

## **New Castle County, Delaware**

### **Introduction**

Nearly 10,000 residents of New Castle County, Delaware, have participated in Study Circles since 1997 in what is by far the largest program of its kind in the country. The YWCA-sponsored initiative, which is based in Wilmington and spans much of the northern half of Delaware, was created to address issues of race and race relations, but has expanded to several related topics. After reaching about 600 people in 1997 the program has since engaged an average of more than 1,000 new participants a year.

The success of the Delaware program at reaching such a large number of people may be attributed to a variety of factors. Most notably, the YWCA has used its unique position in the community to build an extensive coalition of organizational sponsors across local and state government, private businesses, and non-profit organizations. By mid-2004, the number of “partners” associated with the Study Circles program had climbed from an initial coalition of 20 to 147. Additionally, the program has adopted a strategy of conducting Study Circles within businesses, public agencies and community organizations; thereby easing the burden of recruitment and reaching those who might not otherwise volunteer to participate. In the most significant example of a workplace Study Circle program, the State Department of Labor has engaged its entire staff of more than 400 employees in four rounds of Study Circles. Finally, the program has trained several hundred facilitators over the past eight years and created a significant mechanism for providing ongoing support to them. Many of these facilitators have become active, well-placed ambassadors for Study Circles, expanding the initiative’s reach and bringing new organizational sponsors to the program.

The Delaware program is intriguing because of its sheer size, but also because of how the YWCA’s unique organizing strategy has shaped the programs’ impact on the community. Beyond the scale of the program, three attributes stand out as highly distinctive about Study Circles in New Castle County (especially in comparison to Kuna and Portsmouth): (1) the extensive use of places of work and organizations to convene Study Circles for employees and members, (2) the degree to which the program has reached high level officials in the State bureaucracy and targeted state agencies, and (3) the emphasis that the program has largely placed on individual action and change over collective action or policy impact.

Despite the size of the program, tracking the impact of Study Circles in New Castle County has proven to be highly challenging. Unlike Kuna and Portsmouth, organizers in New Castle County have not linked the deliberations to a governance process or public decision-making structure. Rather, Study Circles in Delaware have been primarily used as a means for supporting communication across difference and fostering action and change at the individual level. While participants are encouraged to take action out of the process, limited structures are in place to support this activity. As such, it is difficult to look to policy makers or traditional action forums to find outcomes as one might in other communities.

This case study will explore the various potential kinds of action and change that may have been produced through the Delaware Study Circles program. In addition to providing a brief profile of

New Castle County and a history of Study Circles in the community, it will look at several examples of how Study Circles have been used in order to better understand their impact in the community. Finally, this study will assess New Castle County's experience with Study Circles in terms of four critical areas that have been tracked across the case studies in this research project:

- **Participation:** How, if at all, have Study Circles changed the range of actors that form opinions upon public issues or influence community decision making on those issues?
- **Deliberation:** How, if at all, has deliberation introduced new considerations, or shifted the balance of existing considerations, in decision making processes?
- **Embeddedness:** How, if at all, are participation and deliberation incorporated into the practical and moral reasoning processes of individuals, institutions and organizations in the community?
- **Outcomes:** Have shifts to greater participation and deliberation resulted in any differences in the actions of local government, civic associations or other stakeholder organizations? Have they resulted in changes in important areas of public concern?

Research for this study was conducted through several rounds of phone interviews, a one-day site visit, and a review of relevant documents related to the Study Circles program and newspaper articles written about the events related to the program. A list of the 21 people interviewed for this case study is available in the appendix.

### **Community Profile**

New Castle County is the northern-most county in the state of Delaware and home to more than half of the state's population (512,000 out of 807,000 people in 2002). While it has the largest population of Delaware's three counties, New Castle County is the smallest in size and covers only 435 square miles. The northern half of the county contains more than 90 percent of its population, which is where the state's largest city, Wilmington, is situated. Wilmington is thirty miles south of Philadelphia and about 70 miles north of Baltimore. The southern half of the county, south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, is heavily made up of farmland and is sparsely populated in contrast to the north.

More than two-thirds of the state's African American population resides in New Castle County as does almost two-thirds of the state's Latino population. While the percentage of people of color living in the suburbs outside of Wilmington has increased over the past few decades, Wilmington remains a predominantly African American city in a predominantly white county. Fifty-seven percent of residents in Wilmington are African American and 36 percent are white. Ten percent of Wilmington residents are Latino. By contrast, only 20 percent of New Castle County residents are African American and about five percent are Latino.

Race and ethnicity remain substantial barriers to equal opportunity in Delaware and New Castle County. According to the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, despite Delaware's relative

affluence, African American and Latino residents “do not enjoy equal access to its prosperity.”<sup>1</sup> The average income of Delaware’s white families is \$18,000 greater than the state’s average African American families. According to the Urban League: “Until the late 1960s blacks and most Hispanics were barred from all but the lowest paying, least desirable occupations. More than 30 years later, they are still concentrated in lower blue-collar and other menial occupations. The groups are largely absent from the upper reaches of Delaware’s corporate establishment.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1970, the average African American household in Delaware earned sixty cents for every dollar earned by the average white household. Twenty years later, this ratio had not changed. Latino households in Delaware earned 53 cents for every dollar received by whites in 1980. This gap narrowed in 1990 to 62 cents for every dollar. In 1990, nearly 17 percent of white households in Delaware had incomes in excess of \$75,000, compared to six percent of African American and Latino households.<sup>3</sup>

While education levels for people of color have improved in recent decades, an education attainment gap remains. Since 1960, the proportion of African American and Latino residents with high school and college degrees sharply increased; African American high school graduation rates in Delaware rose from 15 to 53 percent. Nevertheless, graduation rates, dropout rates and test scores continue to lag behind among the state’s students of color.<sup>4</sup> Delaware’s public schools did not become fully desegregated until 1970 and New Castle County’s schools remained under federal court supervision until 1995 due to enduring vestiges of segregation.<sup>5</sup>

Lingering racial disparities are evident in an array of other aspects of life in New Castle County and the state of Delaware. Homeownership among white residents in Delaware was more than 20 percent higher among white families than African Americans in 1998.<sup>6</sup> While segregation in the state has decreased in recent decades, *The News Journal* found in 2000 that more than one third of the state’s population lived in a segregated census tract.<sup>7</sup> Finally, arrests across almost every class of crime are disproportionately higher among people of color than among whites. African American and Latino representation in the prison population was 23 percent higher than the national average in 1999.<sup>8</sup>

It is within this context that New Castle County’s YWCA launched an ambitious Study Circles program to address issues of race and race relations.

## **History**

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<sup>1</sup> Leland Ware, David Rudder and Theodore Davis. *The Pace of Progress: A Report on the State of People of Color in Delaware*. Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League. Summer 2002. 131

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 131-132

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 42

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 49-52.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 132.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 71.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid 76-77.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 86.

The YWCA is an international organization with 25 million members in 122 countries. In the United States, the YWCA has 2 million members based in 300 local organizations. The two “hallmark programs” of the YWCA are racial justice and the economic advancement of women. Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the organization has been a progressive leader in many communities for causes of social justice and empowerment.

