomenon that participants were mentioning, one facilitator acknowledged that she had been a part of dialogues where friends were inside the group, but it only affected one dialogue and not the other. She stated that it is more about how the people approach the dialogue than about the simple fact that they were friends beforehand (Interview 14). Finally, one facilitator mentioned that he cautions against it, but ultimately just tries to help the people realize in the beginning the strain that it may put on their relationship, so they can decide early if dialogue is something they both want to be a part of.

Conclusions with Regard to Relationship Building

Dialogue has proven to be a successful tool for building relationships and the mere contact between participants is not what they turned to as the foundation of the relationships. The relationships that are built within dialogue reach different levels for different people and that can depend on the space, the other people in the space with them, and their attitude towards the space. Some key tools for building relationships in dialogues are comfort, sharing, understanding dialogue, finding commonalities, trusting, and participating in the small group activities. Surprisingly enough, Facebook was also an important factor for some in the process of building these deep connections that may last on after the dialogues are over. Even though there were many factors encumbering the dialogue, for these seven week dialogues, coming in as an outsider hindered the building of a relationship the most if a person had that attitude approaching it. Finally, participating in the dialogue with a friend can also limit the depth that the space can feel, which can truly limit the whole experience. Friendship potentials also definitely exist as a type of relationship built within this space. Two-thirds of those surveyed and over ninety percent of those interviewed saw the potential for friendship within their space. In the following chapters, learning will be analyzed by itself just as relationship building has been analyzed here, and then there will be an analysis of if the two fit together and how. Following those analyses the conclusions of each chapter will be explored more in depth to discover the true conclusions of the research.

CHAPTER 5

THE LEARNING PROCESS

The other central idea to this research is that dialogue allows each participant to go through some sort of learning process of their own, discussed in much of the evaluation literature as a development of understanding. This learning process is not traditional or defined by academic learning, but it does not have to be wholly a personal experience either. Each person's learning process will be unique to them, but it is thought that in a strong dialogue each participant will in fact learn from some aspect of the situation. One of the main ideas behind dialogue as a tool for conflict resolution or even just personal growth is that when a person is in a situation that causes them to open their minds, they will experience and learn things that they have not been able to before.

With the topics that are used in the DDG groups, this research suggests that most of the learning is personal, with intellectual and academic learning interspersed. From previous experience with DDG, personal learning is what an individual is able to learn about themselves and what they think or feel about certain identity issues, especially ones that they may not have thought about often or ever before. Each DDG dialogue group revolves around a topic of identity that can be inherently controversial, or two identity issues that could clash with each other. Even though the model of DDG is to encourage participants to share personal experiences, rather than focus on content, some content may be used which is where some academic learning could take place. Also, the interest in dialogue on the American University campus allows some individuals to consider learning about the dialogue process academic purposes. Prefacing some of the interviewee's responses, there seemed to be some learning that took place in the middle of the personal and academic realm about problem-solving techniques or general ways to communicate that will be described as intellectual learning for this case. The nature of the topics picked by

DDG for their dialogue groups encourages participants to learn in whichever way they find helpful to getting the most out of their experience.

The literature on evaluating dialogue pointed out a few key qualities present in a situation when someone is learning, which became the basis for the survey and interview questions asked around the topic. “Diversity and Higher Education” in particular is an article that discusses what the hoped learning outcomes should be in more diverse learning settings, especially where intergroup contact is involved. The article talks about the development of active thinking skills, intellectual engagement, understanding identity, and cognitive development, or learning from questioning knowledge, and active engagement in these learning environments (Gurin, P. 334). Combining past dialogue experience with the points dissected in the aforementioned article produced this list of qualities: questioning prior knowledge, active thinking and engagement, considering others’ views, building the capacity to perceive differences, understanding the other, gaining general knowledge, building problem-solving skills, thinking critically about topics, and reducing prejudices towards others. Specific points pulled out to encourage open-ended responses throughout the interviews were questioning prior knowledge, changing views around differences, similarities, or perceptions of the other, and a general question asking them to describe their learning experience. Because the literature and this research places emphasis on the role of the intergroup contact, the interviewees were also asked about the role that others played in their learning experience.

This chapter will follow a similar progression to the previous chapter in terms of analyzing first the interviewee’s remarks and then the survey results. Each quality deemed important to a participants learning process within the interviews will be discussed, with more discussion given to those that were more frequently stated within interviews. Then the effects of

the contact with those specific to their group will be analyzed, followed by a more in depth analysis of the self-proclaimed learning experiences that participants had. The survey results will be intertwined with each section of the analysis and main conclusions will be drawn at the end to preface the upcoming analysis of the answers given to the main research question of the correlation between the relationships and the learning.

Factors of Learning in the Dialogue Process

It is definitely true that people learn in all different ways, and that qualities concerning how people learn do not always roll off their tongue as easily as ways that they build relationships. With this in mind, the focus of this section of the chapter will be on those qualities and characteristics of the interactions that did stand out to dialogue participants as a factor in their learning process. After discussing all of those characteristics felt by interviewees, the results of the surveys will be analyzed and compared to that of the interviews. Within the research, all participants indicated that they were able to experience some type of learning, so the real questions will become what type of learning experience was it and how did participants affect that experience. First, interviewees' responses to open-ended questions concerning learning will shed light on the ways learning can occur in a dialogue setting. Unlike the responses to open-ended questions on relationship building, there were not endless suggestions as to how learning occurs, and most participants only named two suggestions. There were eight things suggested by interviewees that helped their learning process along throughout the dialogue. The following analysis will split those eight up into pairs to be looked at in further detail before the survey results are brought into the analysis (See Table 3 on the following page).

Table 3. Learning Factors Mentioned by Interviewees

Factor	Number of Interviewees Mentioned
Having belief challenged by another	6
Questioning prior beliefs	5
Interacting with someone from a new group	3
Clarifying moments	3
Considering others perspectives	2
Learning from another	2
Seeing someone who doesn't fit a stereotype	2
Being inquisitive	1

Questioning and Considering

The first pair of suggestions on how learning occurred in the dialogue space were questioning prior beliefs and, somewhat similar to that, considering others perspectives. Five participants gave a significant amount of credit in their learning process to questioning prior beliefs. Participant one chose to share that the experience left her confused about her beliefs because she realized that other people had formulated their beliefs off of many more experiences than she felt that she had had in her life. Another participant in a race and politics dialogue came into the environment with the idea that these two pieces would not fit together in a dialogue. The structure of the dialogue and topics within it caused that belief to be questioned and eventually shifted into the direction of realizing that these two topics are definitely related. Furthermore, this person stated, "I think by being able to force myself to say it's not just [that] politics is over here and race is over here, it also ... made me look at the other things and how they might be

connected, like how [are] religion and politics connected or religion and race connected” (Participant 5). Questioning one prior belief in dialogue led this person to realize that there may be some other beliefs in need of questioning as well. The strongest example of this questioning was received through a participant who shared in a religious dialogue. This particular participant mentioned that coming into the dialogue that person self-identified as agnostic and did not feel that religion could be easily lived throughout daily life. The facilitators challenged the participants to bring an object to the dialogue that represented them religiously, and when someone that this participant had not thought of as being religious brought in a pieta statute, the inner questioning began. Specifically this participant said, “I was surprised that you can live your life sort of inconspicuously and still have this deep personal spiritual connection” (Participant 10). As this person was explaining this moment, it was obvious the impact that this realization had on this person religiously during the dialogue. The initial belief that you cannot live inconspicuously and be religious was questioned to the point that this person stated “maybe it would be helpful in my life and I could still live the same way I do now” (Participant 10).

The other part of this questioning process is considering others’ beliefs to the point where you may not specifically question your beliefs, but better understand where your own beliefs come from by considering points made by others. One facilitator interviewed summarized what she saw happening between her participants as just that: “they explore why they think that way [and] how... they [got] to where they are, so I think a big part of dialogue is becoming more self-aware” (Participant 15). When participants are able to share stories and question each other, it allows each person to go through an internal process of becoming self-aware by considering what others say and believe. The facilitator also mentioned that in addition to this process of becoming self-aware, some participants chose to explore new lifestyles or beliefs once they have

considered another's perspective. Finally, within this facilitator's interview, the following verbs were used that really well defined this process of considering and questioning:

“reflecting...thinking...unpacking...wondering and exploring” (Participant 15). A participant's example of this consideration and giving validity to considering others opinions came from an interviewee who had participated in a gender dialogue. This person began to really appreciate considering others' perspectives as it was noticed how differently each person believed. The interviewee said in a surprised tone, “however it turns out that people are really different; [it] turns out that I really was surprised at what I was hearing [and] I was really surprised at how unique everyone's experiences had been,” (Participant 2). Especially when this was noticed concerning the other gender in the room, the participant was really able to learn from considering each unique opinion.

Learning from Another

The next pair of suggestions regarding the learning process within the dialogue space builds off of the first two as they are learning from a participant whom you obviously identify as the other and having a belief specifically challenged by another participant. Even though there is a lot of overlap between considering other's perspectives and learning from someone that you particularly identify as the other, there are also specific instances that can be pointed out to show further learning experiences among dialogue participants from both perspectives. A facilitator working with a gender group noticed many times that the different genders were very separated in opinions, which allowed them to easily learn from each other. During the final sessions of dialogue, facilitators usually ask participants to begin reflecting on the process, and this facilitator remembered this regarding a statement a participant made about learning from interacting with the other: “one of the women in our group mentioned that she had appreciated

that the men were so forthcoming because she hadn't thought about the way men struggle with gender identity the same way that women do" (Participant 14). In this case, the other gender within the room really helped one woman to understand the other better and be able to learn more from that other identity. Another way participants talked about learning from the other was through identifying things that contradicted something that they thought they had learned through the media, such as dispelling something from a television show. One international participant spoke about how the concept of dating in America is portrayed in films versus how fellow dialoguers explained it happening in reality. Even though this person did not agree with the way things were explained, it was still made clearer and provided a learning experience that person may not have had otherwise (Participant 6). Participant 8 came into the interview expressing similar thoughts on learning from the other that went past something that was seen on television. The context of this dialogue was faith, and the participant expressed having limited knowledge of another religion, particularly Islam, based solely on what this person had seen on television before. Within the dialogue, a person of Islamic faith expressed a lot of views that the interviewee had never heard before with the limited previous exposure to the Islamic faith. Particularly there was mention of ways that women can in fact use the religion to feel empowered which really challenged the way this participant previously thought women in the Islamic faith would feel (Participant 8).

