

Perspectives On Troubled Interactions: What Happened When A Small Group Began To Address Its Community's Adversarial Political Culture

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Abstract: This study investigated fostering political development (as defined in the report) through an integration of adult development, public issues analysis, and structured public discourse. Entitled The Integral Process For Working On Complex Issues (TIP), that multi-session discourse methodology includes issue analysis and framing, deliberation, and organizing systemic action. Its issue-framing template helps users generate multiple approaches to issues that reflect different levels of complexity and incorporate the conceivable human and institutional perspectives and environmental life conditions. The small group used the discourse process to select a public issue of concern and to begin to address it. It was about how to change the community's adversarial political culture. They conducted a deliberative action inquiry into their own tones and intentions toward that issue as the starting point to address it, and did deliberative decision-making on that basis. The political reasoning and culture of the group developed during the study, evidenced by the group's work and changes that participants experienced. The study is the first of its kind in several respects, which are: (a) to use this public discourse process as part of the research methodology, (b) to perform this kind of empirical research on public discourse and deliberation, and (c) to foster political and adult development while addressing complex issues. This extended length research report departs from traditional journal article formats not only by its length but also by integrating its report of findings with analyses of the processes that resulted in the findings. It is complemented by a shorter article in this issue of *Integral Review*, which describes the steps of the process and the major themes evident in participants' experience.

Key words: action inquiry, adult development, hierarchical complexity, perspectives, political culture, political development, transformative learning.

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Introduction

Unexpected, instructive, and transformative things happened when a small group of citizens decided it wanted to begin to address its community's chronically troubled interactions between citizens and local government, and between groups of citizens. Participants in this study used six sessions of a structured public issue discourse process to investigate the roots of the issue, discover and work with priorities, and deliberately weigh the powerful roles their own tones and intentions would play in any efforts to address the overall issue.

In this first detailed report of findings from the recent study, I aim to tell a "whole story" in such a way that a variety of people may notice at least a few places where this research—and the ideas and praxis behind it—could offer something relevant and interesting to their own endeavors. That variety of people could range from individuals interested in personal and interpersonal development, to various kinds of consultants, change agents, and practitioners including those in deliberative democracy, to theorists and action researchers, to public officials, administrators, and policy makers.

My focus in this report is on what happened in connection with participants' experiences with the issue they worked on during the process. This extended report includes theory, praxis, and analysis. Praxis involves the process of surfacing a unique public issue about attitudes toward—and strategies for—social change, and the small group and individuals' experiences of beginning to work on the issue. Narrative descriptions and qualitative analyses explore what happened with the issue, with the group, and with the individual participants. To support my effort to convey what happened in terms of its whole story, I include a substantive theoretical section before that reporting begins. I believe that readers who wish to skip over that section will glean interesting things from the rest of the story.

The purpose of the study was three-fold: (a) to find out what changes, if any, participants experienced that could be associated with participation in the structured public issue discourse process; (b) to learn about the issue that participants would select, analyze, develop, and deliberate during the process; and (c) to study what happened within the political culture of the small group of participants.

As the method to organize this report, it has the following framework. It begins with a background section in two parts: one that discusses the larger context of the research, followed by one that discusses my research interest and situates it in relation to the literature. That discussion identifies both the void to which this study begins to respond and the research questions posed for the study. The second section discusses the theoretical perspectives underlying the study's methodology and the report of findings. That section serves as an overview of the fields, key theories and areas of praxis. It includes discussion of developmental dynamics in relation to the methodology. Building on those foundations, that second section has a subsection related to the political importance and implications of the study participants' issue. This entire second section provides a foundation for understanding the study as a whole from an applied-theory standpoint. It also enables me to be more efficient in discussing the findings later in the report.

In the third section, the report on the study begins by introducing my research perspective and information about the study participants and data collection methods. It provides a brief overview of the project's design to orient readers for the rest of the section. In this part, my discussion has two major levels of reporting: one at the group level, and one at the level of individual participants. The group level reporting follows the chronological sequence of the

discourse process methodology. Its subsections discuss what happened in each group session, generally using the same pattern: introductory description of a session, a report on its work and dynamics, and usually some reflective or theoretical analysis. Analyses of what happened at the group level close that reporting before shifting the focus to the individual participants. The subsection that reports on what happened for participants includes brief, individual portraits of some of their experience and various qualitative analyses. (This section does not report on the two major themes that showed up in participants' experiences; those are reported in the shorter, companion article in this issue of *Integral Review*.) After a summary discussion of the study, the report ends with describing the study's limitations, recommendations for further research, and my conclusion.

Background

Larger Context of the Study: Political Development

This research reflects the junction of long-term interests I have pursued in tandem. One is putting into use systematic methods to address complex public issues, including conflicted ones, so that their component layers can be addressed systemically, and another is supporting individuals' personal development and communities' socio-political development. These reflect my commitment in research and praxis to fostering political development.¹

Consistent with the dictionary and Stephen Chilton (1988, 1991), I define *politics* as all our ways of relating to others, to groups, to formal and informal institutions, and (unlike Chilton or the dictionary) to the environment. Chilton defines political development in terms of the political culture, comprised of the publicly common ways of relating. In his theoretical work, he writes, "*Political development is defined in this work as a specific form of change in the political culture of a society. The political cultural system, not the individual or social systems, is the locus of development*" (Chilton, 1988, p. 28, emphasis in the original). The first conditions of political development, then, are the human adaptive capacities for increasingly more competent, principled, and appropriate publicly common ways of relating.

Existing political cultures need to develop beyond their present stages of effectiveness in order to address systemic, interrelated issues at all. As that is long-term change, it is important to begin work sooner rather than later to change the political cultures that support and sustain challenging—and often quite troubling—issues. Complex issues are not "things" in themselves that exist independent of the dynamics that give rise to them. They are better understood as *complexes*, metasystems made up of the complicated, interacting dynamics of multiple other systems. Individuals and groups, social institutions, and their cultures play interactive roles in all social issues; thus, they are instrumental actors in efforts to address issues.

Chilton (1988, p. 14) writes, "Locating political development in the cultural system admits several sources of change: change due to cognitive-developmental forces; change due to social inertia; and change due to hegemonic control over available cultural alternatives." According to my reasoning, it follows, then, that if:

¹ Most often in the political science and international development literature, where the term *political development* is used, it refers to institutions. My use of the term includes institutions but is not confined to them. Therefore, I refer to and discuss only Chilton's work with regard to political development because we share the same orientation.

1. structured public issue analysis and discourse can foster participants' individual development while and by addressing complex issues of concern, and
2. thus alter social inertia by actively addressing those issues, and
3. the discursive processes lead to new politics by both the nature of the processes and new systemic approaches to action and institutional change that they equip people to engage, and
4. the process iterations extend over time, gradually resulting in new publicly common ways of relating,

then political development will be fostered. This is a long-term strategy-agenda. A fundamental prescription in this agenda is that its methods to address issues must afford opportunities that are conducive for developing new competencies *over time* in the culture, in individuals and groups, and in their institutions. If methods support this prescription, then people might make qualitatively different contributions to their own quality of life, their interactions, their institutions, their environments, and the challenging issues that often pervade them.

Research Context and Interest

This study grows out of my overarching research interest to develop and use the *how to's*—the structured analysis and discourse methods—that might advance political development *while* and *by* addressing complex issues and questions. The methodology I used in the study was a replicable, structured process I developed almost six years ago, the design of which is grounded in years of public issues analyses and action research, understandings of adult development and dynamic systems, the roles of action inquiry and deliberation, and other foundations. Its design embeds assumptions that its methods need to invoke, utilize, encourage, motivate, develop, and use humans' capacities as they confront complexity in issues that concern them. Its central *function* is to enable people to identify and work on the systemic layers of complex issues.

Working on complex issues in such ways invites reflective thinking. This and other capacities mentioned later are both *products* and *agents* of using such methods to foster political development. As one of the capacities that play simultaneously product-and-agent roles, reflective thinking

introduces the *capacity* to reason and make conclusions about ill-structured problems at a more complex level. [From the point of introducing this capacity, there is a traverse], with the actual development of reflecting thinking skills, and [their] eventual functional use in everyday life, dependent on application of this capacity to complex knowledge dilemmas so as to construct reflective thinking skills over time (Fischer & Pruyne, 2003, p. 176).

Reasoning about and reflecting upon such issues or problems is an important way to interact with the environment. The sciences that study dynamically complex adaptive systems, including biology, psychology, and anthropology, have shown that humans and their social systems can evolve to greater complexity as they interact with changes in their environment. Fields of genetic epistemology, other branches of cognitive science, and education have studied human cognition developing the capacity to perform more complex tasks as it interacts with the environment. Information about *how* we humans and other systems do this is crucial to know if development is to be fostered.

The Model of Hierarchical Complexity (MHC) was developed and refined over the last twenty-some years. It was recently posited as a formal theory (Commons & Pekker, Submitted), and makes a significant advance beyond just describing stages of development and what capacities develop during them. Applicable across human cultures, species, and even computer simulations, among its other contributions to the behavioral sciences and developmental research, this mathematical theory accounts for each step of transition in development in any domain. It does this by assigning to every task an order of hierarchical complexity, resulting in objective measures irrespective of the content, context, or performer of a task. The model “replaces the old, flawed empirically based ideas of developing mental structures” (p. 3). This makes an important, potential contribution to inspiring more research into how to foster human development, particularly since “the traditional notion of developmental stages has been hopelessly mired in empirical problems that have led to its abandonment by many as a coherent measure (see discussions by Brainerd, 1978 or Broughton, 1984)” (p. 3). As a comprehensive developmental theory, the MHC accounts for “a) what behaviors develop and in what order, b) with what speed, and c) how and why development takes place” (Commons & Richards, 2002, p. 2). An important implication is that we need not hazard guesses nor make leaps of logic to attribute cause when we want to study and explain why development occurs in individuals and their social groupings at any scale. This is because the sequence of hierarchical task construction is mapped out, and “there are no intermediate complexity task actions” (Commons & Pekker, Submitted, p. 4). Rather, each discrete step of each increase in performance is identifiable and measurable, both within and across domains of activity, such that “one need not posit as a cause spurts in brain development” (p. 4), for example, or other causal explanations that do not account for the dynamics of development’s “how and why.” The MHC is essential for grounding assumptions in this study’s methodology. However, although it includes the how and why, and general issues of support, contingency settings, and other general factors, it does not, itself, include applications or methods.

Relatively little research has been done to investigate methods to foster adult development that will demonstrate capacities beyond those possible at the more common adult stage of formal operational logic. Alexander’s research with prison populations and children using Transcendental Meditation (TM) techniques (Alexander, Heaton & Chandler, 1994, p. 59) and numerous other studies have documented “that TM produces distinctive physiological, psychological, and sociological effects (Orme-Johnson & Farrow, 1977; Chalmers, et al., 1989)” (p. 65). One longitudinal study of TM practitioners showed a substantive number of the student experimental subjects at Maharishi International University scoring at postformal levels (p. 62). As discussed by both Alexander et al and Torbert (1994), the TM studies reflect different assumptions about the how and why of adult development than, for instance, Commons et al, cited earlier. They center on different hypotheses about the role of effort in development: “From the perspective of Vedic Psychology (Maharishi, 1972, p. 18:8) any individual effort hinders the experience of transcending and diminishes the realization of natural and balanced personal development” (Alexander et al., 1994, p. 62). Since complex issues require effort to address them, this research has little bearing on methods used to foster political development.²

² The studies concentrate on sole individuals’ meditation practice in the isolation of their own minds and beings. Given the evidence that organisms develop in the course of their varied interactions with their entire environment, an investigation into the culture of the university community where TM was embedded as an individual practice could produce some interesting findings. For example, how does a presumably non-adversarial “institutional atmosphere” and Vedic norms in the “cultural atmosphere”

The literature on fostering critical thinking and transformative learning in adults (e.g., Brookfield, 1987; Cranton, 1994; Freire, 2002; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, 2000) is germane to this study in its subject matter, since the process embeds opportunities for critical insights to develop and be used. There are signs that adult developmental perspectives are beginning to converge with the adult learning field (Hoare, 2006), and this may extend such efforts beyond their traditional settings. In the meantime, the methods used in educational venues do not transfer well to the public sector and voluntary citizen work on public issues.

Literature that is germane to my research would reflect the premise that human development, transformation, adaptation—different labels for the same dynamics—emerge and transpire in social settings and interactions and in response to the larger environment. From my perspective, rather than treat such development as an isolated individual endeavor, it should be regarded as a dynamical political process because it inherently involves our ways of relating to self, others, and the world. Another criterion for literature related to this research is recognition that our complex issues arise and exist as *complexes* that manifest and reflect the myriad ways that people, their institutions, and their processes are (or are not) relating with respect to them. Complex issues are more than just the “thing” that their labels suggest and that people debate (e.g., conflict, poverty, unemployment, education reform, etc.). As complexes, they are made up of many issues and they need various layers of integral attention, analysis, decision-making, action, coordination, and evaluation extended over the long term.

Thus, more germane here are intentional practices that “treat not just individual persons, but all social systems from brief conversations to intergenerational institutions as capable of developmental transformation” (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 218). A small body of research validates that specific practices involved in action inquiry—whether used in educational or organizational settings, or in informal groups—can foster adults’ postformal development into more complex capacities (Rooke & Torbert, 2005; Torbert, 1994; Torbert & Associates, 2004). They do this by the way they direct people’s attention into the tasks involved in this practice of “learning from the four territories of experience through action inquiry” in the course of daily life (Torbert, 1994, p. 199). Action inquiry’s powerful effectiveness and broad transportability are among factors that led Torbert to conclude, “the only political principle that invites the potential transformation of everyone’s perspective is the principle of inquiry” (Torbert, 1991, p. 236).

A look at those four territories of experience can help to make the connection with inquiry’s role more evident.

- First territory. *Outside events*: results, assessments, observed behavioral consequences, environmental effects.
- Second territory. *Own sensed performance*: behavior, skills, pattern of activity, deeds, as sensed in the process of enactment.
- Third territory. *Action-logics*: strategies, schemas, ploys, game plans, typical modes of reflecting on experience.
- Fourth territory. *Intentional attention*: presencing awareness, vision, intuition, aims (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 22).

Torbert et al’s theory and praxis of developmental action inquiry bears on processes to foster political development, regardless of issues’ subject matter. However, complex issues involve

serve as the kind of “contingency setting” that is conducive to individual development (see Commons et al., 2005)?

substantive additional factors that require additional processes, which may or may not embed action inquiry. These refer to the criteria I mention above. Specifically, these include down-to-earth analyses of issue-layers. These engender layers of complex decision-making and priority setting, and systemic action by institutions and citizens in various configurations and contexts. Much of that structured and unstructured work is voluntary, is systemically joined with policy-making dimensions, and requires deliberation for complex decisions about both voluntary and official action.

Thus, my review of the literature turned to other sub-fields including public participation with deliberative dialogue and methods for addressing group or moral conflicts. I will confine the focus here primarily to deliberation-related issues. The literature indicates that the “how and why” of public deliberation is still little understood: “The field of public deliberation and our knowledge about this phenomenon is nascent, and much remains uncertain” (Williamson & Fung, 2004, p. 3), largely because “empirical research has lagged behind theory and practice” (Delli Carpini, Lomax Cook & Jacobs, 2004, p. 315), a gap that some have already attempted to explain (e.g., Levine, Fung & Gastil, 2005) and that I will not repeat here. Until fairly recently, when public deliberation or deliberative democracy was discussed or theorized about, the underlying assumption was that deliberation was, or would be, actually taking place among citizens convened for that purpose. Part of the problem in some deliberation research seems to be the absence of criteria for what constitutes deliberation, under what conditions it occurs, and for what purpose. Questions about deliberation are surfacing that challenge earlier assumptions and give rise to new hypotheses. Complicating the matter, clear agreement about the definition of deliberation is not evident (Delli Carpini et al., 2004), nor is there a scheme to understand its various contexts and purposes, qualitative variances, or explanations for them. These are signs of the still-new status of deliberative democracy as a subfield of political theory: it was only “around 1990 [that] the theory of democracy took a definite deliberative turn” (Dryzek, 2000, p. v).

Two recent reviews of the empirical literature on deliberative democracy’s practices (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Ryfe, 2005) provide thorough discussion of the state of the subfield, its challenges, and its questions and I refer to some of them only in summarizing this section.

Beyond the literature’s discourse, numerous “civic entrepreneurs” have been pursuing their own initiatives which are “vital laboratories of public deliberation,” including: Center for Deliberative Polling, Citizen Juries, National Issues Forums, AmericaSpeaks, Study Circles Resource Center, Public Conversations Project, Viewpoint Learning, and others (Williamson & Fung, 2004, p. 12). Some of that work uses multiple, more loosely-structured, quasi-public sessions over long periods (Saunders, 1999, 2006) or single sessions (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997) to explore and improve conflicted relations or issues. Despite all the activity, little empirical work has been done to study how in-person deliberation influences later behavior and political beliefs Burkhalter et al., 2002)” (Gastil, 2004, p. 309). Findings from a combination of two different studies that used NIF as civic education to explore a social cognition model led to a conclusion was that “it would be a mistake to increase the quantity of NIF and similar programs without simultaneously devoting sustained attention to improving their quality” (Gastil, 2004, p. 327).

I have previously presented (Ross, 2002; Ross, 2005) the way I integrate developmental understandings into my theory and methodology, including the process for framing issues so that they can be deliberated. Important additions to the literature on deliberation that also have a developmental perspective have been made by Rosenberg (2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) and his

former graduate student, Winterstein (2005). Its close relation with my research makes it important to discuss Winterstein's dissertation research. He produced a developmental stage model of discourse based on Piaget, Kohlberg, and Rosenberg's (1988, 2002) previous work, and participated with Rosenberg in two small studies. One involved college classes, one involved residents in a community. Doing his reporting before all transcriptions and data analyses were complete, he tendered the conclusion that people must be operating at the systematic stage in order to deliberate, and that his study participants' capacities and their discourses were not nearly systematic: therefore, they could not and did not deliberate in the studies. Rosenberg's recent work has not yet included final reports on the two studies introduced by Winterstein, but he has been asserting that citizens cannot deliberate and challenging assumptions about deliberation's possibilities. The main contribution of these authors' work, in my view, is their developmental perspective entering the discourse on deliberation.

My research interest and methodology include but are not confined to public deliberation, but I do not find literature that extends beyond deliberation to address the scope of my research. Therefore, I mention below some purposes cited for public deliberation to create a broader context for it here.