In 1995, the national organization of the YWCA launched a nation-wide campaign, called “A Week Without Violence,” which was to be implemented locally by each of its chapters. In accordance with the campaign, the New Castle County chapter formed a local coalition of more than 20 organizations to pursue a public education initiative on the issue. The effort was the local YWCA’s first large-scale public education campaign and its first attempt to build a robust local coalition. The organization’s former director described the effort as “amazing.” She said, “It was the first time we had done something on a public education focus; a community-wide event with that kind of strategy and that level of partnerships.” She attributed the success of their coalition building efforts to the YWCA’s perceived neutrality in the community. While the organization has a strong social justice mission, people tend not to be aware of the extent of its positions and advocacy. “We aren’t associated with any camp,” she said.

### Study Circles in New Castle County

In a debrief of the “Week without Violence” program, the local sponsors judged the effort to be successful, but felt that it had failed to provide interested citizens with a way to become actively involved – an outlet for them to do something. Study Circles became the solution to this shortcoming when, several months later, the Study Circles Resource Center received an award at the YWCA’s national conference for its work on issues of race and diversity across the country. The conference presentation inspired the Wilmington delegation to bring Study Circles to New Castle County in order to add a citizen engagement component to their public education efforts. Subsequently, the YWCA convened a working group to determine how to use Study Circles.

The Study Circles working group consisted of more than 20 organizations seeded from the previous year’s coalition and representing a broad diversity of interests and backgrounds. Among the working group members were representatives from the local daily newspaper, the school district, the Wilmington Mayor’s Office, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension, the NAACP, the Delaware Office of State Personnel, FCC National Bank, Dupont, the United Way, the Interdenominational Minister’s Action Council, and the Delaware Department of Labor. The initial challenge for the working group was to decide on what issue the program should focus: violence or racism. After significant discussion, the group decided to start with racism because they saw issues of race as underlying many other issues facing the county.

It is worth noting that no precipitating incident led to the creation of the Study Circles program in New Castle County. When asked about the origin of the program, most people involved with the YWCA cited racial problems of the past like Jim Crowe or the National Guard’s 9-month “occupation” of Wilmington after a race riot in the 1960s. Contemporary racial discrimination was described as a substantial issue for the area, but few if any specific “flash points” were noted by interviewees. The New Castle program seems to have been a proactive effort to deal with

racial issues. “I’m proud to say there was no one galvanizing event, no one horrible, shameful thing that peaked people’s conscience,” said one of the program’s organizers. “People stepped up because they knew we need to find more effective ways to work together.” This is unlike many other Study Circles programs, such as Fayetteville, NC and Springfield, IL, which were prompted by high-profile conflicts involving the police.

Following a pilot round of Study Circles in the fall of 1996 that was undertaken by members of the working group, the YWCA began its first full round of circles. A charter produced by the working group described the initial vision, mission and goal for the program:

“Our Vision: To improve the understanding and acceptance of differing races and cultures throughout the New Castle County area. Our Mission: To provide the community with practical recommendations for actions which organizations, institutions, and individuals can take to improve race relations and racial equality. Our goal: To develop a diverse community-wide network of at least 100 study circles involving up to 1000 people in discussions of race relations in 1997.”

A kick-off forum for Study Circles in New Castle County was held in January of 1997 at the Delaware Technical and Community College.

#### First Round and Creation of Action Groups

The first round of Study Circles in New Castle County ran from April until June with a “concluding event” in October. The format of the program’s first round was relatively typical for a community-wide Study Circles program on race. It’s most distinguishing characteristic was its scale; 600 people participated in the first year. Between January and the launch of the program in April, the YWCA spent considerable effort expanding its coalition to increase the reach of Study Circles. Seventy-five organizations joined the effort as sponsors, each agreeing to (1) designate an organizational coordinator as a contact for the program, (2) promote the program to its members, (3) recruit 10 or more participants to be assigned to Study Circle groups, and (4) recruit group discussion facilitators and provide meeting locations. The YWCA also benefited from strong support from local media, which provided extensive coverage and free public service announcements for the initiative.

Across the 35 Study Circles conducted in 1997, 62 percent of participants were white and 31 percent were African American with only two percent Latino. Forty-three percent of participants were between the ages of 45 and 64, 21 percent were over 65, 20 percent were between 18 and 29, and 16 percent were between 30 and 44. Fifty-five percent of participants said that their participation in the dialogue increased their ability to discuss issues openly. Sixty-two percent said it increased their understanding of their own beliefs and attitudes. Eighty-six percent said it increased their understanding of other’s beliefs and attitudes. Fifty-seven percent said it increased their ability to communicate more effectively with people who may have different beliefs. Finally, 43 percent said it increased their inclination to volunteer in the community.

At the end of the first round, six “action groups” were created to support participants in taking action, but the groups were soon consolidated into three: “Reaching Our Youth,” “Deepening

Our Knowledge and Skills,” and “Changing Our Institutions.” The action groups, each of which would continue for several years with mixed results, represent the YWCA’s most significant attempt to support action out of the Study Circles. The groups received limited staff support and relied heavily on active volunteer leadership from community volunteers.

“Reaching Our Youth” primarily sought to launch Study Circles and other diversity program in the schools. At a “community forum” on December 10, 1997, the group reported the initiation of several programs, including (1) the creation of a Study Circles program at a local high school, (2) an effort to encourage the state to provide in-service credit for teachers through Study Circles, (3) an attempt to establish a for-credit program of Study Circles at the University of Delaware, and (4) the recruitment of diversity seminars and speakers to come to the school district, like speakers from the Anti-Defamation League. Over the long term, “Reaching Our Youth” would focus primarily on the creation of Study Circles programs in local schools and was successful at launching small programs in more than a dozen schools and local colleges.

The “Deepening Our Knowledge and Skills” group sought to provide resources and opportunities for Study Circles participants to continue to explore the issue of race and race relations. The group created a resource center at the YWCA with books and tapes, showed movies on racial diversity, and encouraged people to participate in various workshops and seminars, like a 36-week course that 17 people joined in 1997 called “Partners in Eliminating Racism through Evaluation Counseling.”

Finally, the “Changing Our Institutions” group primarily attempted to recruit state legislators to join Study Circles in order to raise their awareness and understanding of issues related to race and racism. Among the first projects of the group was the creation of a package of materials for Study Circles participants that identified their elected officials and provided guidelines for inviting officials to participate in the process. Initially the action group focused on reaching legislators out of concern over efforts by legislatures in others states to scale back affirmative action and other related programs. A member of the action group described the group’s concerns at the 1997 community forum: “We do have a concern [about] the civil rights initiatives being brought up in many states, most notably in California. This [is] moving across the country, [and] we want to be prepared. It has surfaced in Delaware – not in a large way – but we figure, again, the most effective way to assist the public is to have knowledgeable legislators.”

