Mitigating Ethno-Religious Bias through Interfaith Dialogue and Encounter Journaling

by

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Capstone Action Project Report
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Interfaith Action

Claremont Lincoln University
Claremont, CA
March 2017
MITIGATING ETHNO-RELIGIOUS BIAS

Abstract

The purpose of this Participatory Action Research project is to mitigate biases held toward ethno-religiously diverse others. Because the stakeholders value inclusivity, they chose to explore the impact of their childhood philosophical and religious teachings on adult behavior. Seven stakeholders from various parts of the United States and various belief systems engaged in online interfaith dialogue over several months. Through facilitated discourse and guided encounters, the stakeholders named their own biases, and then expanded their typical levels of engagement to include groups often avoided in their daily lives. They pushed themselves to step outside their zones of comfort. The group members mindfully gained valuable insight from these intentional encounters. By engaging with those whom they consider to be the other, new doors were opened. Through these experiential encounters, the participants broke through once thought impermeable boundaries. Although the project was successful on a personal basis, in the future, stronger empirical analysis will be needed to provide insight that is more substantial.

Keywords: bias awareness, transmission of values, dialoguing, journaling
Mitigating Ethno-Religious Bias

Acknowledgements

The researcher wishes to thank the dialogue participants for their dedication, honesty, courage, commitment, and fortitude. Without these qualities, in fact without their full participation, the project could not have happened, much less been successful.
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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction to Project and Evidence of Mindfulness

Purpose and Scope

The intended purpose of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) project was to gather a group of individuals in online interfaith dialogue where they could begin to recognize and mitigate long held biases they felt toward ethno-religiously diverse others. By communicating and exploring both positive and negative stories from their youth, the participants were able to lay the groundwork for uncovering latent meanings that may correspond to adult behavior. In the end, the group hoped to break down barriers between themselves and those thought of as the other. They wanted to change or deepen the level of engagement with those typically avoided, questioned, or thought of in potentially negative ways. The research statement associated with this project reads as such - Because our stakeholder group values inclusivity, we wanted to explore the impact of our childhood philosophical and religious influences, so that we can better understand and change religious biases we bring with us, in order that we as stakeholders can mitigate our otherizing behaviors.

The project included reaching out through listservs sent out to people across the globe, which might also include people interested in this topic. An invitation to join the project was posted on the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation’s website and the New York City Dispute Resolution listserv, an outgrowth of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. One of the people who responded is the CEO of a mediation organization that ultimately became the mentor partner for the project. The intake session in June of 2016 included ten interested participants. However, the final group (because of time zone and scheduling challenges) whittled down to seven participants from the Catholic, Lutheran, Jewish, Mormon, Unitarian Universalist, and Humanist traditions. The intent of the project was to gather a very diverse group. Originally,
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there was interest from a Muslim participant who resides in Britain and two participants from Greece. For a short time, we had a Romanian graduate student currently residing in the Netherlands in the group, but he dropped out when academic and travel demands became too great.

The initial step of this project was to gather signed consent forms (See Appendix A). Next, the group of participants, those who signed on for the entire length of the project, filled out a survey (See Appendix B.) The project was facilitated using the pro version of an online platform called Zoom, so the group would not be limited in the length of a session or the number of participants. This dialogue tool provides useful features including a white board, a capacity to share screens, and recording options. However, ultimately an app called Supernotes was used to record the sessions, with permission from participants. The dialogue between the participants was transcribed into a summary that was sent to each participant a few days after most of the sessions. Resources were shared asynchronously via email, but the participants were asked to limit their correspondence, to resources only and not two-sided communication.

The intake session conducted in June was followed by subsequent dialogue sessions in July, August, September, October, and November of 2016. Over the holiday break in late 2016, participants were asked to engage in three separate encounters with those who felt very religiously different from themselves (so much so, that they felt discomfort due to certain biases), and then record what happened. The parameters of these encounter journals were clearly delineated to all participants. In January and February of 2017, two final sessions were conducted during which time participants shared whatever portions of their encounter journals they felt were most insightful and poignant. The journals were analyzed for changes in bias awareness, level of engagement with those not formerly approached, and changes in behavior.
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Most of the participants have expressed a desire to continue to check in with each other on an informal basis in the months ahead. In this way, they may become agents of change in their communities.

Guiding Values and Project Significance

The values that guided this project include a desire to be inclusive of all people regardless of race, religion, nationality, or philosophical belief system. Beyond that, the participants agreed that they longed for deeper engagement that comes from a willingness to go below the surface. They value authentic dialogue and encounters where biases are faced head on. In terms of values for the dialogical process itself, the group identified a long list, which included: Unity, cohesion, uncensored communication, cherishing differences, bias awareness, patience, recognition of White privilege and societal power imbalances, respect, safety, compassion, vulnerability, collaborative spirit, love, objectivity, empathy, and non-judgement. The dialogue was structured in two different modes, called D-Mode for discussion and C-Mode for circle. When in D-Mode, participants raised their hands and went in any order. When in C-Mode they stayed in what was referred to as a sacred circle. They went in a specified order and used a talking piece. No interruptions were allowed until each person signified they had contributed all they wanted by holding their talking piece to the video screen and saying “I have finished”. This structure is informed by the work of Kay Pranis (2015.)

As much as possible during the project, the group stayed true to these values. Some of the participants had conservative viewpoints on same sex marriage and abortion. Some did not believe in God in a monotheistic way and expressed this freely. On occasion, the group had trouble staying in C-Mode and someone would interrupt, but this was infrequent. When it happened, a participant would “own up” and apologize for going out of turn or not letting
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someone finish. Group participants used explicit language when describing the context of their childhood narratives. This lent an aspect of authenticity to the project. However, participants always warned the cohort that in order to convey the powerful impact of the biases held over from the past, direct quotes were necessary.

The work exhibited in this project has never been more critical and must continue. The November 2016 U.S. election and the public rhetoric leading up to it have been immensely divisive. If effective, respectful dialogue cannot be mastered, the United States may decline into deeper hatred. This work is about stepping outside our regular circles of engagement and having encounters that break apart stereotypes and biases. The work is relevant to the health and well-being of not only American people but transnationally. Hate crimes against Muslims in the U.S. increased by sixty-seven percent in 2015. This is merely one statistic that justifies the important work for the future (Sidahmed, 2016, n.p.). It is also worthy to note the implications this work may have on international relations, for instance with Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) regions. Healthy, deep engagement is needed in many other areas of the globe where the U.S. is increasingly being thought of in negative terms. However, the work starts one conversation at a time and this project is a manifestation of that goal.

Record of Initial Mindfulness

This PAR dialogue group represents the culmination of graduate work in conflict resolution and interfaith action, volunteer work in ethno-religious facilitation, a deeper understanding of what it means to be mindful, and the desire to create a project with lasting benefits for all of its participants. When mindfully reflecting on what kind of project could deepen previous work in this area, the group understood it had to involve interfaith dialogue and bias awareness. A few of the participants had already begun their own rudimentary mindfulness
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practice. The participants spent a great deal of time thinking about personal awareness. The group spent two full sessions being in the present moment, talking about values, process goals, and the impetus for this work. Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “paying attention on purpose in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (2012, p. 17). The participants of this project recognized that awareness would be a huge part of the work, and at the same time recognized they can feel estranged in their own country and this is what causes us to avoid certain others. Every online dialogue session started with a contemplative opening, to bring the group into the present and help discipline the mind from “being pulled in a thousand different directions” (Kabat-Zinn, 2012, p. 27).

Limitations

Participatory Action Research projects are naturally time consuming because of the emphasis placed on democratic principles. The work involves getting everyone’s input and giving equal time to all. However, some limitations are more complex. Hall notes there are some dangers for groups doing PAR and shares this observation; “Social science researchers often gravitate toward participatory research as a way to get people to agree to a position, an action, or a policy, which others (e.g. social workers, adult educators, etc.) feel is important to their purposes” (Bennett, 2004, p. 8). As the leader of a project, one must become aware of the undue influence they may have and make a special effort not to “hijack” the direction of the project.

In addition, because of the random and virtual nature of this project, it had added challenges. The group gathered as strangers so it took a while to build group cohesion. They used an online tool that was often affected by the quality of internet connection. Participants could not see the entire scope of each other’s body language, a form of nonverbal cue very important to communicating effectively. As a group, we took these limitations under advisement and forged
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ahead, once again being mindful of ways we could have a rich dialogue experience despite these challenges.

Definitions of Terms

Some terms in this project deserve explanation. The group defined encounter journals as the written logs that each participant constructed over a two-month period. The guidelines for these journals can be found in Appendix C. The stakeholders described three personal encounters of their choosing, intentionally or haphazardly arranged after examining and identifying their personal ethno-religious biases. In addition, here is how the researcher defines the term other - those religiously diverse people that one would typically not engage with due to fear, dread, assumptions, or lack of knowledge. Lastly, we interpreted a sacred or talking circle as one where participants engaged uninterrupted, in a specified order, each person getting the chance to speak until finished (Pranis, 2004). Visual representation of this concept can be found in Appendix D. It is of note that the participants themselves also spent time in this project coming to understand the terms and concepts. In fact, one of the survey questions had to do with defining the term, the other. It is clear from the changes in survey responses (before vs. after) that the project helped to elucidate a personalized interpretation of this term.
CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review and Initial Stakeholder Dialogue

Can people deeply immersed in ethno-religious dialogue change their level of healthy engagement with others who are ethnically, racially, or religiously diverse - just by becoming more consciously aware of the reasons for such gestures? If they dig deep into the past behaviors, rituals, doctrines, and philosophies, role modeled to them by their parents and caregivers, what will they find? Some recall rituals that seemingly never meant anything during childhood but now in adulthood provide crucial cultural insight. Yet others embrace and cleave to these teachings and forever use them as a basis for how they think and consequently how they engage with diverse others. Finally, some stray far away from the teachings modeled to them as a way to correct for what they consider to be errant ways. The assumption of this project and its written analysis is that latent effects of one’s upbringing sometimes cause us to interact with individuals in certain ways relevant to the "tapes" we create in our minds while growing up.