The following types of exchanges are what dialogue is truly about according to Participant 1. When asked about considering others' opinions and being challenged by others, this person responded "yes, I think that's kind of ...the whole point of the process and... in my mind it challenged some prior assumptions about different experiences that people had" (Participant 1). The next two examples are some of the most dialogical examples heard within

these interview segments. First, during a dialogue surrounding culture, one participant seemed to think that dialogue could not have a strong effect in life because it was not seen as academic by this participant, but then that participant recounted this experience that occurred within a discussion on the formation of friendships.

“I thought why we make friendship is a very interesting question like of course we generally make friends with the people who are comfortable with us, we love to hang out with them; and then I thought it’s... unconditional, so when that aspect was challenged ... they say like that’s the condition it’s the common interest common background and all so yea that left me with a lot of questions that particular session and its really... very thought provoking” (Participant 3).

While this interviewee was speaking about this dialogical moment, it was clear that there was still a lot of thought and activity going on within this person’s mind about the true reasons why friendships are born or maintained (Participant 3). The final example revolves around a conversation within a politics dialogue that specifically challenged what seemed to be one person’s staunch negative opinion of a particular politician of another race. A participant in a race and politics dialogue admitted to forming a negative opinion of a politician through harsh media portrayals and without looking for additional information. It just so happened that another participant within the dialogue group had witnessed a talk at a high school from this individual, and saw the positive impact that this politician had on young impressionable youth that were disadvantaged for reasons of race and/or socio-economic status. The account of this event that the other participant was able to give allowed this participant to see that people are not always what the media makes them out to be. It allowed another side of this politician who was never respected by this particular participant to be shown that encouraged this participant to never take any opinion based on what is heard in the media without looking into it for additional information. Even though this participants political beliefs did not change to align with those of the politician, his view on the politician’s ability to impact lives in a positive manner did,

building a newfound respect for the person that was previously given no credit as a politician by this participant (Participant 11). Having beliefs challenged by others may not completely change the belief set that anyone holds, but it can have an impact on the ways that others open their minds to new opinions and form new opinions in the future.

Clarifying Moments

This belief system change is a gradual process of opening one's mind to new opinions, but other ways to come upon new opinions can happen in mere moments, specifically through being inquisitive or simply having a moment of clarity. Questioning is a key facet of dialogue that leads to the open conversations that building relationships through dialogue relies on. This can lead to what some considered moments of clarity when a light bulb finally went off to clarify to themselves how they feel or to clarify why others could feel the way that they do. One participant looks at dialogue through a particularly inquisitive lens and was the only interviewee that expressed these opinions about learning in dialogue. This person talked about listening to other dialogue participants, learning about their own experiences, and helping them through their experiences by being inquisitive during discussions. Dialogue, and especially the Dialogue Development Group at American University, manifests itself to this participant as an avenue to look within and ask questions like 'what do I believe' and 'why do I believe that'. Even though this person does not necessarily learn new things regarding these questions internally, it is important to learn about how other people process experiences and information. Learning about how others work through experiences can provide people with small moments of clarity concerning other ways that they could approach problems in their own lives. This inquisitive nature also works to help others reach that moment of clarity in their own individual journeys, which is participant 7's personal favorite part of dialogue (Participant 7).

Moments of clarity come for different reasons to different participants from experiencing something for the first time to hearing something powerful from a member of ‘the other’. A participant from a sexuality dialogue stated that she was able to have a moment of clarity because she interacted with a particular ‘other’ for the first time in this dialogue group. That allowed her to learn from the new ideas that she heard from this participant that were ideas she had never been exposed to before (Participant 6). These moments of clarity also manifested themselves as eye-opening, thought-provoking, and perspective-changing moments in any dialogue group that had an immediate impact on any participant involved. One person who participated in the dialogue on politics described the experience as one that opened her eyes to “more different sides of the debate. I didn’t really understand either side so hearing perspectives from all different sides ... was very interesting to me” (Participant 1). For this person, there was an assumption from the beginning around who would be easier to identify with in the group, and the moments that dispelled those assumptions were part of the clarifying process for this participant. Breaking down assumptions and listening to each participant individually without stereotyping were stated as reasons behind being open to experiencing these moments within the dialogue climate (Participant 1).

The final interview to cite within this section involves an eye opening process around racial identities. This interaction is one of the most successful stories heard throughout interviews of learning to change their opinion of the other in a positive way. The initial view of race that this person held within the dialogue space involved thinking of race without truly considering how it could affect people. “I sort of figure that race is just as simple as the color of your skin; it’s your genetic makeup; its important because you need to describe a person and what they look like, and other than that it’s not important” (Participant 11). This participant

spoke about the impact of the conversations within the dialogue and finally conveyed this new outlook on race:

“I realized that whether for better or for worse, race is important and race does matter to people and to groups of people; no matter how hard you try to think otherwise, race really does play an important role in people’s lives, how they think of the world, and how it shapes them as people; it was very eye opening because I sort of felt that race was, well that you had more freedom to opt out of these stereotypes, more freedom to sort of opt out of the whole structures of race so to speak, but I realized that it’s not so easy and it’s a lot more complicated than I thought.”

This person continued to speak throughout the interview on the impact that dialogue truly had, and continued to detail examples of how the interactions within the group changed his thinking on stereotypes and their impact on people of different racial backgrounds. This type of experience epitomizes the experience that authors Miller and Donner hoped that participants would have in race dialogues. These moments of clarity that come from dialogue are miraculous to witness and will tie in tremendously to the discussion to come on the way these relationships and learning experiences work together within dialogue.

Dispelling Stereotypes

The final pair of suggestions regarding how the learning process occurred involved seeing someone that does not fit a normal stereotype and meeting or interacting with someone who represented a group of people that is new to someone. Participant three had a stereotype dispelled when there was an interaction with a Saudi Arabian woman that did not fit the normal portrayal this person knew about previously. This person mentioned that a Saudi Arabian woman wore her hijab regularly, which led him to believe certain things about her beliefs. When she began to express her views, the participant noticed that she was “very liberal and very dynamic, and...she completely changed [my] view point about those cultures” (Participant 3). A participant in another dialogue mentioned meeting someone that dispelled a stereotype and

considered themselves something that this person had never encountered before: a cultural Muslim. This participant was able to learn about how a person could follow the cultural practices of the Islamic faith without following the spiritual foundations (Participant 4). Another participant learned a lot as well about different religions. This person in a faith dialogue had many stereotypes about different religions and was able to dispel many of those, especially regarding those religions that were represented within the dialogue group. Seeing things from others' perspectives can allow people to see their own stereotypes and recognize how these affect their views on others (Participant 12).

Another participant had similar experiences when interacting with those of different sexualities. At first, this particular person did not think there would be any similarities with the other in the dialogue and could not truly understand where the other was coming from. As the dialogue went on, a humanization process happened between participants and similarities were able to be seen and bonds were able to be formed over conversations that made this participant realize that the other is just another person with trials and joys just like you. "I think that when they started talking and I started talking, and we both sort of stopped [stereotyping], they didn't think of me as doing wrong and I didn't think of them as doing wrong anymore, and I think that might just be the purpose of dialogue" (Participant 10). This person continued to talk about getting to know those that were considered the other and said that "after talking,... you just sort of start to understand people, ... forget about their stereotype, ... [and] they're just people and you're just talking" (Participant 10). Lastly, this process of humanizing the other was also talked about by a dialogue participant from the politics sessions. When asked about how views of the other can be changed, this interviewee responded: "I think that when you hear peoples stories of how they grew up and where they came from, it makes them less the other and more just a

person; so ... now [I] have a face and a person I know to be them, so they're not really the other anymore, they're just somebody you know" (Participant 5). This humanizing effect that dialogue can have will be detailed further with the closing thoughts of what types of learning are experienced as many interviewees described just this response again.

Questionnaire Responses

Along with these interview responses, there were also responses to the questionnaires that were indicative of other facets to learning within the dialogue. These questionnaire responses are separated in this section because of the differences in the responses that open-ended surveys elicited from those questions that were studied through the surveys. Also, since the previous interview responses were generated without provocation, those answers are given more weight in this part of the study. Finally, it is to juxtapose the interview answers with the survey answers to see if any will overlap as timeless qualities. The facets to be listed here will be broken down into three groupings; those that are positive but not brought up by interviewees, those that are positive and mentioned by interviewees, and those that were not mentioned and were not responded too well within the surveys (See Table 4 at the conclusion of this section). First, four survey statements elicited very positive responses from dialogue participants. These statements acknowledged the role of engaging in the conversation, building capacities to see similarities and differences, gaining general knowledge, and understanding peoples' differences. Looking at the factors that were brought up within the interviews, it seems that these four actions would be happening before the deeper learning that was described in the interviews. On the same scale of one to five mentioned previously, all of these were positively answered averaging above four except for gaining general knowledge which averaged 3.97. In this grouping, understanding differences was the most helpful to those surveyed and averaged a score of 4.34. Next, three

other survey statements were answered overwhelmingly positive and were mentioned by multiple participants in their open-ended interview process. Those three things were active thinking, thinking critically and considering others points of view. These statements brought average responses of 4.22, 4.28, and 4.37 respectively, accounting for all but one of the highest averages.