Buttom & Manson (1999) derived from their studies that the prevailing orienting purposes of convening deliberative gatherings reflect a range: educative, consensual, activist/instrumental, and conflictual. Levine et al. report that despite the countless deliberative efforts over many years, the idea of action as a purpose is a new idea now occurring to some convenors. Actions come out of decisions to act, and although many writers do not discuss citizen action at all, some do regard the general purpose of deliberation to include decision-making or common ground that can inform policy decisions, e.g., Macoubrie (2004), Mathews (1999), Lee (2003), Rosenberg (2005), and Winterstein (2005). Others have taken the thinking further into specific needs, advocating for deliberative decision-making to characterize how we coordinate our intentions and actions to guide our future actions (den Hartogh, 2004), to address future stakes (Karlsson, 2005), grapple with issues concerning science and technology in relation to governance (Farrell, 2003) and concerning the global environment (Dryzek, 2000; Laslett, 2003; Stern, 2005). Some view the benefits so vital as to advocate for the institutionalization of deliberative techniques and norms at the level of national government (Levine et al., 2005; Williamson & Fung, 2004) and international agency and development efforts (Daubon, 2005; King, 2003). One motive for this advocacy is to exploit such techniques' potential for reconstructing boundaries and transcending differences that manifest in violence between and among communities, a necessity for "any ethical enterprise aimed at constructing moral and political community" (Lee, 2003, p. 22). All of these purposes are relevant to my research and to the research agenda for public deliberation.

I classify the chief elements of that research agenda as process-structure issues and the informed application of developmental understandings. Those who have recognized the need for structured processes, although they do not provide methods, include Dryzek (2000), Gastil (2004), Levine et al. (2005), Macoubrie (2004), Rosenberg (2005), Ryfe, (2002), and Winterstein (2005). Habermas summarizes the elemental importance of structured processes or procedures when he writes, "'Dialogical' and 'instrumental' politics can *interpenetrate* in the medium of deliberation if the corresponding forms of communication are sufficiently institutionalized. Everything depends on the conditions of communication and the procedures that lend the institutionalized opinion- and will-formation their legitimating force" (Habermas, 1998, pp. 245, emphasis in the original).

In order for future research to identify “particular keys, strategies, or patterns of talk” that assist “successful deliberation” (Ryfe, 2005, p. 60), informed application of developmental understandings need to underlie both assumptions about deliberation and the design of discourse structures for it (Rosenberg, 2005; Winterstein, 2005). A new ingredient in the discourse is the argument recently introduced by Rosenberg and Winterstein, described above. That stance counters others’ assumptions and assessments, including my own, and also Ryfe’s (2002, p. 5) conclusion that “it is not then, that people cannot deliberate, it is simply that they often don’t in these forums.” Public deliberation is unlikely to occur outside of well-designed structures.

Ryfe (2005) suggests that findings indicate the need to revise images assumed by deliberative theorists. Those efforts need to include a great deal of boundary crossing in two areas summarized by Ryfe (2005): (a) “Despite its breadth, the empirical study of deliberation is not yet very rich or deep. More integration across disciplinary boundaries would be useful” (p. 64); (b) “Moreover, the theory of deliberative democracy needlessly remains removed from its practice” (p. 64) and practitioners of deliberation, empirical scholars, and theorists “might gain from greater interaction” (p. 49). That would facilitate the new learning needed to fill the glaring void apparent in the discourse, because “finally, and perhaps most importantly, we must learn more about what deliberation actually looks like. It simply will not do to place the very practice under investigation into a black box” (p. 64).

Thus, I have located a void, wherein no work or research has been conceived, designed, or conducted that reflects this paradigm for fostering political development. This present study makes an original contribution to social knowledge that begins the long process of responding to and filling that void.

My research interest in this study was to answer these questions.

1. What changes, if any, would participants experience that could be associated with their participation in the process? If any changes were experienced, did they involve discernible changes in any of their action-logics³?
2. What could be learned about the public issue that participants would select and develop during the process?
3. What would happen during the process, if anything, in the political culture of the small group?

Theoretical Perspectives Underlying the Methodology

I include this section as a foundational reference for understanding the study as a whole and my interpretations of its findings. Included below are the major theoretical perspectives that are embedded in the methodology. As a whole, this section is an overview of key, interrelated premises in some other fields that underlie both the research methodology and my analyses. It includes a subsection to introduce why participants’ *tone and intention* issue was important from this vantage point on theory and praxis. I believe the inclusion of these foundational ideas, here, helps my discussions to be more efficient later in the report.

³ The term *action-logics* is defined in the next section.

Integrating Diverse Concepts and Practices as Dynamics of Political Development

In this section, I integrate important concepts within theories of motivation, transformative learning, nonlinear dynamics, action inquiry, and adult development. By integrating the dynamics that those concepts represent, I can then relate them to the study's methods and practices for issue analysis, action inquiry, deliberation, and decision making. The objective is to convey a holistic understanding of the dynamics of adult development as they pertain to my methodology, and to political development in general. This should elucidate key aspects of my paradigm of fostering political development using structured approaches for working on complex issues by showing the integration of the dynamic development of the adult and the political in a hopefully seamless fashion. To arrive at a seamless whole requires that I first identify the "parts" and dynamics comprising it. Therefore, this discussion involves a great deal of detail to accomplish its purposes. I believe the effort supports my goal to make the study's reporting more efficient and to make at least parts of the overall report meaningful to diverse audiences.

Despite the concept's obscurity, conation and its dynamic role in human development (Maslow, 1987) and transformation (Mezirow, 1991) are important considerations for understanding choices of behavior. In addition to being an important dynamic to integrate here, I also draw upon it later in the report in connection with study participants' levels of hope and motivation. Both Maslow and Mezirow describe conation as an intensity of desire companioned by the free choice to act on it. Conation heightens in the process of learning experiences that have transformative qualities. For example, a new insight that significantly re-frames a former assumption about how things work in some area of life-interest is typically followed by the strong desire to put the insight to active use. Thus, transformative learning involves intentions toward new activity, and "behavioral intentions involve conative, cognitive, and affective [i.e., emotional] dimensions" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 14). In that light, the participants' tone and intention issue—where tone is understood as *imbuing* behaviors—was about behavioral intentions, and it involved those dimensions of conation, cognition, and emotion. A key tenet of transformation theory is that as people gain insights into new perspectives, they are motivated to act out of them with a new sense of empowerment (Mezirow, 1991). To complete that picture, it is important to incorporate environmental factors into considerations of these "behavioral intentions." This is because (a) human behaviors *are* interactions with the larger environment, and (b) intentions are formed in the context of that larger environment. The findings from this study make it important to situate transformative learning events in the larger frame of the politics of adults developing their interactions within, and with, their environment.

A Synthetic Logic

To provide the rationale for the analytic categories I use later in this report, and so that I can discuss the findings as a coherent whole, I begin with a synthesis of Mezirow's three dimensions of transformative learning's intentions. Then I use that synthesis as a starting point to map a logical progression that explicates the important concept of *action-logic* and the generic conditions for developing insights and new action-logics.

According to Mezirow, behavioral intentions involve insights into new perspectives (cognition), motivation to act (conation), and a new sense of empowerment (affect, or emotion). Motivation theory demonstrates how these dimensions are inseparably intertwined, and

establishes conative energy as an inherent human quality, not confined to specific learning events:

In a certain sense almost any organismic state of affairs whatsoever is in itself also a motivating state. [Others seem to assume] that a motivational state is a special, peculiar state, sharply marked off from the other happenings in the organism. Sound motivational theory should, on the contrary, assume that motivation is constant, never ending, fluctuating, and complex, and that it is an almost universal characteristic of practically every organismic state of affairs” (Maslow, 1987, pp. 6-7).

That theory pivots on humans’ and other organisms’ natural drive to satisfy needs, putting the *process* of gratifying needs center stage. The different stages of human development demonstrate different needs to strive to meet (Maslow, 1987). New needs arise as a new stage if the basic needs of the previous stage have been met. Organisms are motivated to strive to meet their basic needs, which are ends unto themselves *because* they are basic needs. Because these “ends are intrinsically, and in themselves, valuable to the organism, it will therefore do anything necessary to achieve these goals” (p. 35). The striving, the motivation to strive, the gratification of basic needs, and any frustration or depression at not satisfying basic needs, are *affective* (p. 42). Therefore, conation is an emotional dimension. On that basis, Mezirow’s formula above can be slimmed to two dimensions: behavioral intentions involve (cognition) + (conation/emotion).

Maslow’s explication of the cognitive dimension and its *needs* is valuable for understanding development and transformation, for integrating understandings of their dynamics, and for interpreting what happened in this study. He refutes prevalent connotations of the cognitive as being the arena of dry intellect, and illuminates how humans have basic cognitive needs. Those needs are vital because cognitive capacities are vital to meet other basic needs: “it is clear that any danger to [cognitive capacities], and deprivation or blocking of their free use, must also be indirectly threatening to the basic needs themselves” (p. 23). The basic cognitive needs are the “desires to know and to understand.” Further, “the gratification of the cognitive impulses is subjectively satisfying and yields end-experience....Insight is usually a bright, happy, emotional spot in any person’s life... the desire to know and to understand are themselves conative” (pp. 23-25). On this basis, Mezirow’s formula slims even further: behavioral intentions involve (cognition/conation/emotion).

This unity supports the framework I use below to integrate notions of transformative learning events with *development*. Further, it supports a whole-person model of development by not carving up human experience into compartments such as moral, cognitive, emotional, value systems, etc. (or even drawing thick lines between the personal and the political). Others have already framed dynamics of human development in holistic, non-compartmentalized terms. These include, for example, theories of action inquiry (Fisher, Rooke & Torbert, 2000; Torbert & Associates, 2004), the biological basis of cognition (Maturana & Varela, 1998), cybernetics (Bateson, 2000), emergent cyclical (Graves, 2005), hierarchical complexity (Commons & Pekker, Submitted; Commons & Richards, 2002), motivation and personality (Maslow, 1987), nonlinear dynamics of cognition (Thelen & Smith, 1994), process psychology (Roy, 2000), and subject-object differentiation (Kegan, 1982). Of those, Fisher et al, Commons et al, Graves, and Kegan identify discrete stages of development. Of those stage theories, two of them—action inquiry and hierarchical complexity—are explicit about the fractal levels at which, and the different domains in which, different stages of performance actually operate concurrently in a person’s life.

Since I interpret some of the findings in terms of domains of life, I need to indicate why, and that, transformative, developmental events and their dynamics show up both at small and larger scales, and in single domains and across multiple domains. My coverage is directed to the limited needs of this report; others in addition to Commons et al. and Torbert et al. have documented this (e.g., Burleson & Caplan, 1998; Dawson, Xie & Wildon, 2003). In developmental theory, the term *domains* refers to context-categories we may create to distinguish different environments where activity takes place, such as home, work, community, or governing. For more specificity, relevant sub domains within them can be identified.⁴ My discussion will draw from both action inquiry and hierarchical complexity and embed nonlinear dynamics. For the logic presented below, I employ Torbert's conception of action-logics. Action-logics are distinguished by their hierarchical complexity of tasks, as described in the MHC that I discussed earlier.

The following logic provides a context or framework for my later discussions. It begins with the now-unified rendition of Mezirow's transformative learning dimensions: the behavioral intentions involve (cognition/conation/emotion). Those dimensions unite in a natural synthesis, where:

1. (conation/cognition/emotion) → why people act as they do (i.e., behavioral intentions)
2. People *form* and *use* logics of action
3. These are the *dynamics of undertaking* human action. → decisions about acting/reacting
4. This is about the *process* of human activity. → comprised of continuous decision dynamics
5. Human activity is made up of events that happen.
6. People often experience events as being “chunks” of discrete, identifiable happenings yet events (at many scales) seamlessly constitute all human experience.⁵ Thus, events and experience are inseparable, like two sides of the same coin of human existence. (Sometimes events are treated as external happenings; if so, that overlooks the multitude of happenings going on within individuals. Both kinds of events co-constitute human experience. The contradiction dissolves if event/experience is viewed as a seamless whole, which is the viewpoint here.)
7. Every event/experience (however brief) co-forms/in-forms people's decisions (aware-ly made, or not) about *how* to inter-act with it.

⁴ Bateson's (2000) concept of *cybernetic system* is superior to *sub domain* when discussing how action-logics develop to greater complexity. While it is beyond my scope to delve into, for present purposes, activities in sub domains can be *loosely* related to cybernetic systems. Bateson's complex system of thought, which he called a “cybernetic epistemology” (p. 467), understood cybernetic systems as the “units of evolution” (p. 466). This bears on why I believe it is important to report some of the study's findings in terms of domains and sub domains.

⁵ This view is consistent with Whitehead's (1960) cosmological view of reality as process.

8. *How* people inter-act with their event/experience reflects the above dynamics of *forming* and *using* a logic of action, i.e., an action-logic.
9. *Forming* and *using* an action-logic involves a decision-making process (aware, or not).
10. People decide to inter-act a certain way *only if* it is logical *to them* to do so.
11. If people assume (implicitly or explicitly) that they do not have a free choice to inter-act—for whatever reason(s)—then they will *perceive* that certain decisions are not possible. ‘Impossible decisions’ are illogical, by definition, and people do not choose or make them.
12. A decision/choice of inter-action will be logical *only if* it makes sense in a given event/experience.
13. What makes sense depends on how people (a) *perceive the environment* of the event/experience they may inter-act with (e.g., threatening, supportive, creative) and (b) *perceive the benefits* of a potential inter-action.
14. If they perceive a “match” between the environment and potential benefits, people will naturally desire—be motivated—to inter-act with the event/experience.
15. If people do not perceive a match, they are unlikely to be motivated (and may inter-act, in effect, by deciding to *not* inter-act directly with the event/experience.)
16. The *way* that people perceive the environment and potential benefits is shaped by whatever action-logic they *form* and *use* toward an event/experience + its environment + its benefits.
17. Action-logics rest on assumptions about possible options for inter-acting and achieving desired ends.
18. If people do not (or cannot) assume/perceive certain options, then the options do not exist, *for them*. (Then their action-logics reflect repetitive patterns in decision-making about how to inter-act with event/experiences, based on existing assumptions/perceptions.)
19. People encounter possibilities for new options in the form of *insights* that arise during or after their inter-actions with one or more event/experiences.
20. When people actively inquire into new insights, their new perception of now-new options may lead them to *form* and *use* new action-logics because a new, *now-logical* possibility has appeared in sight.

The Dynamic Process of Developing Action-Logics

Consistent with transformation and some adult learning theory, this logic indicates that *insights* are like seeds from which transformative change *may* develop. Such change includes new assumptions and transformed perspectives (Brookfield, 1987; Cranton, 1994; Freire, 2002; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor et al., 2000; Torbert, 1994). When we have an insight, we may “see our way into” new perspectives, which are ways of viewing things. Perspectives are not, however, disassociated from action-logics: rather, the two are as inseparably intertwined as conation/cognition/emotion. According to the Model of Hierarchical Complexity, a person’s

perceptions of the world (and the stimuli in it) are influenced by frameworks. These frameworks embody the individuals’ conditioning history, including cultural, educational, religious, political, and social backgrounds, among other factors. These combined frameworks are referred to as one’s perspective. Perspectives differ in terms of hierarchical complexity. As the hierarchical complexity of an individual’s response to task demands increases (i.e., as complexity of performances goes up), the individual is increasingly likely to have taken many such perspectives into account (Commons, & Rodriguez, 1990) (Commons, LoCicero, Ross & Miller, 2005, p. 1).

Perspective transformation is not a lateral or translative shift in how people operate. Rather, it is an integral dimension of developing qualitatively different *action-logics* (Torbert & Associates, 2004). An action-logic reflects the framework a person has about how things seem to work in a given situation or in general. Thus, action-logics can show up at the scale of an event/experience as well as the scale of a more pervasive world-view (Fisher et al., 2000). All development follows a progressive logic of actions, which are made up of tasks of increasing hierarchical complexity (Commons & Pekker, Submitted). When we have an insight in a particular domain of effort, it may help us internalize a more complex-than-before set of connections about how things work in that domain. Although only some action logics use *reflective* thinking, the basic dynamic in the organism is akin to this: “reflective thinkers do not take knowledge as given, but instead they evaluate it and then combine it in novel and complex ways to construct and evaluate new ways of understanding and knowing” (Fischer & Pruyne, 2003, p. 178). If the more complex connections get made, one action-logic gives way to the next hierarchically complex action-logic. Through the lens of that next action-logic, perspectives can “see more.” If the new insight is used, transformative learning has taken place, at least in the domain in which it arose. At different stages of development, people have correspondingly different capacities, affecting if or how they may reflect on and transfer learning from one domain to others (Fischer & Pruyne, 2003). Thus, if or when transformative learning takes place, it may remain confined to only its original domain, or may extend across to others.

The concept of transformative learning needs to be situated in the context of development’s hierarchical complexity, because what can be considered as transformative can be qualitatively different: it depends on how complex a person’s action-logic is in that domain. For example, a child will have a zero-loop action logic of helpless, repetitive whining, such as: “I want my teddy bear.” The child may pitch the whining at higher and lower volumes in revised efforts to get a response (*quantitative* change, not qualitative). The whining may get no response from the environment (the teddy bear does not magically appear in the child’s arms, a caretaker does not deliver it from another room in the house, etc.). *If* the child is motivated enough, the desire for

the teddy bear, possibly combined with the visual memory of someone bringing it previously, may connect as an insight, inspiring and further motivating the child, who begins to actively look for the teddy bear. This adaptation in response to no-outcomes-from-whining would be transformative learning for that child in that sub domain: the zero-loop behavior of whining transformed into a new, single loop action-logic: “My teddy bear (still) is not here; I look for my teddy bear.” By contrast, this behavior change would not represent transformative learning if a lazy older person whined for someone to deliver a meal over to the easy chair, but finally got up and got the meal independently. The older person already had the capacity to exercise single-loop behavior change in that sub domain of being hungry while sitting in the easy chair.

Several of these concepts are combined in Table 1. Column 1 illustrates the concept of domain by an analogy of using a radio station and media in increasingly complex ways. Column 2 indicates the number of feedback loops (sometimes called learning loops) each action-logic uses, and introduces the action-logic titles I use in this report. Column 3 indicates differences in adult action-logics in terms of the contents included in feedback loops. It shows the quantitative increases in the type of activity that each loop includes. These loops can be thought of as a lasso, with each larger lasso encompassing more than the previously-sized lasso could. As column 3’s heading suggests, these loops encompass (quantitative increase) progressively more territories of event/experiences (qualitative differences) as its sub-columns are read from left to right.