The “Changing Our Institutions” action group would prove largely unsuccessful at recruiting legislators and elected officials to participate in Study Circles. While several expressed their support, the group was only able to convince one legislator to participate in a Study Circle after ith her local church decided to convene a dialogue group. “We just couldn’t seem to make the right connection,” the group’s chairperson explained. The YWCA’s former director elaborated on the challenge of supporting the work of the action group:

“Some things are easier to do – it’s a lot easier to recruit for Study Circles then to figure out how to tackle something as amorphous and entrenched as institutional racism. We didn’t get really focused in to bringing it to some particular policy point. There was nothing in the environment that presented itself. So [the action group was] all over the place, from police brutality to achievement gap to

economic disparities. To tell you the truth from a lead organizer's standpoint, the one key ingredient we didn't have was a partner to hand off doing advocacy and public policy work. We didn't have a group with that as an agenda to drive that. The Y is a direct service organization and there was just no one but me who could give much time to that level of work. So it just got neglected. Meanwhile we were off on a tear recruiting because we so value the dialogue."

### Evaluating the First Year

After the first year of its Study Circles program, the YWCA joined the Study Circles Resource Center to conduct three focus groups to evaluate the initiative's progress.<sup>9</sup> The focus groups examined the respondents' sense of the need for dialogue about racism and race relations, evaluated elements of the Study Circles model, and provided information about the early impacts of the program. A total of 30 people participated in the three focus groups. Respondents in the first group were white, respondents in the second group were persons of color (all but one were African American), and the third group was multi-racial.

According to the study, people felt that "the Study Circles fill a need in the community for interracial dialogue and for open conversations about racism and race relations. They felt that their communities have deep-seated race problems and that reluctance to acknowledge racial issues is common." While a "strong" majority of the participants said they would take part in Study Circles again, respondents in all three groups – and especially persons of color – "repeatedly said they would judge the ultimate value of the Study Circles by what came out of them."

"The importance of actions steps was clear in these focus groups," said the report. "First and foremost, respondents emphasized the importance of dialogue leading to action, though their ideas of meaningful action differed." One participant exemplified this point, saying that, "One of the driving forces that got me involved was and is the desire to see something concrete that I could touch, taste, smell. ... I definitely want to see some action."

The report listed eight actions that participants had reported that they had taken or were planning to take as a result of their participation in the Study Circles:

- An African American man said he planned to visit the church of a white pastor whom he met in a Study Circle. He also planned to check up with other members of the group to see what they had done to encourage them to work to make a difference.
- Two Study Circle participants came together to try to integrate an area Bible school.
- Two Study Circle participants approached school administrators about reducing racism in a local school.
- Many white respondents reported that they were no longer tolerating racist remarks.

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<sup>9</sup> Catherine Flavin-McDonald, "New Castle County Delaware: Study Circles on Racism and Race Relations, Year 1 – 1997, A Report on the Focus Groups." Study Circles Resource Center and the YWCA of New Castle County, 1998

- One white woman reported efforts to continue learning about racism, mentioning that she was reading *Teaching Tolerance* magazine with great interest.
- Client and staff participants in a Study Circle held at an area nursing home planned ways to reduce racism at the facility.
- Others reported plans to get involved in multi-racial projects through a community service center.
- The “Reaching Our Youth” action group was cited for its work to find ways to involve young people in the Study Circles.

Notably, participants said that the least rewarding segment of the Study Circles was the discussion of public policy because “they felt it was difficult to affect policy.” In many respects, this last sentiment addresses an important aspect of New Castle County’s Study Circles program. The Delaware program largely positioned Study Circles as a tool for increasing communication and understanding at the individual level. The theory of change articulated, explicitly or implicitly, by most organizers and facilitators in New Castle County was that Study Circles would impact beliefs and behaviors in the community individual by individual and eventually reach some critical mass.

In part, New Castle County’s positioning of Study Circles as a tool for individual change may be attributed to the nature of the issue of race. To a degree not true for most other policy issues, racism is a problem that occurs at both the individual level of personal beliefs and behaviors, and at the level of community institutions, public policy and relationships of power. As reflected by participants’ frustration with affecting policy, the pathway for impacting institutional racism through Study Circles may be more difficult to reach. More importantly, the pathway was not particularly well developed by the New Castle County program. This aspect of the program will be addressed further later in this study.

### Year Two and Workplace Circles

A kick-off for the program’s second year attracted more than 450 people during the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in 1998. Over the course of the year, more than 1,000 new participants took part in Study Circles and the number of the program’s partners increased to 96. While the format of the second year of circles in New Castle County was similar to the first – a series of community-wide circles launched by a kick-off event and concluding with a community action forum on June 28 – the program’s second round began a slow transition away from the standard Community-Wide Study Circles model and towards an approach primarily focused on conducting dialogue within workplace and organizational settings. Notably, while evaluations of the program in 1998 remained positive, the YWCA saw slight declines in the percentage of participants who said that participation in the deliberations had positively impacted them in the five categories being tracked. This could be a result of the use of workplace circles, which included mandatory participation in some cases.

The first major workplace Study Circles in New Castle County were held within the Delaware Department of Labor in the Spring of 1998. The Department engaged all 430 of its employees in Study Circles, including the Secretary of Labor and the Department’s top leadership. Twenty-nine circles were conducted over a three-day period at an off-site facility. Each circle was co-

facilitated by an employee and a YWCA facilitator. The mandatory sessions were repeated by the Department in subsequent years on issues of gender, disabilities and creating “a more perfect union.” Another round on race is planned for the coming months.

Study Circles at the Department of Labor were first explored in 1997 by an internal diversity committee made up of employees and managers – including the leader of the employee’s union – that had been looking to address issues of race and diversity within the agency. The Study Circles model was presented to the group by the Equal Employment Opportunity Manager from the Delaware Office of Personnel, who also served on the steering committee for the Study Circles program. The Department of Labor committee was attracted to the model because it seemed to be a constructive approach to increasing communication among employees.

Initially, the Secretary of the Department of Labor was resistant to the idea of convening Study Circles in the agency. The EEO Manager explained that the Secretary, who was African American, was “taken aback that I would even bring up the issue because his department was already diverse. ... He blasted me for even having the conversation.” Nevertheless, the Department’s diversity committee went through a pilot round of Study Circles and came out enthusiastic about the process. The committee’s enthusiasm proved to be enough to convince the Secretary to conduct his own pilot round of circles for the Department’s top managers.

Upon completion of the pilot, the Secretary and his leadership team had bought into the idea of engaging the entire agency in Study Circles. “[The Secretary] realized that it was important to use Study Circles to create a different working environment,” explained one organizer of the program. Another person involved suggested that the Secretary’s support may have been related to his position as chair of the Governor’s Equal Employment Opportunity Council, which had to date not been very active. Engaging the Department in Study Circles was a way for the Secretary to show leadership on diversity issues within the state bureaucracy. “Part of it was political,” said the agency’s former Director of Human Resources. “It is good to be in a leadership role in this area.”