Another statement that was mentioned by interviewees still garnered a strong average response of 3.77, but seemed to be less important all around. This statement involved questioning prior knowledge, and some of those interviewed reacted negatively to the wording of that statement because they felt they were firm in their previous beliefs. It seemed that interviewees were more interested in further developing or growing their existing knowledge, so a disconnect in wording could have influenced the responses here. Finally, there were two statements on the questionnaire that received responses below a four, with one being significantly lower than the other. These two statements were also not mentioned specifically by the interviewees. The first statement is “I was able to reduce my prejudice towards the other”. This statement was responded to with an average of 3.85 out of 5. This statement was the last before the open ended questions on the survey and a main idea of dialogue is that it would be used to reduce prejudice. Ideally, this statement would average at least a four, but there are some things to consider when thinking of this average. One respondent wrote out to the side of the question that there was not much prejudice to reduce and then responded with a two. If people perceive that they were not prejudiced from the beginning, they may answer this question lower on the scale. Positively, no one responded here with a one. The final statement to look into received an average of 2.74, and is one that tried to tap into one of the more practical skills that can be developed or noticed through dialogue if someone is searching for that skill in learning:

building problem-solving skills. It is hoped that problem-solving skills could be honed through dialoguing with others. This could mean one of two things; either, identity issues are not really being resolved in dialogue, or building problem-solving skills is being overlooked as relationship building is inherently reducing the problem.

Table 4. Facets of Learning Prompted by the Questionnaire

	Quality	Average Response from those Surveyed
Qualities that are positive but not mentioned by interviewees	Engaging in the conversation	4.08
	Building capacities to see similarities and differences	4.05
	Gaining general knowledge	3.97
	Understanding peoples' differences	4.34
Qualities that are positive and mentioned by interviewees	Active thinking	4.22
	Thinking Critically	4.28
	Considering others' points of view	4.37
Qualities that were responded to as positively as previous qualities and were not mentioned by interviewees	Questioning prior knowledge	3.77
	Reducing prejudice towards the other	3.85
	Building problem-solving skills	2.74

Note: All averages given from a 1-5 scale with 5 being the most positive response.

Participants Effect on the Learning Process

After clarifying their factors to learning, participants were asked if the people in the group with them had anything to do with the ways they were able to learn or the experience they had. This question also begins to touch on the correlation between people, relationships, and

learning. The two extreme thoughts within this question were posed as either saying that participants are everything to the dialogue or that a person would have had this type of learning experience no matter what. Thirteen of fifteen interviewees, or 86%, responded that participants really do matter, but gave varying degrees to which this impacted their learning experience in the dialogue. The other two participants did not answer the question at all; one continued to give examples of interactions but did not explicitly answer the question and an answer will not be inferred, and the other participant's interview had to be cut short for reasons not to be named here. So, all that answered the question understood the importance of people within the dialogue space, but the responses divided into two main camps after this initial point of agreement. One group of answers sticks to the idea that participants, being these particular participants in the dialogue with them, were everything to the dialogue. The other main idea is that yes participants are everything, but that you would have some type of transformative learning experience no matter who those specific participants were. A final claim was made that participants should be more diverse because they are so imperative to the situation. Interviewees made valid claims for each groups of thought and those details will be provided here.

One idea put forth by interviewees is that participants, being those particular individuals within the group, are everything. These individuals feel that the experience could not have been anything close to what it turned out to be if even just one person was different. One participant in a dialogue on religion stated specifically that she "wouldn't have learned anything if [she] didn't have their perceptions and their views on things" (Participant 10). The views of others helped this particular dialoguer to challenge the views that she held when she entered the conversation. It was the differences that were apparent in these individuals that helped her learn about herself. Along these same lines, another participant claimed that the experience would have been

different if even just one person would have been different. The personal experiences of those that were in this dialogue group really affected this participant in a way that might not have been as powerful if someone in the group were different (Participant 11). Another person stated how important each person's opinions were by talking about how each person left a new thought or way of thinking unique to the story or experience that was conveyed by that particular individual in the group. If this had been different in any way, the experience would have been vastly different (Participant 3). In all, five participants shared this view that the learning experience would have been completely different and may have not happened at all without the specific participants that completed the dialogue process with them.

Another group of interviewees shared the idea that the participant did impact what was taken from the dialogue, but having different participants would not have prevented a learning experience. Rather, this group of people felt that the learning would have just been different based on the different experiences that other participants would hold. One dialoguer gave a strong response to why this would be the case when the following was stated in her interview: "if you decided to go to the interfaith one, it's because you want to have those discussions. I don't feel like it was because of the people; it was more like because of the space, because that was the intention of the space, and I assume that is the intention of the people when they go there" (Participant 12). Another participant from a gender dialogue recognized the role that fellow dialoguers played by recognizing that the dialogue obviously could not have taken place without them, but also could not particularly put a finger on why the experience would have been similar with different people who had different experiences (Participant 4). Overall, six of those interviewed shared this opinion on the people that were within the dialogue space with them. A facilitator summed up the same point of view in a very eloquent way, but the description was still

very similar to others' thoughts that have been shared. This facilitator, who has worked with dialogue for a good number of years now, said "I don't think the learning would have been any more or less profound if different faith traditions or different sexual orientations were in the group; I think it just would have moved in a different direction, but I think it would have been just as profound" (Participant 15).

Finally, there was a group of participants that believed that the learning could actually be more profound if there had been greater diversity in the pool of participants in DDG's dialogues. This is somewhat similar to the first opinion as the participants are more important than the last group of responses referenced made them seem. This group is suggesting that not just anyone can step into a dialogue experience and help it get to a profound place. A participant in a religious dialogue talked about how the others within that group were not as diverse as imagined, and commented further that some people were quick to "excuse themselves from [their religion]" (Participant 9). This person really wanted to be able to talk with and learn from someone who would really stand up for every bit of their religion and believes that if this would have happened, the dialogue would have been greatly more profound. A facilitator who participated in this interview process talked about how the dialogues could have been more successful if the identity groups represented were better balanced, instead of having groups that had an obviously larger number of one particular identity group than the other (Participant 14). Three people brought out the lack of diversity within dialogue participants and truly believed that this had a very large impact on where the dialogue was and was not able to go, leaving out some deep places that could not be found without a more diverse group of peers.

Defining the Learning Experience

Though each participant may not have had the learning experience they imagined or expected for whatever reason, each individual was able to detail a learning experience that this dialogue process was able to make possible for them. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, learning experience will be broken down into three types: personal, academic, and intellectual. The intellectual learning experience will be talked about first which will cover those that stated that they learned things about other cultures, identities, etc, or those that learned how to see differences clearly or pay attention to things such as group dynamics. The academic learning experience will then be looked at which was described by three participants. This experience involves learning about something that they would use in their studies which in this scenario means most likely learning about the dialogue process as a tool for conflict resolution. Finally, the personal learning experienced will be detailed which eleven of the fifteen participants described feeling at some point in the dialogue. This will refer to the things they were able to learn about themselves and their communication skills with others. It will also cover a unique experience that several participants detailed as a process of humanizing the other while learning from and getting to know them personally (See Table 5 below).

After thinking through the process of their learning experience, seven participants came to a conclusion that at least a part of their learning experience was intellectual. Unlike some of the responses that will be seen throughout the academic and personal learning experiences, the experiences that were described here were very different experiences from one another. Intellectual learning seems to be a catch all for those things that were not personal and also did not help a person within their studies. One participant in a dialogue around religion said that there was a lot of intellectual learning because of the different religions that were represented

Table 5. The Learning Experience

Type of Learning	Definition	Number of participants who felt this type
Academic	Learning about something that they could use in their studies at American University or their respective institution.	3
Intellectual	Learning about other cultures, identities, etc.; Learning how to see and understand differences more clearly	7
Personal	Learning about themselves and how they communicate with others; Learning how to humanize and transform opinions of the other.	11

that people were not familiar with before the dialogue. Specifically, Hinduism and Islam were referenced as religions that this person learned intellectually about (Participant 4). A participant that took part in a dialogue speaking on sexuality believed that his learning was intellectual as he learned about other people's decision making processes. This person is one that described dialogue as a place where he could learn about the lives and experiences of others, instead of a place where he could learn about himself. Within the learning experience, this participant used intellectual learning to process others' experiences and take from them what could help him moving forward in communicating with others (Participant 7). Another learning experience that was described as intellectual was the process of learning "how other peoples' perspectives are shaped" (Participant 11). This person participated in a race dialogue and also talked about

learning intellectually about topics within the realm of race such as black or white privilege and other stereotypes that mean more than meets the eye. The facilitators interviewed talked a lot about personal learning experiences, which they considered ideal for dialogue, but one also acknowledged the intellectual learning in the form of learning about other cultures or identities as two other participants talked about (Participant 13).

Facilitators often try to focus only on that transformational learning experience that is supposedly ideal to dialogue, but the same facilitator who recognized intellectual learning also championed academic learning within the dialogue setting. The academic learning spoken about most when mentioned by any of the interviewees was the academic learning about the process of dialogue itself. Learning about dialogue involves picking up on facilitation cues, learning where to involve content in a process reliant on personal experiences, and learning about the usefulness of dialogue by deconstructing the experiences that are witnessed within these dialogue spaces. This facilitator gave this example of someone within the dialogue learning academically: “I think one person was really interested in learning what dialogue could do for people, [and] that was their main draw; they were ... participating as part of a class and learned a lot about how ... the facilitators handled things” (Participant 13). Two other interviewees who were dialogue participants credited this as their main learning experience within the context of dialogue. One participant spoke about how valuable just being in the dialogue space was to learning about the academic process of dialogue. Taking a class about dialogue allows students to learn in the classroom, but participating in a dialogue gave students a practical experience that provided them with appreciated knowledge about the actual implementation of dialogue (Participant 2). A couple of participants also talked about the process of learning to check their assumptions, which is part of the process of dialogue learned about in the classroom setting. Finally, one person who

has been heavily involved with dialogue in the past talked about how she was hoping to get more than an academic experience out of this participation but that was not the case.