Finally, Table 1 ([click here](#)) portrays how development that is typically thought of as stages that a person may develop through over a lifetime, it is a pattern of action-logics that transpires throughout lifetimes at larger and smaller scales. The pattern behaves like “mini-stages of development” in all event/experiences, as I intend for the whining child and the radio analogy to illustrate. This indicates that these self-similar (*fractal*) patterns are processes—like building blocks—of all development into increasing complexity. This is one important implication of the Model of Hierarchical Complexity. Row 5/0 across the bottom of the table is my attempt to indicate this, although within the confines of one table, it is difficult to illustrate one pattern that appears at all scales. As incremental capacities get added, from left to right in that row, the feedback loops’ activities operate as the *transition steps* required to develop the next higher action logic at any scale (see Commons & Richards, 2002 and Commons & Pekker, Submitted). *Scale* is almost infinite; it can refer to a set of thoughts, an event/experience, a skill, a domain, a life-world (worldview, paradigm), a society, an era, etc. Every time we reach a new synthesis (sub-column 5/0) regardless of scale or activity, we have developed a new paradigm for operating “there”—we completed the *quantitatively required* transitions (Commons & Pekker, Submitted) to operate at a more complex action-logic (or stage of performance). Then, as we use that new action-logic, our activity that uses it gets classified in sub-column 0. This simply means that the end of one full set of integrated learning transitions, once they are consolidated, places us in potential readiness to begin a new learning cycle from within our new, more complex action-logic.

The foregoing points were that people develop new action-logics in the course of active life, that action-logics pertain to all domains and scales of human activity, and that there are different action-logics that reflect varying degrees of complexity. Below, I describe four “full stage” adult action-logics that are relevant to this study’s findings. It does not give illustrations of the transition steps between the full stages because to do so would unduly extend this section. These action-logics are *structures* of behaviors and reasoning, which is a different way to think about human behavior. Therefore, under each description, I include one example of study participants’ *content* that uses each different structure, to show the differences in the action-logics’

hierarchical complexity between each stage. The examples come from asking participants what they thought of or meant when they heard or used the term “community.” Each meaning would underlie (be the *logic* of) how they *acted* with regard to community. I use both Torbert et al.’s and MHC’s (the Model of Hierarchical Complexity) names and descriptions for these stages because they are complementary and familiar to different audiences. See Torbert & Associates (2004) and Commons et al. (2005) for fuller descriptions. A critical reminder is that people employ different action-logics situationally, depending on the event/experiences they find themselves in and the level of hierarchical complexity they have already developed (or are ready to develop).

Abstract/Diplomat. Uses stereotypes and clichés; uses quantifiers when describing things (all, most, none, some); talks about variables of time, place, act, actor, state, type; makes categorical assertions (“we all know that”); seeks group membership, status, is loyal to in-group; saving face is important.

Example: “People. You think of people involved and people activity and places where the community can go to feel safe and spend time together. Most communities do not have that anymore.”

Formal/Expert and Achiever. Argues using empirical or logical evidence; logic is linear (if...then, because, thus, therefore); seeks causes and solves problems based on one input (causal) variable; dogmatic; accepts feedback only from objectively acknowledged masters; uses longer-term thinking to achieve results.

Example: “This community is, basically the [name of local city] area because we have the boundary lines of [names three counties] that meet the city boundary; therefore, that area would be this community.” [empirical boundaries as input variable, logic based on their relations]

Systematic/Individualist. Coordinates multiple variables or factors and uses them as input to recognize systems of relationships; forms matrices to illustrate relations; situates events and ideas in larger contexts (present and historical); relativism may show up while juggling these multiple relations; is less inclined to judge; systems are formed out of relations; starts to recognize self as system and notice own shadow.

Example: “I don’t know how to mention this but the word community has a lot of meaning because we are looking to developing a residential community here at [work site] so we have been going around to meetings trying to put community, create community, to develop a housing community here at [site of employment]. The word ‘community’ has a specific meaning in that context, in terms of an intentional, planned place to live, work, and have relationships with people.” [system]

Metasystematic/Strategist. Integrates systems, constructing metasystems, which can take the form of higher principles that coordinate systems coherently; principles go beyond rules, customs, and exceptions; reflects on and compares systems and perspectives coherently (meta-analytic), and is aware that people’s perspectives depend upon their action-logics; recognizes

perspectives as systems, and multiple perspectives as metasystems; coordinates short-term goals with long-term process orientations.

Example 1: “I just think of community as a group of homes or people living in homes that are in x amount of numbers where they go to the same school, that you see one another, and you are a part of paying either city taxes or county taxes [system] and those taxes go to whatever things that you participate in publicly in that area [system]. That is how I see a community” [metasystem that coordinates relations of systems].

Example 2: “I guess, you know, I think about this community more in terms of what we talked about, the [site] community per se, and all of the different constituencies that were included in there. I guess I kind of felt a part of that community, if you will. I think that could be translated a lot of different ways, in terms of community. I think it maybe changed my perception, that it includes a lot of different parties coming from different perspectives [who] a lot of times you don’t really perhaps think about that have an interest in an issue or a topic, or whatever.” [metasystem of parties with different perspectives and interests]

This section has been a long, dense traverse to arrive at its simply stated conclusion about where these theoretical perspectives lead. Human interactions with the environment are continuous event/experiences that happen all the time at numerous scales. Decisions about how to inter-act derive from whichever action-logics a person has available and other factors that influence motivations. The more territories of experience that a person can inter-act with, the more complex that interactive action-logic is and can become. My theory for fostering political development uses that foundation as a basis to build into methodologies all the territories of experience that are practical within given tasks that are needed to address issues. Thus, event/experiences that introduce and use more territories of experience are part of my overall methodology.

To give some indication of this integration, Table 2 lists main practices of the method’s issue-work with their action inquiry elements. This is shown within the same columnar format as Table 1, with the incrementally more complex action-logics from left to right. While it is not easy to indicate process dynamics in a static table, or how they are woven through the method in various iterations, Table 2 indicates that the pattern built into the methodology is a fractal that is self-similar to Table 1’s developmental pattern. It indicates the progressive looping of more elements to (hopefully) arrive at a major synthesis, a new decision point. The decision point/synthesis in Table 2 corresponds to Table 1’s last cell at row 5/0 in column 5/0. There are several smaller decision points within the process, indicated by an asterisk. Each one represents that the group has created and must inter-act with an event/experience before work can continue.

Table 2. Integration of Method’s Main Practices With Action-Logics and Action Inquiry.

Main Practices Within Methodology In Relation to Developmental Sequence in Table 1					
0	1	2	3	4	5/0
Map topics of concern; select one *	Convert topic to an issue * and gain insights R, I	Develop * systemic analysis of the issue, and gain insights R, A, I, AI	Describe multiple action-logic approaches to address issue, and gain insights R, A, I, AI	Deliberate * tensions within and across the multiple action-logics, and gain insights (R), A, I, AI	Deliberative decision-making outcome(s) R
		Create an issue action-system, and gain insights R, A, I			
		Select one systemic action to work on 1 st *			
^ <i>Issue Analyses</i> ^			^ <i>Frame</i> ^ <i>the options</i>	^ <i>Perceive</i> ^ <i>landscape of options</i>	^ <i>Synthesize</i>
Action Inquiry’s four practices weave through most tasks in this group discourse method. The four codes used above are: R-Re-framing; A-Advocating; I-Illustrating; AI-Actively Inquiring					

The Importance of Inquiring Into and Deliberating About Tone and Intention

The purpose of this section is to discuss why the tone and intention issue was critical for this group to inquire into. As Table 4 in a later section will indicate, one of the participants raised some fundamental inquiries in a mid-point discussion. In one instance, for example, “Why do we think they don’t do what we want them to do?” In another, “So why do we distrust them?” The inquiries were why do *we* do something, not, why do *they* do something. Other participants did not engage the queries into why do *we*, which would mean examining some assumptions and beliefs. Nor did I, in my role as facilitator, invite them to; my activity during their impromptu diversion from task was to observe what was happening among them. I observed that they did not naturally move into an inquiry into *why do we* (or *why do I*) even in the face of the direct questions. Instead, they moved away from inquiry.

The practice of inquiry bears directly on why the tone and intention issue was important to deliberate. The method’s overall design embeds the role of inquiry into an integral array of factors that make up the layers of issues. In a social context, an issue represents a collective perception of a complex, a complicated set of “stuff” going on that people want to change. Factors that contribute to perceptions of an issue include people’s intentions, assumptions, beliefs, values, biases, concerns, needs, hopes, and life experiences, as well as larger social factors. The collection of those individual factors (intentions, assumptions, beliefs, values, etc.) contributes to an individual’s *perspective* on an issue.

The Politics of Tone and Intention

Every attempt to address issues is political, because it intends to impact the ways of relating in and among the *polis*: the people who contribute to an issue, those who are affected by the issue, and those who have governance roles in any dimension of the issue. For people to realistically conceive of undertaking complex action to address issues, and for the actions to have the necessary integral change-making potential (where integral is understood as *essential to completeness*), an effective political change process must rest on and reflect a certain set of principles. These are implicit in the methodology, and this section is for making some of them explicit.

Torbert's (1991) explication of his action inquiry paradigm gives a coherent rendering of the principles most important to emphasize here. Habermas' (1979) communicative action theory and Freire's (2002) pedagogy for critical consciousness are consistent with these. Torbert shows a concise, building-block logic of why inquiry is an essential political activity. Three of the principles are the traditional ones of liberty, equality, and fraternity. He adds two more: inquiry and quality, as the first and last principles in the hierarchy. He recombines all of these to construct his new paradigm. He asserts, "we are missing a fourth political principle—a principle never before recognized as political—the principle of inquiry. The only political principle that *invites the potential transformation of everyone's perspective is the principle of inquiry*" (Torbert, 1991, pp. 236, emphasis added). This principle is *primary*, followed by peerdom, which combines the principles of fraternity and equality "without the sexist connotation of fraternity" (p. 234), and liberty. Quality is the "quaternary political principle, approached only in the context of the commitment, attention, and skill cultivated through ongoing practice of the first three principles" (p. 234).

In any setting, liberty and peerdom (equality and fraternity, combined) are *not necessarily* givens: perceptions and realities of whether or not they operate depend largely on the culture's operative—not espoused—action-logics. Without liberty and peerdom, people find it difficult to meet their needs, and motivation (conation) to decide to do something that seems impossible to do is naturally depressed. Maslow explicates what is at stake.

There are certain conditions that are immediate prerequisites for the basic need satisfactions. Such conditions as freedom to speak, freedom to do what one wishes so long as no harm is done to others, freedom to express oneself, freedom to investigate and seek for information, freedom to defend oneself, justice, fairness, honesty, and orderliness in the group are examples of such preconditions for basic need satisfactions. These conditions are not ends in themselves but they are *almost* so since they are so closely related to the basic needs, which are apparently the only ends in themselves. Danger to these freedoms is reacted to with emergency response as if there were direct danger to the basic needs themselves....Secrecy, censorship, dishonesty, and blocking of communication threaten *all* the basic needs" (Maslow, 1987, pp. 22-23, emphasis in the original).

Toward completing this discussion about the importance of the tone and intention issue, I emphasize my earlier point, that every attempt to address issues is political because it *intends* to impact ways of relating in and among the polis. Thus, intention plays an inherent role in all political activity. Our intentions may be unconscious or implicit, or conscious or explicit. Interpreted in terms of Kegan's (1982) work, if we are not conscious of having certain intentions

because we are embedded in them, they often *have us* and they govern our tones, assumptions, behaviors, etc. Conversely, if we are conscious of our intentions, we can *have* them without our actions necessarily being governed by them; this is because we can inquire into and modify them. If we are aware of our intentions, they are explicit in our private thinking. Often, they *seem* to remain in that private domain. However, when they flavor our speech and behaviors, they are no longer private, even though we may assume that they remain private if they are not spoken. The point, illustrated in this study, is that tone and intention's flavor enters the discourse whether intended or not. However, this can be brought into the public domain purposefully, and consciously be made explicit there, simply by speaking about them to others.

To articulate actual intentions publicly is an intensely political act. If such acts do not already characterize the publicly common ways of relating—the political culture—the acts *change* the politics (the ways of relating) *by* being acts done in public. Thus, both knowing and stating our intentions toward social change play a political role in fostering change. The kinds of intentions we have will flavor the kind of change we foster. If we have a commitment to foster positive change, we are wise to inquire into and examine our intentions so our tones, assumptions, and actions are consistent toward that goal. This is one reason why inquiry is the primary political principle and practice.

By exposing the participants to their tone and intention issue, illustrating how it showed up, and explaining why it was crucial to address, we together opened the space for them to own the value of inquiring into it in a structured, deliberative way. As Table 2's columns 3 and 4 indicate, issues are framed into diverse approaches driven by different action-logics (perspectives) on the issue. It is just as legitimate to deliberate about tone and intention as it is to deliberate about any traditional "out there" public issue. The logic that I give here shows that tone and intention are inherently political and are among the factors that make up issues. Thus, tone and intention is a public ("out there") issue, it is complex because multiple action-logics construct it and multiple approaches to address it are possible, the approaches embed competing tensions, and "this tension must be worked off by the participants' own efforts" (Habermas, 1996, p. 17). This is the classic formula for when deliberation is called for.

Paradigm of Deliberative Action Inquiry

The idea and practice of developing several approaches to a public issue so that people can deliberate about it are not new, at least in the U.S.⁶ As a process of thoughtfully weighing differences, deliberation is associated with a transformative quality (Mathews, 1999) and playing a role in the sometimes decades-long process from citizen's earliest awareness of issues to arriving at a "public judgment" about them with a will to make policy changes on them (Yankelovich, 1991, p. 64). Thousands of single-session meetings for public deliberation have been convened over the last two decades. Even so, as I mentioned earlier, a change in orientation from talk to action is only beginning in the minds of many practitioners who convene them (Levine, Fung, & Gastil, 2005). In my years of doing contracted research for Kettering Foundation—in community politics action research and performing a longitudinal study—I found few signs of what my program area called "real" deliberation, and no evidence of systemic action on issues. These are natural outcomes in the absence of (a) a rigorously systematic theory and practice for issue-framing that embeds real tensions to deliberate at all, and (b) a metasystematic understanding of the layers of complexity involved in issues with processes for

⁶ National Issues Forums is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2006 (See www.nifi.org).

systemic action to be conceived. Real deliberation requires focus on the bona fide tensions resulting from different life experiences of people employing different action-logics. With a rigorous issue-framing system to help ensure such focus, real deliberation's talk does not include blaming, polemics, diagnoses, opining, and off-topic tangents that are otherwise quite common in unstructured talk—an incoherence akin to a spontaneous discussion participants in this study had (shown in Table 4 in a section below). When the deliberation is focused, people's naturally deliberative, nonlinear oscillations among and between the embedded tensions (Ross 2005) have the environment they need to elicit insights, inform and shift assumptions, and take in more of the territories of experience the issue involves. When the process is designed for the possibility, the deliberative product can lead to a metasystem of action-systems that a well-focused issue needs. The methodology used in this study reflects these improvements to deliberative practice.

When a deliberative framework enables people to weigh several choices of action-logic-driven perspectives that they could adopt toward their own tone and intention, it is an opportunity for individual and collective processes of reflection.⁷ Such occasions offer a structured event/experience to step back, perceive, reflect on, and weigh—in an orderly way—several approaches or scenarios. Each of those include different assumptions and different territories of experience. Those territories include our individual and collective intentions, strategies, behaviors, and desired impacts. Table 3 (on the next page) indicates the complex array of nonlinear dynamics that go on within a group that is really deliberating a framework based on developmental action-logics.

Inquiring into our assumptions and suspending them long enough to explore alternative assumptions and their implications are fundamental activities in accounts of critical reflection and transformative learning (e.g., Brookfield, 1987; Cranton, 1994; Fischer & Pruyne, 2003; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor et al., 2000; Torbert & Associates, 2004). Critical reflection liberates the individual and the community by making themselves observable or transparent to themselves (Badillo, 1991), and such transformative potentials are commonly associated with positive social evolution (e.g., Earley, 1997; Habermas, 1979; Morrow & Torres, 2002; Torbert, 2000). When individuals or groups can turn their reflections back onto themselves, they form a relationship between themselves and their reflections. This is called being *reflexive*. In Earley's discussion of reflection's role in personal and societal evolution, he calls it "the most advanced form of self-reflexive consciousness" (1997, p. 323). In sum, critical reflection's "significance cannot be sufficiently accentuated" (Badillo, 1991, p. 32).

This structured approach to critical reflection using a paradigm of deliberative action inquiry with the multi-perspectives of a range of action-logics to deliberate about, enables people with different reflective capacities to conduct a meaningful issue-inquiry together. When the issue has an array of tones and intentions to deliberate, as the study participants did, people can weigh how each option may contribute to (or detract from) an overall goal, and conscious choices about them in advance can reduce the odds of self-sabotaging efforts once the active work begins. This is especially essential when the stated goal is to transform an adversarial political culture. Political development requires the landscapes afforded by "event structures" that embed the principles of inquiry and quality and the "multi-paradigmatic nature of human consciousness/reality" (Torbert, 2000, p. 75). Fischer and Pruyne (2003) summarize these last notions when they write "reflective thinking...depends on environments that support high-level abstract thinking about multiple perspectives" (p. 185), and the key factor ... does not seem to be

⁷ The same things are true for any other issue, although *tone and intention* issues *explicitly require* three-loop learning, which always incorporates intentions in its deliberations across the four territories.

education in general, but a certain *kind* of education—a focus on reasoning about ill-structured problems” (p. 189). Participants’ disparate tones and intentions toward achieving a common goal certainly represented an ill-structured problem in this study.

Table 3. Structure for the Nonlinear Dynamics of Deliberative Action Inquiry.

Feedback loop complexity built into approaches’ perspectives (i.e., their basic action-logics) ↓	Concurrent 1 st person 2 nd person 3 rd person feedback loops during deliberation ↓	0 Encounter reasons, assumptions & actions involved in approach					
		1 Frame/advocate/illustrate one’s own pro/con concerns (i.e., action-logics formed & used toward the issue)					
		2 Frame/advocate/illustrate/inquire into issue-concerns of other’s concerns (present & absent) (i.e., other action-logics formed & used toward the issue)					
		3 Coordinate the issue’s pro/con tensions within the approach					
		4 Coordinate the issue’s pro/con tensions across all approaches					
		5/0 Synthesize/Decide					
Feedback loops → across territories of deliberative action inquiry		0	1	2	3	4	5/0
<i>1st Approach</i> 0-loop abstract	1 st individual						
	2 nd group						
	3 rd issue						
<i>2nd Approach</i> 1-loop formal logic	1 st individual						
	2 nd group						
	3 rd issue						
<i>3rd Approach</i> 1-loop formal logic	1 st individual						
	2 nd group						
	3 rd issue						
<i>4th Approach</i> 2-loop systematic	1 st individual						
	2 nd group						
	3 rd issue						

The Study

Research Perspective

The study was based on qualitative research methods, using individual interviews, participant observation integrated with action research, and my reflections as the researcher and process facilitator. The study was informed by the theoretical perspectives described earlier, which are embedded in the methodology.