This chapter will explore the research approach for the capstone project associated with a graduate degree in Interfaith Action. The focus is the effect of childhood influences on how we treat the other. We all think of someone as our other – a person we do not feel like talking to, much less getting to know. What makes us believe and act the way we do toward these individuals?

Because the stakeholder group involved in this project values inclusivity, we wanted to explore the impact of our childhood philosophical and religious influences. The group wanted to better understand and change religious biases we bring with us, in order that we as stakeholders can mitigate our otherizing behaviors. The participants examined these influences, latent or otherwise by raising awareness through online dialogue sessions and encounter journals. From there, they strove to implement deeper connections that would lead to a more peaceful co-
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existence in our schools, groups, organizations, and the world at large. This was an intentional attempt to increase the likelihood of changing over to a culture of peace and acceptance, instead of one where isolation and rejection is abundant.

The desired change identified for this project can best be addressed by recognizing the biases that are present in each of us. They result as a cumulative effect of how we were raised – our family’s or caregiver’s faith traditions, philosophical underpinnings, modeled behavior, and our combined reaction to those influences throughout our lives. Most often, these biases go unnoticed, unidentified, and never altered; much less become something upon which we take action. By dialoguing together in a safe space over the course of several months, the participants brought up memories, both positive and negative. A new awareness was achieved and with commitment and courage, the participants carried this new awareness out into the world and tried different ways of encountering those who might otherwise produce trepidation, dread, or fear.

All participants in this project were tasked with creating a personal digest or journal of attempts to act from a place of mindful awareness. They examined biases and pre-conceived notions about who is more easy for them to approach and who is often avoided, and why. The journaling exercise of this project required honest self-appraisal, acts of courage, and accurate recording of what happened in these attempts. Participants became mindful leaders of changed behavior. A final successful measure included sharing these findings with significant others, co-workers, project partners, and other important contacts. The participants have become change agents who live important values out loud (in daily interactions) instead of only reflecting on them in private.

Past Perspectives on Value Transmission, Bias Toward Others, and Changing Behavior

Researchers since the turn of the twentieth century have much to say on the relevance of
such terms and phrases as, transmission of values, family attitudes, changing behavior, the other, benefits of journaling and reflective practice, and bias awareness. These words were used as search terms, along with myriad others in various combinations through many successful and not so successful attempts, using a paid academic resource called Questia.com and the online school library from Claremont Lincoln University. In short, attempts were made to tie the concepts together to examine how aspects of our childhood religious and philosophical teachings get transmitted and what effects they have on the way we treat diverse others. The project further examines if biases and otherizing behaviors potentially handed down through this transmission can be mitigated or improved through dialogue and journaling.

Copen and Silverstein examine the influences of intergenerational values transmission, noting that although marital instability and changing norms have perhaps lessened the influence with time, this transmission of values still creates a wealth of influence (2007). The article does not address bias awareness per say, nor does it address how to mitigate these behaviors. For answers about biased behavior, the work of Jason Slone, entitled “Theological Incorrectness: Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't” was explored. Noting that many people believe what they believe due to a “because I said so”, or “that's just the way we always have” attitude, Slone begins to hint at the heart of the research statement associated with this dialogue project. Our caregivers have tremendous influence and at the same time can keep us stuck in narrow thinking. Slone does not make suggestions for how to mitigate these influences but instead only offers, “It is through the scientific study of human behavior that the knowledge of God is best understood” (2004, p. 125). Can we also come to an understanding when we study, engage, and reflect together in dialogue and communal thought? The research continued based on this question.
Further discussion begins by reflecting on what we mean when we say engaging with the other. In addition, what does it mean to bridge the gap with others who are religiously and ethnically diverse? It may have to do with what it means to be inclusive, another term found in the research statement. In reviewing an article by Volf, he reminds us that, “to have an inclusive identity one must have permeable and flexible boundaries” (2002, n.p.). The encounter journals created by the participants in this project, required them to transcend once thought impermeable boundaries. The literature review reported on in this chapter, reveals an article espousing the benefits of journaling. In this context, it relates to the gratefulness one might feel from remembering the benevolence expressed to them in their religious communities. It is hoped that such benevolence will be extended by way of the encounter journals created by the project stakeholders, bringing the process more or less full circle.

Another important article by Pewewardy agrees that journaling is essential to building awareness of one’s own biases and power structures, while encouraging reflection and “fostering alliances and other strategies of collaboration across differences” (2005, n.p.). Even more evidence that journaling is an effective strategy for increasing multicultural competence is found in the cultural immersion project called the Multicultural Action Project (MAP). This project was designed to help counseling students decrease cultural bias and improve skill development through journaling, engagement, and assessment (Hipolito-Delgado, Cook, Avrus, & Bonham, 2011).

Next, Garmon has created an important work that also explores the benefits of what is referred to as dialogue journaling. This technique includes more than mere reflection but asks the creator and receiver of dialogue to exchange written ideas and thoughts. The group members
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of this project were not asked to do this. Many of the encounters were brief, happenstance, or not conducive to long conversations.

One of the specific benefits discussed by Garmon has to do with our use of language and how its role is influential in the depth of learning that takes place in our social interactions (2001). He also examines how journaling can promote self-reflection and self-understanding, even to the level of “soul searching” about one’s feelings related to certain people or situations. This is paramount to bias awareness (Garmon, 2001). Producing a narrative of thoughts, reflections, actions, and behaviors allows participants to see their own biases in writing. They have a sort of “self-proof”, which makes inaction and denial a little more painful. At the same time, researchers have noted that constructing a reflection privately, first on paper, guarantees a safer space for exploration of our biases (Charlés, Thomas, & Thornton, 2005). Issues of privacy, shame, guilt, fear, and contradictory thoughts are never the kinds of confessions we want to share with people who are not intimately known to us, which is why group building was so important to this project. Only after successful group cohesion was achieved did the participants feel safe sharing their encounters.

Although the emphasis and content from each of these articles is not in total agreement, the general idea that journals are beneficial tools for reflective practice seems to spread across many disciplines and pedagogical subgroups. The gap in the research comes when trying to find the specific benefits for groups engaging in interfaith dialogue. However, it is not a far-fetched analysis to deduct, that for any project where an examination of one’s understanding of self and behavior, journaling can be of great benefit.

Current Perspectives on Values, Bias, and Change

When conducting research for more current perspectives, similar search terms such as
values, biases, journaling, religious tolerance, the other, and change, were utilized. Once again, the research was completed using the academic search engine Questia.com and the online school library from Claremont Lincoln University. This topic cannot be encapsulated by one search term and the desired change not captured by a singular idea. Therefore, the search has been an arduous journey.

With regard to contemporary families and the values they transmit, Bouchard and Lachance-Grzela note that marriage is on the decline and non-traditional families are more numerous than ever. Overall, studies have shown the new family arrangement, with non-traditional roles and practices, tends to build more tolerance toward others and those living in non-traditional settings (Bouchard & Lachance-Grzela, 2016). Additionally, the research for this project explores the role that religion continues to play in the transmission of values for contemporary families as they grow more nontraditional. Plenk agrees that our values are on the move when he shares and describes the life of community organizer and political activist, Yehudah Webster. He states, “his parents were looking for what he calls the good news,” – expressing that no sacrifice was too big to bring about a more socially enlightened adult (Plenk, 2016, n.p.). Currently, there is much tumult, many challenges, and a long road to traverse toward racial, ethnic, and religious justice. However, expanded versions of the family, especially those whose religious, political, and social sights are set on values like equality and enlightenment, make the goal a little more attainable.

What do current works have to say about how we can change our biased perception of people? Pope, Price, and Wolfers examined how to make a group of referees more aware of their own biases. At first, when no public awareness was present, the changes were insignificant. Later however, when they were under public scrutiny the behaviors began to change. Perhaps when we
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are in our own private domain, we feel less accountability. This is why the journals in this project (the ones where participants record their encounters and biases), were in *their* possession for the last month of their journey. However, they were shared with the group in the final dialogue session and this public sharing and the deconstruction that took place is where the most learning and self-awareness happened.

More evidence exists that *we* carry the keys to unlocking where our biases originate and that a reflective practice such as journaling can help us move past and come to terms with long held memories and the biases that grow out of them. Such tools help us examine those “memory tapes” referenced in the early part of this discussion. Cathleen Love states is this way, “The untested mental models that we carry around in our heads often come from people we love the most - parents, teachers, religious leaders, friends, mentors. It is up to us to examine our own assumptions and decide if we want to keep or change our mental models” (2015, n.p.). She reminds us that valuing diversity, religious and otherwise, requires that we stretch ourselves and go outside our zones of comfort.