“I do so much studying on faith secular stuff that I really wanted the personal experience and it didn’t happen for me; I did...really pick up a lot of learning about the dialogue process, especially because I participated first in what I would say was a really successful dialogue and then participated second in what I would say was not that successful of a dialogue; so I really learned a lot about the process and facilitation, ... what works, what doesn’t work, some things that I’d do differently, or some things they did that I really liked; ...so I appreciate the experience ...[but] if I didn’t plan on working in dialogue ... it might have been a little flat for me” (Participant 9).

It is very important to not brush these opinions under the rug when looking into the learning experiences that those participating in dialogue are able to have. All in all, this participant is conveying the opinion that the academic learning is still useful, but it is not what would help dialogue be successful in changing people and their view of the other.

The learning experience that would help people change their view of the other is the personal learning experience that thankfully so many participants conveyed having. One participant was particularly adamant in saying that his experience was personal and nothing else. Dialogue for this person was not a place for those other types of learning, but was a place where he could look into his own self. This person feels that the learning experience helped him become a better listener, speaker, and more tolerant and broad-minded person all around (Participant 3). A facilitator stated that the participants within the gender dialogue experienced “personal growth” that was very interesting to watch as the participants interacted (Participant 14). Another facilitator described what was meant when he used this personal growth term or talked about a personal learning experience. This person termed it a self-exploration process where dialoguers are given the space to explore facets of themselves that they may not have fully constructed yet, such as sexuality or religious identity, and generalized it for any dialoguer with this statement: “I think what did happen is they explore why they think that way [and] how did

they get to where they are, so I think a big part of dialogue is becoming more self-aware; a lot of participants have said I've never thought about [it or] I've never unpacked these labels or these identities" (Participant 15).

Three interviewees referenced one phrase when speaking about this process of becoming more self-aware or experiencing a personal learning outcome: humanizing the other. This seemed to be the ultimate tool for reducing prejudice in the way that Allport described as necessary. One participant talked about how dialogue is all about personal experience and how hearing the personal experiences of others made them just another person. Seeing the other as just people now helped this person grow internally through realizing that everyone's experiences are different (Participant 5). Another participant started by talking about how she was able to put faces to those that she had considered the other at the beginning of the experience, and then these people who she had previously considered the other were able to help her have a "personal transformation... Going to this dialogue every week helped me kind of analyze where my personal faith was going [and] it was helpful to know that ... we're all in it together" (Participant 8). Finally, for one participant, realizing that she actually could relate to all of these people that she had previously considered the other allowed the doors to open to allow them to help her through her personal learning experience as well. She described that opening experience in this manner: "I think that my learning experience was personal but through the thoughts of others clarifying my own thoughts; it was just a big opening, like before I was like confused and closed off and like 'this is how I feel but I'm not sure about it,' and then I went into this experience and I was like yes, yes, yes, ok here we go!" (Participant 10). The excitement shown by this participant was so refreshing and real; it really epitomized that process of self-exploration and personal growth that the facilitators were trying to describe. If a personal learning experience is

achieved, dialogue can be a thrilling and fascinating process for all participants, and eighty percent of those that were interviewed expressed similar feelings of excitement and learning to participant 10.

The answers to the open-ended survey question regarding learning experience very closely paralleled the answers that interviewees gave. Twelve, or 35%, of those surveyed recorded some type of intellectual experience, two, or 5%, explained an academic experience, twenty, or 57%, detailed a very personal experience, and one, or 3%, did not provide an answer. Those that provided an answer that showed an intellectual experience talked about both the theory behind communicating with other people, such as how to balance introspection and discussion, and learning about the content in whichever dialogue they participated in, whether it be culture, religion, or gender issues just to name a few. The academic learning experiences described were also similar to those that were detailed by interviewees. These answers are of course less specific because they were taking a survey quickly with a small space to detail their answers. The two that answered with academic lessons learned spoke only about figuring out what a structured dialogue should look like and how it should function. Finally, the personal experiences were described in short but powerful statements made by participants recognizing confidence in themselves, the power of listening to the other, and getting to know themselves better than they had been able to do on their own. One specific statement made that was especially powerful and shows the true way dialogue can be successful was made by a survey responder in a religion dialogue who stated this: “I have been reminded that I want to always be in conversation with the other”. Another religion group dialoguer commented that the dialogue and learning was a “precious and unique experience”. Others spoke of hope and how they were reminded that open dialogue can change the minds of others. All of these things give hope to the

dialogue process and will be showcased as the final conclusions are drawn when looking specifically into the research question in the next chapter.

Conclusions with Regard to the Learning Experience

The learning experience that dialogue provides is a completely different type of experience that many may not even consider a prominent form of learning. The most significant and recurring type of learning that happened within the dialogues done through the Dialogue Development Group was a personal form of learning that helped participants learn about themselves by dialoguing with others both similar and different from themselves. This learning also happens in what most people would consider non-traditional ways, or ways that do not come from a classroom or a text book. The sample interviewed from the pool of DDG dialogue participants showed that this learning happens through questioning and challenging oneself and each other, interacting with those unfamiliar to you in productive ways, considering the opinions of others, and allowing one's self to experience the moments of clarity that can come from processing these experiences. The interviews with dialogue participants also brought forth the true importance of the participants. If even one person did not have a good experience because of participants not sharing or interacting in dialogical manners, then that has impact on the overall dialogue. Participants are everything and not just anyone would make a strong dialogue participant. As one facilitator pointed out, experiences can be profound no matter who is in the room, but as other participants noted, not all dialogical experiences are profound. Conclusively, dialogue is not something that would be good for everyone and dialogue will not just elicit open-mindedness in others who are not ready for that experience, but dialogue can be profound and meaningful even if there are different people in the room in a new or additional experience. The learning uncovered will not match the previous experience, but that also just gives dialogue a

longer shelf life to continue to uncover new parts of one's self and one's willingness to be open to others. Finally, though personal learning is the ultimate end goal, especially of the dialogues within DDG, other forms of learning can have their place in the dialogue space as well. Some intellectual learning may come inherently from interacting with those who practice different cultural or religious traditions and academic learning may come, especially if dialogue is something that a person is interested in academically. Personal learning though will be the type of learning that leaves the most lasting impression of hope or change, which dialogue works to achieve through self-awareness and a positive space to interact with those that you have not yet been able to humanize. Therefore, the learning that happens within dialogue, though not typical, has its own place and develops a great sense of self-awareness that may not be built within any other type of interaction.

CHAPTER 6

FINDING THE CORRELATION: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN POTENTIAL FRIENDSHIPS AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Dialogue is the most thought-provoking experience I have ever had on a college campus, and it seemed preposterous to me that this profound experience did not come in a classroom setting. As I reflected on what could have made this space so special and able to produce such a different outcome than that achieved even in classrooms focusing on dialogue, I realized that the safety felt within the setting creates the ability to build relationships with people in a very intimate atmosphere, which can lead to a different feeling than that of classroom spaces. This different feeling seemed to stick throughout the whole experience and grew stronger as people shared experiences and learned things about themselves and each other. Gathering and analyzing this stream of consciousness that I had concerning dialogue led me to first ask whether building relationships in dialogue settings allows for a more personal learning experience and thus an overall more profound experience than one could experience in a classroom that could lead to taking action that is only spoken about or possibly inspired in a classroom. Then, I realized that I may be biased only asking the question in one direction. Some of my peers could feel that the learning within that safe space is what builds some of the lasting relationships that can be formed in dialogue. These thoughts led to asking the question what comes first in the dialogue experience, which was described to many of the interviewees as a chicken and egg question. The essential research question then became whether you feel like for you the fact that you are able to build relationships opens the door for you to have this learning experience, or whether the beginning of the learning experience opens the door for you to build these relationships with the people in your group?

In the previous chapters, the parts of this question have been broken down and detailed separately but this section is all about how past dialogue participants and facilitators have married the two with this one essential question. The fact that relationships were formed and learning was experienced shows the possibility for success that dialogue has, but still doesn't get to why these two separate pieces happen so strongly within the same space. As alluded to previously, the initial hypothesis is that relationships will be built before profound learning can occur within such an intimate space. Part of the idea behind this hypothesis is that relationships can lead to feelings of comfort, and it was hypothesized that these feelings of comfort are what allowed people to share their essential life experiences in order to foster a learning about self through discovery of the group. Another idea is that the dialogue experience and the relationships built within it provide those in the dialogue with an ownership of the process that will encourage them to succeed in reducing prejudices or overcoming differences more than an authority figure asking them to would.

This chapter will detail the answers given by interviewees when directly asked this core research question. The chapter will be divided up into five different sections from this point on, not including a conclusion. First, the opinions of those who believed that relationship building and learning happened simultaneously will be explained. Following the remarks on those that find the process simultaneous, the belief that learning occurs before relationships are built will be explored. The third section of this chapter will look deeper into the initial hypothesis that relationships are built prior to the learning experience. Fourth, the opinions of those that did not see a correlation between the events will be discussed. Finally, the furthering the correlations section will use other interviewee responses relating to timing of events pertaining to relationship building and learning experiences within the dialogue setting and build in my own participant

observation as a dialogue facilitator. Concluding remarks will venture answers to the core question of what comes first in dialogue.