Participants and Data Collection

The population of interest was any adult who lived, worked, or felt invested in the selected U.S. community. The site selected was a small city and the areas adjacent to it, referred to below as “the community.” All eight participants lived and/or worked in the community. They engaged in the informed consent process for research with human subjects and signed the appropriate forms indicating their informed consent to participate. They ranged in age from 31 to 57 years, with educations ranging from two persons with general education diplomas and some post-secondary education, to three with Master’s degrees.

Fieldwork spanned approximately three and a half months and included individual pre-process interviews, six consecutive weekly group sessions, and individual post-process interviews, all audio-recorded. Process methods used during the group meetings varied by session, with the following sequence of general tasks.

1. Identify all the topics of concern in the community and why they are concerns. Map how and why they connect with each other.
2. Select a priority topic to focus on. Using the steps provided, select one of the issues derived from that topic, and analyze why it exists, its impacts, and the factors that support its continuance.
3. Identify a systemic array of reactive and proactive actions tailored to address the issue.
4. Using criteria provided, select one of the actions that will require complex decision-making about its implementation.
5. Using the template provided, develop several viable, diverse approaches toward deciding upon that action; product a brief issue booklet about the question that needs deciding.
6. With the aid of the issue booklet, deliberate all the pros, cons, and real world consequences and trade-offs involved with each approach, and articulate decisions.

What Happened for the Group

The discourse process, formally entitled *The Integral Process For Working On Complex Issues* but called *FreshAir* for this project, is referred to below either by the acronym TIP, or simply as, the process. It is derived from a general model that I had developed based on my prior action and theoretical research. Its functional purposes and their theoretical underpinnings are not further discussed here (but see Ross 2002). Its template for first developing and then deliberating approaches to issues explicitly includes distinct action-logics that complex issues evoke in various people, depending on how the issue does, or may, affect them.⁸ These action-logics are characterized by capacities to perform tasks at different levels of hierarchical complexity as shown in Table 1. TIP embeds these disparate voices in various of its sub-processes, providing a structured method, context, *and the real-world reasons* for people to engage with each voice, even if it is not “theirs” on a particular issue. Some of those real-world reasons have to do with the individual’s own concerns, inviting some first-person (self) action inquiry. Others have to do with discussing the existence and validity of other persons’ concerns

⁸ While a maximum of four action-logics are reflected as the individual approaches to deliberate, within each approach the other common, adult action-logics are given voice by reflecting their concerns or objections to each approach.

about the issue (second- and third-person action inquiry), inviting social perspective-taking, in Selman's (1980) terms, which expands the territories of event/experience.

Sessions' Methodology, Analyses, And Discussion

The group's issue about tones and intentions evolved gradually, and this narrative begins by telling the story of that evolution. Every complex issue arises from a particular context. While a *tone and intention* issue could seem generic on its surface, that issue, too, emerged out of not only the design of the discourse process itself, but also out of the gestalt produced by a particular combination of factors. These included the research context, the individuals involved in it and their unique contexts, group dynamics in the various subjects and steps of the process, community history, and the local political culture that concerned participants.

Session One

The unusually thorough quality of the work that participants did in their first session laid the foundation for the rest of the process and their eventual issue. They began by identifying 39 topics of concern. As they discussed which topics were more like the tip of an iceberg (as compared to the deep base of an iceberg) they were able to separate the topics into two distinct clusters. They characterized one cluster as consequences and symptoms. It was associated with recent years' changes in the community's status quo, with those differences in the quality of life feeling like a threat. They recognized that all of the topics of concern in that cluster were directly or indirectly affiliated with local land uses. The other cluster was associated with the strains that characterized local public life and showed up in the relations of the public with its government and in the relations between local governments. They characterized that cluster as containing issues of process: "how we get the job done, relate, and communicate, how we do things, how things are working or not working." In that cluster laid the roots of the eventual tones and intentions issue they worked on. At that early stage, words they used as part of some topics' descriptions included angst, trickery, tension, strain, and other terms to describe what contributed to the strained relations, from their perspectives.

At that juncture, the next task was to select one topic of priority concern to work on in more detail in the next session. The process steps do not require or invite participants to identify or analyze the relationships between any topic-clusters they develop. In this case, however, once people saw and discussed the distinctly different nature of each cluster they had created, there was a seemingly natural desire or movement to articulate "the gap" between the two clusters. What *was* the missing link that would transform one cluster's strains *so that* the pile of its symptoms and consequences in the other cluster could get whittled down? A difficult effort, the most they could do at that point was name that the community needed a process to connect the two clusters, which was hard to do when there was a lack of a sense of community and a lack of communication. Not only did the community seem to have such a gap; at that point, the group discovered it also had one. Its gap was not finding a satisfactory way to "name" its priority concern, that missing link or process between the two clusters.

My job as facilitator in this process was to help people share and build their knowledge base together. My role did not include imposing my own thinking or analyses on the participants. Although it left some of them feeling dissatisfied to stop short of selecting a clear topic, they were tired and we had reached the end of that session's allotted time. With assurances that the

next session would begin where this one left off, I suggested that once I typed up their work, that seeing it in an orderly format could help them identify and select the topic.

I believe a combination of factors probably made it hard for the group to coalesce around a way to name the new topic of concern situated between their clusters. First, at an analytic, developmental level, their two clusters represented huge systems. To conceive of a way to name that nexus would be a difficult task of metasystematic complexity in a new domain of issue analysis. Public issue analysis is not something that participants were accustomed to doing, and they would need more time to think, whether or not any of them used metasystematic thinking. Next, at a content level, some of the individuals had expressed which topics they had the most concern about, while others did not have a stated preference. As they tried to name the new topic, they may have been struggling to assure that the already-identified topics of greatest concern would still be accommodated. In their concerns about getting to the roots of the difficult relations and consequences of them, I had some sense that it was almost like they were searching for a “magic bullet,” a quick way to make that missing link appear. If people harbor hopes for such rescues, it can naturally lead them to avoid making a commitment to a possibly sub-optimum choice. Finally, there are choice-points like this throughout the process, and it is not always comfortable for participants to engage them.

Session Two

As the next session began, participants felt no closer to finding words to describe that topic, yet everyone felt that they shared the same grasp of what they meant, even though it did not yet have words. That was sufficient for me to suggest that we just dive into the steps to turn the topic into an issue, which would be a more specific set of concerns that they could work on through the rest of the sessions. It takes a thoughtful process to get from the broad, implicit generalizations of a topic (whether it has words to label it, or not) to identifying a specific issue or problem. Regardless of what kind of topic concerns people, it has identifiable impacts and causes that people can cite from experience, or that they fear they will experience. Some or all of those may be bona fide issues that can be worked on. For this group to sort through the impacts and causes of this hard-for-them-to-name topic, its discussion included anecdotal stories that unpacked it and revealed more about the concerns.

One person reported that his stances on certain issues in the community seemed to put him on the police department’s list of people to track and then harass with traffic tickets over minor things. Another reported that family members had said the city’s atmosphere had been antagonistic across the forty years they had lived there. Some people reported a number of frustrating, unsuccessful attempts to get basic public information from City Hall. Some told the stories of citizen referendum efforts over the years, and how each one left more damaged relations in its wake regardless of which side “won.” Despite citizen outcries, mostly in connection with land use issues, successive city administrations would pursue their own agendas. There were chronic difficulties in obtaining official explanations for decisions or creating opportunities for dialogue about them, either before or after they happened. The community politics seemed to be summed up by a resident (not participating in this study) who posted to an electronic bulletin board: “It’s hard to live here in the middle of the ‘Hatfields and McCoys.’ I try to stay in the background and not say much so I don’t risk the venom and being labeled.” I trusted that the study participants were not exaggerating the community’s troubled interactions.

Citizens' complaints about others in their community have been common in all the years I have done public issues work. They represent only some of the facets of any community's whole story. This discourse process is designed to flesh out the whole story from as many perspectives as possible to elicit as much balanced insight as possible, and therefore as much capacity to address issues as possible. The group in this non-public project did not have that benefit. Some of the participants contributed to achieving some balance by introducing actual or potential cases of officials' frustrations with citizens, and including other citizens' perspectives. For example, in the third session a participant asserted: "They're sitting around having the same meeting [that we are], by the way."

Us and *them* language was prominent in the early sessions. Yet, I heard these people describing more than common complaints. I heard them, and they heard themselves, describing in detail a very uncomfortable political culture that permeated a great deal of daily life, and the quality of that life. Through their explanations of impacts and causes, participants defined their key issue of concern, using these terms: "The issue, the problem is that citizens are unaware, frustrated, and therefore powerless, uninvolved, and misinformed." Moments later, the group coalesced around a name for the elusive umbrella topic this problem referred to: "the troubled interactions between government and the people." The group adopted this as its orienting topic. It seemed to capture the *cause* of the gap between their first session's clusters. It was at the heart of troubling things that were—and were not—happening in the community.

By the time these milestones were reached, we did not have enough session time remaining for the last step: to summarize their work into a fuller description of the issue. One person suggested that they could work on the summary from home before the third session, and all agreed. The process book had an example for reference, modeling the factual, unbiased style to use when describing an issue. This seemingly clear closure to the second session masked some things going on beneath the surface.

During the week, I received the summaries drafted by (only) two of the participants, giving me a clue. Rather than a neutral issue summary derived from the group's work, one person drafted a page akin to a manifesto that proclaimed "power to the people" in a democracy. It echoed comments that the person had made in the last session, and prescribed what citizens should do to "take the power back" from the "power elite." It told me that this person had both missed the purpose of the issue summary, and was operating on an erroneous assumption. Its tone of victimization and aggression was similar to the tone that another participant's comments sometimes had. It seemed to me that at least one, and possibly, two participants had misconstrued the research project's objectives and the overall purpose of the discourse process. We were entering the turn toward the group's tone and intention issue.

Session Three

I inserted some discussion time at the beginning of the third session so we could surface assumptions about the project and the process, and the neutrality with which issues are treated in both. It answered a couple persons' previously unasked questions and seemed to afford more clarity in general about what we were doing, and why. In the course of that discussion, the person who wrote the manifesto-type issue summary explained why it sounded the way it did. One reason was the perception that the group was quite homogenous, that everyone seemed on the same page about motivations and what they wanted to be different in the community. The inference seemed to be that if the group had a shared goal, then it was appropriate to summarize

the issue with prescriptions for addressing it. The underlying assumption seemed to be that everyone would agree on the same prescriptions because their ultimate goals were similar.

To that stage of our work, I too had been viewing the group as homogenous. Discussions in this session began to shift my perception. One outcome of this first discussion was that the manifesto-writer said that it clarified for her why the issue's summary description had to be neutral and not prescribe solutions, and also that the rawness of so many bad experiences made it "probably impossible to *feel* neutral."

The agenda for this session was very straightforward. The first task was to freely brainstorm all the conceivable actions that could be taken by anyone, or any entity, in the community, to directly address the issue the group had selected. The group produced a long, diverse systemic action to-do list. Some actions were voluntary things that individuals, groups, or government could do. Some would involve administrative policy changes for local government, the newspaper, and schools. Most of them would involve public policy changes of different kinds, including how facets of local government operations were structured. The purpose of this step is to generate a comprehensive inventory of what systemic change on a public issue could require if it is undertaken.

The next task was to select only one of the actions that met the basic criteria provided in the process book. If an action met those criteria, it would signal that the action amounted to a sub-issue of the overall issue, and that it needed special attention and decision-making. The criteria help people recognize the kinds of changes that should ideally be deliberated: to decide about why an action should be done, about whether it should be done, and/or about how it should be done. Such explorations indicate the hallmark of which issues to deliberate, that they have no simple answers. Deliberative decision-making about such changes is important if they are to be understood, well designed, accepted, supported, and successfully implemented. On the surface, the selection of one action from such a list is a straightforward task. In reality, such decision-points involve some messiness, because to give priority to one subject of importance means weighing the consequences of not choosing other perhaps equally important options. (However, when many people are involved, concurrent work on a range of issues is possible.) Some groups doing issues work experience such decision-points as a dilemma, to various degrees.

At times taking circuitous routes, and with my prodding to assess which actions might be more likely to address the group's fundamental concerns sooner than others', participants' discussion surfaced the following list to choose from. Each selection was cast in the form of a question that could be deliberated. They were:

- How do we involve the whole community in deciding changes to zoning codes?
- Who needs to be included and considered in deciding zoning variances?
- How do we ensure transparency and access to all public information?
- How do we ensure accountability and protections in cases of retribution?

Narrowed down from all the possible choices on their earlier list of actions, this short list of concrete issues confronted the group with another dilemma: which one should be the issue that the remaining three sessions would focus on? Rather than briefly and informally deliberating about these four options, choosing one of them, and ending the session at the two-hour mark, the participants veered far away from that task. They began an important discussion of a very different ilk.

The discussion illuminated that participants were not of one mind about how, why, and when they should engage their overall goal, much less of one mind for choosing one of the four issue-questions they prioritized. From one perspective, the discussion was like an ordinary

conversation among citizens that might take place almost anywhere. However, its context and timing made it noteworthy. It took place *instead of* making a key decision. Experience over the years has taught me to pay close attention when a group avoids a task. It usually signals that something is going on, unnamed, that needs to come to the surface. It could be something as simple as not really understanding the task to be done, or something much more complex. Thus, this was an important discussion to emerge, and I did not redirect their focus back to the task.

All of this meant that we closed the session in a state similar to the first one, with the group unable to make a selection. This time, however, the reasons for that state were very different. I spent the next days immersed in analyzing the session's discussion and the cumulative group dynamics, pondering how to introduce participants to the invisible "elephant in the room" I saw emerging: the dynamics that indicated that a tone and intention issue had to be on that list.

Emergence of the Tone and Intention Issue

As the event/experience that brought the issue to the surface, the discussion's content merits a closer look, for its own sake as part of this study into what happened, and also as a basis of comparison for what happened later. To highlight an instrumental pattern within the discussion and the political dynamics in the group, I introduce and use the Triangle Model of Responsibility (Schlenker, Britt, Pennington, Murphy & Doherty, 1994). For reading the transcript below, it can contribute a layer of coherence. The participants' discussion lacked coherence in the traditional sense, since they were unable to coordinate and reflect on the relations among the myriad points they raised (or their assumptions). The triangle model explicates some of those relations, and in doing so, coordinates the kinds of foundational issues of accountability and responsibility that happened to be reflected in the group's four issue-questions above. The model posits that responsibility is an essential part of holding people accountable and that accountability entails "an evaluative reckoning" (p. 634) that judges self and/or others. It asserts, "there are no exceptions" (p. 635) to the requirement that to make an evaluative reckoning, "the evaluator has information about three key elements and the linkages or connections among them" (p. 634) "*as perceived* by the individual who is making the judgment" (p. 638, emphasis added). Those elements are

- (a) the *prescriptions* that should be guiding the actor's conduct on the occasion, (b) the *event* that occurred (or is anticipated) that is relevant to the prescriptions, and (c) a set of *identity images* that are relevant to the event and prescriptions and that describe the actor's roles, qualities, convictions, and aspirations (Schlenker et al., 1994, p. 634, emphases in the original).

The elements defined by Schlenker et al. are couched in language that implies judging specific instances and individual actors, and they need to be generalized to apply to the participants' discussion. For example, 'actor' would apply to the class of citizens, the class of officials, or the government, and 'event' would apply to classes of events. The image of a triangle is ideal for suggesting the tensions among and between the three elements. When an "audience" is judging a situation comprised of those elements, the authors reflect that added dimension to the triangle by calling it "the accountability pyramid" (p. 635). Their explication of the model and the significance of different weights that an evaluative judgment can place on the elements' linkages is worthwhile reading, although it is beyond my scope to discuss it here. Their notion of the pyramid is germane because much of the participants' discussion reflected

various judgments on others’ situations, resulting in quite an assortment of such pyramids. This was because participants *perceived differently* the prescriptions, relevant events, and identity images evoked during the discussion.

With regard to the foregoing three elements of evaluative reckonings, each participant statement below that I classified that way illustrated that the person had particular perceptions of prescriptions, events, and identity images (for whatever actors it referred to). The purpose of using that model in this analysis is not to show simple support for the model. It calls attention to both positive and negative evaluative statements, and contrasts judgments with other kinds of statements. In the process of using those categories to assess statements, attention picks up on other features that could be obscure without a method to sharpen the comparisons. For example, the *scale* of participants’ attention ranged from prescriptions, events, and roles at the level of citizen and official *minutiae* to larger questions of roles and responsibilities. The *scope* ranged from personal levels of distrust to political philosophy. The *type* of statements ranged from searching questions, to balanced observations, to judgments, to prescribing a decision for the small group to make about a hypothetical candidate. The *focus* shifted from arriving at non-judgmental observations to moving away from them back into judgment, like the “patterned set of influence links among members” discussed by Arrow, McGrath & Berdahl (2000, p. 43). Prescriptions, events, and identity images focused predominately on “them.” Some statements in the discussion reflected negative judgments along the lines of similar statements made in the first two sessions. Half of the participants later referred to this as a “negative tone.” Albeit understandable, if such a tone flavored efforts to foster positive change in an adversarial political culture, it would fail by perpetrating the very culture it purportedly wanted to change. The dichotomy between the group’s expressed desire to improve the culture and the tone that characterized a number of participants’ attitudes—and the silence about that dichotomy—was the invisible elephant in the room.

The discussion ensued immediately after I asked the group which of the four issue-questions (above) it wanted to select. Table 4 classifies the chronological flow of statements using the elements of the Triangle Model of Responsibility, where applicable. It is a basis for comparing the coherence, in tone and intention, with the group’s later, deliberative discussion.

Table 4. Excerpts From Session 3 Discussion.