While many employees were resistant to the Study Circles program – “initially people were kicking and screaming” – most rated the dialogue as useful and worthwhile after completing their deliberations. Evaluations completed by each participant were later analyzed by an economist consulting with the Department. Among the findings of the analysis were:

- 63 percent of participants felt it was a valuable use of their time.
- 62.9 percent felt that they had gained a much better understanding of their co-workers.
- 38.3 percent felt that their attitudes about race and/or ethnicity had changed as a result of the Study Circles.
- While black and white participants were about equally likely to agree that they had gained a much better understanding of their co-workers (64 percent and 63.7 percent), black participants were more likely to disagree (24 percent vs. 16 percent).
- Workers aged 45 years and older were more likely to feel they had gained a much better understanding of their co-workers (67.2 percent vs 60.9 percent of those under 45 years of age).

- Women were more likely than men to believe that the Study Circles were a valuable use of time (68.1 percent vs 55.8 percent).
- Black males were most likely to believe that the Study Circles were a valuable use of time (78.6 percent vs 53.5 percent).<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, the evaluation found that of those eager to participate in the Study Circles, nearly 83 percent found them to be a “valuable” experience. Among those who had been reluctant to participate, 47 percent said that they were a valuable use of their time and only 28 percent said they were not. Only seventy-seven employees of the Department said they had initially been strongly resistant to attending the Study Circles. Of this group, 24 agreed or strongly agreed that it was a good use of their time afterwards.

While the Department’s decision to continue to reconvene Study Circles in subsequent years – across three different cabinet secretaries – suggests that the program had a positive affect, little data is available to substantiate how participation in Study Circles have impacted the Department or what actions have been taken by employees as a result of their participation in the deliberations. Several people involved with the program said that Study Circles had shifted the environment or culture of the Department. “Before [the Study Circles] there was no mechanism for employees to get to know other employees, other than those who they work with,” said one person. “It put a warmth in the agency. Now I have some history with people here.” Another person said that it taught employees new skills, like active listening. Finally, the creation of a sexual harassment program and a multi-cultural lunch program were cited as evidence of changes within the agency spurred by the Study Circles.

During the second year of the Study Circles program, pilot Study Circles were also held in several public schools as a result of the work of the “Reaching Our Children” action group and a retired high school teacher who spearheaded the effort. Three school districts conducted circles among teachers and administrators on issues involving the elimination of past desegregation programs and issues of accountability. Study Circles were also introduced into the state mental hospital.

The concluding action forum in June of 1998 was used as a “reunion” for past Study Circles participants. In addition to listening to reports from the various action groups, participants were presented with a “Study Circles Action Guide” that had been prepared by the State Office of Volunteerism as a tool for encouraging participants to take action. The guide consisted of several sections, including: (1) “guiding principles” that described the relationship between dialogue and action, (2) a series of questions to help people decide whether to act as an individual or with a group, whether to act through an existing organization or by starting something new, and to determine the kind of skills and amount of time they would need, (3) steps to take in order to get started, (4) a list of 28 community organizations with which individuals could volunteer, and (5) worksheets to help participants plan their action strategy. No data is available to suggest how many people used the guide or volunteered as a result of reading it. No one interviewed

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<sup>10</sup> George Sharpley, Jr. “Report on The Delaware Department of Labor’s Experiences with the YWCA Study Circles on Race and Race Relations.” Delaware Department of Labor. September 18, 1998

mentioned the guide as a tool that had been used by themselves or by another member of a Study Circle in which they had participated or facilitated.

### Round Three and Further Movement

On November 19, 1998, a third round of Study Circles was launched at a kick-off event at the University of Delaware. The event, which was attended by more than 500 people, was held in conjunction with the area's major daily newspaper, the *News Journal*. At the forum, participants broke up into four groups: affirmative action and the workplace, tolerance and acceptance, education, and a mock Study Circle session. Recommendations for action generated through the first three break-out groups tended to be overly general. For example, the group that addressed affirmative action and the workplace concluded with the following recommendations: "management needs to take the lead," "there needs to be more accountability," "must work on attitudes and practices," "hold more study circles," and "need clear plan of action."

In order to attract new participants to the effort, the YWCA adopted a new strategy at the November kick-off event that it would continue to employ at future Study Circles events by inviting a prominent speaker, Cornell West, to address the group. Future Study Circles events featured the daughter of Martin Luther King Jr., Joycelyn Elders, and Lani Guinier. The use of prominent speakers reflected a concern among the program's organizers that after engaging almost 2,000 people, the program needed to branch out to new participants. Many worried that the program was only reaching those already predisposed towards more tolerant views on issues of race; that it was "singing to the choir."

This concern that the program needed to move beyond "the choir" was also a significant factor in the program's shift to conducting Study Circles in workplace and organizational settings. Especially in those settings, like the Department of Labor, where Study Circles were mandated or strongly encouraged for employees, the program was able to engage a more diverse, cross-section of people in the dialogue. Over the past several years, Study Circles have been used in a wide array of businesses (e.g. Accenture, W.L. Gore and Associates, The News Journal, Dupont), community organizations (e.g. Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, Claymont Community Center, Chesapeake Bay Girl Scouts, Jewish Family Services), schools and colleges (e.g. Concord High School, Talley Middle School, Sussex High School, Brandywine High School, Delaware Technical Community College), and places of worship (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Red Clay Presbyterian Church, Hockessin United Methodist Church, Aldersgate United Methodist Church).

More importantly, the YWCA began an intentional effort to expand the program to several state agencies beyond the Department of Labor. By reaching the employees of public agencies, Study Circles organizers hoped that organizational shifts could have broader impacts in the community. Among the departments within Delaware state government that have used Study Circles are the Office of State Personnel, the Delaware Human Relations Commission, the Delaware Division of Youth and Family Services, the Delaware River and Bay Authority, the Delaware Psychiatric Center, the Delaware State Police, and the State Department of Education. Top leadership, including the cabinet secretary, participated in the dialogues at several of these agencies.

The YWCA's success at penetrating the state bureaucracy may be attributed to several factors, including the demonstrated success of the Department of Labor's program. The most important factor, however, seems to be the support of the State Office of Personnel and, in particular, the office's Equal Employment Opportunity Manager. The Office has served as an important vehicle for disseminating the model and providing it with credibility. In April 1999, the Office organized a special Study Circles event for state employees hosted by the Governor in order to encourage state participation in the program. The EEO Manager has also served as an active ambassador for the program, regularly presenting it to the leadership of other agencies. In one instance, the Office of Personnel officially recommended the use of Study Circles for an agency – the State Police – that was undergoing racial problems. This recommendation was later translated into an executive order mandating participation of the agency from the Governor.

### New Pathways for Expansion

In recent years, New Castle County's Study Circles program has continued to grow. Distinct from its early years, the program's on-going expansion seems to follow three distinct paths. The first path is through requests made to the YWCA by local organizations and employers to conduct Study Circles. The YWCA has become known in the community for its dialogues on race and diversity. Organizations interested in diversity issues regularly approach it with requests for assistance with facilitating dialogues, sometimes in the guise of "diversity training." In some instances, organizations pay the YWCA for its facilitation services and technical assistance, but in most circumstances they are provided as a free service.