While the research does not give solid parameters as to how to do this, nor does the current data include numerous studies on the value of a reflexive practice such as journaling, the gap does not leave one completely in the dark. However, we still might ask, can we really implement such practices to change the overall level of religious tolerance in our societies? The search terms for this project continue to produce varied results. The last article reviewed for this section is entitled, “Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach” (Martos, 2016.) The author urges us to think about what change needs to take place in order for everyone to see the world’s religions in a broader, more inclusive context. Martos seems to be telling us that we must get past the idea that our traditions are just a set of beliefs. They can and must be
viewed as instructions for a way of life. Similar to much of the literature reviewed so far, themes of pluralism, tolerance, inclusivity, and a transcendent way of life that is not delineated by strict religious boundaries, are addressed in this work. Martos calls for "a radical moral change, a reorientation of one's life toward a new set of values" (2016, p.157).

**Future Perspectives – Changing Our Religious and Social Landscape**

What does the future of religious practice look like in America and the world at large? Greeley has much to say. He believes that we will continue to cleave to our traditions, feeling their influence in both the religious and the secular contexts. Sympathetic understanding for the wisdom of other traditions will increase, while at the same time, individuals will feel the ultimate responsibility for their own morality. The local congregation and all the denominations will more or less continue to flourish (Greeley, 2001). This is all good news for the interfaith actor and those who wish to act on social change in the name of religious pluralism.

On an individual level, Doehring discusses the process of change as it relates to spiritual care conversations. She suggests that change happens when we are ready for it to happen and often not until (2014, p. 583). This is much different from the societal changes discussed in the article above. This was something the participants revisited in their dialogue group as they prepared to reach out to their other (those people who belong to a group that makes them feel discomfort). Increasing bias awareness is hard work and causes much trepidation in people, as does the idea of making any kind of change to our social groups. We can expect some resistance. However, Doehring also reminds us that our future is better when we expand our thought. She states, “Spiritual integration is liberative for persons, communities, and cultures” (2014, p. 584). As one begins to think about the future of religious tolerance in America and abroad, one cannot
help but wonder what new trials we will face. There is much work to be done, structurally and individually.

**Stakeholder Perspectives – An Introduction to the Group**

This project involved seven stakeholders who participated in an online interfaith dialogue group using the Zoom platform. It began with ten, but through attrition and because of busy schedules and time zone differences, the group narrowed. The seven participants stuck together over many months and have become a tightly knit dialogue group, sharing both positive and negative stories about their engagement with *the other* and how religious and philosophical backgrounds have influenced these experiences.

The group demographics include six females and one male. They are Christian, Humanist, Atheist, Unitarian Universalist, Jewish, Catholic, and Mormon but all Caucasian. Two of the females came from the Seattle area. One female logged in from Atlanta, two are from New York, and one from New Jersey. The male participant logged in from the Minneapolis area. One of the females from the New York area is the founder and CEO of the conflict resolution organization that serves as the collaborative partner in this project. Her extensive background and interest in bias awareness, mediation, dialogue, restorative justice, and interfaith relations has been invaluable. She provided feedback, especially in the early stages. This helped the participants to slow down and pay attention to group values and guidelines before entering into a sacred story-sharing space. Each participant may be equally influenced by this important collaborative work for months or years to come.

The group had a basic understanding of the issues addressed in this project. They know that no matter how educated one becomes, we are all subject to hidden and not so hidden biases. Many of the participants have been involved in interfaith dialogue. They bring a wealth of
knowledge and commitment to the project but are also aware they have been influenced by childhood patterns and interactions. With courage and care, the participants have shared stories from the past that included watching parents exhibit racist and religiously biased behavior. The group dissected how these influences made their way into our adult thinking.

One of the participants suggested the idea of *encounter journals* as a measurement tool. Consequently, in the late stages of the project, the group was tasked with creating a personal journal about their attempts to engage with people they would usually “steer clear of” in their daily lives. Perhaps it is the Hasidic Jew walking down the sidewalk, or the woman on the train in hijab, or the storeowner wearing a turban. These are stark examples utilized to make the point that, as White Americans, we are challenged in our full acceptance of *the other*. The participants chose how to set up their encounters and included this aspect in their writings. They identified and addressed the biases most notable to them. The logistics and the results of the encounters were recorded and shared with the group. Finally, the participants discussed the changes needed to expand their zones of comfort. The group examined lessons learned, and ways of being not just more tolerant, but more willing to face our biases head on. We want actionable behavior changes, supported by the accountability we have felt to each other over the course of the project.

From time to time, the participants have shared resources with each other. More often than not, they are blogs, poems, film clips, and writings that address the overall theme of *otherizing* or bias awareness. The research supports the human tendency that we *are* influenced by our caregivers’ religious and philosophical teachings. We become aware of the biases when we hear about each other’s stories. The dialogue and the encounters also bring new awareness to
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light. Finally, this literature review, especially the Copen and Silverstein, Pope et al., and Pewewardy articles fall right in line with what we had hoped to explore and accomplish.

The stakeholder group in this project collaboratively explored how to address this issue and the change necessary to improve it. The work required compassion yet deep honesty and authenticity. The stories shared were painful at times so each session began and ended with a reflection and a debriefing. The group also checked in to see what had happened in each other’s lives that could bring new understanding to bear. The project required collaboration on deciding measurement tools, such as the survey administered early in the project (and again after its completion) and the encounter journals constructed toward the end. The encounter journal idea was offered by a participant and since research supported its potential effectiveness, this became our final strategy for change.

Conclusion

The three most important findings from this research and literature review include Copen and Silverstein’s clear analysis of the mechanisms that are used to transmit values from parents to children. They suggest the most important facets are socialization through direct training and instruction, role modeling, and studying social (and religious, one might wonder) texts that predispose them to a certain values and worldviews (2007). Additionally, with regard to bias awareness, Pope, Price, and Wolfers recommend “exposure to situations that contradict the particular biases” that are causing the problem (2014, p. 2). The dialogue group often intentionally placed themselves where they could have encounters with their version of the other. In some cases, the encounters were not intentional, but the introspection afterward revealed deeper insight. Pope, et al. also suggest that public awareness can reduce bias, which is why the experiences were in plain view – at the bus stop, on the train, at a concert, etc. Participants were
tasked with finding ways to overcome their biases, those we carry with us into adulthood. Finally, Pewewardy points out that a reflexive practice such as journaling helps people consider the intersectionality between privilege, oppression, and diversity, and how these facets shape our experiences (2005). He further suggests that journal writing can serve as a sounding board and that it elicits self-disclosure, self-exploration, and self-discovery (2005.)

In June of 2016, interviews were conducted with potential stakeholders during an intake session via the Zoom platform. All were found to have a great desire to examine their own biases and were curious to explore the idea of otherizing behaviors from a cross-cultural, interfaith perspective. As partners in this Participatory Action Research project, we spent over 10 hours in dialogical exploration and story sharing. We set our group guidelines together. We discussed our group values together. We dialogued about the encounter journals as a cohesive group making sure everyone’s story was shared and everyone’s voice was heard.

As participants, we have become live change agents, going into our communities and engaging with those whom we would generally consider off limits. We pushed through our discomfort, watching closely for the biases that arose. Through critical analysis in private and then collective sessions, we altered our interactions from closed to open – from safe to vulnerable. Encounters formerly impinged by biases become interactions enlightened by personal growth. It is difficult work but our small group rose to the challenge. The change involves mindfulness, awareness, and communally shared ideas and interpretations. Taken together these changes could easily lead to a more peaceful planet, one where ethno-religious boundaries are more permeable and relationships more inclusive.
CHAPTER 3 - Methods Determined with Stakeholders

Introduction

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) Interfaith Dialogue group that formed out of this project conducted eight online sessions. We used the Zoom platform for these virtual sessions, at an average of 90 minutes each, over nine months (See Appendix E for an overall timeline of the dialogue project). The first, in June 2016, was merely an intake session, as a way to determine the level of interest for those people who had reached out via the listservs mentioned in chapter two. The hope was to gather, through hard work and attentiveness, a global participant pool. Initially, it appeared that the dedication paid off. The intake group consisted of ten people of many faith traditions from the U.S. and Europe. However, by the second session, the group had whittled down to seven, including the researcher as facilitator. Although still varied in their religious and philosophical orientations, all participants were Caucasian Americans and all reside in the United States. Consent forms and surveys were the first step and these documents are found in the appendices section of this paper (See Appendix A and B). The survey was given at the start of the project and again after completion. Following the November 2016 session, the participants had a couple of months to set up or observe the encounters they wrote about in their journals. One of the participants supplied the idea of an encounter journal and suggested we use this as a way to record our own increased bias awareness. The participants were also asked to record other insights and to record behavior changes.

Many engaged in conversation but some chose to reach out in smaller ways, including observing an encounter that caused an interpersonal dialogue with themselves. Through deep introspection and mindful awareness, the participants gained the insight needed to create their encounter journals. The group discussed together these encounters in our last full dialogue...
session held in late January 2017. Due to a last minute scheduling conflict, one participant could not attend the January session. The group, by this time, had formed a deep level of cohesiveness. Therefore, one final session was held in early February for all who could attend, as a way to give closure for everyone involved in this project.

**Description of Stakeholders**

The following description gives the demographic details of the final stakeholder group. These dedicated co-researchers have all chosen to be mindful and present participants, missing nary a session in nine months. Dialogue participants are identified by a color-coded capital letter and the region of the United States where they now live. All other identifying characteristics have been omitted.