Participant Statements			
Triangle Model Elements: P = Prescriptions E = Events I = Identity Images			
Statements	P	E	I
Maybe we should be asking what do we expect government to do for us, what do we want them to do, what should they provide us, what’s the best way to do that and not anything else. And beyond that, get out of other activity, like the development business. A lot of people feel they shouldn’t be in it.	✓	✓	✓
It’s a human thing, it’s a personal thing: they’ve been elected, they’re right. Period. Period. There are two ways you look at our form of government, either they’re responsible to do what the people want or the government’s structured so if people don’t like it, they can vote you out.	✓	✓	✓

Participant Statements			
Triangle Model Elements: P = Prescriptions E = Events I = Identity Images			
Do we think it's a power thing? Why do we think they don't do what we want them to do?			
Because they often <i>do</i> do things we don't want them to do.	✓	✓	✓
But why do they do things we don't want them to do?			
Because they're right.	✓	✓	✓
There's a debate around government issues about to what extent do you do just what the people say and to what extent do I, as an elected official, take what people say and factor it in with what I know and experience and make the best decision I can...I think there's a legitimate other condition there that says it's my obligation to synthesize information and make decisions and act in what I perceive is in the community's best interest, even if it's different from what [some people say].	✓	✓	✓
That is a tension a leader deals with. And I also think there are things you have a perspective on, of what's best overall for the city, that another tension is what's best for the city as opposed to what's best for people that live [nearby contested issues]. And that's a tension they deal with. So where does the distrust come in? We know these are issues they deal with. So why do we distrust them? [pause] I admit they've done some bad things...	✓	✓	✓
And why do they mistrust [citizens] too, right? Because there's mutual distrust, isn't there?			
Yes, oh yeah.			
Yeah, they're sitting around having the same meeting we are, by the way. What you just said is the basis of their [effort to meet citizens].			
[Facilitator] So if we're asking how do we understand the role and responsibility of government, so the city, conversely, could be asking how do we understand the role and responsibilities of citizens? N___, I'm remembering you telling of a conversation with the city manager, and him asking if it's the city's job to educate citizens.			
Yeah.			
[Facilitator] So it sounds like there are some mutual questions, and the them is us, and the us is them: we've met the enemy and it's us?			
Right.			
I have to wonder why at meetings people don't discuss or ask questions. It almost seems as though the manager comes up with the answer he thinks is cool, and says here, I've done all this research and this is what you have to do if you want a happy city. And everyone on council nods,	✓	✓	✓

Participant Statements			
Triangle Model Elements: P = Prescriptions E = Events I = Identity Images			
and if any of them asks him to explain or if they could have more facts, they're accused of slowing things down or grandstanding. But policy is actually being developed by maybe one or two individuals, and of course they're the experts because, after all, they're getting paid 90 thousand dollars plus per year.			
[Facilitator] So, if you had a policy to require discussion of decisions before they're made, etc., it'd be information you don't have now.			
Right. And it should be part of the job description of the city manager, which is a big and responsible job, is that he be flexible in terms of goal setting, that it's not just his goal.	✓	✓	✓
See, this has been literally, and I'm serious now, I got into this with [a city staff person] in a fun discussion, and he pointed me to a text that's 200 years old. People have been arguing about this subject for 200 years: the responsibility of a person to do what the people want in a democracy.	✓	✓	✓
[Facilitator] But you're [the group] talking about what specific structural changes are possible to alleviate the problems you've identified. This is not up at the philosophical level.			
What problems are you talking about?			
[Facilitator] The first sentence of the summary description you came up with last week.			
Citizens' communication...			
The interactions, being alienated, adversarial.			
Part of what it comes down to though, the reasons for those is because of past experiences. And it's one thing to say they want people to call them at city hall, but it's like, what happens when you call? And then if you call them and this happens, is when you feel apathetic and adversarial. It's one thing to say we should do this, this, and this, and they should do that, that, and that, but if they're not going to do that, that, and that, then it doesn't matter if you do this, this, and this. Sometimes it's like you're in a twilight zone.	✓	✓	✓
I was suggesting a connection between elected officials not feeling it's their responsibility to do what people want, a correlation between that and the adversarial. If you want to get to the root, that's it: "I'm elected; now I'm the boss. Elected representatives can't possibly know what everyone wants, so they do their best. Vote me out if you don't like it." His argument is valid. I don't agree with it.	✓	✓	✓
One option could be a public forum to talk about what are the			

Participant Statements			
Triangle Model Elements: P = Prescriptions E = Events I = Identity Images			
responsibilities.			
I don't understand. You brought up the point we can't go in and strong-arm them. They've been strong-arming us for 200 years. We gave them the power, now we're asking for the power back. We want more control of what you do. You're saying I can't ask for this because I might offend somebody. At this point, I could care less about offending them. The issue is getting power back to the people, to make them more confident to come to vote, to feel like they got control. You have to go back and take some power back and limit what their responsibilities are. See, I don't have a good trust factor.	✓	✓	✓
It all boils down to they hold all the cards right now and the only card citizens hold is that they go to the ballot box. Citizens have to be able to talk to each other to develop their own sense of where they are, what they want. It has to be really grassroots [like neighbors talking and saying] "let's find a candidate who will do these 5 specific things for us." Maybe if we [this group] make a list of 5 things we want a candidate to do... This group can come up with the list, we're a 'neighborhood' right now.	✓	✓	✓

Why did participants veer so far away from their task of selecting a specific issue to work on, when it would be a concrete starting point to address their pressing concerns? It is unlikely that a single explanation could account for it, given the diverse participants and group dynamics. Perhaps the options felt too objective or positive to resonate with some of the people. For example, comments in a later session surfaced both the attraction to punitive action and the revulsion toward collaboration: "It [one of the approaches] is not *mean* enough. We feel the need to punish before we feel clear to build new relationships," and another was, "We all will have to overcome habits and even our personal revulsions." Perhaps a sense that it would be a concrete beginning, like a commitment from which there was no turning back, induced some resistance. Resistance can take numerous forms at such points. An insight into dynamics that happen "not infrequently, especially at the point of decoding concrete situations" (Freire, 2002, p. 156) may apply here.

It is just that in facing a concrete situation as a problem, the participants begin to realize that if their analysis of the situation goes any deeper they will either have to divest themselves of their myths, or reaffirm them. Divesting themselves of and renouncing their myths represents, at that moment, an act of self-violence. On the other hand, to reaffirm those myths is to reveal themselves. The only way out (which functions as a defense mechanism) is to project onto the coordinator their own usual practices: *steering, conquering, and invading* (Freire, 2002, pp. 156-157, emphasis in the original).

In this setting, any such projections were not onto me (with my facilitative role loosely corresponding to Freire's training coordinator above), but perhaps onto the "them" of city officials. Whether or not that was the case, perhaps they needed me to give them a set of clear criteria to launch and guide the selection process. Perhaps because the process had increasingly narrowed the focus so that discrete issues were identified, that focus acted like a magnet that attracted all the diverse, internal stances to the surface. Perhaps, as with groups in other settings, they simply could not bring themselves to commit to one direction when there were several to choose from; especially when, in this case, they had questions and implicit assumptions just now surfacing. Coordinating all of this, without an intentional process-container to assist, can be a complex task involving the three distinct kinds of coordination described by Arrow et al. (2000, p. 42). Groups' coordination tasks are: that of "interactional synchrony" or action; that of shared meanings and norms, i.e., understanding; and that of "adjusting purposes, interests, and intentions," i.e., goals. The discussion certainly indicates that these factors were uncoordinated by the group at that point. However, the benefit in this case was that the diversity and confusion were out in the open. There were clear signs that the earlier sessions' opportunities to voice a wide range of emotions, and their reasons, had not lessened those feelings' strength. These factors made it easier for me to introduce them to their elephant.

Sessions Four and Five

Formulated as an open-ended question, the overall issue they wanted to address was by now entitled: "How do we improve interactions between government and people in ways that reduce frustration, increase information exchange, and foster citizen participation and cooperation in their government?" It would not require a huge leap in logic to connect that issue of interactions with the importance of individuals' tones and intentions. However, given the group's orientation toward *others'* objectionable attitudes and behaviors, the group needed a process to re-orient its attention. That process had to do two things. First, it needed to introduce *that* there was an elephant in the room, and what it was made up of. Then, it needed to persuade the group that the issue of tones and intentions was a bona fide *complex issue* to add to their short list, and select from five, rather than from the original four. I intended to make a strong case for doing first things first, and recommend they choose this one.

Arrow et al's (2000, p. 43) work on small groups as complex systems supports the issue's importance as the first one to address. Using their formulation, the tone and intention issue was a "global variable," defined as "the global structure or pattern generated by the interaction of local variables [which] in turn constrains the future behavior of these local variables." The authors describe the coordination tasks of a group (those listed above), as local variables. The implications of this interactive, mutually-shaping dynamic "between micro- and macro-system levels" (p. 44) for the future of a group are significant, and suggest the level at which interventions are effective.

Each global variable (or, more accurately, the system that all of the local variables jointly reflect) may have subsequent effects on *all* aspects of the group's local activity....When [the group members] are dissatisfied with the state of the group, or when outsiders notice and comment on problems in the group as revealed by global variables, this is a cue to change something. However, global variables cannot be changed directly—what needs to be changed is the local dynamics that give rise to them. Action identification theory (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987) suggests that when groups receive negative feedback from the

environment, they are cued to focus on lower-level subtasks, rather than higher-level group tasks, as a locus for corrective action (Arrow et al., 2000, pp. 165-166).

To shift the issue-focus from a traditional community issue to an individual cum group issue for explicit action inquiry was to situate corrective action on such lower-level subtasks. For the fourth session, I prepared several handouts to present the logic of working on the tones and intentions within the group. I began the session with sharing my reflections on the previous week's discussion, introduced the elephant in the room, and walked through several handouts with them. I stated that they had a choice of which issue to select. In the previous sessions, they had developed their own logic for the four issues listed above. Now, I introduced the logic behind the new issue of tones and intentions, via another handout that listed a short series of logical statements to build the rationale. Two of those statements follow.

Our attitudes shape our behaviors toward others. While we feel angry, frustrated, mistrustful, disrespected, and shut out, we risk flavoring our approaches to introducing this issue with those feelings. If we let those adversarial feelings dominate us, we are likely to provoke adversarial reactions in others, and keep the vicious cycle of troublesome relationships going. Since our overall goal is to end adversarial divisions and processes, we are wise to step back and carefully choose which feelings and motivations we want to flavor our public efforts.

If we frame and deliberate this issue for ourselves, we should be able to accomplish three things.

- Figure out what kinds of chain reactions may be set in motion if we take different approaches to introducing the overall issue.
- Find ways to keep our feelings in perspective so we can have them, but they don't "have us" at the expense of our effectiveness on this issue.
- Align our intentions and purposes to reach a well-considered decision (agreement, shared sense of direction) about the kinds of public relationships we want to have as we introduce this issue, and what strategies might support them.

The rationale (which addressed both the local and global variables, discussed above) seemed to be sensible to participants at least on the surface, possibly assisted by whatever trust levels they had developed toward me; they agreed to focus on the new tone and intention issue. Agreements at that time were accompanied by reactions ranging from surprised confusion, to understanding, to appreciation. That range that showed up in participants' retrospective reflections on that turning point, including the excerpts from three persons below.

Yeah, that really blindsided me. Once it was done, it made good sense. But it wasn't what I was expecting and I wasn't sure why it was at that point in the process. After it was said and done, it seemed vital to do that, but it almost seemed like it was tacked on or that it wasn't the original intent. And I didn't understand it at all.

You were seeing more the personal attitudes and the words. The words that were coming out, they were more agitated or aggressive, and it became more personal like, in their own little, what you feel inside. Well, I would probably include me, also. And it was getting away from what the topic or issue was. So I think that's why we had to get rid of that

undertone first. And you started asking a few questions, then kind of fleshed that, and then I started seeing it.

I think it really helped focus our energies in one direction in one approach. And I think we struggled prior to that [with] these topics that we weren't really sure which were the best one.

Once the group committed to this new direction, we spent time developing the precise issue-question to describe it. They couched it in these terms: "What kinds of relationships do we, as a group, want to have around the issue of troubled interactions with and among citizens, officials, and public servants?"

The remainder of the fourth session, and all of the fifth, were spent developing four very different approaches toward tones and intentions, using the process's standard issue-framing template. This produces an issue booklet that introduces the issue and contains the descriptions of each approach, which are introduced below with the sixth and last session. The importance of a group process to deliberate about tone and intention, and its relevance when the group wants to make positive change in the larger political culture was discussed earlier in this report.

Session Six

This last session that was planned for the group was devoted to the deliberation, structured by several discrete segments. It included the processes of opening the deliberative session, deliberating the tensions embedded *within* each approach, followed by deliberating the tensions *across* all the approaches, and the final process of closing the deliberation. Opening the session included reviewing the ground rules, and participants' articulating their personal stake in the issue they were about to deliberate. In the closing process, participants reflectively evaluated the thoroughness of their deliberations, summarized their conclusions and reasons for them, and reflected on the deliberative process and its effects on them.

Before listing the four approaches to its tone and intention issue that the group deliberated, I summarize the layers of activity that brought them to that point, to refresh the memory of its evolution from the processes described earlier.

1. The overall issue of concern was entitled, How do we improve interactions between government and people in ways that reduce frustration, increase information exchange, and foster citizen participation and cooperation in their government?
2. From the systemic action array it created to respond to that umbrella issue, the group initially identified four priority sub-issues from which it needed to choose one to work on in the remaining project sessions. All of them were good candidates for deliberative decision-making at a later community level and each would address a different facet of the many-faceted overall issue.
3. As the group veered from the task of selecting one of those four, evidence of a tone and intention issue emerged in its discussion.
4. It agreed to select the tone and intention issue as the one that it would develop and deliberate during this limited project. This issue was entitled: What kinds of relationships do we, as a group, want to have around the issue of troubled interactions with and among citizens, officials, and public servants?

5. The titles given to the four approaches to that issue-question were as follows.
 - a. *Approach 1*: The intention and tone of preparing to organize an “us vs. them” campaign to get the changes we want.
 - b. *Approach 2*: The intention and tone of preparing to take an “it’s the law” approach to enforce needed changes.
 - c. *Approach 3*: The intention and tone of preparing to take a positive “strategic encouragement” approach to get changes rolling.
 - d. *Approach 4*: The intention and tone of preparing to take a fully collaborative community-wide approach to work on changes.
6. Although they had qualitatively different content, all approaches were developed using the same outline to develop that content, indicated by the headings, below.
 - a. We might favor this approach if we assume that...
 - b. This approach to the overall issue would be best because...
 - c. Examples of how we would prepare for taking this approach.
 - d. This approach may be worrisome, because...
 - e. Trade-offs that would be involved, including impacts on the kinds of relationships we want.

The most striking thing I noticed as the group convened and got settled for this session was the difference in the quality of its overall energy. I had expected that some sharper tones would still be evident, as they had been during the several previous sessions. This time, the energy seemed clear and open, ready, and free of any sense of struggling. That quality characterized the entire session. Two persons later expressed their surprise at this “dramatic” shift in the group. I reflected on possible explanations for this.

From some of their comments at the end of deliberating and in the subsequent interviews, I gathered that the process of developing the sharp clarification of several possible perspectives on tone and intention (to create their issue to deliberate) had contributed to the change in energy. In addition to providing an orderly structure for deliberation, the separately described, distinctly different perspectives perform that clarification service. That new clarity can lend explanatory power to understand and sort out the confusing din of internal thoughts. It is often hard for people to slow down their thinking enough to even notice their mental zig-zags of internal decision-making attempts to choose among scarcely-conceived, unarticulated options. All of the participants but one referred in some degree to the explanatory benefit of approaches based on distinct perspectives. For example, the person who had drafted the earlier manifesto realized that:

I guess I’ve [now] looked at these things as separate things, which I probably hadn’t before. I didn’t think of them as separate, to choose this way or that. In one way, they were all bundled up together and this pulled them apart and kind of examined each one individually. And I probably hadn’t examined each individual [one]: “Well, what if I did this and not the other, what would I gain?” Seeing it like this, with the one, two, three, four, you know, I can see the differences in those.

The passage of time between beginning to develop the approaches in the fourth session, and arriving at the sixth session, may have cleared some of the sharper-toned energy. It may have been cathartic for participants with a lot at stake in this issue to have all of their sentiments, concerns, and hopes formally legitimized. By including those in the course of developing all the

components of each approach, the process legitimized a wide range of diversity—the participants’ and others’—even before getting to the stage of deliberating.

The content and quality of thoughtful deliberations are best reported by allowing them to speak for themselves. This unique event/experience deserves to speak in its own voice. It was a group of people conducting a truly deliberative action inquiry into their tones and intentions, within the two-layered context of (a) larger concerns for the adversarial political culture and (b) being intentional about potential impacts on that culture. For this reason and to convey the deliberation’s own whole story, the Appendix is the session report that I prepared from the transcripts and sent to the participants. In contrast to the discussion segment included earlier as Table 4, the smooth undulations of deliberation’s back-and-forth, interactive reasoning, which is observable in the report, indicate the sea-change in the group’s coherence. Participants demonstrated the capacity to remain focused, build constructively on one another’s contributions, and arrive at well-reasoned contextual conclusions about how, when, and why they may use the various tones and intentions in the community.

Those conclusions happen to reflect the pattern suggested by action identification theory, which was introduced earlier in the sessions four and five section.⁹ That framework describes the pattern of shifting from higher-level tasks to lower-level ones as the effective place to make course corrections when environmental feedback indicates corrective action (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987, as cited in Arrow et al. 2000, p. 166). The group reflected this pattern in the situational hierarchy it developed for when and why it would employ actions derived from each of the approaches to tone and intention. By process design (shown in Table 3), the approaches follow a progressive sequence of action-logics with increasing complexity, i.e., the first approach was the least complex, and the fourth approach was the most complex. For example, it demands far less skill for a group to organize a campaign among like-minded people against something (the first approach) than it demands of several individuals, groups, and various entities to succeed at negotiated solutions that meet the requirements of multiple, diverse, vested interests (the third approach). Overall, the group preferred the fourth approach because it held the greatest potential effectiveness to foster *untroubled* interactions in the community by changing how public relationships and decisions were structured and conducted. As the deliberation’s summary describes, the group pragmatically recognized that there would be issues or situations when a higher-level approach would not fit or succeed, in which case the next lower approach could be appropriate to try. It identified that there may be cases where none of those higher-level approaches could work and the first approach would be advisable as a last resort.

Discussion

I have two analyses of the development the group exhibited over the course of the sessions. I refer to Arrow et al’s work, cited earlier, to emphasize the system level at which these remarks apply. The observable development pertains at the dynamic group level, at the level of the “global variable,” which is the “global structure or pattern *generated by the interaction of local variables* [which] in turn constrains the future behavior of these local variables” (2000, p. 44, emphasis added).

⁹ Other theoretical frameworks, including developmental ones, would have explanatory power for this common pattern. In the space of this report, it seems sufficient to use only the one that has already been introduced.

Analysis 1

The first development, already suggested above, is that the sharper combined energy of distressed concern, confusion, judgment, and frustration transformed by the end of the process. That earlier negative tone, as several participants called it, gave way to freer, open, pragmatic, and as the next section indicates, hopeful energy. “Us versus them” tones derive from dualistic action-logics that view event/experiences in such terms, pitting in-groups against out-groups. As findings from the post-interview inquiry into hopes and motivations reveal (reported in next section), the group dynamic resulted in a complex set of negative feedback loops until the last session of the process. Participants who did not, themselves, bring a negative tone toward city officials or other citizens, developed an un-voiced, inwardly negative attitude toward the several participants who *did* voice their negative judgments about officials and other citizens. Rather than articulate the attitude or associate it with specific individuals, it was safer to refer to the negative tone as “the group’s” or “the people in the group.”