In one recent example of a Study Circle requested by a community group, a participant talked about a Study Circle organized by her church last year. The dialogue was convened by the church's Social Justice group, which had been looking for ways to address diversity issues in the community. At the request of the church group, the YWCA sent two volunteer facilitators with discussion guides to support a Study Circle among the group's members. Twelve people from the predominantly white congregation participated in the multiple-session dialogue, all but two of whom were white. The participant described the experience as highly engaging and meaningful, but said there was no support or structure for taking action out of the discussions. She elaborated: "It would have been nice if at the conclusion, they had said that we'll meet again in three or six months to talk about what we have accomplished. Or if they had said: 'here are suggestions as to what you might be able to do.' They kind of left it to the group." It seems that because this type of Study Circle is run independent of a larger round of activity, it has lost a connection to any formal initiative to support action.

The second path through which the Study Circles program continues to grow is the YWCA's substantial facilitator network. A significant number of new Study Circles are the result of facilitators or past participants bringing the program to a new organization at which they are members. The YWCA has made a considerable effort to grow and nurture its facilitator network, the members of which have in a sense become ambassadors for the program. Facilitators, who are trained by the Delaware Division of Human Relations, may work with Study Circles in their organizations and places of work or they may be asked by the YWCA to facilitate for other groups in the community. Since 1999, the YWCA has organized a Facilitator Support Group – run by volunteers – in order to nurture the network and provide facilitators with an opportunity to

talk about their experiences and the challenges they face. The monthly meetings feature a presentation on a relevant topic and discussions of personal experiences. Over the years, the organization has held several reunions and public events for past facilitators and participants.

Among the hundreds of trained facilitators, a core group has emerged of about a dozen volunteers who act as special ambassadors for the program in a certain part of the community. At a recent focus group arranged to examine the New Castle County program, these core volunteers spoke about Study Circles with a religious zeal. Many agreed with a characterization that they acted as evangelists “bringing the word” to other members of the community. For example, one of these volunteers, a retired teacher, has dedicated herself to launching Study Circles programs in the county’s schools. Her efforts, independently and through the “Reaching Our Youth” action group, have resulted in the creation of Study Circles in more than a dozen local schools. Another of these volunteers, the EEO Manager, has disseminated Study Circles through state agencies.

The final path for the growth of the program is the intentional efforts by the YWCA to launch Study Circles in situations that may produce important outcomes for the community. In keeping with its social change agenda, the YWCA has sought to start programs that may lead to some kind of institutional change. Two examples of the strategic use of Study Circles have been attempts by the YWCA to conduct Study Circles among the Delaware State Police Department and to create a Study Circles program on the “achievement gap” in the Delaware public schools.

Attempts to bring Study Circles to the Delaware State Police began several years ago after a series of high profile disputes surfaced involving diversity issues within the Department. At the core of the problem were concerns that women and people of color were not well represented among the Department’s leadership and that not enough was being done to ensure an overall diverse workforce. Out of 608 state troopers in 2001, 544 were men and 64 were women. Only seventy-four state troopers were persons of color (12 percent). Among the Department’s leadership, there was one African American male captain, one African American male lieutenant, two Hispanic male lieutenants, one white female captain, and two white female lieutenants. A study by the Office of Personnel found that women and minorities were significantly underrepresented in the Department compared to the actual labor force.

Study Circles organizers believed that the situation represented a unique opportunity to influence a public agency whose behavior could have a dramatic impact on the community. In an official review of the situation to the Governor, the Delaware Office of Personnel included in its recommendations that the State Police use Study Circles to support a healing process within the Department and foster a culture change. “The challenge today is how to acknowledge those things of which DSP is proud and those things they are not and move forward in a positive direction,” said the report. “This effort requires trust and true commitment from all players – DSP leadership, elected officials, the union, current troopers, all races, gender, religions.” The Governor accepted the recommendations and included in an executive order to the State Police that they should utilize Study Circles.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Lisa Blunt-Bradley. Review of the Delaware State Police: Executive Order Number 19. State Personnel Office. December 1, 2001

With the issuance of the Governor's executive order, the YWCA began more than one year of meetings with the Department's director of training to develop a program to engage members in Study Circles. The State Police leadership slowed the process by expressing strong concern about how the dialogues would be scheduled, how officers would be paid for overtime, and overall timing issues. After several months of discussions with limited progress, a member of the State Senate, who had been active on diversity issues involving the State Police, intervened and asked for a status report of the discussions. She proceeded to initiate a conversation with the Governor and the Secretary of the State Police to move the process forward.

An African American officer described the situation: "They didn't want to do it. Because as much as people say they are open to diversity training there is still some reluctance to doing it. The law enforcement culture is a very closed culture in that unless you are part of it you don't understand us. ... So obstacles were put up that we don't have funding. ... But the pressure was still there ... so we did it reluctantly."

The Department eventually agreed to conduct an abbreviated Study Circle among its leadership at the beginning of 2004. Fifteen members of the Department participated in two half-day sessions. Participants included the colonel (the top position under the cabinet Secretary) and several majors and captains. Due to the lack of diversity among the top leadership, five additional African American officers were included from the lower rank of lieutenant.

Two African American participants in the dialogue characterized leadership participation as "going through the motions" and some of the discussions as superficial. Both officers said it was a positive experience and said they would support holding more Study Circles, but found that the discussion was too short and failed to go deep enough to address the core problems facing the Department. During the second day of the Study Circles, the colonel left for a meeting with the Governor. Several people said the discussion opened up more once the colonel had left, allowing for a more engaging conversation about organizational issues.

In the end, it is unclear what impact Study Circles have had on the State Police. According to YWCA leaders, members of the State Police concluded the discussions wanting to go deeper and to expand the program. They said that Department leadership had expressed support for creating a program for Field Training Officers to go through Study Circles, as well as creating a new diversity plan. However, the two African American participants who had experienced some frustration with the process said that they had not seen any evidence of internal support for carrying Study Circles forward or action on the part of the Department. Other top leaders who participated in the Study Circles did not respond to requests for interviews.

Since the Study Circles were completed, a cabinet-level leadership change for the Department has meant that the YWCA has had to work to reestablish its relationship in order to move the process forward. The YWCA is optimistic that the program will continue in the future.

In the case of the achievement gap, the YWCA attempted to launch a Study Circles program with New Castle County public schools in 2002 after the Study Circles Resource Center developed a discussion guide on the topic. The YWCA formed a partnership with the National Conference for Community and Justice and the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League. Based

on the program's moderate success at bringing dialogues on issues of race to the schools, the YWCA saw an opportunity to leverage Study Circles to produce real change in an area of significant racial inequality in the community.

The YWCA appealed to several schools to pilot the program, but has to date found very few schools that were interested in convening Study Circles on the topic. According to organizers, one of the reasons for the lack of momentum behind the program was that the YWCA's partners were promoting other initiatives on the achievement gap and did not place a high priority on the program.