**Participant-A**
Role – Dialogue participant from Northwestern U.S.
Needs – Exploring multiple identifications as Jewish/Catholic/Feminist
Resources – Politically active progressive, knowledge of the powerful effects of cult behavior
Effect – Deeper awareness of causal relationships such as childhood influences on adult understanding

**Participant B**
Role – Dialogue participant from Northeastern U.S.
Needs – Raised in Southern California as a Mormon, wished to promote tolerance and acceptance and share interfaith heritage and stories with dialogue participants
Resources – Brings expertise in teaching and client engagement
Effect – Greater awareness of multiple dimensions, built trust and knowledge base to help with engagement strategies

**Participant C**
Role – Dialogue participant from Northeastern U.S.
Needs – Raised in the Jewish tradition, just outside St. Louis, wishes to impact interfaith relations
Resources – Was on the board of the Parliament of World Religions for 22 years
Effect – Broadened views of what interfaith action means and discovered new knowledge as to the background of participants and what “makes them tick”

**Participant D**
Role – Dialogue participant from North Central U.S.
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Needs – Raised in Minnesota in a Christian household by a pastor/father who did not believe in the need for atonement, interested in engaging in a grassroots context and more focused on ethical considerations, very centered on promoting love and service.

Resources – Numerous years of interfaith action in a grassroots context and brings a wealth of shared experiences

Effect – Deeper understanding of grass roots organization and fieldwork

**Participant E**
Role – Dialogue participant from Southeastern U.S.
Needs – Raised in the southern U.S. by strong Evangelical Catholic family (mostly the mother) and wishes to engage with others to explore interpretations and behavior patterns, retaining the best parts of her Catholicism

Resources – Has a background and master’s degree in International Relations

Effect – Moved from distrust and questioning to a more collaborative mindset and acceptance of the other, deeper appreciation for her Catholic heritage

**Participant F**
Role – Dialogue participant and project mentor from the Northeastern U.S.
Needs – Raised Lutheran/non-religious, wished to engage and observe the project, served to deepen understanding of the work in general

Resources – Many years as a mediation consultant, published author on the subject of bias awareness, teaches peer mediation in NY schools, gave feedback on the project as needed

Effect – Positive influences from participation included a wider understanding of how to help conflict resolution specialists in the field develop better questions and engagement strategies to overcome profiling of the other.

**Participant G**
Role – Dialogue participant and researcher/facilitator of project
Needs – Raised Lutheran, now Unitarian, explore and take action on research statement

Resources – M.S. in Conflict Resolution, trained facilitator of Ethno-Religious Dialogue

Effect – Was able to measure success of online environment, practiced mindfulness techniques in dialogical setting, increased interfaith leadership and facilitation skills

**Stakeholder Research Statement**

This project created a path for change. The PAR dialogue group sought to change or improve the level of understanding of our own childhood faith narratives through deep exploration of memories and stories. It further sought to examine any possible ties between these childhood faith stories and reasons for adult behaviors toward religiously diverse others – those we hold biases against. The result was deeper, more diverse, and more positive engagement with
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others who are very religiously or philosophically different from us. Our research statement reads as such:

“Because our stakeholder group values inclusivity, we wanted to explore the impact of our childhood philosophical and religious influences, so that we can better understand and change religious biases we bring with us, in order that we as stakeholders can mitigate our “otherizing” behaviors”.

Assessment and Measures of Success

The project started with an intake session, a consent form, and then a pre-survey that also served as a post-survey. The survey contained questions involving choices we make about engaging with ethnically and religiously diverse others as well as the historical influences of those choices. The first five questions were open ended and the last question was a rating scale with ten parts. The options for answering were placed on a continuum containing the choices - I strongly disagree, I kind of disagree, I can’t make up my mind, I kind of agree, and I strongly agree. This was the first step to help participants become aware of their personally held biases toward certain groups. Taking the survey as the project commenced and again as it ended served as a rudimentary measurement tool, but one that ultimately produced measurable results. The journey continued through seven more online dialogue sessions where positive and negative aspects of each participant’s religious or philosophical traditions were shared. In the last two months of the project, participants were asked to go into their prospective communities and intentionally (or not so intentionally) engage with groups formerly thought of as “off limits” or uncomfortable. Each encounter was journaled according to a set framework in order that the experiences could be compared effectively. Success was indicated by the increase in awareness.
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and the elucidating nature of what the participants recorded based on these encounter journal entries. The group shared and discussed their encounters in the final dialogue sessions. The written journals were then compared and analyzed, eventually becoming part of this capstone paper.

Making Sense of the Results and the Data

Since my stakeholders have been active participants throughout the process, all of them indicated on their consent forms that they wish to be sent a copy of the final report. The analysis of the data included comparing the language, thought processes, and desired behavior changes of the participants. It also included an analysis of the participants’ survey responses as a way to show the identifiable changes in bias awareness and attitude toward ethnically/religiously diverse others. The stakeholders continually self-reflected and assessed during each dialogue session. The journaling process provided space for them to assess the changes they have and will continue to make in their lives so they may act in a more inclusive manner. This is made possible in part, because all of the participants appeared to have some knowledge of research, interfaith work, ethnic/cultural/religious biases, and global perspectives. The difficult work came in uncovering these biases, but we tackled this hard work together. Stakeholders also contributed and shared resources with each other throughout the project, such as readings, articles, and reflections. In this way, they provided insight and enriched the collaborative spirit between members of the group.
CHAPTER 4 - Results: Evidence of Change through Project Implementation

Summary

This yearlong project has involved seven participants in online interfaith dialogue. We began as a group of strangers, only sharing a love of dialogue and a curiosity about others who are ethnically, culturally, and/or religiously diverse from ourselves. Many of the design elements for this project were co-created or chosen by the stakeholders themselves, such as the circle process and the encounter journals. Marketing professor, Venkat Ramaswamy and author and business consultant, Francis Gouillart remind us that the key to improving experiences is letting stakeholders play a central role in designing how they work with one another (2010). This provided critical buy in from the participants and made it a truly collaborative and action oriented endeavor. The final project design did not waver from the initial concept, except for the idea about an encounter journal, which was contributed by one of the stakeholders in the fifth month of our work together. Chapter four describes the specific actions, which led to changes in bias awareness and depth of engagement taken by the stakeholders of this Capstone Project.

Actions Taken by Researcher and Stakeholders

During the months of June through November in 2016 and January and February in 2017, our interfaith dialogue group met eight times for ninety-minute online sessions. The first action of the participants was to sign a consent form and then take a quick survey. Most of the sessions were recorded, after which many were summarized and sent to the participants for their review. In the last weeks of the project, the participants engaged three times each with those whom they consider to be their other and recorded their findings. Each submitted an encounter journal describing the level of intentionality for the encounter. They also discussed their recognized or expected biases, date and location of the encounter, insight gained, and behavior changes needed.
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The survey was retaken by stakeholders after the final session and the results were analyzed for any changes in their responses. The researcher was looking for changes in the areas of bias recognition, hope for the likelihood of peaceful coexistence, questioning the effects of one’s religious or philosophical upbringing, questions about the trustworthiness of media sources to report accurate religious news, and comfort levels with dialoguing about religiously controversial subjects.

Measurements of Results

At the beginning of this dialogue project, our stakeholder group was unclear exactly what we were going to measure. We quickly determined that it would generally have to do with bias awareness, deepening the level and scope of engagement with ethno-religiously diverse others, and changes in perspective and behavior. The survey, taken before and after the project, had a narrative component and questions that were answered on a continuum. The narrative questions asked how confident we were that we treated others fairly, how we could expand on our levels of understanding and empathy when engaging with those whom we considered our others, what the term other meant to us, and what our religious or philosophical upbringing entailed. The continuum questions asked about openness to difference, the influence of media headlines on trusting others, the hope of co-existing peacefully, how our childhood faith traditions impacted us, levels of anxiety versus comfort when engaging with others, and what witnessing acts of terror and violence might do to our levels of trust when engaging with ethno-religiously diverse others.

Notable changes occurred in the stakeholders’ responses. One question that asked about how acts of terrorism and violence may cause us to change our levels of trust with others was answered differently by five out of seven of the dialogue participants. Five of seven also
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changed their perspective on how their upbringing informed the way they treat others. Four of
seven changed their perspective on the hope for peaceful co-existence, the ease of talking about
controversial subjects with diverse others, acceptance of other faith and philosophical traditions,
and being comfortable around those whom we consider to be our others. Appendix E presents
the raw data accumulated from the survey taken both before and after the project.

The encounter journals asked about intentionality, bias awareness, location, insight, and
changes that need to be made to break down once though impermeable barriers between the
participants and their ethno-religiously diverse others. The journals contained rich narrative
about insight and change. Keywords were identified to help with the analysis of the narrative
components. It seems this exercise was about getting past our biases and carving out room to
explore stereotypes. Researcher and psychologist, Saul McLeod reminds us there is a clear
disadvantage to stereotyping because “it makes us ignore differences between individuals;
therefore we think things about people that might not be true” (2008, n.p.). The participants in
this dialogue project clearly wrestled with what is and what is not true about how we see the
differences between us.

Narrative data is particularly challenging to interpret definitively, unless one uses a
complex coding system. A good example is the work completed by social psychologist, Reina
Neufeldt (2014). Her work served as the inspiration for extracting keywords from the dialogue,
but closer analysis or initiating a coding process of these keywords is beyond the scope of this
project. The participants’ thoughtfully constructed journals are fascinating nonetheless. The
excerpts and keywords from the narrative data are found below.