Simultaneous Experiences

Simultaneous experiences were described by four interviewees, or 27%, and three, or 8%. of those answering the open ended question on the survey distributed to each dialogue participant. Two of the interviewees specifically noted that they occur at the same time while the other two seemed to struggle with saying that exactly and instead commented on how the two go hand in hand and are just too hard to separate. After thinking more about the question, the researcher worried that many responses would simply fall in the simultaneous category as a way to escape the question, because this answer could be the typical both answer for those not concerned with thinking through the question, but thankfully that was not the case. Within the survey responses, there was not much explanation from those three that stated that the two happen simultaneously. One survey respondent commented simply on the fact that dialogue seemed to allow that group of people to grow together as the dialogue progressed. This participant in a race dialogue seemed to be saying that both relationships built and learning experienced began and deepened at a similar or the same pace allowing the process to naturally flow and move forward each week. This vague response on flow and growing together leads naturally though into the comments made by those interviewed on the process of relationship building and learning happening simultaneously.

For the first participant interviewed from a race dialogue, a careful thought-through process led to a decision that yes, relationships were being built in a simultaneous process to the overall dialogue experience. She mentioned that coming into the dialogue process she did not think much about the relationship portion of dialogue as she was referring to dialogue as just a

learning experience, or only about the content of the dialogue. After having the experience, the participant said, “I can see how the relationships that we built definitely helped the comfort level which basically can make or break the dialogue” (Participant 1). This person was looking at dialogue very one-dimensionally at the beginning of the experience, but then realized that relationships can be built successfully because of the space that dialogue provides where people can talk, disagree, and clarify in a positive setting. As this interviewee was more surprised about the building of potential friendships than learning within the space, building friendships was elaborated while discussing this final question. It was noted that there did seem to be a lot of potential for friendship between dialoguers, and this participant went a step further to connect this to the example that was set by the facilitators of that particular dialogue. Their relationship became obvious over the weeks and helped participants challenge each other and become closer themselves.

Another two participants, one in a race dialogue and one in a dialogue on gender, arrived at the same conclusion but articulated it in a different way from the previous race participant. As that person saw the potential for learning immediately and realized the potential for relationships in the space, these two participants realized and built off of the potential for both from the first dialogue session. This enabled them to see the two moving hand in hand as they describe it throughout the interview process. The participant from the gender dialogue began relating this information about the two going hand in hand by talking about the fact that dialogue facilitates a trust that helps to build both the relationships and the learning experience equally (Participant 6). The other interviewee explaining this phenomenon of dialogue being about both from the beginning articulated this point of view on why they can and should happen at the same time within the dialogue space:

“I think that you’re at the same time building relationships and learning things; if you go in looking to respect, looking to trust, and looking to learn, I think that’s the best way; I ... think if you went in thinking I’m never going to relate to these people ever, you’re not going to learn anything, and if you went in thinking I’m only going to make my best friend here and not learn anything, it’s not going to work either; so I don’t know if there’s one; I think they kind of happen simultaneously” (Participant 5).

This quote really shows how participants can make the best of the dialogue situation by being open to both avenues of learning about one’s self and each other while participating in dialogue and by trying to successfully balance the two as they move forward together.

This hand in hand description was also used by a facilitator who participated in the interview process with her experience as a facilitator of a gender dialogue in mind. When it comes to personal preferences, this person talked about needing the comfort of a relationship to open up, but within a dialogue space, she feels that it is not about one preceding the other anymore. Thinking within the dialogue model that DDG uses, this facilitator mentioned that sometimes the content can be used as a crutch to relationships not forming immediately, but it is also an important thing that those in the space can find common ground around to help relationships start to build. This person styled the coming together of learning and relationship building around what she called the struggle of dialogue.

“I think that the process of struggling with these issues with each other is what kind of makes you feel connected to the other people; it’s those struggling together and knowing that there are other people that have to challenge themselves, and clarifying those thoughts with each other makes [them] feel connected to other people; I think that’s something that’s common among dialogue groups that doesn’t really happen outside of dialogue” (Participant 14).

Relationship building and learning can happen hand in hand because both have to be apparent as participants struggle through their process of building self-awareness together. These participants put together a strong case for the possibility of these things happening simultaneously within the experiences of some in dialogue.

Learning Before Relationship Building

The school of thought that here acknowledges that learning happens before relationship building works off of the premise that the learning that happens first is about another person or their experiences. This knowledge that is gained about another person can help one build a friendship or relationship with someone else. Of the interviewees and survey responders answering this question, three interviewees, or 20%, and six survey responders, or 17%, were able to detail why it was important for them to be involved in a learning experience about other people first before a relationship could develop. Of those surveyed, two definitively stated that learning came first and then built towards the relationships but did not further explain. Another person surveyed stated that this was definitely true of the way one would build a relationship and did happen within the dialogue space, but this person was unsure whether or not this was the only thing happening to build relationships in dialogue. The other three surveyed were able to define more clearly why they felt learning preceded relationships. One from a religious dialogue described learning and relationships as happening cyclically after initially learning about someone and gaining a desire to become friends with them. Another from a race conversation mentioned that the learning that fosters relationships is the learning about others' personal experiences that are dear to them. Another from a faith dialogue takes this a step further by recognizing causation and not just correlation. Learning about others' personal experiences is what caused this person to make friends in the setting. Those that responded more fully were those that interviewed after the dialogue process, and their views though more detailed greatly paralleled those of the survey respondents.

One person who took part in a gender dialogue spoke about how it was just her preference, but she found that the learning comes first. Once it was established clearly that

learning does come before relationship building for this participant, she went on to described something similar to the cyclical nature that a previous survey responder detailed.

“I think I need to learn about someone or hear their perspective on a topic before I can start to feel some kind of connection with them so in that sense learning would come first, ... but they obviously do complement each other [and after that] ... there’s a real readiness there to have a relationship kind of simultaneously with learning about each other” (Participant 2).

This person also suggested that these connections are what make dialogue so different from any other learning experience, especially the western model of classroom learning. Dialogue is a strong experience for this person because she states that she learns better when she feels more comfortable in the setting, which is what the connections and relationships within dialogue provided for her. The nature of dialogue moving and progressing with learning and relationships is very organic and allowed this participant to notice that dialogue does not always have to follow one specific prescription or plan, but is a fluid process that moves with those in the space allowing both learning and relationships to continuously evolve over time.

Another participant from a race dialogue spoke about the understanding that he gained of people in the first moments of learning about them through hearing their experiences and listening to their views on some of the topics. This person also shared the view that once this initial learning happened, there was some type of constant exchange going on between both building relationships and learning from one another. Developing a better understanding of those within the group began to make this person look at them and hear them out differently than he would have before. This understanding from learning their experiences is what this participant credits for enabling relationship building. “I think just having their experiences incorporated with your own ... helped like we got to know each other better, more intimately and [were] just sort of [able] to foster those relationships; I think definitely sharing view points and experiences definitely had the biggest effect on how we connected” (Participant 11). Each week the

discussion and activities allowed for these connections to continue and more learning occurred while deeper relationships were being built.

Finally, another facilitator weighed in on the question with the opinion that learning comes before relationships. This person logically worked through the question and arrived at the conclusion for the reason that relationships take time to form. As the others pointed out, the learning that occurs first is the learning about other participants, and the relationships can truly form later after the learning has started. This person is the only one within this school of thought that did not present the interaction as a complementary process after the initial learning about other's experiences. This person did mention that the learning can happen throughout the dialogue process, but suggested that each could happen and form on their own after learning about one another began. His assessment of the situation from a lot of his past dialogue experience is here: "my initial reaction is that the learning happens first; you get to know each other you learn about each other and then you form those relationships based on what you learned so I think you learn about each other in sessions one and two in the name activities and the icebreaker activities and the object activity; I didn't see the relationships building until later" (Participant 15). Overall, those that posed the theory that learning occurs first all agreed that the learning that occurs first is about the people in the dialogue space and their experiences. Also, both learning and relationships continue to form throughout the experience, whether in a related or unrelated fashion. The main point to be taken away here is that learning about another person lays the foundation for building relationships into the future.

Relationship Building Before Learning

The school of thought with the most backing amongst interviewees is the idea that relationships are built before learning occurs. Six or 40% of those interviewed expressed that

relationship building occurs first and detailed similar explanations as those who felt that learning occurred first. Along with those six, eight survey responders, or 23%, stated an answer to their open-ended question that suggested relationship building occurring before learning, second only to those fifteen responders that said there was either no correlation or no friends were made. The interesting thing about the responses detailing why it is that relationships occur first is eerily similar to the responses that make a strong case for learning first. A cyclical process will be mentioned again along with explanations of how relationship-type connections happened first before a process of learning about one's self began. With this being the initial hypothesis, each person's point will be looked at in even greater detail starting with the different opinions of those who answered the short answer question at the end of the survey.

Two things that were mentioned often throughout the eight survey answers that agreed that relationships happen before learning were comfort and qualities that centered on respect. Qualities generating from respect allowed people to build those connections that encouraged the beginning of relationships. Interviewees were able to gain respect for others by learning about their personal experiences related to their identity. Other participants pointed out that this mutual building of respect can increase the amount of fun participants had while learning in the dialogue. Another person talked about how respect has the ability to foster relationships, and building off of this point a different participant said that more interesting things were discussed after a respectful relationship was built. Finally, two others talked about how connections and deep understandings between participants built upon respect allowed learning to become possible.