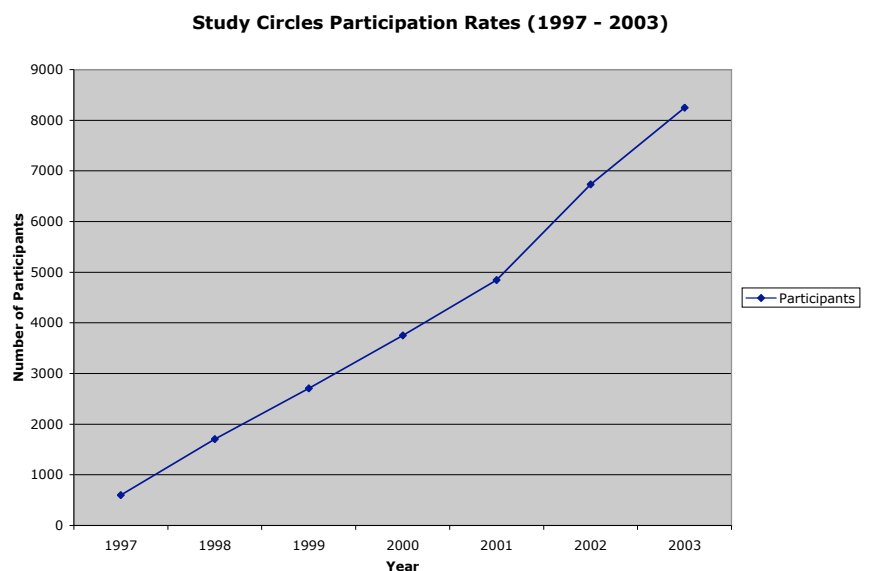
One of the few schools that was responsive, Brandywine High School, engaged about 20 staff members, as well as four administrators, in Study Circles on the topic. According to the school's principal, the discussions were very compelling and participants were enthusiastic about the process. The group concluded that the greatest need at the school was to help 9<sup>th</sup> graders better transition to high school and provide them with more guidance and support. "Most problems start in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade," he said. Students who make it past their first year in high school without significant problem tend to do well in later grades.

In response to this conclusion, the school created a mentoring program that assigned each of the school's staff members as mentors to six 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. Despite concerns that staff members wouldn't be willing to volunteer their time, only a small number opted out. The program was designed and organized by the faculty members and administrators who had participated in the dialogue. "The people in the group were committed to this idea. ... People really followed through," said the principal.

The YWCA continues to work on advancing the achievement gap program and is currently attempting to determine the best strategy for moving it farther into the school system.

### Total Study Circle Participation to Date

By the end of 2003, the New Castle County Study Circles program had engaged more than 8,200 participants and had accumulated 142 partners. Sixty percent of the people who participated in the program were white and 40 percent were persons of color. Seventy percent of participants were female and 30 percent male. More than a quarter of all participants in the Study Circles program filled out an evaluation of their experience with the program.



Of those participants who completed an evaluation, seventy percent said their participation increased their ability to discuss issues openly. Seventy-one percent said participation increased their understanding of their own beliefs and attitudes. Eighty percent said it had increased their understanding of other’s beliefs and attitudes. Seventy-one percent said it had increased their ability to communicate more effectively with people who may have different beliefs. Fifty-six percent said it increased their inclination to volunteer in the community.

	Caucasian	Person of Color	Not Indicated	Total
Increased ability to discuss issues openly	69%	77%	47%	70%
Increased understanding of their own beliefs and attitudes	76%	80%	44%	71%
Increased understanding of other’s beliefs and attitudes	89%	81%	68%	80%
Increased ability to communicate more effectively with people who may have different beliefs	73%	85%	42%	71%
Increased their inclination to volunteer in the community	62%	59%	45%	56%

**Action and Change**

From the beginning, the objective of the New Castle County Study Circles program was to “provide the community with practical recommendations for actions which organizations, institutions, and individuals can take to improve race relations and racial equality.” However, in recent years, the YWCA has received increasing pressure from its funders to demonstrate that the program has produced quantifiable change. After engaging close to 10,000 people across the county, funders – like the United Way – have asked what difference the program has made in the community.

Earlier, the challenge facing the YWCA in this regard was touched upon. Racism as a public problem is uniquely difficult to address: it is often diffuse, highly entrenched, and spans a wide array of community institutions, public policies, and organizational relationships. As was noted in an earlier study:

“Race, as a community issue, presents challenges on the level of individual behavior and relationships, as well as the level of institutional policies and organizations. On the individual level, racial prejudice is often rooted in deep-seated values that may be difficult to address and slow to change. On the institutional level, reform may be a very slow, politically divisive, and resource intensive process. It is highly unlikely that a community dialogue process will “solve” community race relations, or even create a

visible change over the course of a few years. To the extent that change does occur, it may be quite difficult to trace it back to its causes.”<sup>12</sup>

The New Castle County Study Circles program was not linked to any specific governance process or tied to any decision-making apparatus. On the contrary, while the program’s initial mission was to produce recommendations for action, the actual Study Circles tended to focus on learning, understanding and personal change at the level of each individual participant. Many people who were interviewed spoke of the dialogue process as a unique form of diversity training, seldom acknowledging any relationship to organizational or institutional action or change.

In order to explore how Study Circles have impacted issues of race and race relations in New Castle County, it is important to consider several different levels of action and change:

- Action and change at the individual level
- Collective action
- Action and change within organizational settings
- Community-wide action and change

Given the scale and duration of the program, it is not possible to catalogue the activity that has been undertaken in New Castle County. However, it is possible to look at each of these areas and draw conclusions from individual situations and activities.

### Individual Action and Change

At its most basic, public deliberation is a process of influencing the perspectives, beliefs and behaviors of the individuals participating in the discussions. According to the current director of the YWCA, the core of the program is based on the promise of dialogue changing the behavior of individuals. “One of our philosophies is to affect change one person at a time,” she said. “We believe that there isn’t a whole lot you can do to erase bias in people’s minds and actions other than to give them the opportunity to have their eyes open. We are really committed to this model as the eye opener.”

In evaluating outcomes of the YWCA’s Study Circles program, there are two critical questions that must be addressed in regards to action and change at the individual level. First, to what extent does participation in Study Circles affect the views of individuals who participate? Second, to what extent does participation in Study Circles motivate people to in some way to change their personal behavior? There are three sources of data that may be used to evaluate these two questions: (1) survey data taken from participants after taking part in Study Circles, (2) anecdotal data from interviews, and (3) information about what mechanisms were in place to support individuals in taking action out of their Study Circles experience.

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<sup>12</sup> Joe Goldman. “Dialogue and Change: A Study of the Use of Community-Wide Study Circles Programs to Foster Action and Change.” John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. April 1, 2003.

The survey results of Study Circles participants, while not conclusive, are quite compelling:

- Seventy percent said their participation increased their ability to discuss issues openly.
- Seventy-one percent said participation increased their understanding of their own beliefs and attitudes.
- Eighty percent said it had increased their understanding of other's beliefs and attitudes.
- Seventy-one percent said it had increased their ability to communicate more effectively with people who may have different beliefs.
- Fifty-six percent said it increased their inclination to volunteer in the community.

Unfortunately, only a quarter of Study Circles participants filled out the surveys that generated these results. But, even if we assume that only those who were most influenced by their participation filled out the survey forms, the percentage of people impacted by their participation is significant. What these numbers do not tell us, however, is what percentage of participants followed through and acted based on their participation in Study Circles. Equally important, these numbers say nothing about what kinds of behavior change or actions were produced and whether those changes had any significant affect in the community.