**Participant A –**

**Keywords and phrases from their encounter journal and a quote about change:**
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Screening participants, storytelling, alleviated hostility, compassion, polarization, seeing the individual, assumption, common ground, shared values, awareness of the need to engage, demonization, black and white

“I think I have more courage to have those encounters after this project, and I think it would be really useful for us to meet every couple of months to talk about how we are handling encounters with “the other”.

Participant B –
Keywords and phrases from their encounter journal and a quote about change:
Myself as “other”, outside the mainstream, widen my circle, skepticism, unfamiliarity, celebrate commonalities, a medium that mocks sacred elements of my faith, awkwardness, discomfort, challenge and question, respect differences

“So part of my desire moving forward from this shared experience is to not assume that others will refrain from sharing or appreciating a connection with me based on my lifestyle, values and choices. But rather see in it an opportunity to widen my circle of love and friendship.”

“I know I must respect both those who choose to worship differently than I do, or not to worship at all. I know that my charge is to “love my neighbor.” So while I am sure I have biases the question is how do those biases influence how I interact with and treat others? I firmly believe this question, how I have interacted and treated others will be and is of concern to God - that God whom I believe is father to each of our spirits and loves us and desires that we experience happiness and growth in this life. So my quest is to be true to the mandate I feel I have to shine His light and be a force for good in the world”.

Participant C –
Keywords and phrases from their encounter journal and a quote about change:
Protect my image of myself, inclination to turn away, close myself off, really listened, demeanor totally changed, stand with the oppressed, found a shift in my thoughts, willing to be disturbed, monsters under the bed

“As I write up these encounters, I find that this entire project has illuminated for me my own “othering” tendencies. Growing up Jewish and a female born in 1945, I developed a very strong sense of being “the other”—Jew and woman and smart—and have done a great deal of coping and fighting, for my whole life. At this time in my life, I find I want to connect with, more than separate myself from others, and don’t have a strong skill set for doing this. If I am truthful, I must see and say that I feel scared and small in the presence of great activists and ordinary people who stand up to be counted.”

Participant D –
Keywords and phrases from their encounter journal and a quote about change:
Timely and inviting project, ringside seat for watching a potent othering process, see the divine in everything and everyone, we made conjectures, empty my mind and be present, different moral matrices, focus on love and social justice, resolved to be gentle, break new ground, love and
closeness can feel different with different members, guarded, differences of perceptions, cultural conditioning, place of love and empathy

“I am very glad to have been a part of this project. To be intentional about setting up and participating in encounters with “others,” I became aware of how frequently we are afforded situations where, with curiosity and compassion, we can connect with people in chance encounters as well as those we have known previously. When future opportunities present themselves, I am confident that I will be more mindful and caring and open to what may happen. On a par with the wonderful results of my third encounter, I greatly treasure the deep and thoughtful and vulnerable sharings that occurred within the project group. We really connected with each other and shared most freely our experiences and feelings around them.”

Participant E –
Keywords and phrases from their encounter journal and a quote about change:
Separation and not belonging, arrogance, one-issue voters, extreme othering, not a “real Christian”, the people I am most afraid of, emotional trauma, aggressive “others”, secure grounded space, gross contradictions, polarized, perceptions, soul searching conversations, not scripturally valid

“This encounter helped me to see there is a little patronizing demon that is still inside of me that ALSO believes that non-Catholic Christians are weak outsiders. I don’t really believe this in my heart and in my intellect—but perhaps it is the visceral and embodied emotional residue of my past that is still with me on some certain level. This is why I am so bothered by these women’s beliefs[a reference to another part of the stakeholder’s story]—I feel like they are in my way of me becoming the person I long to be—free of any beliefs of others as “less than”.

Participant F –
Keywords and phrases from their encounter journal and a quote about change:
Don’t spend time on our own biases, contradictory thought, disagreeing in a positive way, making friends with those who believe differently from me, he looked away but then started to beam and came alive, suddenly, it didn’t seem that terrible

“The insights I gained had to do with “judgmentalness”. I need to work on withholding judgment - I was going to say without hearing the whole story, but I really need to work on withholding judgment period!! There are always so many ways of looking at things. I acknowledge that I have a bias against violent men. It is hard for me to remain object, neutral. I judge them.”

Participant G –
Keywords and phrases from their encounter journal and a quote about change:
Measured changes in bias awareness, something truly did change, profoundly affected, practiced rituals, resistant, rebellious, White Christian privilege, family habit, fell short of finding a way to engage, power structure, went past our fear of insulting each other, get past the leftover politeness, wider and deeper next time, trepidation, outsider, unfamiliar, scary, peace and gratitude, middle ground
"Learning to change and overcome ethno-religious bias is a life-long process – one that some never embark upon. They never face the shadowy demons from their past. They just incorporate them into their present and future. This project was about exploring those demons and trying to move past them in a marked way."

**Communication of Results to Stakeholders**

After most of the sessions, summary notes were sent to the participants for them to review. They were also sent a copy of the values and guidelines we created in the first two months of the project. This allowed them to refer back to what we had achieved as a group with whatever frequency they desired. When a particular session prompted us to engage on a subject we found provocative, the dialogue participants would often send each other relevant resources about activism, stories of bias awareness, and tales of heroic efforts exhibited by members of faith communities in support of religiously different others.

The encounter journals served as the last group results of the project. We spent two sessions sharing each of the three encounters the stakeholders had experienced. This prompted a rich dialogue about not only the results of these encounters with others, but the intrapersonal dialogue we have with ourselves. The assessment that we can be our own *other* was a profound realization for many. The conversations we have with ourselves represent the growth in mindfulness necessary to understand *otherizing* behavior. “Intrapersonal talk is the psychological fuel to our external actions in the world” (Insightful Innovations, 2012, n.p.). Some people are very aware of their intrapersonal dialogue but for others it is part of a long journey of self-discovery.

After all the survey data was entered into charts, both the narrative answers and the answers supplied using a rating scale were sent to the participants. It is clear the project was not just about talking to each other about interesting topics. It actually caused the participants to change their perspectives or at least question things they formerly thought were certain. Each
stakeholder was emailed a copy of Appendix F, the Dialogue Project Survey Answers Comparison Chart and Appendix G, the Dialogue Project Survey Answers Summary Results Chart. These two pieces clearly showed that hearts and minds can change when participants gather in meaningful interfaith dialogue. However, the encounter journals probably did more to “move the needle”, if ever so slightly, than the dialogue alone could have achieved. Ever deeper analysis of the changes in our group will serve as the impetus for more sessions, which we plan to hold sometime in the near future.

Assessment of Goal Achievement

When interfaith dialogue creates change in the responses to a set of questions, does this represent statistically significant data? The answer to that question is probably no, but producing statistically significant results was never a goal for this project. Interpreting dialogue (interfaith or otherwise) is notoriously ambiguous. The United States Institute of Peace points out, “despite the increasing popularity of interfaith dialogue, rarely are these dialogue projects subjected to rigorous efforts to evaluate their impact and effectiveness” (2004, p. 1). This project was no exception. Instead, the goals of this project were to carve out space for increased awareness through shared exploration of ethno-religious biases and to become more mindful of the ways our upbringing influenced us. To that end, the project was deemed a success.

The most productive evaluation to ascertain what did or did not change is represented by Appendix G, entitled, Dialogue Project Survey Answers Summary Results Chart. The stakeholders were not able to see the results from the first time they took the survey. Additionally, they were asked to not try to remember their original answers. Every participant experienced changes in perception, from whether or not their caregivers influenced their ability to be accepting of their other, to increased bias awareness. The most significant changes came in
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how acts of terror and violence influence our ability to trust those who are ethno-religiously
different from us and whether or not we think our philosophical or religious upbringing fully
informs how we treat others. As a group, we increased our resistance to cultural biases and
stereotypes, especially those conveyed by the media. We became more comfortable talking about
controversial subjects that have to do with religion. Finally, we became more hopeful that we
could all someday co-exist more peacefully.

One of the most interesting reflections was discussed several times throughout the
dialogue sessions. Many participants recollected distinct memories about religious rituals that
they had not recalled for many years. Some of these recollections involved a newfound
appreciation for their upbringing. However, some concluded that the rituals negatively
influenced them and they wanted to detach from them as a way to become more open to ethno-
religiously diverse others. Overall, we reduced our anxiety about the topic by having a positive
interfaith experience.
CHAPTER 5 - Final Reflections and Recommendations

Overall Project Summary

This project gathered a group of interested stakeholders in online interfaith dialogue using a virtual platform called Zoom. Participants offered their consent and had a major role in designing the guidelines, values, and measurement tools for the project. They joined because they had interest in exploring the idea of otherizing from an interfaith perspective. However, they stayed because they wanted to see how the topic might relate to our ethno-religious/cultural identities and the influences of our childhood religious or philosophical traditions. We wanted to examine biases, behaviors, and strategies for engaging more fully with those whom we would typically avoid. We wanted to “move the needle” and start to get past the seemingly impermeable boundaries that keep us in silos. Measurements from the project show marked changes in attitude, comfort with ethno-religiously diverse others, recognition of one’s own biases, and a willingness to go deeper and discuss controversial subjects in dialogue.