Two interviewees also placed a lot of importance on finding comfort as a means of building relationships. One participant from a dialogue involving cultural identity spoke about

how comfort and friendship were almost interchangeable in this situation. He stated that the comfort definitely was found before learning began, and also the comfort is what kept him coming back to the dialogue to experience and learn more. This comfort that he was able to feel began on the very first session and continued to build as the dialogue experience moved forward. This is similar to the cyclical process that will be mentioned by other participants shortly, but the emphasis from this particular participant was placed on feelings of comfort (Participant 3). Also, another participant from a religious dialogue suggested that relationships came first because of the activities that are done in the first couple weeks of dialogue that are referred to as ice-breakers. The point of these ice-breakers are to give participants a chance to get to know each other, find that level of comfort, and begin to build a relationship. The learning was noticed by this participant when these activities stopped and the group was able to have a serious dialogue for a whole session without much help from the facilitators (Participant 10). Comfort and building relationships do go hand in hand, and it seems really helped people find their place in dialogue and become willing to learn. Some participants even went as far as suggesting that comfort and potential friendships might be interchangeable in the case of dialogue as the potential is built through a safe and comfortable environment.

Two other participants really placed emphasis on the cyclical nature of learning and relationships once one ignited the other, and in this case, the building of relationships is what ignited the process of learning and deepening those relationships. First, a participant in a religious dialogue commented that because of needing to feel that comfort first, for her relationship building does happen first. After that initial comfort is felt, it is very cyclical to this particular person.

“It’s kind of a cyclical thing because ... we had the relationships so we were able to kind of delve into deeper topics and talk about ... more relevant things, and because we talked

about those relevant things we also built a relationship with each other because we went ... deeper within ourselves; it was kind of cyclical but I think it really started with the relationships” (Participant 8).

Instead of using the term cyclical, another participant agreed with this quote by simply stating that after the initial foundation to the relationships was laid, the relationships and learning began to happen simultaneously. This participant was adamant that some sort of relationship though not necessarily a potential friendship had to happen first. “I wouldn’t have learned from someone that I have zero relationship [with]... I needed some kind of relationship, some kind of trust between them in order to learn from them; I needed to want to listen to them; I needed to care about what they were saying enough to want to process it and make my own thoughts about it” (Participant 9). These thoughts about the process being cyclical or simultaneous after the starting catalyst are very similar whether one believes the learning or relationships come first.

Finally, the two other interviewees that described this line of thinking came to the conclusion after much more deliberation than the other interviewees within this section. One particular person from a dialogue on religion began talking about how obviously relationships were first and then learning came after, but while answering the question almost convinced herself of the opposite. Finally, she settled on the opinion that relationships do happen first, but the process of building relationships could actually be defined as learning about one another. She reconciled this by talking about how the personal learning that happens within the space can only be built off of the relationships that are built first. She settled here because “when you build relationships with people, you are more open to learning” (Participant 4). The final person within this camp is a facilitator from a religious dialogue. After engaging in some dialogue about how difficult the question was to answer and saying that it would be something that she continued to think about, she arrived at the answer that the relationships are built first because “they (the participants) learned more once they liked talking to each other about those things, and if they

couldn't get there they probably wouldn't have learned the same things they did" (Participant 13). All of these opinions within the section revolve around the core idea that this group of interviewees needed to reach a comfort level in the form of some type of relationship with their peers before they could engage in the learning that dialogue offers.

No Correlations

Despite the many opinions that acknowledged a correlation between relationships and learning, there were of course interviewees and survey responders who did not see that correlation. Only two of the fifteen interviewees, or 13%, held this opinion, but there were fifteen surveyed, or 43%, who stated that there was no correlation and one that simply answered that he or she did not know. The purpose of this discussion is to ensure that each voice is heard, even those beyond the skeptical. Discussing these opinions will also allow the researcher to have a platform to argue against these opinions and offer any clarifications to the questions that may have influenced the survey answers. These opinions that suggest there is no correlation perhaps offer some of the most important insights as dialogue research goes forward.

As far as those opinions that contended that there was no correlation between relationship building and learning were concerned, they were far more prominent amongst survey responders. Fifteen survey responders were adamant about there not being a connection between these two parts of dialogue, and their reasoning ranged from the thought of making friends to the idea that dialogue is not the place for both of these. A lot of the negative survey responses mentioned something about not being able to make friends with those in their group. This opinion needs to be brought out so that the intent of the question can be ultimately clarified. This study looks into potential friendships, or the beginning of some type of relationship that works because of respect and if it were established in a non-dialogical setting could possibly turn into a friendship. The

purpose of dialogue is definitely not to make friends but it is to allow a transformative experience and relationship to open your mind to new learning. No, an ultimate understanding of the question may not change many survey results, but it could clarify why people thought that the two things could not be related since the answer that one could not be long-term friends with the participants afterwards is not an appropriate response to the actual intention of the question. There were a few other common responses amongst survey responders and those involved intellectualizing the process and keeping a professional atmosphere. DDG does not encourage an intellectualization of the process because an intellectualization of the process could prevent someone from sharing the personal experiences that dialogue revolves around. It does make sense that those who feel this way about the process would see no correlation, and survey respondents were not the only ones with this view.

Two participants interviewed expressed the opinion that relationship building and learning do not have to be connected to one another. One person who admitted to being in dialogue for reasons other than having a personal learning experience definitely felt that the two did not have to be related. This participant mentioned that he is very comfortable with everyone no matter the foundation of the relationship or what the information is that they are able to share. This person enjoys having the interactions that happen within dialogue, but intellectualizes the process some by analyzing the actions of others instead of turning to the person learning. In order to make sure his view was clear he stated plainly, “I don’t really need the learning process to build the relationship and I don’t need the relationship to build learning process, so it’s sort of completely outside of that altogether” (Participant 7). This person also acknowledged that he did not know many in dialogue that shared his opinion, but even if no one else feels the same way, each opinion has to be expressed when doing this kind of comprehensive study on the dialogue

process. It is also important to continually involve people who do not necessarily fit the mold as that is where the diversity in dialogue will come from. Though this person may not have realized it, another participant was also under the impression that the two are unrelated. This person stated that for her both things actually happened but she credited her learning process to the fact that she was able to be honest with herself throughout the dialogue process. “I really wanted to learn about others and through the process I learned a lot about myself and also I had potential friends there and I like that but I don’t think they are connected” (Participant 12). She talked further about the fact that if you relate these too much, you may not be able to learn as much because you may become too focused on maintaining a relationship. These two were the only ones interviewed who did not see some type of connection, but all participants were able to talk about the point in the dialogue where each individual thing happened for them.

Furthering the Correlations

A few other influences work to pull the correlation together in ways that no other section of this research has offered. First, participants talked a lot about the point during the dialogue at which certain things happened, such as when relationships built or when learning began. This will be looked at in order to see if the opinions that were voiced match up with the order that people suggested things happen. This discussion of timing lends itself to relationships happening early in the dialogues and learning happening all throughout the dialogue. Finally, the participant observation will be briefed, and the observations pertinent to this analysis will be covered. Both of these discussions propose valuable insights into the possible ways that the correlations develop further throughout the dialogue process.

Participants talked a lot about which session within the dialogue process was able to activate the learning and the relationship building within each person. As far the relationship

process goes, people talked about that beginning in the first session with the designated ice breaker activities that facilitators do specifically to allow participants to get to know each other. At least nine participants talked about building relationships during these ice breakers or the small group activities that follow in the next two sessions within a standard DDG model. This contends that building relationships begins by the third session. Eight participants who were asked about when learning began within the dialogue stated that it began no sooner than the halfway point and continued through to the end of the dialogue. Two participants claimed that the learning happened all through the dialogue, while one stated that it could happen as early as session two. Finally, two people stated that learning did not really happen for them, while two others did not give a definitive point at which learning began. This seems like an indicator that the relationship building naturally happens first. Also though, when people talked about the learning that began at these sessions, they did not mention the learning that happens about other participants, which was the reason most gave for learning coming before relationship building.

Finally, the participant observation provided a unique experience to watch as participants interacted with each other and progressed with the dialogue. Of course, doing a participant observation inherently brings with it a small amount of bias regarding the progression that one thinks or hopes the dialogue would take. Thinking particularly about past dialogue experiences as a participant and facilitator, a hypothesis was drawn for this study looking at the way I was able to build relationships and learn within the dialogue space. Watching others do the same thing required me to take my bias out of the equation as much as possible and truly observe the interactions of others. There were seven participants in a dialogue that I facilitated with another person, making nine in the room altogether, and thinking about each of these people as individuals made me realize that everyone did enter the dialogue group at a different point in

their desires to build relationships or learn. One participant seemed eager to share her experiences as she realized they were unique and could help others learn, while one participant came in the complete opposite of that and very disengaged from the process. Other participants came in reserved and looking to feel out the process before diving in, whereas the remaining participants entered the first day of dialogue eager to learn the process and whatever other learning the dialogue brought to the table. As the dialogue progressed, it was obvious that the personal sharing and learning experiences deepened, but it was not as obvious whether there was a correlation between relationships and learning. For example, one participant who was observed was also interviewed. While observing, it appeared that this participant was waiting to feel comfortable or feel a relationship before participating extensively. During the interview, this person said that they believed learning came before relationship building because you had to learn about the other first. It was obvious that this participant was always processing the situation, but it was not obvious as to whether a relationship was being built first or learning was occurring. This is part of the reason that the participant observation has not played as big a role in the research as originally expected. These observations were not guaranteed to accurately portray the feelings of dialogue participants and would inherently be biased towards proving the hypothesis correct. Overall, the participant observation was a very enlightening experience as it forced the researcher to explore every option and answer to the research question. Each additional opinion or influence shed further light on the process that dialoguers go through during each dialogue experience, and how different those experiences can actually be.