Anecdotally, it seems that in most groups at least a few people were motivated to take some action towards greater personal growth, like reading a book related to diversity issues, joining a discussion group, or interacting with co-workers differently. The YWCA's former director talked about this impact:

“Racism doesn't just disappear. I think an awful lot of people get their eyes opened. And a lot of people who wanted to become able to talk more honestly who were just afraid to engage people who were different then them do so. ... They feel empowered to engage them to have that conversation. A lot of people have gone on for deeper self work and participated in anti-racism trainings and a variety of other more intense programs.”

An active volunteer who has facilitated many Study Circles made a similar observation:

“People begin to have a dialogue around a subject that is never talked about. We never talk about racism. No one wants to talk about it. So it begins that dialogue. It heightens people's awareness that there are issues in society that are racist, systems that people don't have to think about unless they are directly effected. These are uncomfortable subjects that they have now begun to talk about; that is mostly the beginning of their journey. People go to the library. They start watching programs. They look at videos. There is so much material you probably haven't thought about. Then you start talking about it in your regular activities. I know a fellow who is white and conservative, and I get to see him time and time, and he talks about his experience. He brings the subject up when he is at lunch with his friends. And it opens people's eyes. 'I didn't know this was going on,' he told me.”

A Study Circles facilitator recounted from her notes the different ways that a Study Circle she organized at her place of work affected people:

This one gentleman said he had read his first article on diversity because of [Study Circles] and would continue to try to learn. One person of color said it really opened up his mind that not all white people didn't care. He made a promise to reserve judgment in the future. Another said he would encourage others to attend Study Circles. ... One woman said she felt incredibly privileged that she got to hear the conversation and participate in the conversation. One person said he didn't realize there was such pain for other groups of people, and committed to connect to others... Another was a recruiter and said he would use to change how he approached recruiting."

A far smaller number of people seem to take some significant community action out of their participation in Study Circles, like volunteering, organizing a group or organization, or acting on a policy issue. Nevertheless, there are many examples of people taking significant steps in the community based on their experience with Study Circles. Even if this number were as small as one person out of every two Study Circles, that would still mean that more than 300 people in the community have taken significant actions out of their experience.

In one example celebrated by the YWCA, a participant was motivated by her experience with an early Study Circle to start an inter-racial choir. She explained how the choir came about: "At the end of the Study Circle, they asked what things we could do. I said I'd like to have a community chorus because I believe singing brings people together. But I didn't have any idea how to do that. ... There was something about saying that this is what I'd like to do..." Soon after the Study Circle, she learned that her church was exploring a relationship with a nearby community center. "I said what about a community chorus," she recounted. "Eventually, our church worked with the center and I took on the chorus. It's been going on since 1998 and it is still active. ... It has been an amazing experience."

In another example, a participant who was heavily involved with the NAACP found himself talking a great deal with his Study Circle group about the importance of education to eliminate racism. As a result, he decided to become the education chairperson for the Delaware NAACP. He said his participation in Study Circles and his subsequent role as the education chairperson transformed the relationship between the State Department of Education and the NAACP. He explained, "The things we talked about are the things I did. I got very involved in making it so people in the NAACP were on state committees on education, had strong influence on the Secretary of Education in Delaware, and also effecting key alliances with the Department of Education to the point that Department of Education began inviting us in to give feedback on its new programs."

According to one organizer of a workplace Study Circle, several members of his company began volunteering individually with a mentoring program at a local school for more than one year. Several others reported similar accounts of individuals deciding to volunteer at local organizations in the community.

In at least some circumstances, however, it appears that some people who were motivated to act out of their Study Circle did not because there was insufficient support to help them do so. One woman who recently participated in a Study Circle through her church explained that at least five people who participated in her Study Circle wanted to actively do something out of the

experience. She and another member of the group, for example, talked about organizing a film festival of movies on the topic of race. Others were interested in volunteering. She, herself, attempted to volunteer with the NAACP and other groups. Most of these intentions for action, however, were not fulfilled, she said, because the individuals in the group had no guidance or support. Citing one example, she said: “A couple people said they were going to try to join some place like the NAACP or some other place, but no one knew who to call or what to join.” She said that she eventually joined a local group that deals with civil rights issues, but thought that few others in her group had sustained their attempts to do something out of their discussions.

This last example raises the question of how the Study Circles program supported people in taking action out of the dialogue. Earlier in the history of the program, it seems there were four tools that helped people to take action out of their Study Circle experience: (1) the action guide developed by the State Office of Volunteerism, (2) a Study Circles newsletter that included information about ways that people could volunteer or get involved, (3) action groups that people could volunteer to join, and (4) Study Circles reunions and action events that convened people and served as focal points for activity and action. The first three of these tools are no longer available for Study Circles participants. It seems that as the program has become more diffuse across the workplaces and community groups that individuals participating in Study Circles have less centralized support for action.

### Collective Action

The primary setting for collective action out of the New Castle County Study Circles appears to be the three action groups that were formed out of the first round of Study Circles. Each of the three groups began with 10 to 20 members and consolidated over time to a core half dozen or so volunteers. All three of the groups continued their work over several years with some turnover in membership. The YWCA provided limited staff support for the three groups and relied primarily on volunteer leadership.

- The “Deepening Our Knowledge and Skills” group was successful at making available an array of resources for individuals interested in fostering their own personal growth. To the extent that Study Circles were a catalyst for personal change, this action group created opportunities for individuals to continue on this path through such things as a library, lists of resources, trainings, and movie nights.
- The “Reaching Our Youth” group was also successful at fostering collective action towards its mission. The group established more than a dozen small Study Circles programs at local schools and colleges. However, the group experienced considerable resistance from many schools that were reluctant to take time away from students coursework. The programs appear to have had little institutional impact on the schools or the school system.
- Finally, the “Changing Our Institutions” group, while active, was unsuccessful overall at achieving any significant impact. Unfortunately, this group, which sought to produce the most important kind of outcome from the perspective of real community change, lacked the resources and strategy to create real outcomes.

Outside of the action groups, there is little evidence of significant collective action beyond groups of two to four people joining together to volunteer at a local program of one sort or another. The only substantial collective effort surfaced through interviews was the creation of the mentoring program at Brandywine High School, which was described earlier. In this instance, the strong support of the school administration and the critical mass achieved of about 20 percent faculty participation may have been important factors in motivating the group to launch the program and follow through.

### Action and Change within Organizational Setting

The YWCA's unique strategy of convening Study Circles within the workplace and in organizations creates the opportunity for Study Circles to influence the organizations within which they were conducted. In some cases, like the Delaware State Police, the YWCA has actively worked to launch Study Circles in specific organizations because they believed that organizational change in these setting may yield larger community benefits.

There would seem to be three pathways that Study Circles could lead to significant organizational change. First, a critical mass within an organization may participate in Study Circles leading to a change in the culture of the organization. Several people claimed that this was the case at the Department of Labor. Said one person involved with the program: "Before [the Study Circles] there was no mechanism for employees to get to know other employees, other than those who they work with. ... It put a warmth in the agency. Now I have some history with people here." Unfortunately, only a small number of workplaces have engaged a large enough percentage of employees to reach a "critical mass." In fact, the majority workplace and organizational Study Circles programs seem to have only conducted one or two Study Circles at a time.