It is worth a brief discussion to unpack how a layer of projected attitudes feeds the loops that gives a group’s global variable its character. Projection is a normal part of humans’ nonlinear system dynamics (Van Eenwyk, 1997). Its psycho-logic is that whatever attitudes or beliefs that an individual has but does not recognize, or is unwilling to claim as his or her own, will be unconsciously assigned elsewhere: for example, to other individuals, groups, societies, etc. In this group’s case, and likely in many others, projection of attitudes played a silent role in constructing the overall negative tone. The loop began with several individuals’ critical, frustrated statements and the tones that accompanied them. These were directed at the community’s officials and other citizens: the “them.” If no other people had a reaction to these statements, there would not have been a negative feedback loop at all. However, four people *did* have reactions (see the next section). They developed a negative attitude toward the negative attitudes of others, creating a dynamic loop of negativity. One of those four said that he adopted a negative attitude toward officials based on what he heard from others. The result was four people with negative tones toward (primarily) officials, and four people with negative attitudes toward those negative tones. *The original three “negative” people did not mention or seem to perceive any negative tone at all in their group experience.* The perception of negative tone resided in only four other people. My analysis is that those four were sufficiently embedded in their negative attitudes toward the others’ negative attitudes that they projected the responsibility for negativity onto the three vocally-negative people. The silence that accompanied so much of this non-verbal dynamic is a natural dimension of the Cognitive Thermodynamics understanding of communication within or across species, which recognizes a “dynamic complex information circuit” that does not require verbalization (Malcolm Dean, personal communication, February 2006). In summary, the feedback loops were comprised of spoken judgments toward officials and unspoken judgments of those judgments. Seven of eight participants’ judgments characterized the global variable of group tone, a dynamic information circuit indeed.

These human system dynamics account for how, on a surface level, only three individuals with negative tones, in a group of eight people, could have so much power to influence. In reality, seven of the eight people constructed and maintained the negative tone. Only one participant consistently held a non-judgmental attitude toward all people in the group, the group itself, and in the community. That person’s earnest, inquiring influence was not sufficient to alter the dynamic feedback loop that the others were maintaining at the level of the global variable. The Appendix and the individual portraits in the next section demonstrate that the feedback system became transformed by different attitudes and energy. The pluralistic tone the group

ended with indicates the global variable of tone developed to a systematic action-logic by the end of the process.

Analysis 2

Equally significant, the other observation compares the level of task complexity the group faced at the end of the first session and how it handled it, with the level of the task complexity the group completed at the end of the last session. As that first session closed, the group had failed to achieve its self-set task to conceive an encompassing way to describe the missing process or approach that could unite its two major issue-clusters (or systems) of concern. There seemed to be the intuition that there had to be a way to describe this, but the group could not complete that task, which I identified earlier as having a metasystematic level of complexity that was beyond the group's reach. By contrast, in the last session's work, the group constructed a metasystematic approach as a product of its deliberating about tone and intention. Tones and intentions were not treated as ethereal, "soft and fuzzy" ideas detached from embodied action, but as the bases of concrete actions. Thus, the group deliberated about diverse concrete actions and their possibilities and impacts at the same time as it deliberated about the tones and intentions that may govern the strategies for them. This deliberative action inquiry spanned the four territories of experience (see Table 1) that were involved. The situational hierarchy of approaches to action that it developed through its deliberative reasoning is a tailored metasystem that unites the two original issue-clusters *by* addressing concerns about them. By the end, the group successfully conceived a complex response that completed—and qualitatively exceeded—the earlier task that had eluded it in the first session. The process of deliberating through progressively more complex approaches apparently gave it the tasks of increasing complexity it needed to arrive at an action-logic of higher complexity. That metasystematic capacity to combine disparate systems of actions to construct a new, comprehensive approach is the paramount demand if systemic issues are ever to be addressed as such.

What Happened for Participants

By devoting the foregoing space to an emphasis on the group and issue levels, I have attempted to set a meaningful context for this section about the individual participants. The scope of this report is set to focus on the tone and intention issue, which emerged from within the entire process and cannot be entirely divorced from that origin. In this section, I strive for an appropriate balance in reporting on what happened for participants within that scope. This scope-setting precludes the depth of reporting and discussion on each participant that seriously interested readers may wish to have. Reporting included below presents much less than their experience as a whole, yet inherently reflects it.

This section begins with short narratives that include participants' reports about what happened for them. After each paragraph about a participant is my brief reflective analysis and observations about that individual's participation. Following those findings, there is short section to report how participants assessed their levels of hope and motivation toward the overall issue of the adversarial political culture, then a concluding discussion.

Individual Portraits of Participants

In the individual interviews I conducted with participants after the last group session, I asked what their understandings were about the reasons for the last session's deliberative decision-making about the tone and intention issue. I also inquired into what each person learned or otherwise got out of the process, if anything, and how they could use what was learned or gained from it, if anything.

One section of the interview was devoted to exploring how participants were thinking and feeling about various dimensions of the overall issue that they identified. That issue was entitled, "How do we improve interactions between government and people in ways that reduce frustration, increase information exchange, and foster citizen participation and cooperation in their government?" I asked one question, each, about hope and about motivation as that section of the interview began and ended. Those questions were as follows.

1. If we had taken the group temperature on this issue at the beginning of our sessions (once it was identified), how would you have rated your personal sense of hope about it changing for the better? Why?
2. Back then, how would you have rated your personal motivations to address the issue? Why?
3. How does that [set of work and experiences] affect your motivation for wanting to address this overall issue? Why?
4. What is your sense of hope, now, for successfully addressing this overall issue? Why?

The presentation sequence below is organized on the basis of those participants reporting relatively fewer to relatively greater personal impacts or learnings.

Participant 1

Hope, before. "I don't think there's much hope. Not hopeful at all. Because of history. Over and over and over and over again. Not history one time, but history over and over. And not just history with [Site], but history with politicians and government and how things work. You just got to know how things work."

Motivation, before. "Well, if it's hopeless, I'm not going to be very motivated to put my time and energy into it, cause you get geared up a little bit, and you think well, maybe, you know. Then you think, oh yeah right, okay. And then the reality comes in again."

Immediately after the deliberation, this first person commented that it did not change her feelings on things, but "it's helped to clarify them and to verbalize them better." Beyond that, she did not report that anything was meaningful about working on the issue, and said she "was lost the whole way." However, she also said, "I understood in that when you're communicating, that what tone you set can, changes the outcome...all that kind of stuff, I understand all that." Yet shortly thereafter, she also said "So, to me, changing the tone wasn't going to make any difference. Now, changing the approach..." When I asked, "What's the relation between the tone and approach? Is there one?" she responded, "I think so. One approach is knocking on the door. And you can knock using different tones. So, one is a piece of the other, I guess. And, so, I don't know." Perhaps related to her identifying that one action can be done using different tones, she reported that "I've only just evolved to the understanding that people need something, a plan, whether [or not] it's *the* plan, they needed something that says here's an idea of a plan to follow,

otherwise they'll go crazy about it. That just became concrete in my experience with my board. So I'm supposing there are things from this experience that helped me come to that understanding, but I couldn't be specific as to what."

Motivation, after. "Slightly motivated, but again, as we talked before, I'm not going to get involved in politics in this town because unless you are willing to jump in 100% and put it out there and be willing to bank everything on it.... You can jump in and take a chance of winning, or you can stick your finger in and know it's going to be chopped off. I need my fingers. So, I'm just not going to go there to do that."

Hope, after. "Obviously, the problem's getting bigger and bigger, and hope gets less and less. Not hopeful. Because of this interaction [in the project] I have looked at some things, as far as I will, gone back to reading the opinion page, and that's the same old shit. Nothing. Oh yeah, that's good. It's like I thought it was."

Participant 1. Analytical Reflection and Observations

Compared to the other participants, this person was the least engaged in the issue. One objective sign of this showed up in the session and interview transcripts: she did not ask any questions, nor express curiosity or wondering about anything; rather, she consistently made declarative statements. Most of them were complete, logical thoughts, indicating a formal action-logic. The apparent absence of curiosity also appears above, as she was content to end her thinking with its unresolved contradictions. One of the several individuals whose own tone helped to surface the issue, this person's past experiences had led her to confine her community activity to volunteer efforts that did not interface with city officials. She indicated several times that the tone issue lay with city hall and it was a "futile effort" because "we don't have any control over the reality of politicians" and she was sure that that would not change. She was explicit about not feeling personally related to the issue or invested in it. She had no logical basis for engaging the issue. The issue that she *was* interested in, as she discussed it in both interviews, reflected a small but significant change in her strategy for addressing it. It did not appear that she was aware of the transition underway from formal to systematic action-logic in that domain that her descriptions reflected. It may be that the reflective nature of the tone and intention issue affected her in ways that she did not notice. Unlike the first interview, in the second one she made several self-reflective statements (one is included above) that were transitions to or fully reflecting systematic thought.

Participant 2

Hope, before. "Hmm, not very hopeful, I'd have to say. I'm pretty pessimistic. From what I was hearing, it had been that way for a long time. I'd heard about various different kinds of attempts to try to change the interactions. I know N___ a little better [than others], and I respect her, and to hear her say stuff coming from city hall doesn't make sense sometimes and there really is this kind of antagonistic interaction. And I think also, too, because people who were trying to make changes had such high emotions about it, and such negative emotions."

Motivation, before. "Not hopeful so, I'd say, not motivated at all to slightly motivated. Because I was there and bothering to think about it and interact, so that's some motivation. Although, whether I was motivated to be there and interact because I was hoping to change the

issue, or because I was getting other things out of it, that was probably more accurate reasons for my motivations.”

Immediately after the deliberation, and iterated in the interview, this person expressed appreciation for learning the value of long-term thinking. She explained that she came to that by the deliberation helping her to “understand that there are multiple options to choose from with tone, and people can make a better choice if they thought through what the likely outcomes of those choices would have been.” Apparently making some new connections, she explained, “I probably wouldn’t have thought it through to that degree. I would have just said, ‘Am I going to take a friendly tone or am I going to take a more aggressive tone?’” She said the “whole deliberating about tone thing helped me keep that more in mind, how the tone I take and the intention I have when interacting with other people can affect the outcome, apart from what the words are actually saying, and that’s been really valuable.” Even though “the process is bigger than easily fits in my head,” she learned the value of using different steps to “understand what people think is a problem, which of those are just surface parts of other problems, and looking at who the problem affects and where they originate from.”

Motivation, after. “I would say, up to slightly motivated. But there’s so many other things beside that would affect motivation, because more options, some of them just little steps, but still steps toward improving the situation, and I think then it’s probably the just the emotional part of people feeling more empowered as a group maybe like brought me along with it.”

Hope, after. “I’d still be slightly hopeful, because it seems more possible now. And I think just getting people to think about the kind of relationships they want when they interact is maybe a step in right direction, and taking the focus away from all the wrong, all that problematic specific issues, and more on something maybe they can affect, the interaction between them and another individual.”

Participant 2. Analytical Reflection and Observations.

As a recent arrival in the community, this person exhibited a neutral yet engaged attention to the issue that was unaccompanied by history or apparent biases. Throughout her first interview, her discussions about issues relied upon formal logic, some of them in transition to systematic stage. As the statements above indicate, the value she placed on tone and intention at both the general and interpersonal levels has a utilitarian, goal-directed, single-loop nature: it can affect “outcomes.” However, she formed new systems of relations: she did not isolate outcomes from a process of collective and individual reflection that would support better choices to arrive at those outcomes. Rather, she developed full systematic connections between reflection, actions, and outcomes. She seemed to associate long-term thinking with the reflective acts of “thinking through” and “keeping in mind.” A number of her statements in the second interview, and the new insights reflected in them, indicated she was using the insights into several issues in a double-looped systematic action-logic.

Participant 3

Hope, before. “I would probably be not hopeful at all or slightly hopeful, because it was really a very decisive split, it seemed like. I mean, it seemed like a lot of frustration, a lot of past efforts, a lot of dead ends, a lot of frustration. And it was very personal for a lot of the group, the

temperature sounded pretty high on the personal front. So, I would have thought not hopeless, but it was going to be a struggle.”

Motivation, before. “To me it probably would be at the other end of the extreme, very motivated. I guess I like a good fight. I don’t know. I’m a champion of hopeless causes.”

Immediately after deliberating about tone and intention, this person reported how it shifted him out of “being caught up in” the earlier group tone: “In the beginning, it was all directed at specific individuals, it’s grown to a bigger picture. It was easy to get caught up in that. Now it’s more refreshing.” He felt that the purpose of re-framing things in terms of “how do we really want to address this issue” was about “how we wanted to be representing ourselves in our intentions.” He thought that that accounted for the “pretty dramatic shift out of the combative mentality,” and used the analogy of “warring parties going to the peace table.” What changed for him in the deliberation was the refocusing, that “it wasn’t so much the individuals as the process and the system [so] instead of griping at individuals or events, step back, and it grew into a bigger issue,” and “that’s how it changed for me.” He reported that he “learned or relearned being a little more appreciative of different perspectives.” Extending that further, “I think it maybe changed my perception, that community includes a lot of different parties coming from different perspectives, [who] a lot of times you don’t really perhaps think about, that have an interest in an issue.” He views a business as a community with underlying issues, and “very much learned, I think, how to get all of the issues and how they’re potentially interconnected.”

Motivation, after. “I think it would still put me in that pretty motivated to be involved, because I think the way that we framed it and the way that we ultimately ended up looking at it, it seemed like a solvable problem, a worthwhile problem to spend energy and effort on that could be used as a model for a lot of communities and relationships.”

Hope, after. “I think coming out of it, it would be pretty hopeful, because I think [after] that real frustration and divisiveness, I sensed people had a sense of hope and a new approach, a new way of looking at it. I don’t think it’s any less of a, I mean it’s going to take some real effort, but I felt very hopeful that if people proceeded with that, that they would have some success with it. So, I probably have flipped, going in and coming out of it.”

Participant 3. Analytical Reflection and Observations

As someone who did not live in the community, but worked in it without involvement in the community life, this person also exhibited an apparently neutral yet engaged attention to the issue that was unaccompanied by history or apparent biases. While he said that he had gotten caught up in the group tone, that was not observable by his tone and behaviors in the sessions. Retrospectively, I could tentatively link one joking suggestion he had made about “throw the bastards out” to his feel of being caught up. It appears that, for him, being caught up in the tone developed out of group conversations with a narrower than usual (for him) focus on concrete individuals and events, which happened to reflect others’ negative experiences and led to the group tone. Statements he made in sessions and the interview indicated that his usual orientation is at the system level of processes. Thus, it was “more refreshing” when the tone and intention issue eventually rose to that level. Through internalizing these event/experiences, his conception of *community* developed to the metasystematic level, as did his reflections on the discourse processes that complex issues need.

Participant 4

Hope, before. “Probably would say slightly hopeful, because I feel like some people were very pessimistic about the problem, feeling like it was so deep, so intense. And I feel I’m relatively new, and I don’t really know what’s going on, so I need to take some of that, they’ve got a lot more knowledge and experience than I do, so I have to take some of that on faith. But also, generally, as a person, I am optimistic, and think there are usually solutions to things if people are willing to work on it and engage with it. So, that would modify that a little bit for me.”

Motivation, before. “Probably I’d say slightly motivated, because it wouldn’t be the issue I would pick necessarily, it’s not the thing I feel a great deal of passion about. Probably mostly because I’m new and because I’m so involved in what’s happening here [at place of work and residence], my available time is really low.”

Immediately after deliberating about tone and intention, this person preceded her reflection on the deliberative experience by referring to the course of the six weeks. She said, “I’ve learned a lot. I don’t know that much has changed tonight, but I understand more about each approach, the options, what are the dividing lines. Breaking them apart and looking at them as separate strategies is helpful, to pull them apart.” She viewed the purpose and contribution of deliberating as “clarifying and focusing.” That came out of the processes that “help[ed] the group really wrestle with the pros and the cons of each one...to talk it out enough that people understood them and kind of wrestle with the reasons why to do it and not to do it, so that the group was making some intentional choices. Instead of falling into a default habit, they were really looking at their options and choosing one.” For her, personally, “the thinking about intentionally choosing a tone to respond from is helpful.” She was able to reflect on and describe the session methods and their progressive purposes, and reported that with further thought and the support of the materials, she thought she could transfer her learning and the process to other group environments for working on issues and decision-making on them.

Motivation, after. “Probably bring it up to moderately. Yeah, I would say having the list of actions, but also more than that, having a sense of who else is interested, or having connections with some of those people, that, partly it’s the concept of what happened, partly it’s the relationships of the process of what happened, that could make me feel more motivated.”

Hope, after. “Somewhere between slightly and moderately. I think that it feels a little more hopeful, because I think people made some of the connections, they’ve thought through things a little more. They’re not stuck in that place of just being reactive, that they’ve given it a lot more thought and have more perspective. But I also know how hard it is to make real, deep changes like that, and how the change that needs to happen depends on others changing their behaviors, as well as the individuals changing their behaviors, and that’s always a hard thing to do. And it feels like such a big, intense, deep, issue, that I don’t really feel, don’t think that I can be too hopeful, because it will take a lot of time and a lot of work to really change. So, I guess it depends on what time frame you put on it, for successfully addressing it. I would say at least 10 years, that it would take at least that long to see really transformative change. I could see smaller steps in the next, like, two or three years, but significant change seems like it would take that long, 10 years. But I don’t really know, I’ve never been to a city council meeting, I don’t know... it’s just based on those interactions.”

Participant 4. Analytical Reflection and Observations

As suggested by the more distanced references above to “they” (as compared to “we”), this person did not carry a personal stake in the issue. She was one of the two participants who had recently moved into the community, and exhibited an apparently neutral yet engaged attention to the issue that was unaccompanied by history or apparent biases. Her observable behaviors during the deliberative session and her statements suggest that her internal stance toward it was as an interested participant-observer of the process. Her various observations and interpretations indicate that viewing issues and interpersonal dynamics at systematic and sometimes metasystematic levels was familiar territory. Even so, “I was surprised to see the group moved so far... especially since I missed the session right before the final session, for me it felt like a really dramatic change.”

Participant 5

Hope, before. “Oh, I was very hopeful, because that was a very powerful group. I don’t know N___ or N___, but I think I knew everyone else. And if they decided that’s what they wanted to work on, it would get done.”

Motivation, before. “Mentally, very motivated. Physically, like, am I going to put the time into it? I’d say moderately motivated, at the beginning. Maybe moderately, or even kind of depressed, maybe even slightly motivated. I mean in my mind, I think yeah, this really needs to be done, but it’s been so nasty lately, am I actually physically going to do it? Ah, it’s just, you get depressed with all the issues, and the attitudes, and stuff. And a lot of these people are my friends, personal friends. So, I’m limited. I have access in a certain way, but I’m limited in a certain way, too. So, yeah, beats you down. What am I going to say, what am I not going to say. Kind of gets you tired.”