Originally, respondents came from the United States, the United Kingdom, Greece, and the Netherlands, but the final group consisted of Americans from all over the United States. The group ranged in age from mid-thirties to early seventies and included six females and one male. All of the stakeholders had some background or knowledge of conflict resolution strategies, international relations, interfaith dialogue, and/or social activism but the group also came in with an unbridled willingness to be open and curious. The group united on many shared values such as:

• Inclusivity
• Not feeling censored
• Cherishing difference
• Awareness of biases
• Patience
• Willingness to question the dominant story but still preserve what is good
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- Honesty and respect
- Authenticity
- Resisting the temptation to speak for an entire group
- Safety and the audacity to be vulnerable
- Collaboration
- Love, compassion, and non-judgement
- Objectivity
- Empathy
- Facing our fears
- Understanding

Consistency of Guiding Values

Although the group tackled such topics as racist speech heard in our nuclear families, conservative versus liberal ideology about abortion, biases against “lazy White people”, and White Christian privilege found in our own histories, we remained respectful yet authentic in our exchanges. We strove to have deep conversations about policy, religion, and ethnicity but always kept in mind the need to treat each other as we wish to be treated. In short, we lived our values out loud, which we interpreted to mean transferring the values mentioned above into everyday interactions. In order for something to be lived out loud, it must be viewable and recognizable. When the participants shared their encounters in our last dialogue sessions, they talked of reaching out to people on the subway, intentionally encountering them in line to buy tickets to a Broadway show, and meaningful but difficult conversations at family functions, conferences, and neighborhood faith gatherings. These are the situations where the participants reached out and connected intentionally with people they would have otherwise scorned or ignored.

We worked collaboratively and made the time to include everyone in the dialogue sessions. In fact, one participant had a last minute scheduling conflict for the last session held in January 2017. The group decided that this individual also needed closure to the project and space to share their encounter journal. We could not find a time for all seven of us to meet, including the usual facilitator, so the group met on a night when five of the seven could meet and a
different stakeholder took over as facilitator. We carried on, not skipping a beat, and the quality of engagement remained just as meaningful as the early sessions.

**Project Impact on the Researcher**

The researcher of this project went from impatient, nervous, uncertain student to mindful facilitator over the nine months of this project. In the beginning, the most important focus was to meet the deadlines and achieve the goals of the project. An early over emphasis on identifying the elements of the change theory left the group members feeling conflicted about whether they wanted to continue. When the dialogue deepened, the collaborative spirit emerged. It was no accident that we became a mindfulness-centered group, starting and ending each session with a reflection meant to pull us away from the cares of our busy lives and into our sacred dialogue space. We used a talking piece during our circle mode time to ensure that everyone got to speak until finished. We also carved out time for a more spontaneous exchange. In this way, we achieved a balance between fun and serious, resulting in an abundance of group cohesion. Gradually, the change elements emerged. In the end, through the encounter journals and pre and post surveys, it was easy to see the ways that each stakeholder mitigated their own biases and changed the way they thought about how to engage with their *other*.

**Project Impact on the Stakeholders**

The stakeholders have undeniably experienced the cohesion that can occur when a group spends time in mindful dialogue. We are amazed that we were able to experience this in a virtual context. The Zoom platform worked so well that even those who had technology phobias became comfortable after the first session. One must recognize that while online education has expanded to almost every major university in the country and over one billion people chat with each other
on Facebook daily, these customs do not represent the depth of dialogue we strove for and seemingly achieved in the project (Zuckerberg, 2016.)

Our interest never dwindled, in fact it elevated and spread throughout the group. The February 2017 make-up session, led by someone other than the regular facilitator, went just as smoothly and provided just as much food for thought as the first. We fine-tuned the process as we moved from month to month, which allowed for the project goals to be achieved organically. By the end of the project, change was evident. The stakeholders’ survey answers and narrative entries indicate they were not only moved by the project, but they actually changed their perceptions. The survey question, “I sometimes get influenced by acts of terror and violence. They cause me to change my mind about how much I can trust other religiously diverse people”, got five out of seven stakeholders to rethink their assessment of how they feel about their other. Almost as many changed their answer to the survey question, “My religious or philosophical upbringing fully informs how I treat others”. This seems to indicate that the group members, as they recalled their childhood influences, developed a new understanding of their rituals and practices. I heard many say, I never really thought about how that influenced me before this project.

**Overall Project Assessment**

Strengths of the project include creating group cohesiveness, marked change in perceptions and attitudes, increased bias awareness, and deeper engagement with religiously diverse others. The platform worked successfully and allowed for easy transference of leadership. The facilitator kept the group members in touch through impeccable organization skills and excellent feedback. Our loftiest goal was to never let anyone feel like an outsider. Weaknesses include the lack of easily assessing nonverbal communication, a deficit from being
in a virtual environment. We were not able to hug each other and experience the tactile nature of group experiences. Finally, the nature of qualitative or narrative data is hard to measure. It is not easy to understand what someone’s survey response changes really mean to the overall assessment of change. The project was very unscientific in that regard.

In order to strengthen the project, the group should continue to meet and decide to follow up in person. Over time, by encouraging each other, they could build communal resources and become even stronger agents of change. The survey questions were limited and created in too short of a timeframe – before the project goals were actually envisioned. The researcher could have enhanced the questions, which would have expanded the findings.

**Recommendations for Future Projects**

This model for interfaith engagement is not anything new, although the depth of engagement achieved in our online environment might be just shy of groundbreaking. Each member feels compelled to stay connected. Future recommendations would then include more sessions, in person sessions, and perhaps a yearly conference that builds from this project. New groups of this caliber could be formed if each of the stakeholders in this project would start a dialogue group in their prospective community. The project could also be adapted for an international focus, anywhere in the world. Below is a basic outline of how one might go about setting up a dialogue group. However, there would be many variables depending on whether the project is online or in person.

I. Use list serves or other resources to develop an eclectic group.
   a. Email an introductory letter to each potential dialogue participant explaining the process.
   
   II. Schedule an intake session to ascertain the level of interest. Usually people who are curious will show up but only those who are committed will move forward.
   
   III. Decide on a platform if online, or a venue if in person.
   
   IV. Collaborate with participants to create group values and process guidelines.
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V. Decide on a topic or group of topics.
VI. Schedule the first actual session using a polling tool such as Doodle.
VII. Facilitate the first session.
   a. Decide whether the facilitator will remain the same or vary from session to session.
   b. Choose meaningful opening and closing reflections if so desired. Let the group decide collaboratively.
VIII. Ask the group if they want an end date, an open or closed group, and if they would like to choose an activism project to carry over the work into the community.

Obviously, the possibilities are endless and very location and culture sensitive. The best advice is to listen carefully and make sure every voice is heard when decisions are being made.

In addition, the group could take it upon themselves to become more active. We could take the insights we gained and apply them to social justice projects – especially those where we all have an active role. Finally, the researcher/facilitator of this project intends to present the findings at an ethno-religious mediation conference next fall. Much adaptation will be needed, but this is part of the process. The project findings could also be applied to the researcher’s workplace, as they are situated in a liberal Unitarian Universalist congregation that strives to achieve similar goals.

**Project Conclusion**

Interfaith dialogue has become increasingly popular but this project strove to create a deeply engaged group in an online environment, something that has been achieved with much less frequency. We also explored the influences of not only faith traditions but philosophical teachings as a way to include the nones. This term refers to those who have a set of codes for how to treat others, but do not identify with any religious tradition, often including atheists and humanists (Hunter, n.d.). The project examined ethno-religious biases as a way to mitigate the negative effects these biases may have on our treatment of the other, those people we would rather ignore or scorn instead of accept.
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Over the course of nine months, through dialoguing and journaling, the group explored and came to better recognize the effects of stereotypes, cultural assumptions, and negative (positive as well) impacts of childhood religious and philosophical teachings. By creating a cohesive group dynamic where participants felt safe and free to express their viewpoints, we were able to go beyond having “nice” surface conversations. The stakeholders worked collaboratively to design the project, sharing summaries and resources to enhance the depth of collective learning. Measurement tools such as a survey and narrative journals were used to collect the raw data, which was then analyzed and charted to show the attitudinal and perceptual changes.

Stakeholders responded differently to survey questions which appeared to indicate increased bias awareness, a better understanding of the impact of family rituals, and more hope for a peaceful co-existence among ethno-religiously diverse others. The rich narrative found in personal encounter journals shed light on the challenges that people have engaging with those we often avoid. The dialogue participants often acted with intentionality when setting up personal encounters, then reflected on the impact these encounters have on our lives. The group sees promise for expanding the project and continuing the dialogical exchanges as a way to become live change agents in a world desperate for deeper, more fruitful engagements.
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REFERENCES


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Appendix A – Dialogue Project Consent Form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE

Interfaith Dialogue Project

INVITATION

You are being asked to take part in a research/dialogue project. It will explore how the influences of childhood religious and philosophical teachings effect how we treat ethno-religiously different others. It is being conducted by Global Peacemaker Fellow, Jillian Post who is studying toward a Master of Arts in Interfaith Action at Claremont Lincoln University. It will be supervised by Dr. Stan Ward and has been fully approved by the senior administrators of the program.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will meet for these sessions, the first of which is on July 12, 2016 at 6:00 pm EDT or (UTC-4 hours). During this meeting, dates will be chosen for the next 90-minute dialogue session to be facilitated by Jillian Post, the graduate student, for a total of 8. During the dialogue, you will share narrative stories and experiences relating to your religious or philosophical upbringing. Your caretakers’ and family names should be anonymized. You should only expound on the details you are comfortable sharing. Stimulus questions will be utilized by the facilitator to keep the dialogue moving along. Immediately before the first actual session (not the intake session) you will be sent a pre-survey link (via SurveyMonkey) and this survey will be filled out again, shortly after the last session.

TIME COMMITMENT

This project will start in July with the last session date yet to be determined. Each session will be held on a night of the week t.b.d. by the participants and last 90 minutes, with a minimum of 6 sessions. We will be using the Zoom platform and a link will be sent to each participant’s email address prior to every session.