Conclusions with Regard to the Correlation

These last points align well with the overall conclusions of this research. Despite the fifteen survey responses that claimed no correlation between relationship building and learning,

there is an obvious connection between the two. No, one may not specifically cause the other, which was never implied within this study anyway, but there is at least a progression as to how they move together throughout the dialogue process. Specifically one of the points of this chapter is to show that there is a correlation, but the direction that correlation goes is not as clear as I would have thought from the beginning. The even more interesting piece to this fact is that all three dialogue facilitators interviewed answered the question differently and claimed to understand the intention of the question well. All of these dialogue facilitators were trained in dialogue before the beginning of the seven week period, and all had advisors to work with them before and after each session. The fact that they all observed something different, even two facilitators from the same type of dialogue group, meant that even with their dialogue knowledge, they all keenly observed something different and believed that it drove their participants to success in dialogue.

The explanation that each participant gave that answered that relationships and learning happened simultaneously, before the other, or after the other, were all strangely similar and relatable. Those that spoke about the two happening simultaneously within dialogue mentioned how things just progressed together and worked hand in hand together. Other participants detailed that the two went hand in hand once one acted as a catalyst for the dialogue to begin this process of moving forward with relationships and learning at the same pace. Over half of those interviewed closed their interview by stating something positive about dialogue or stating that they hoped to participate again in the future. There will always be these other opinions that do not see a tool in the same way that another person sees it, and those opinions are definitely valid as well. Those opinions need to be noted so that things can be worked on to make all more comfortable in dialogical settings or to be able to help filter those that are dedicated to the

experience from those that are not. Conclusively or inconclusively, the actual conclusion will now move on to explore the struggle of only having one answer to this research question and how specific people can truly affect how this question is answered.

CHAPTER 7

DEBRIEFING DIALOGUE: LINKING LITERATURE AND DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Dialogue has proved to be a very valuable tool that is used by many and in countless different ways. Speaking with the interviewees allowed insight into their true emotions and feelings about dialogue and its power to influence their opinions of themselves and others. People spoke with immense confidence in the process, confusion about the struggles within the process, and excitement around the final destination that was reached at the end of the seven sessions. Building an environment that is conducive to relationship building and learning is not easy or anywhere close to an exact science even in dialogue, but the strides being made by researching dialogue are helping to reveal key pieces of that dialogical puzzle. As this study is brought to a close, a synopsis of the information gathered regarding each facet of the research question will be detailed. Then, efforts will be made to link dialogue to conflict resolution and all other literature reviewed. Finally, closing remarks regarding what the correlation between relationships and learning is concerning DDG participants' interviews and all of the research tools together will be made. Specific details from this study will also note a few things that should be given special consideration within those projects.

Recounting Dialogical Truths

The first facet of dialogue explored within this study was relationship building. One core truth of dialogue is that it offers a safe space to freely and productively interact with those who are considered the other. When inquiring about the process of building relationships within the dialogue space, the answers were numerous, detailed, and creative. The qualities of relationship building that were listed by over half of the interviewees actually all had something to do with that space provided by dialogue. The qualities revolved around feeling comfortable in the space

and trusting it enough to express yourself deeply by sharing vulnerable experiences and participating fully in the small group activities. One of these core characteristics of relationship building in dialogue was mentioned by every participant interviewed. Also, all but one participant acknowledged this potential for building potential friendships within dialogue. Some participants spoke about things that deterred them from wanting to build a relationship with someone else in the dialogue, but the only thing mentioned by more than one participant that could hinder or even prevent feeling the potential friendship was coming into the space as a complete outsider. These self-proclaimed outsiders, according to this sample, will not truly experience the dialogical relationship the space is intended to build. One of the requirements talked about in the literature was getting everyone on an equal plain within the dialogue, and this may be something that those running dialogues in confined settings with a regular group of participants needs to be more aware of. Relationships definitely have the potential of being built and those relationships will really open up the places that dialogue can go and deepen the conversation to the things that may only be able to be spoken about within such an atmosphere.

Learning was not spoken of nearly as much as relationship building, but that just shows the truth behind the few ways learning does manifest itself within a dialogue space. Within the rubric of learning, there were not four or five particular facets that every participant agreed had a part in their learning. Four verbs did appear regularly: questioning, learning (with respect to getting to know other participants), considering, and challenging. Each participant did mention at least one of these verbs as being a catalyst for their learning. Also, there were three different types of learning experiences to be had within the dialogue process, and those were personal, academic, and intellectual. Intellectual learning involved learning about other cultures or religions, and also that learning that occurred around how to communicate with others inside or

outside of group settings. Academic learning revolved around those that studied the processes of dialogue, conflict resolution, negotiations, or any other similar topic. This academic learning helped students figure out the facilitation process of dialogue and realize how the structured setting should look in a practical or real life scenario. Finally, the most common form of learning experience that was felt by participants was a personal learning experience, where the participant went through some type of transformative experience while learning more about themselves. This transformation has been described by many authors, including Bohm, Issacs, Kelman, and Yankelovich to name a few, as one of the pure goals of dialogue. The fact that these transformations were able to be experienced is one of the most important indicators of honest dialogue. These learning experiences were greatly affected by the participants that were in the room and the things that they shared. Sharing, as seen earlier, was usually denoted by the relationship that was felt within the dialogue group between the participants, which leads well into the discussion of how the two relate together.

The purpose of this research was to first establish that there is a correlation between the relationship building and learning within the dialogue and then decide the direction of that correlation. Over 85% of the participants interviewed acknowledged a clear correlation between the two, but saw these connections happening in different manners. Those that saw a connection saw it happening in three different ways, which were simultaneous to one another, the learning coming before the relationship building, and the relationship building coming before the learning. Those that did not see a correlation relied heavily on the fact that they were not in the dialogue to make friends and stated that the two could both happen and not be dependent on one another because both can happen personally without them having a large effect on each other. For those that saw the relationship building and learning happening simultaneously, they detailed

that both things happened within a natural flow of dialogue and moved together so hand in hand that they were not sure if the two could be separated. Detailing that the learning happened before the relationship building relied on the fact that you have to learn small things about others before you would want to form a relationship with them. The personal learning was not talked about by many participants before the learning done about other participants. Relationship building happening before learning held that in order to be willing to learn from someone, you must first have a relationship with them, simply because respecting what one hears from someone else will make one more likely to fully process that information in order to be able to learn from it. The interesting thing about these last two is that many participants used either of these as a catalyst for a cyclical activity. If the learning came first, then the learning and relationship building happened together throughout the rest of the dialogue and vice versa.

There were two main parts to the original hypothesis of the research, and those were that a correlation would be apparent and that the correlation would be that relationship building happened before learning. The first part of the hypothesis has been confirmed using two out of three of the research tools within this study. Even with the least successful method, more people stated that that the correlation was apparent than those that did not. 48% of survey respondents agreed that there was a correlation while 42% stated that they did not see a correlation. From the success of this thought throughout the other two methods, it will be said with certainty after this study that there is a correlation between relationship building and learning. Reasons why the survey answers were much lower were presented earlier and revolved around possible confusion within the wording of the question or assuming causation instead of correlation.

The second part of this research question of which came first was certainly not as easy to answer one way or the other with any conclusiveness. The initial hypothesis was created because

for the researcher the relationship building happened before the learning within dialogue experiences, and this should have been a clue as to how the results would have come to be before the research ever began. The decision on which happened first as reiterated by many of the interviewees was merely a personal preference that reflected on personality type and what one person deemed to be more important in a dialogical atmosphere. It can definitely be stated that the original hypothesis that relationship building would always come before learning was not the case. It was the case that relationship building happening before learning was the answer that was detailed the most by interviewees, but that still only left 40% of those spoken to, or six out of fifteen, answering in this manner. Next, four out of fifteen, or 27%, stated that the two happened simultaneously, and three, or 20%, answered that learning happened before relationship building. Finally, two out of fifteen, or 13%, believed that there did not have to be a correlation at all. The only conclusive answer to this research question is that which pattern of thought a participant aligns with will depend highly on their personality type and which of these ways makes them feel the most comfortable at the beginning of the dialogue. This concept is one that is backed by Stephan and Stephan's discussion of 'person factors' affecting the dialogue (70). All of those that spoke of one happening before the other, no matter which one, talked about how it was about feeling comfortable with the other before the simultaneous process could begin and the dialogue could flow forward naturally. The need to feel comfortable before moving forward simultaneously aligns with Issacs's discussion of setting a container for dialogue.

There are some final thoughts that can be put out that were significant enough to be thought about when planning dialogue groups through the future. Leaving some participants feeling like an outsider within the space slightly affected how they were able to participate in the

dialogue and all of these perceived outsiders felt that the experience could have been therefore slightly richer if they had been more comfortable or felt more involved in the space. Also, at least five participants were concerned about having those in the group that were too close to each other before the dialogue began. Having best friends in the dialogue space together negatively affected the outcome of a couple of dialogues because friends were stated as saying that they did not want to share such things in the room with the other person. Not sharing openly within the dialogue is likened to Burton's discussion of effective communication relying on the "full employment of information" (49). These two situations within dialogue therefore prevent dialogue from being completely successful, because effective communication is a key to resolving any issues through dialogue and is not being implored by all participants. Finally, though these considerations need to be kept in mind when moving forward with dialogue, most participants underlined their overwhelmingly positive response to dialogue, saying how much they appreciated the experience or that they looked forward to participating again in the future. One comment that a participant made epitomized the feelings about dialogue no matter the relationship building experiences or learning experiences that participants detailed having:

"[Another classmate and I] went into this dialogue with this theoretical model; we had seen the charts and you're trying to get from here to here and we're all going to be happy; that didn't even come close to happening. There were a lot of fits and starts; Despite that, there was absolutely ah ha moments, there were absolutely learning experiences, definitely relationships were formed whether they were unique to the dialogue or they could be something else [or] grow into something else. That happened despite the fact that this wasn't your 'ideal scenario,' which for me I think validated dialogue period, because if that can happen even when you're not having your miracle moments, that's pretty cool." (Participant 2)

Another facilitator said this about the overall process: "I learn new things all the time so that's why I love to keep doing it; people have said time and time again the skills they learn on how to articulate, how to communicate their feelings and their experiences, and how to listen to others and ...have meaningful conversations, so I think people take a lot away from it; it's just a very

rewarding thing” (Participant 15). The positive response to dialogue no matter the theoretical imperfections of the experience does validate the dialogue process and reaffirm these dialogical truths that have been detailed as effective pieces in each their own way of the dialogue process.