Immediately after deliberating about tone and intention, this person could say only that she “just learned a lot. I don’t know how it’s changed. It’ll take me a while...” Later, she was able to answer her earlier confusion about why we did the tone and intention issue, reflecting, “Well, now, it makes sense that there’s different attitudes or ways to approach this problem and that’s an integral part of what the problem is. So it was confusing to me why we didn’t even start off with something like that, or at least, it would be a part of all this. But that it *is* the problem, it *is* the tone, that’s what we’re objecting to, is the way things are done. Some of it is what things are being done. And that addresses that, that we need to act the way we want them to act.” For her, “one of the best parts about it [deliberating] is getting at the different perspectives. Like I said, you can get lost in yourself.... But it wasn’t apparent to me how it would affect the solution. I thought, well, we’re all going in the same direction, so it doesn’t matter. We just have different energies. But I think it would have made a huge difference in the end. This is a way to articulate that.” Although she did not elaborate, she reported, “I found words for articulating feelings.” She valued “getting insights onto perspectives,” and learning the “universal tones, [which] I find real interesting,” and “that things are complex but they can be divided, and that there’s lenses that you look through things and try to separate them.”

Motivation, after. “Well, it just reminds me that it’s just a lot of work. And towards the end, I felt more energized and willing to put in the time. I thought, let’s pick one of these, and do something. I’m quite motivated. I felt reminded about things and felt energized that there’s other

people interested in it, even if they're coming at it a different way and for different reasons, that's fine. I thought, okay, maybe it's time to put more effort in it. I don't know...seemed like it was a way of putting words to things I was feeling, once you have the words, and you can work with it, so it makes it more concrete and more focused."

Hope, after. "I'm very hopeful, because, it's a perfect time with change in [city] administration, I have the time, it's inspiring, all these powerful people that are interested, so, I think, maybe we will see something good."

Participant 5. Analytical reflection and observations

An established and very active resident of the community, this participant did not contribute to the negative tones in the group. Her contributions took the form of searching questions, introducing perspectives of officials, and other balanced forms of engagement in the discussions and deliberation, indicating her metasystemic action-logic in this domain. Her use of "we" indicates that she felt very much a part of the group and the community, neither distant nor detached. She had a long-standing concern to figure out a way for city officials to "know what the community feels," and had not been able to conceive one. This was closely related to the gap the group had in the first session, unable to conceive how to connect its two clusters. After participating in this issue's work, she did construct a metasystematic connection in the form of the principle, above, that "we need to act the way we want them to act," and developed a long, sophisticated line of metasystematic reasoning about what it would take, and why, for city officials to know how the diverse perspectives in the community could be heard in un-manipulated, un-biased ways, and acted upon.

Participant 6

Hope, before. "I guess between slightly and moderately, because I thought well, something might come out of this, that it'll work, or I wouldn't have gone to the meetings."

Motivation, before. "Well, I'd say very motivated. But only if I could figure out something to do that I thought would really work, and that, I can't do it myself. [Because] I'm just built that way. I'm a glutton for punishment. I don't know what to say. You know, in a sense, you beat your head against the wall a lot of the times. But sometimes you don't. And when you do get some kind of a breakthrough, it's really worth it."

Immediately after deliberating about tone and intention, this person shared a lengthy reflection, which included the earlier quote ("I guess I've [now] looked at these things as separate things, which I probably hadn't before...."). Her interview was sprinkled with reflective insights, some perspective-taking, and conclusions drawn from the experience, perhaps summed up when she saw the issue as the way to get to root causes and "that if we were more agreeable, we'd be more agreeable regardless of who the 'we' was or what the subject was. If we were being agreeable, maybe we'd find agreement." She had been considering the issue, and what she wanted to do about it, in the almost seven weeks between the interview and the last session. "I think what came out of that session, was that in order for tensions to be lessened, it can't start out, anyway, as an adversarial thing." Referring to a post-deliberation, long-term plan and design for a community network she embarked on with the participant in item 5 above: "The goal is to remain as neutral a platform as possible. And that's changed. I mean, I began, because the situation is adversarial now, feeling the need to, basically, build a defense mechanism....But the

activity of getting off the horses first, I think, is probably necessary. It's not something that I am personally real comfortable about. It makes me nervous. I feel safer on the back of my horse. And I'm sure that they probably do, too. But, I think that if everybody gets off their horses, then I think maybe we'll be able to...we'll just have to see how it goes... we won't be any worse off than we are now." She reported that much of the process was "foreign" to her way of thinking and she felt confused. "But sometimes when you're confused, then you're walking somewhere you're not used to walking. Maybe it was a pattern of discovery to have everyone walking around confused for a while so you reorganize your thoughts. That was one of my conclusions."

Motivation, after. "Oh I'm probably equally as, probably a little more motivated than I was before. I'd say I'm very motivated, because I sense there'll be more helpers, and every time I get people talking to me they seem they're on the same page, they may be more or less organized about what to do about it, but I think if it can be intelligently set up, a mechanism intelligently set up so people can access it easily, I'm pretty convinced."

Hope, after. "I don't know, I'll give it a shot. I mean, why not hope, you know? I'd say between moderately and very. Very hopeful is pretty sure of success. I don't think so. [But] I think we have a shot at it, and there's a lot of reasons it could run out of steam, not because it can't work, but because it ran out of steam. I really think it could work. I just do."

Participant 6. Analytical Reflection and Observations

This person was a long-time active member of the community, often involved in citizens' various campaigns. She was one of three whose experiences had contributed to the negative tones that others experienced. The early openings she exhibited after the deliberative session were likely nurtured along by her close association with the friend-participant who recognized that "we need to act the way we want them to act." It seems likely that the openings and unbundling of the perspectives done in the last session prepared the ground to internalize her friend's insight, and to fertilize ideas for a new communication system in the community and actions based on that new principle of interpersonal relations. That new project conception is a meta-system that integrates the one's desire for a system for officials to know how the community feels, and the other's desire for a system for the "community organism" to "know itself." She demonstrated systematic action-logics in general issue discussion and about the community organism knowing itself. Her action-logic in the domain of troubled interactions transformed from formal logic's "us vs. them" framings, to the systematic level, accounting for the radical change in her tone.

Participant 7

Hope, before. "I would have been slightly hopeful. But not really hopeful, because I started listening to people in the very beginning, a lot of people, and they were so gung ho and so advocate about their issues, you know. It was like just so stern, this is how it is, this how it's going to be, you can't get anything through this way, and it was just... And so I didn't think it would be very hopeful, that they would turn, because they were so, you know. They were just like me, if I have a set thing in my mind and that's the way I've thought for years and years and years. I just didn't feel very hopeful, that was why."

Motivation, before. "I would have been slightly motivated. I don't think I would have been too motivated as far as the group was concerned. Actually, I didn't think I'd get that much out of

the group per se, I thought I'd get more out of the actual processing of the work we would do, but not necessarily the individual people because, there again, it goes back to the first, because everybody was so stern about their ideas."

Immediately after deliberating about tone and intention, this person echoed another's comment that it helped to clarify and verbalize things better, then stated that "I came with an open mind. I can just see things a little clearer, how to deal with a lot of different things." Reflecting on how she reacted once the issue was introduced in the fourth session, she conveyed that she had been assuming "this is how everybody acts: cut and dried. And this is the issue. That's when I noticed it, not till you brought it up, then I could see it." The experience with the issue seemed to offer her both a mirror and a window. "I'm like the group, I mean, I have my ways, I'm set in my ways. A lot is, maybe, because it's all I know how to do, and that kind of gave me some other avenues. After I've used all the traditional ways that I've always done, I can back up and say, you know, there are some other ways to approach this." Along with a number of statements about feeling "excited," she told anecdotes of recent interpersonal experiences, and anticipated future scenarios, of using what she had learned. "My kids, I've been using some of this stuff on them. [One of them] just called to tell me he loves me! Because it's how I approach the situation! (laughs) It's how I approach the situation. I'm very stern and I have my ways. I always used to be like, really, like a taskmaster. But what I've been doing here lately, I've been using what's upstairs.... Basically, I'm thinking more of, not so much the feeling—I mean I have the feeling and the compassion—but it's how I deal with it intelligently, how I approach it intelligently. Because I can feel compassion for it, I can feel motivation, all those things, but that doesn't mean that I'm going to get or be able to deal with those issues just because I feel that way. I've learned that there are different ways that I can handle a situation, and not necessarily *my way*, but how to handle it according to who that person is."

Motivation, after. "I would think very motivated, because it just kind of gets me a little bit excited as to, you know what to do. It's just like you were asking the question before, if you knew what was going on, why didn't you do something about it? You didn't know. But now that you know, you kind of have a ground-laying thing. It's just not all, 'Well, this is the right approach.' There's many ways to take that approach. It's kind of like stepping back and being able to look at it. We don't plan to live here very long. But if things come up, which I think they will in the community we plan to go to, I think I'll be a little more aware, I won't be so anxious to jump on a bandwagon. I'd be more inclined to look at the issue to see how it affects everybody. So, it's kind of motivating me, because I know how to do it."

Hope, after. "I think it's moderately hopeful, because I just saw a small portion of the people who are really involved in what's going on, on the issues in [Site]. And from what I saw there, you know, I saw a lot of hope. I saw like, the little lights come on. I saw some of them who were diehards [come] to the point now, 'Well, maybe there is.' And I think some of them said, 'Well, maybe there is another way to do it.' So, I feel pretty hopeful, as to some of the issues that will come out of it, some of the things."

Participant 7. Analytical Reflection and Observations

As she stated, this person came with, and she exhibited, an open mind during the sessions. Several years before, she had been active in an organized effort with other citizens on the

'winning side' in one issue, but she seemed to regard it as a functional activity that did not carry a lingering or sharp edge. Her activity and experience in the community was otherwise unconnected to city issues, and she did not have a basis for sharing the negative tone others had. Her excitement was in discovering that she had new options that transformed her assumptions that there was only one stance available to take in situations. Now she was "intelligently" tailoring her tone, intention, and behavior to situations she found herself in. The event/experiences of working with the different action-logics while developing the issue's approaches and playing a participant-observer role in the deliberation seemed to open these windows. Her thinking about issues of concern had already demonstrated metasytemic conceptions. Now, her anecdotes indicated that this early stage of enjoying and experimenting with her budding metasytemic capacity in the pervasive domain of interpersonal relations had a focus on watching the different approaches she could adopt, in relation to how they met and adjusted to the perspective and situation of whomever she was having an interchange with. Her phrase, "to handle it according to who that person is" was a consistent element in her anecdotes and future scenarios. Her delight in this new way of being was palpable.

Participant 8

Hope, before. "Temperature-wise? Freezing. [*not hopeful at all?*] No. [*Slightly hopeful?*] No, because after seeing over 200, 2,000 years of the same things going on, what does that tell you?"

Motivation, before. "Really not motivated. Confused and scared. [*So, if you were confused and scared, you wouldn't be motivated?*] Right. I would be motivated to the point that I needed to find out more information, so I would probably start digging for more information. Would I act on it? No."

The last participant to present here was unable to attend the last two group sessions due to family illness and another emergency. He was a fully active participant in the first four sessions, and was one of those who brought a combative tone into the group. He considered himself an active member of the community, although he reported that he had never attended any public meetings or citizen efforts before. His active-feeling investment was getting its first public manifestation with participation in this project. His vociferous complaint was the frustrating lack of information he could get from the city when he needed it to inform his various decisions. The need for information and people's rights to have it was a passionate mantra. Initially, he had some confusion about the tone and intention issue, fearing that it would mean his perspective would not be permitted. The fear was allayed during his participation in the first of the two sessions that developed the issue's approaches. When he missed the following session, I sent him (and the others) the full issue booklet, which he used to study new handouts and the remaining approaches. When he had to miss the deliberation, he studied its written report and summary.

By his use of these experiences, he transformed the meaning he gave to "information." "Yeah, how to define the issue. I kind of speculated it was information, because this is what I felt. Before I started this program [the research project] I pretty well gave up, I threw my hands up, said we're not going to beat government. But ... now I can understand, when I don't understand something, I look at it from every angle." After relating a conversation to serve as an example of how it had changed his conversations, he explained, "I normally wouldn't do that. I would pick something to say, and then I would pick it apart, and build on it. I didn't do that. I actually stepped back and looked at it from different angles and different ways of thinking....And said,

‘this is what I would think about and these are the things I would consider [if I were you in this situation].’” He found that when he developed these new systematic-level conceptions that he was creating new information for himself and others to use in decision-making. “This gives you more access to information, because you got to look, you have to think, you have to analyze things more, listening to yourself, so you actually get more information. So, it helps tremendously because you’re building your knowledge level, and building a better understanding of what all has to go on to be in this universe, to even be here. I mean, it’s amazing.”

Motivation, after. “I’m more motivated to try to make changes. I would say between moderately and very, because I wanted something better for my kids. And I want something better for my wife. I don’t want to just come to a house. And be in a house with a couple friends on the block. And I don’t want to feel like an outsider to another group of people. I would like us all to feel the same, like this is our home, and have a good time and experience each other. Because I want to. I would like to make the changes. But I’m kind of scared to do it. I don’t know if I’ve got what it takes to be able to do it mentally, physically, or verbally, so it kind of scares me.”

Hope, after. “I would say, moderately, because the more people I get involved with and speak with, hopefully at some point they would see that these are the changes that need to be made and be willing to help me, to get them done. Because I really don’t see nothing coming out of it [if] we’re going in there turning wheels, covering issues we’ve been covering, yeah it might change for today, I’m not looking for here and today. We can change it one day, one week, one year, ten years, I want to change it.”

Participant 8. Analytical Reflection and Observations

This person maintained his passionate mantra about the need for information, but with qualitatively new meanings and ways to access it, including self-reflection. Its application extended to other people, including city officials: the information everyone in the community needed was knowing each other’s opinions and what angles they had looked at in arriving at them. From his earlier stance, he arrived at the conclusion that “I gotta quit looking at it like an us versus them thing, because it’s not an us versus them: it’s a ‘we.’” He no longer wanted to exist in an in-group/out-group divide. His anecdotes revealed that he had begun to take the perspective of multiple people in one situation and put them in relation with each other. He had “more concern for other people.” He found that this practice of stepping back to look at different angles resulted in stepping out of the strong emotions that previously held sway over his tone and behaviors. “I got more tones. Before, I was pretty limited. Two tones. Their side, and my side. That was it. I’m using it with my wife. I’m using it with my kids. In the process, I’m getting better. I’m learning different ways of thinking and acting. So, it’s helped me with my family, and my life. I use it every day, in my way of thinking and living. It’s changing me. It’s going change me. I’m curious to see what I’m going to be like in another 20 years.” He had emerged from a self-described behavioral prison where he felt confined to a dark present, and developed a longer-ranged orientation. I had the sense that he had been open to finding such an escape for a long time, but had not had the kind of event/experiences that would help him discover that there were alternatives. His escape from the dualisms of linear thinking was a grateful change. Participating in the process “gave me a little spark to live, because for a long time, I just wanted to give up and die. It actually gave me a reason to live now.”

Summary Of Findings At The Individual Portraits Level

These individual portraits of what happened for participants indicate five potentially-progressive categories that are meaningful from the perspectives of both adult and political development. Table 5 illustrates those categories. All participants are included in the first category because they reported having at least one new insight, during or after participating in the process, which bore a connection to their participation. Seven people indicated by discussion that they had at least one specific idea of how they could use the new insight(s) in a future situation. I treated that as *learning* and included the persons in that second category. Four participants reported taking new forms of action that were based on new assumptions or insights connected to their participation, and they are included in the third category. The fourth category accommodates one person's unique experience, which evidenced a meaningful change in her action-logic that appeared to be confined to one domain of her activity, based on her self-reporting. The final category is for the two participants who evidenced operating from a new action-logic in what I categorize as their life-world. I use the term life-world to indicate that the new action-logic affected multiple domains of their activity, based on their self-reporting.

Table 5. What Happened For Participants.

Person	Frequency distribution of persons in impact-count clusters	Total Impact Categories Per Person	1. Had new insight(s)	2. Had idea(s) for using new learning in future	3. Reported new actions based on new assumptions	4. Evidence of a new action-logic in one domain	5. Evidence of a new action-logic in life-world
	100%						
1	12.5%	1	✓				
2	37.5%	2	✓	✓			
3		2	✓	✓			
4		2	✓	✓			
5	12.5%	3	✓	✓	✓		
6	37.5%	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7		4	✓	✓	✓		✓
8		4	✓	✓	✓		✓
Impact Item Counts		22	8	7	4	1	2
Frequency distribution of impacts in each category			100%	87.5%	50%	12.5%	25%

All of the participants demonstrated increased complexity in their thinking in one or more areas or domains. One-half of the participants' behaviors and activities (not just thinking) reflected substantive changes, based upon different operating assumptions that they developed. This is evidence of transformative learning (Cranton, 1994; Mezirow, 1991; Torbert & Associates, 2004). The most dramatic of those impacts involve the three participants that had already begun to operate with new action-logics. Valuable for the individuals personally, there also are broader positive impacts from such development. Viewed through a quantifying lens, the change in the one person who developed a new action-logic in only one domain (that could be

identified from data) has potentially far-reaching impacts for the community population and its adversarial political culture. Within the domain of community, she changed her action-logic in its sub domain of citizen organizing and activism. Where she had been a force in efforts that opposed city actions, she “got off her horse” and began the long-term investment in the non-combative system-change effort mentioned earlier. The two people who evidenced development to new life-world action-logics were extending their benefits, and anticipating further extensions, in the majority of the domains identified in Table 5.

Across the participants, there was a diverse range of domains where they foresaw that the learning could be applied, and/or where they had actively begun to employ it. Table 6 classifies those seven domains and indicates which participants cited them as either anticipated or active applications. The symbol ✓ indicates that a participant anticipates a domain, and the symbol ☑ indicates that a participant described doing new activity in a domain.

Table 6. Domains in Which Participants Could, Or Did, Use Learning.

Person	Domain Total Per Person	1. Inter-personal (in general)	2. Family	3. Employed Work	4. Meetings (any)	5. Community or sub-communities	6. Group(s) (any)	7. Other issues (in general)
2	3	✓				✓	✓	
3	3			✓		✓		✓
4	2						✓	✓
5	4	✓				☑	☑	✓
6	3	☑				☑	☑	
7	4	☑	☑	N/A		✓		✓
8	5	☑	☑	N/A	☑	✓		☑
Counts	24	5	2	1	1	6	4	5
Frequency distribution	100%	20.8%	8.3%	4.2%	4.2%	25%	16.7%	20.8%
Current	11	3	2	--	1	2	2	1
☑Frequency distribution	100%	27.3%	18.24%		9%	18.23%	18.23%	9%
Anticipated	13	2	--	1	--	4	2	4
✓Frequency distribution	100%	15.4%		7.7%		30.75%	15.4%	30.75%

What Happened With Participants' Hope And Motivation

In Table 7, I report their ratings in response to the questions I posed about their hope and motivation. The questions used a simple, four point scale for both categories of *hope* and *motivation*: 1 = not at all; 2 = slightly; 3 = moderately; 4 = very. Participants exercised the option to use half points when they wanted that refinement to be reflected in their response. For simplicity, the table uses *before* and *after* headings to distinguish the timing differences the ratings refer to.