PARTICIPANTS’ RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed. You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you (as appropriate, “and without penalty”).

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study’s outcome). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begin.

SHARING OF EMAIL ADDRESS
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If you wish to share your email address with the group, so we can share resources and build cohesiveness faster, **list it here and check the box.** Thank you. **THIS IS NOT A REQUIREMENT!**

BENEFITS AND RISKS

Risks from this project will most likely be minimal but may include some emotional pain from sharing stories of rejection or harm from church leaders or family. Benefits include changing one’s scope of tolerance toward others, learning from each other, becoming more religiously literate, and increasing one’s understanding of cultural and religious differences. Two to three surveys will be taken throughout this research/dialogue project. The answers may “stir up” certain memories from the past.

COST, REIMBURSEMENT AND COMPENSATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will NOT receive any compensation nor will you be asked to pay fees of any kind.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data I collect will not contain any personal information about you except: where you were born, where you live now, what faith tradition or philosophical context you were raised with, and your first name. (You may supply an online alias if you so desire.) No one will link the data you provide to the identifying information you supply (e.g., name, address, email). These findings will be ANONIMOUSLY included in a final paper for my master’s degree, but will not be used for presentations at conferences or publication.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Dr. Stan Ward, my project mentor, has approved this study and will be glad to answer your questions at any time. You may contact him at sward@claremontlincoln.edu or write to:

Stan Ward, PhD.
C/o Claremont Lincoln University
250 W 1st St #330
Claremont, CA 91711

If you want to find out about the final results of this study, you should request this information at the end of the project and let the facilitator, Jillian Post, know by email of your decision.

INFORMED CONSENT SIGNATURE LINE

Because your name and email address will be known to the facilitator of this dialogue project, you must sign the consent form below no later than 5 days after you receive it. Thus, the project is not completely anonymous but NO ONE besides the facilitator, Jillian Post, will

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have access to this information at any time unless you check the box above saying you are willing to share your email address. This is the only piece of information that we may optionally share, besides your name.

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

x__________________________________
Participant’s Name (Printed)*

x__________________________________ ________________
Participant’s signature* Date

______________Jillian Post______________
Name of person obtaining consent (Printed) Signature of person obtaining consent

*Participants wishing to preserve some degree of anonymity may use their initials.

________________________________________________________________________

FOLLOW UP AFTER COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT

Please check the first box if you would like to have basic follow up/results emailed to you after completion of this project (will be sometime next year when the paper is done.)

1 □ I would like follow up on this study. Please contact me at this email address.

________________________________________________________________________

Please check the second box if you DO NOT wish to have follow up/results emailed to you after completion of this project.

2 □ Do nothing. I absolve the researchers of any obligation to contact me about this project.
Appendix B – Dialogue Project Survey Questions

Question 1: Where were you born and where do you live now?
Question 2: How confident are you that you treat all people fairly?
Question 3: How might you expand your ability to understand and empathize with those whose religious or philosophical teachings differ from yours?
Question 4: What does the term, "the other" mean to you?
Question 5: Explain your religious or lack of religious upbringing, (e.g. strict, none, philosophy-based, combination.)

Questions 6a through 6j were answered by using the following continuum.

I strongly agree.  I kind of agree.  I can’t make up my mind.  I kind of disagree.  I strongly disagree.

a. I am open to the differences of others.
b. I accept other faith traditions (other than my own) regardless of what the media headlines report.
c. I don’t think we were ever meant to co-exist peacefully on the planet.
d. My religious or philosophical upbringing fully informs how I treat others.
e. I have difficulty accepting viewpoints of non-believers or those who believe something very different from me.
f. When I engage with religiously diverse others, I feel comfortable and open.
g. Talking about controversial subjects with religiously diverse others causes me anxiety.
h. I sometimes get influenced by acts of terror and violence. They cause me to change my mind about how much I can trust other religiously diverse people.
i. My caregivers taught me tolerance, compassion, and love.
j. My caregivers tried to get me to reject certain faith traditions.
Appendix C – Dialogue Project Encounter Journals Guideline

A. Summary Thoughts about Project

B. First Encounter

1. Thought Process About How The Encounter Happened
2. Biases about This Group Or Person
3. When and Where
4. What Happened and What Insight was Gained
5. What Changes Need to Be Made For a Future Encounter

C. Second Encounter

1. Thought Process About How The Encounter Happened
2. Biases about This Group Or Person
3. When and Where
4. What Happened and What Insight was Gained
5. What Changes Need to Be Made For a Future Encounter

D. Third Encounter

1. Thought Process About How The Encounter Happened
2. Biases about This Group Or Person
3. When and Where
4. What Happened and What Insight was Gained
5. What Changes Need to Be Made For a Future Encounter

E. Conclusion

1. Impact of project – good or bad
Appendix D - Dialogue Project Circle Process Diagrams

The Talking Circle Dialogue Process
Tree analogy by Kay Prusin, found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-cN9dI5ZA0

The trunk connects the parts and represents the work we do in setting guidelines about how to treat each other using a talking piece or other symbols.

The precircle is represented by the roots of the tree. This is where the group discovers shared values and establishes the tone, often by adopting indigenous teachings.

The branches represent the output through collective action, connection, healing, and community building. This can be done during the circle and post circle parts of the process.

Creating an action plan

Getting acquainted with one another

Analyzing and addressing the issues

Building and rebuilding the relationships

The circle process has four parts that require equal time and attention. If any part is rushed, the results can be shallow. It is common to go back and forth between relationship building and addressing and analyzing the issues.
Appendix E – Dialogue Project Timeline

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<td>Decide on group values and guidelines</td>
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<td>Evaluate and debrief encounter journals</td>
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<td>Conduct post-survey, finalize success of changes</td>
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# MITIGATING ETHNO-RELIGIOUS BIAS