Linking Dialogue to Conflict Resolution

Though this study was not able to detail as specifically as hoped the internal workings of dialogue and reasons behind its success, it is very significant that dialogue does not only work in one way. The participants are a very large and influential part of the dialogue and that would not change no matter which stage dialogue is used on, whether on a college campus or within an international community. The fact that participants are so important and have such a large impact on the dialogue makes dialogue an ideal way for people who do not usually have a voice to be heard. But, as found during this study, not every person who came into dialogue made for a strong dialogue participant. There were certain personal factors that swayed participants away from other people such as personalities not clicking, but there were people that expressed disappointment in the dialogue because the participants were not able to take the conversation to the deep level that is possible and desired from most dialogue participants. Participants should be those that come into the dialogue looking to do those most common things described in both relationship building and learning. Those coming to the space should be ready to share willingly, become vulnerable, and trust the process; they should be ready to challenge others and be challenged in order to truly learn about others through their customs, traditions, and most importantly experiences.

It is obvious that a person will not always be able to ensure that their dialogue participants follow this prescription before entering the dialogue, and Stephan and Stephan suggest only that you realize some “contact programs are likely to be more successful with some

populations than with others” (70). It must also be acknowledged that the most likely scenario for people to feel this way entering a dialogue is a voluntary scenario such as the one DDG provides. Those that participate in DDG are mostly voluntary participants from the American University community, with a few participating because of class obligations. Voluntary here refers to the fact that these participants asked to be a part of the dialogue process by applying whereas some dialogue experiences, such as company retreats, may not necessarily be the choice of the participant. As a few participants specifically pointed out previously, this should ensure that some type of personal dialogue experience should be reached in any dialogue through DDG because that is what every participant is expecting and looking for. When dialogue is put forth out within other communities as a voluntary experience, similar experiences should be able to be created. Other thoughts for dialogue as a tool for conflict resolution though may not always be able to rely on voluntary participation. The feeling of ownership of the process did not surface throughout the interviews, so there is a possibility that dialogical experiences could be reached without a voluntary system. With that said, the way that participants are gathered or chosen is something that needs to be emphasized within any dialogue process moving forward because of the established importance of participants. As dialogues do become more prevalent and are more researched, it is important to note that interviews served to be the most useful and unbiased source of information for this project and really allowed the researcher to see into the minds of participants and figure out why some things are or are not working within the space. If participants or the ways they are gathered for dialogue change in the future, this would be a valid way to voice the concerns built as dialogue progresses in that direction.

Finally, the most significant part of this research is that it actually attempts to voice the reasons that make dialogue effective and the concerns of those participants who felt that dialogue

was not able to fulfill its true potential. The process of dialogue has the opportunity to restore people's belief in them-selves through interacting in positive manners with those who have prejudices towards them. This premise goes along with Allport's main concept that contact will reduce prejudice, and is admitted to by over half of the participants in this study. The part of dialogue that is so transformative is that personal learning experience that one is able to have by humanizing the other with you within the space, and also feeling humanized by them. Many participants expressed the opinion that when leaving the dialogue they realized that participants were no longer the other, but just a person that they knew and could put a face to along with all of the other people in their life. This humanizing process takes Allport's premise a step further by implying that humanizing the other would be an extension of reducing prejudices towards the other. Kelman speaks about the effect of having your identity acknowledged and secured by the other and the mutual security this acceptance of identities can create (198). He also points out that dehumanization is at the core of many deep-rooted conflicts, therefore making legitimizing and humanizing the other a vital step towards resolving any conflicts among people or peoples. The possibility of that effect alone should give reason enough to further develop dialogue and attempt to bring others in conflicting states with one another into this space that can give them back their identity. No matter how people build relationships, learn, or connect these two processes, dialogue is an avenue to experience all of these things at once in a positive atmosphere while learning invaluable things about one's self. This charismatic ideal of dialogue is perhaps best seen by Yankelovich's constant connecting dialogue to magic. In the closing of his text, Yankelovich puts forth the concept that we as people are skilled in science and research but lacking in dialogical areas and continues by championing the concept of dialogue in a way different than any other author.

“What we don’t know very well, and where we are surprisingly awkward and not at all adept, is in the arts of listening with empathy, setting aside status differences, and examining with open minds the assumptions that underlie all the old scripts we all live by—in a word, dialogue. At the risk of overstating the case, I believe that greater mastery of dialogue will advance our civility—and our civilization—a giant step forward. Dialogue has the magic to help us do it.” (218).

The goal of dialogue to transform opinions and beliefs about one’s self and the other is a very lofty, admirable, and, as evident from this research, attainable goal, therefore acknowledging the validity of the dialogue process and necessity of continuing research around this promising yet underutilized tool of conflict resolution.

SURVEY

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Totally

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Totally

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Totally

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Totally

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Totally

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Totally

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Totally

11. I was able to form friendships with those in my group.

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

12. How would you describe the relationships that the dialogue experience helped you form:

1 2 3 4 5

Surface Level

Very Deep

13. I experienced times when I questioned my prior knowledge or when my knowledge shifted:

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

14. I was actively thinking during the dialogue sessions:

Active thinking: continual and serious reflection on opinions and perspectives heard

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

15. I was engaged or interested in the topics discussed:

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

16. I was considering other's points of view, while developing knowledge from this experience:

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

17. I have been able to build my capacity to perceive differences and similarities in the other:

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

18. I was able to be understanding of the differences present amongst other identities:

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

19. I was able to gain general knowledge of the other:

General knowledge: information uncovered or skills built through experience

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

20. I was able to build problem-solving skills:

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

21. I was able to think critically about the topics being discussed:

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

22. I was able to reduce my prejudice towards the other:

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Totally

Directions: The remaining three questions are open-ended. Feel free to answer as much or as little as you feel comfortable doing

23. Do you feel that you were able to consider your peers as potential friends while in the dialogue space? Why or why not?

24. What do you feel you have learned in this dialogue experience?

25. Is there some correlation between your learning and your ability to make friends in the dialogue? Did your learning cause you to make friends or was your learning a result of the friends you made?

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Your responses are valued and your cooperation is appreciated.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction: Thank you for your participation in this research study. Participation is voluntary and you have the right to refuse to do this interview at any time. The design of this survey is intended for no other purpose than to gather information for thesis research conducted by Devyn Bayes on the topic of dialogue evaluation. Please answer each question with as much or as little information as you see fit. Your responses will be treated with dignity and confidentiality at all times.

1. Could you describe how you felt relationships were built between yourself and other group members?
2. Could you give examples of the interactions that made you feel like that relationship was building? If so, could you state explicitly the qualities you felt were important in these interactions?
3. Within the dialogue space, did you feel as if you were becoming friends or that there was a potential friendship building with the other participants? If so, could you give examples of how that process was happening? If not, how would you describe the relationship?
4. Could you describe the building of these relationships also with respect to how they changed over the course of the dialogue? How were the relationships different from week one to week seven?
5. How did building these relationships affect how you participated in the dialogue experience?
6. Was the prior knowledge that you brought into the situation questioned during the seven dialogue sessions? Could you give some examples of interactions that left you thinking seriously about other perceptions? When in the seven week process did this occur, and did it become more common as the process went along? Did considering others' perspectives different from your own directly influence this process?
7. Could you describe the learning experience you feel this dialogue process helped you through academically or intellectually?
8. Could you give examples of how your view of the "other" has changed throughout this process? For example, differences and similarities you saw from the beginning to now or how your perceptions or prejudices have changed.
9. Do you feel that the learning experience through the dialogue sessions was directly affected by the other participants? Could you explain why you feel this way?
10. How do you feel that the relationships you built were connected to the things you have learned throughout the dialogue experience?

Thank you for your participation in this research. Your responses are valued and your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Devyn Bayes from American University. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between potential friendships and learning outcomes by analyzing the combined theories that exist on dialogue and evaluating a dialogue program on campus. The objective is to test the hypothesis that building friendships and relationships will strongly correlate with the learning outcomes tested. This study will contribute to the student's completion of her master's thesis.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to verbally consent once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of an interview being facilitated by the researcher that will document interactions that happen within the dialogue group that you are a part of. The information documented will pertain only to the interactions that participants have amongst themselves that contributes to the building of their relationships with one another or to the learning fostered or knowledge exchanged between participants.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require one to two hours of your time for this additional interview.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

The investigator perceives the following are possible risks arising from your involvement with this study: the main risk within this study that is highly unlikely would be a breach of confidentiality if someone were able to recognize the participant through the interactions described. In order to minimize this risk, no attribution will be recorded within the interview and the only record of your participation will be the investigators knowledge of who is being interviewed.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study will not be benefits that will directly affect the participants as a whole. The benefits of this research to the academic community will be proving correlations in learning environments and adding knowledge to the field of dialogue evaluation for others to consider when building and evaluating their dialogue programs in the future. It will

also benefit the field of dialogue by showing the affect the dialogue process has on the participants learning outcomes.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented as a Master's thesis. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individuals will be kept confidential within the interviews, aggregate data will be presented representing generalizations about the experiences kept in the journal as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed, including the consent forms. The journal will be kept by the researcher, and is not to be used in any other future studies.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

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Verbal Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

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