The second pathway is that a group of employees or group members decide to implement a program to influence the entire organization. This was the case at Brandywine High School, where faculty launched a mentoring program for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. Again, there seem to be few examples where this form of collective action took place. One potential reason that more action of this kind has not occurred in the organizational settings is that the action component of the Study Circles seems to not necessarily focus on action within the organization. Most interviewees who participated in workplace Study Circles only talked about potential actions that involved activities external to the organization. For example, a member of one corporation talked about employees taking time off to mentor students in the community. To the extent that discussions and actions were focused on internal organizational issues, they seemed to have been dealt with like a diversity training that sought to foster relationship building within the group.

The third pathway involves the engagement of organizational leaders who are influenced to change the organization from the top down based on their experience with Study Circles. For example, this kind of change would have taken place had the leadership of the State Police been influenced to create a new diversity plan or launch Study Circles for new trainees. Again, there is little evidence that this kind of change has occurred as a result of many Study Circles in New Castle County.

## Community-Wide Action and Change

In the end, the objective of the New Castle County Study Circles program is to impact racism in the community on the whole. The three most likely ways that the program could affect change at this level might be by (1) engaging a critical mass of community members, (2) influencing policy makers to shift important policies or programs, (3) creating significant change within key community institutions or organizations, or (4) launching a grassroots campaign that targets an important element of institutional racism, like segregation, housing or employment discrimination.

In the first instance, it seems highly unlikely that the program has reached a critical mass in an area as large as New Castle County, or even Wilmington. No one who was interviewed suggested that the program had made such a community impact. When asked whether the average person on the street was likely to have had heard of the program, most said that they doubted it. In regards to the policy making process, the program did attempt to influence policy makers by recruiting state legislators to participate in Study Circles through the “Changing Our Institutions” action group. Unfortunately, this effort was unsuccessful. Finally, there is little evidence that the program has created significant change within a critical community institution or organization and other than the fledgling effort to address the attainment gap no campaigns have resulted from the efforts.

It is important to note that while there is little evidence of community-wide change from the Study Circles program, one may still conclude that the program has been highly worthwhile. The examples of action and change at the individual level may be quite significant and may very well have larger impacts that cannot be tracked at this time.

## Assessing Study Circles in New Castle County

This study has evaluated each Study Circles program by addressing four categories of questions:

- **Participation:** How, if at all, have Study Circles changed the range of actors that form opinions upon public issues or influence community decision making on those issues?
- **Deliberation:** How, if at all, has deliberation introduced new considerations, or shifted the balance of existing considerations, in decision making processes?
- **Embeddedness:** How, if at all, are participation and deliberation incorporated into the practical and moral reasoning processes of individuals, institutions and organizations in the community?
- **Outcomes:** Have shifts to greater participation and deliberation resulted in any differences in the actions of local government, civic associations or other stakeholder organizations? Have they resulted in changes in important areas of public concern?

## Participation

While the YWCA program has clearly engaged a substantial, diverse group of people in discussions about race, the question of bringing new voices into a community decision-making process seems inappropriate to New Castle County given that the program has not been specifically aimed at decision making. It certainly is the case that Study Circles influenced a wide range of individuals who would otherwise not deeply think about or address issues of race and diversity. Especially in the case of those Study Circles used in places of work that required employee participation, many individuals confronted issues of race and diversity in new ways thanks to the program and seem to have greatly benefited from that participation.

At the same time, however, the YWCA program does seem to have “sung to the choir” in many circumstances – engaging those who were interested in discussion issues of race anyways. Nevertheless, even among “the choir” it seems that the program yielded community benefits by motivating volunteerism and deepening understanding.

## Deliberation

Again, framing the question of deliberation in the context of decision making processes is inappropriate to the New Castle experience. In some respects, “dialogue” rather than “deliberation” may be a better characterization of what went on in many Study Circles in New Castle County in so far as the focus was often not finding consensus to the end of action or influencing decision making. It does seem to the case that the discussions were successful at introducing new perspectives and circumstances to participants. Seventy-one percent said participation increased their understanding of their own beliefs and attitudes. Eighty percent said it had increased their understanding of other’s beliefs and attitudes. Seventy-one percent said it had increased their ability to communicate more effectively with people who may have different beliefs.

## Embeddedness

Despite the fact that the Study Circles program made no attempt to institutionalize itself as a governance mechanism as was the case in Kuna, the YWCA program seems to have made remarkable strides towards embedding itself in the community. Among the several indicators of the program’s embeddedness:

- The use of Study Circles was included in a formal Executive Order signed by the Governor of Delaware as a means for the State Police to address diversity issues among its workforce.
- Study Circles have been utilized across an array of state agencies and have been instituted among the entire Department of Labor on four separate occasions and across three different cabinet secretaries.

- The program, through the Delaware Human Relations Division, has trained hundreds of volunteer facilitators, building a substantial network of ambassadors who actively advocate for the use of Study Circles and regularly launch new dialogues across the county.
- The YWCA regularly receives requests from community organizations to facilitate dialogues. Increasingly these requests come on issues beyond race and race relations.

There are three respects with which the program's embeddedness seems notably weak. First, the YWCA has struggled to maintain funding for the program. Many of its early funders have stopped donating to the program and its largest funder, the United Way, has raised significant questions about the program's outcomes. Second, the Study Circles program has been unable to link itself to any formal governance or decision making structure in the community. Third, several of the more impressive elements of the program, like its action groups and newsletter, have faltered in recent years.

### Outcomes

As has been described earlier, the community-wide impacts of the New Castle County program seem to be minimal, especially in relation to institutional racism in the community. Most people involved with the program, however, seem to view the program as only a single element in a larger strategy for community change. Many don't view it as the role of Study Circles or the YWCA to advocate for policy change or take institutional racism head on. Nevertheless, it does seem to be the case that the initial intent of the program and the ongoing intent of the YWCA is to create lasting, community change on the issue.

The actions and individual change that has occurred as a result of the Study Circles program should not be dismissed. It is certainly possible that these individual-levels actions and changes may produce higher level changes that are difficult to trace. Even if this is not the case, the program has undoubtedly affected the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, in the community for the better.

*<<no conclusion written because this case will be integrated with others>>*

## Appendix A

Research for this study was conducted through several rounds of phone calls, a one-day site visit, and a review of relevant documents related to the Study Circles program and newspaper articles written about the events related to the program. The following individuals were interviewed at least once (and some two or three times) for this study.

1. Dave Baylor
2. Faye Benneau
3. Beverly Benson
4. Allan Cairncross
5. Greg Chambers
6. Norwood Coleman
7. Edie Corbin
8. Al Daneidio
9. Ascha Dodia
10. Burt Freeman
11. John Landsman
12. Gina Marino
13. Nate McQueen
14. Pat Oceanic
15. Paul Pinson
16. Nancy Plummer
17. Barbara Rowey
18. Ruth Sokolofsky
19. Tony Sokolofsky
20. Leslie Stanford
21. George Turner