## Appendix F – Dialogue Project Survey Answers Comparison Chart

Survey Answers for Capstone Dialogue Project - Jillian Post - Claremont Lincoln University, M.A. in Interfaith Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anonymous ID</th>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>Question 4</th>
<th>Question 5</th>
<th>Question 6</th>
<th>Question 7</th>
<th>Question 8</th>
<th>Question 9</th>
<th>Question 10</th>
<th>Question 11</th>
<th>Question 12</th>
<th>Question 13</th>
<th>Question 14</th>
<th>Question 15</th>
<th>Question 16</th>
<th>Question 17</th>
<th>Question 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant A - before</td>
<td>Northwest US / Northeast US</td>
<td>I try, but subconscious biases are hard to identify.</td>
<td>Another person brought up a difference in religious and understanding that each faith is different.</td>
<td>Do more suffering if I play out of my way to treat people with empathy and and/or allow their events.</td>
<td>I think treating people fairly is not always easy.</td>
<td>I try, but subconscious biases are hard to identify.</td>
<td>Another person brought up a difference in religious and understanding that each faith is different.</td>
<td>Do more suffering if I play out of my way to treat people with empathy and and/or allow their events.</td>
<td>I think treating people fairly is not always easy.</td>
<td>I try, but subconscious biases are hard to identify.</td>
<td>Another person brought up a difference in religious and understanding that each faith is different.</td>
<td>Do more suffering if I play out of my way to treat people with empathy and and/or allow their events.</td>
<td>I think treating people fairly is not always easy.</td>
<td>I try, but subconscious biases are hard to identify.</td>
<td>Another person brought up a difference in religious and understanding that each faith is different.</td>
<td>Do more suffering if I play out of my way to treat people with empathy and and/or allow their events.</td>
<td>I think treating people fairly is not always easy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant B - before</td>
<td>Northwest US / Southwest Central US</td>
<td>I am getting used to treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Someone who practiced teaching their children about our faith background.</td>
<td>Someone who practices differing in other’s behaviors.</td>
<td>I cannot imagine the Church of Latter Day Saints being themselves.</td>
<td>I am getting used to treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Someone who practiced teaching their children about our faith background.</td>
<td>Someone who practices differing in other’s behaviors.</td>
<td>I cannot imagine the Church of Latter Day Saints being themselves.</td>
<td>I am getting used to treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Someone who practiced teaching their children about our faith background.</td>
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<td>I cannot imagine the Church of Latter Day Saints being themselves.</td>
<td>I am getting used to treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Someone who practiced teaching their children about our faith background.</td>
<td>Someone who practices differing in other’s behaviors.</td>
<td>I cannot imagine the Church of Latter Day Saints being themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant C - before</td>
<td>Northwest US / Southeast US</td>
<td>I am pretty comfortable treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Through discussion, I was taught that treating people fairly does not mean being fair.</td>
<td>I did not see &quot;another&quot; different in religious experience or sharing.</td>
<td>I have developed a negatively charged description of this word, that kills curiosity.</td>
<td>I am pretty comfortable treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Through discussion, I was taught that treating people fairly does not mean being fair.</td>
<td>I did not see &quot;another&quot; different in religious experience or sharing.</td>
<td>I have developed a negatively charged description of this word, that kills curiosity.</td>
<td>I am pretty comfortable treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Through discussion, I was taught that treating people fairly does not mean being fair.</td>
<td>I did not see &quot;another&quot; different in religious experience or sharing.</td>
<td>I have developed a negatively charged description of this word, that kills curiosity.</td>
<td>I am pretty comfortable treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Through discussion, I was taught that treating people fairly does not mean being fair.</td>
<td>I did not see &quot;another&quot; different in religious experience or sharing.</td>
<td>I have developed a negatively charged description of this word, that kills curiosity.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant D - before</td>
<td>Northwest US / Northeast US</td>
<td>I don’t take time to consider when people express their opinions differently from me.</td>
<td>Understanding it is difficult but empathy from people becomes more real.</td>
<td>The concept of other is not as black or white.</td>
<td>I cannot imagine the Church of Latter Day Saints being themselves.</td>
<td>I don’t take time to consider when people express their opinions differently from me.</td>
<td>Understanding it is difficult but empathy from people becomes more real.</td>
<td>The concept of other is not as black or white.</td>
<td>I cannot imagine the Church of Latter Day Saints being themselves.</td>
<td>I don’t take time to consider when people express their opinions differently from me.</td>
<td>Understanding it is difficult but empathy from people becomes more real.</td>
<td>The concept of other is not as black or white.</td>
<td>I cannot imagine the Church of Latter Day Saints being themselves.</td>
<td>I don’t take time to consider when people express their opinions differently from me.</td>
<td>Understanding it is difficult but empathy from people becomes more real.</td>
<td>The concept of other is not as black or white.</td>
<td>I cannot imagine the Church of Latter Day Saints being themselves.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant E - before</td>
<td>Southeast US / Southwest US</td>
<td>I can pretty comfortable treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Through safe dialogue space, it’s really a social construct that is a definite problem.</td>
<td>If people live in a good place, they probably have some form of faith.</td>
<td>My religious belief is very different.</td>
<td>I can pretty comfortable treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Through safe dialogue space, it’s really a social construct that is a definite problem.</td>
<td>If people live in a good place, they probably have some form of faith.</td>
<td>My religious belief is very different.</td>
<td>I can pretty comfortable treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Through safe dialogue space, it’s really a social construct that is a definite problem.</td>
<td>If people live in a good place, they probably have some form of faith.</td>
<td>My religious belief is very different.</td>
<td>I can pretty comfortable treating people fairly.</td>
<td>Through safe dialogue space, it’s really a social construct that is a definite problem.</td>
<td>If people live in a good place, they probably have some form of faith.</td>
<td>My religious belief is very different.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant F - before</td>
<td>Northeast US / New England region of US</td>
<td>I try, but I am interested in learning more about other religious.</td>
<td>Someone other than me will not offer me information.</td>
<td>I am interested in learning more about religious.</td>
<td>Someone other than me will not offer me information.</td>
<td>I try, but I am interested in learning more about other religious.</td>
<td>Someone other than me will not offer me information.</td>
<td>I am interested in learning more about religious.</td>
<td>Someone other than me will not offer me information.</td>
<td>I try, but I am interested in learning more about other religious.</td>
<td>Someone other than me will not offer me information.</td>
<td>I am interested in learning more about religious.</td>
<td>Someone other than me will not offer me information.</td>
<td>I try, but I am interested in learning more about other religious.</td>
<td>Someone other than me will not offer me information.</td>
<td>I am interested in learning more about religious.</td>
<td>Someone other than me will not offer me information.</td>
<td>I try, but I am interested in learning more about other religious.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant G - before</td>
<td>Central US / Northeast US</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
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<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>I want to be able to talk with people regarding understanding.</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant H - before</td>
<td>Central US / Northeast US</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
<td>I have a chance to talk with people who have adopted a more good faith.</td>
<td>People who are not fully accepted by society.</td>
<td>My religious upbringing did more good than harm, but I have adapted it substantially.</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
<td>I have a chance to talk with people who have adopted a more good faith.</td>
<td>People who are not fully accepted by society.</td>
<td>My religious upbringing did more good than harm, but I have adapted it substantially.</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
<td>I have a chance to talk with people who have adopted a more good faith.</td>
<td>People who are not fully accepted by society.</td>
<td>My religious upbringing did more good than harm, but I have adapted it substantially.</td>
<td>When I am honest with myself, I realize I have many biases.</td>
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<td>People who are not fully accepted by society.</td>
<td>My religious upbringing did more good than harm, but I have adapted it substantially.</td>
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Appendix G – Dialogue Project Survey Answers Summary Results Chart

**PARTICIPANT A**

Narrative from questions 1 through 5

| Talks about the need to reverse course and correct otherizing behaviors |
| Describes the action needed to engage more deeply – like attend events of the other |
| Begins to better understand the term the other |
| Laments about the limitation of their religious upbringing |

**Notable changes from questions 6a through 6j**

| 6a | Survey answer does not change |
| 6b | Appears to recognize potential media bias |
| 6c | Increase in the hope for peaceful coexistence |
| 6d | Appears to question positive effects of their upbringing |
| 6e | Survey answer does not change |
| 6f | Appears to recognizes bias |
| 6g | Survey answer does not change |
| 6h | Appears to question cultural biases |
| 6i | Appears to recognize limitations of upbringing |
| 6j | Appears to recognize biases in upbringing |

**PARTICIPANT B**

Narrative from questions 1 through 5

| Transitions from fascination with diversity to actual engagement |
| Accepts employment opportunity working with their other |
| Recognizes that they themselves are an other and not mainstream |

**Notable changes from questions 6a through 6j**

| 6a | Survey answer does not change |
| 6b | Seems to be more accepting of their other and defies the influence of the media |
| 6c | Survey answer does not change |
| 6d | Survey answer does not change |
| 6e | Survey answer does not change |
| 6f | Survey answer does not change |
| 6g | Appears to have gained comfort in discussing controversial religious subjects |
| 6h | Survey answer does not change |
| 6i | Survey answer does not change |
| 6j | Survey answer does not change |
MITIGATING ETHNO-RELIGIOUS BIAS

**PARTICIPANT C**
Narrative from questions 1 through 5

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Appears to realize that their own <em>otherizing</em> behavior might in self-defense of being an <em>other</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Begins to understand the negative connotation associated with being an <em>other</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appears to recognize being <em>otherized</em> as a small town minority Jew in rural America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notable changes from questions 6a through 6j

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>Appears to have revelation that they are not as open as once thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b</td>
<td>Seems to defy media bias more fervently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c</td>
<td>Appears to change their mind about the greater possibility of peaceful coexistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6d</td>
<td>Appears to recognize the powerful influence of their own upbringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6e</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6f</td>
<td>Appears to become slightly more comfortable with religiously diverse others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6g</td>
<td>Appears to recognize how challenging change is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6h</td>
<td>Appears to be resisting the urge to be drawn into stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6i</td>
<td>Not sure if parents really taught compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6j</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTICIPANT D**
Narrative from questions 1 through 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes their own reactivity when they are not in a “good place”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes the need for not just respect and empathy but genuine curiosity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notable changes from questions 6a through 6j

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6d</td>
<td>Appears to recognize and give credit to upbringing for a focus on love and justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6e</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6f</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6g</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6h</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6i</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6j</td>
<td>Survey answer does not change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MITIGATING ETHNO-RELIGIOUS BIAS

PARTICIPANT E
Narrative from questions 1 through 5

| Recognizes that insecurities of others causes them to feel more insecure. | Better understands the correct definition of dialogue |
| Gains understanding that *otherizing* is a social construct and a current problem | Rediscovering the loving nature of her Catholic upbringing |

Notable changes from questions 6a through 6j

| 6a | Survey answer does not change |
| 6b | Appears to recognize the powerful influence of media |
| 6c | Appears to change their mind about the greater possibility of peaceful coexistence |
| 6d | Survey answer does not change |
| 6e | Appears to recognize what a struggle it is to remain open |
| 6f | Survey answer does not change |
| 6g | Survey answer does not change |
| 6h | Appears to reconfirm that acts of terror should not negatively influence us |
| 6i | Seems to embrace the positive aspects of her religious upbringing |
| 6j | Survey answer does not change |

PARTICIPANT F
Narrative from questions 1 through 5

| Better defines biases and power struggles | Recognizes that WE define our own other |

Notable changes from questions 6a through 6j

| 6a | Survey answer does not change |
| 6b | Survey answer does not change |
| 6c | Survey answer does not change |
| 6d | Appears to better recognize the influences of her upbringing |
| 6e | Appears to have less difficulty in accepting religiously diverse others |
| 6f | Appears to have become more comfortable and open with religiously diverse others |
| 6g | However, still acknowledges some anxiety engaging with religiously diverse others |
| 6h | Appears to acknowledge the negative cultural influences from acts of terrorism |
| 6i | Survey answer does not change |
| 6j | Changes mind slightly about parents trying to get them to reject certain traditions |
**PARTICIPANT G**

**Narrative from questions 1 through 5**

| Recognizes their own improvement in bias awareness |
| Recognizes their need for deeper engagement especially when visiting other’s surroundings |
| Recognizes the social impact of othering and not just the personal impact |
| Comes to recognize the positive effects of their upbringing |

**Notable changes from questions 6a through 6j**

| 6a | Appears to become more open and accepting of others |
| 6b | Survey answer does not change |
| 6c | Appears to change their mind about the greater possibility of peaceful coexistence |
| 6d | Appears to better recognize the influences of their upbringing |
| 6e | Survey answer does not change |
| 6f | Appears to have become more comfortable and open with religiously diverse others |
| 6g | Appears to have much less anxiety about controversial religious subjects |
| 6h | Recommits to resisting the negative influences of terrorist attacks/avoid generalizing |
| 6i | Appears to better recognize parents good influences from faith tradition |
| 6j | Becomes more ambivalent about parents being the cause for them rejecting traditions |