Table 7. What Happened With Hope and Motivation

Participant #	Sense of Hope		Sense of Motivation	
	Before	After	Before	After
1	1	1	1.5	2
2	2	2	1.5	2
3	1.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
4	2	2.5	2	3
5	4	4	2	4
6	2.5	3.5	4	4
7	2	3	2	4
8	1	3	1	3.5
Totals	16.0	22.5	17.5	26.0

As reported in their individual portraits, participants explained the reasoning behind the ratings they assigned to their levels of hope and motivation. Table 8 summarizes their explanations.

Table 8. Categorical Explanations for Hope and Motivation

Rating	Reason for Level of Hope		Reason for Level of Motivation	
	Before	After	Before	After
Very 4.0	P	O P S	M S	M P P S S
Between moderate-very 3.5		PT S		I M S
Moderate 3.0		I P PT		P S
Between slight-moderate 2.5	O P S	PT S		
Slight 2.0	NH NT NT NT	P PT	I I M NT NT S	I NH PT S
Between none-slight 1.5	NT		I M NH S	
None 1.0	NH NH	NH	I	

I – Issues around investment at personal level (either limited or liberating)
 M – General motivation by nature, interest in issue
 NH – Negative history, historical trends
 NT – Negative tone of people in group/community
 O – Other reasons
 P – Positive personal qualities of people in group
 PT – Positive tone of people in group
 S – Discovered new system or method to address issues

What happened for participants at these individual levels, and the work they collectively produced, changed the “global variable” of the group’s tone, which developed to the systematic level. The group’s deliberative conclusions at end of last session reflected a metasystem of tones

and intentions, and situational approaches that coordinated them (see Appendix). A new group of two formed on the basis of a metasytematic, executable plan for an approach to social change

Summary Discussion

In the multiple layers of event/experiences involved in this study, participants' learning ranged from noticing some influence in the evolution of a new understanding, to diverse actionable and employed new insights and action-logics. One of the hopeful and motivating insights gained by most participants was that there are processes and methods for dealing with complex issues and diverse perspectives. As both products and agents of the process's impacts, participants' levels of hope and motivation, and the overall group tone, realized positive development. Some of this was a result of that insight into the existence of processual methods, some was appreciation that negative tones could transform, and some was a result of learning that there are a range of perspectives and tones. Participants who had new learning about multiple perspectives and tones developed various conceptions of how they could use, or described how they were already using, that information to meet their interests and affect their own and others' experiences. Positive feedback loops of insights and actionable learning developed within the group and within the participants. The group-level competency developed sufficiently to conceive a complex, metasytematic approach toward addressing positive change in the local political culture. Participants developed more complex action-logics in either self-reflection, a concept, a principle, a sub domain of activity, and/or their life-worlds. Some of those changes were already having positive influences on people beyond the group. A new small group formed to develop and implement a newly-conceived metasytematic approach to a community network that holds possibilities for change in the adversarial political culture over time.

What happened here transpired in the context of an intentionally-designed, structured discourse process for working on complex issues. As the vehicle that introduced new event/experiences, the process itself was an integral part of what happened. It was a higher-level system in which this group system functioned. It enabled both the negative tones and the subsequent positive tones to develop and play their roles in participants' experiences. The progressive building-blocks of session-methods increasingly narrowed the group's attention, beginning with abstract topics of concern, and ending with up-close-and-personal concerns at concrete levels of tones to take in interactive contact with others in the community. It was a vehicle for participants to co-create their event/experiences, assumptions, motivations, alternative perspectives, and a wider range of free choices to act. In the course of the process, the political culture of the group transformed, a microcosm of the macro-level problem that concerned many of them in the larger community. There were overall higher levels of hope and motivation toward improving the adversarial political culture, and new, more adequate conceptions of approaches to dealing with it.

Limitations Of The Study

The primary limitation of this study is its low number of participants, which precludes drawing any inferences from the findings. Related to that issue, the sample's limited demographic and cultural diversity is a limitation. Another limitation is that no participants began the process with concrete or abstract levels of action-logics, and the process may have

been a very different event/experience for persons with those action-logics, including the possibility that they may have dropped out before it was completed.

Recommendations for Further Research

Research into socially significant impacts of using this discourse process for working on tone and intention, and other more traditional complex issues, should be designed to overcome the limitations of this study, mentioned above. Comparative studies between tone and intention issues and traditional public issues should be designed to discover how impacts on participants and groups correlate with the specific subject of the issue selected to work on. Findings here suggest that a study should be designed to investigate if a tone and intention issue needs to arise organically from within the process of addressing larger issues, as it did in this study, or if the issue can be introduced as an issue unto itself that people are motivated to engage. If so, how would such introductions be designed? Another research question is that of investigating and comparing impacts on people when a group only deliberates an issue, versus a group both developing the approaches and deliberating them as this group did.

International relations expert Harold Saunders recently published another book on his work, "Politics Is About Relationship: A Blueprint for the Citizens' Century" (2006, Palgrave MacMillan). His loosely structured sustained dialogue process developed out of watching the slow evolution of relational change over the course of dialogues between conflicted parties, which spanned years. This small study introduces the research question: how might parties to such dialogues be beneficially impacted if their efforts are preceded by a more tightly structured process, such as this, that specifically guides people through a triple-loop action inquiry into their own tones, intentions, alternative possible strategies, and assessments of potential impacts of those various strategies? How might deliberating tone and intention issues, in general, affect populations in conflicts and brewing conflicts?

In recent months, researcher Richard Harwood has been traveling the United States to promote and discuss his book, "Hope Unraveled: The People's Retreat and Our Way Back" (2005, Charles F. Kettering Foundation). He reports, "people can no longer see or hear themselves reflected in politics and public life.... They abhor this retreat, but feel lost about what to do... [We need to] square with the reality of people's lives...tap into people's desire to be part of something larger than themselves...affirm our commitment to hope" (Harwood, 2005). Further research could indicate if the process used in this study provides a method to implement those prescriptions.

Two of the participants in this study suggested that the process should be customized for use in two other areas: family systems work, and child education. Both of them believed the value of discriminating between discrete perspectives and tones that family services and educational methods are silent about would make a significant contribution to people's well-being and interpersonal relations and effectiveness.

Further research would be valuable to investigate how to institutionalize tone and intention issues as a liberating discipline that could embed deliberating multiple perspectives into child education, family services, and political development efforts at various scales to address complex issues.

Conclusion

Of the countless public issues I have had the privilege to work on with other citizens—on the ground “live,” as intentional action research, and in assorted educational settings—this occasion of working on a tone and intention issue was rich with new experience and findings, and beneficial impacts on participants and others who share some of their life-worlds. Although this was the first opportunity to actively work with that issue, it was certainly not the first time or place that I saw the need for it. Some years ago, I summarized my thinking about “those elements that are necessary in considering how a public can address complex social or political issues in such a way that the evolution of the culture and the structures it supports might be assisted” (Ross, 2000, p. 1). The summary was based on experiences in public issues work that I had accumulated at that point. The first element that I treated began as follows.

Address the community’s most presenting or hidden needs first, those which, if left unaddressed, would likely sabotage other efforts.

- Troubling relationships and their history
- Assumptions about capacity, knowledge, power, leadership, inclusivity
- a. Provide a method for recognizing them because people need to become conscious of them before they can intentionally work through them.
- b. Provide a method for working through them because the [likely] alternative is paralysis or regression (p. 2).

Whether or not existing troubled relationships or misplaced public assumptions appear to characterize a political culture, in these decades of rapid change, with their clashes of worldviews and expectations, the potential for an increasing number of tone and intention types of issues is, itself, a pervasive—if unrecognized—socio-political issue. For this reason, this small study has socio-political significance because it demonstrates that there is an effective discourse process for people to work on such issues, both in communities and other settings both larger and smaller. As a result of this study, I have institutionalized the tone and intention issue by incorporating it into TIP’s methodology as a specific option for groups to discern using before addressing other issues.

By providing the purposeful structure, the processual methods, the context, and the reasons for engaging all voices on an issue, the process used in this study is an institutionalized form of a “liberating discipline” as described by Torbert (2000, p. 80). It provides a method to precisely identify discrete issues and sub issues that comprise larger topics of concern, e.g., in this case the community’s adversarial political culture. It legitimizes, respects, and appropriately uses the perspectives emanating from the range of action-logics, to conceive metasystematic combinations of approaches to specific issues, such as tone and intention, that can effectively work on the overall issue. What happened in this study was that diverse forms of human energy, motivation, and capacity were freed and could, or did, begin to engage collaboratively in social change and more complex decision-making processes and action-logics.

Another conclusion I propose is that there are valuable implications for political development, as defined earlier. When we consider the conundrums posed by perennially troublesome issues, an integrated understanding of positive event/experiences, human motivations, and adult development of new action-logics can help us transform hopeless assumptions that things will never change. We have the knowledge of the necessary conditions to liberate the conative

dimension of human nature. Now, to develop those conditions is, itself, a universally-germane complex issue that demands priority if we are ever to address the serious challenges that humanity has brought upon itself in every region of the world—and in their populations' publicly common ways of relating.

Such an understanding of conation's role in human existence has much to say about "apathy" and "public disengagement." What might it say about addressing the systemic, underlying issues in conflicted communities and societies? Freeing up people's environments, for example by such methods as used here, would employ the wisdom of identifying corrective actions at the foundational lower-level tasks discussed earlier. Whole-system change, at any scale, must include the level of individual human beings and their motivations to satisfy basic needs. This small study demonstrated some dimensions of why that is so.

Finally, a word about the word *paradigm*. In recent years, "new paradigms" are announced in one arena or another with noticeable frequency. They "tend to emphasize their revolutionary dissimilarity from the paradigms prior to them" (Torbert, 1994, p. 80). The people who study and measure stages of development in the field of developmental theory use the term with a specific, technical meaning. In that domain, a paradigm is measured by the hierarchical complexity of the tasks necessary to construct a new paradigm, just as other stages are measured by the task complexity needed to construct, for example, a linear logic, a system, or a metasystem. The paradigmatic level of development is characterized by its use of methods that are quantitatively and qualitatively more complex and adequate to deal with other clashing or competing systems and metasystems. Their hallmark is socio-political dynamics that can resolve moral questions by engaging all perspectives constructively (Sonnert & Commons, 1994), practices that use all worldviews' perspectives in "recognized complementarity" to the others (Torbert, 2000, p. 80), and public discourses and social levels of organization, including societies, that effectively integrate "all members...[in the] co-construction of solutions" to complex issues (Commons et al., 2005, p. 50). Social, economic, and political issues are metasystem complexes of enormous complexity that are not susceptible to technical remedies. If, as the planet's 21st Century inhabitants, we hope to address them with an effectiveness that exceeds our history to date, we must employ genuinely new paradigms. Torbert's developmental action inquiry and the methodology used in this study operate at the paradigmatic stage. As first, second, and third person discourse methods that depend on all action-logics for their effectiveness, they embed paradigmatic complexity: "When the public discourse is extended in time, has real power, is inclusive, and establishes its own rules and agenda, and when it engages in real co-construction of its rules, agenda and prioritization of assumptions, then the discourse may be paradigmatic" (Commons et al., 2005, p. 50).

Referring to capacities that he associated with his Learning III (which equates to the metasystematic action-logic), a passionate Gregory Bateson had the following convictions.

If I am right, the whole of our thinking about what we are and what other people are has got to be restructured. This is not funny, and I do not know how long we have to do it.... The most important task today is, perhaps, to learn to think in the new way.... The step to realizing—to making habitual—this other way of thinking—so that one naturally thinks that way when one reaches out for a glass of water or cuts down a tree—that step is not an easy one. And quite seriously, I suggest to you that we should trust no policy decisions which emanate from persons who do not yet have that habit (2000, pp. 468-469).

If we do not currently think that way—and few do—so much more the reason to institutionalize the new field of political development. Its theory and early praxis have potential for such liberating disciplines to begin to permeate our publicly common ways of relating: a new field to develop individuals, institutions, and their cultures while, and by, addressing their confounding complexes of issues. Such liberating disciplines need to be embedded in the way we humans do our important work: living, intending, inquiring, thinking, learning, analyzing, strategizing, relating, transacting, educating, deliberating, policy-making, governing, and being good stewards of our entire ecosystem.

[Editor's note: The Appendix begins on the next page.]

Appendix

Report of Study Participants' Deliberation

Thinking and Outcomes of Our Deliberative Session

Before starting, we expressed some of our personal stakes in this issue.

- It would certainly be a nicer place to live if these bad feelings weren't here; would certainly be a nicer place for me to live!
- There's an awful lot of time and energy that's really wasted in the current situation. It would be nice to get that off our backs and be able to address specific littler issues that are interesting and often fun to solve, without this impossible monster that underlies things. This matters tonight because we'd like to be successful and have a better environment.
- Even though I don't live in the city limits, it's the closest community to where I live, so if it was a friendlier, happier community, obviously it would benefit me. Also, if there were better relations between government officials and people, government would be more effective and more would get done.
- It would make the community a better place to live. We can't solve all the problems and please everybody, but it would be a good way to establish that there are problems and there are ways to solve them to a certain extent.
- I hate wasting time, energy, and money. And we're doing all of it, a lot of people are: wasting time, energy, and money. We could use it to better serve the whole community.
- It's a case of personally learning, in case I ever find myself in that situation, there would possibly be some ways to avoid doing some of these things...so it's a learning experience.
- We had talked about democracy, and how this may be a failing of democracy. If we can't make democracy work on such a small scale, how can it ever work on a large scale? I want to see it work here because I want democracy to succeed.
- I want to see better government and better community relations. I think it makes a difference. The kind of government people live with affects people as individuals. I care about people who live here, and I live close by; I want it to be better for people.

Using the approaches we developed in our Issue Booklet, we deliberated about the different tones and intentions we could employ toward the overall issue. First, we weighed the pros and cons of each different approach, and imagined what kind of future scenario it would mean for the community if each tone were the dominant one. The following pages summarize our deliberative thinking about each approach.

Approach 1: The intention & tone of preparing to organize an “us vs. them” campaign to get the changes we want

This is the tone and approach of things that are already going on now. It's the status quo, not in the sense of a public campaign, but in the form of people finding others willing to walk into the fire with them over an issue. Such efforts have been organized issue by issue, and stir things up, but have never been organized as a long term campaign to stop the overall nonsense.

Adopting this tone to get changes made would mean people wouldn't want to participate, it's too high-intensity, certainly not worth it for people who never had anything happen to them that they had to fight against.

On the other hand, perhaps with the negative national publicity over the ____ case, this type of approach might tap into existing energies and seem appropriate given the nonsense of [that case], which seems rather emblematic of the larger issue we're concerned about.

The worrisome aspects of this approach are that it means there would continue to be winners and losers, and could make that rift even greater, although we're unsure if it could be greater than it already is. Losers bide their time, because even if someone else wins the battle, the war isn't over. It may just be the nature of the system, to have winners and losers.

But our goal is that we want to help make decisions, not keep opposing decisions or having the *us vs. them* dynamic. We want an “we're all in this together” tone. That would stop the cycle. With this approach, even if a concerted campaign flipped the balance of power, that's all it does: then “us” has the power of the system over “them.” All we would be doing is trading places, and that means no change at all.

This approach works best on a specific issue that has a specific yes or no answer, like a “do you want it or not want it?” question. A campaign would have to have a specific and limited goal – such as a movement for a strong mayor, for example, or the ____ battle. It requires defined targets, and only those things would happen that are focused on by such campaigns.

They would create more ill will and tension, and it doesn't seem worth it. Targeted issue campaigns don't lead to general system change. That's what we want, but this just reinforces what is already here. However, if we had a different system, where people have a say in advance about deciding what they want, or do not want, such campaigns would not be necessary, and our relationships wouldn't suffer this long term, sore underbelly after battles.

We agreed this approach is only a last resort if all else fails. In general, we place the highest value on wanting broader change, improving relationships, and being freed of aggravation.

When would it be worth it to head into more aggravation by using this approach? We agree that land use decisions can warrant this, because they are irreversible, and dramatically affect people where they live. Homes are bedrock where people say No.

Looking ahead. The scenario we foresee if our approach to the overall issue were dominated by this tone is that it would just be more of the same: long term conflict, bad feelings, more angry folks, and more of not getting things done. Nothing would change in the long term on either “side.”

Approach 2: The intention & tone of preparing to take an “It’s the law” approach to enforce needed changes

This approach rests on the assumptions—some of us say knowledge—that government officials are not abiding by existing laws in all cases and circumstances. It is neutral toward our relationships with one another, because we all have to follow the law. If we believe laws are not being followed, our tone should convey we want to find diplomatic ways to get the facts on the table. If laws have not and are not being broken, we need to know that so suspicions can be laid to rest. In the meantime, this tone risks relationships becoming hostile and people taking sides, even if we all regard the law as the bedrock of democracy.

We would like to approach things with the assumption that the law is followed and implemented without favoritism or discrimination toward selected people and issues. We are concerned that patriarchal attitudes of “father knows best” at the government level lead to uneven treatment of people and issues. This approach would lead us to remove such people from office, in favor of those who do what constituents want and who take impeccable care with legal requirements.

While we see the potential for hostile relationships aroused by insisting on lawful behaviors, on the other hand, if such efforts were successful, it would not matter if those who do not follow the law and those who support them became hostile, because they would no longer be in power. We have the right to insist on lawful behavior without apologizing. This tone may generate respect, since it is the way the system is designed to work.

Since this approach does not rest on an *us vs. them* basis but rather on already-spelled out law, it is a firm and diplomatic basis for taking the high moral ground, beyond issues of relationship. It is also possible that if other things happen in the community to improve, that a shift to proper enforcement of the law will be an end result rather than something we need to emphasize specifically. We would not want this legal enforcement tone to dominate everything we do, because in itself, it is not enough.

When we turn this legalistic approach around, we find ourselves ambivalent about judgments between the spirit of the law and the letter of the law. We notice we want to hold government to a strict execution of the law in areas where we fear its misuse or abuse, yet we also want public servants to be more facilitative than rigid and dictatorial in applying the law to citizens in certain cases. If laws aren’t serving well as they are written, we need to deliberate to change them, but that needs to be broad-based deliberation, not among only a select few.

Overall, we value the spirit of the law over compliance, a balanced spirit of cooperation and compliance. We value public servants striving to make laws work for all of us without impersonal rigidity. We value both government officials and citizens living within the law without the weight of fear of dictatorial punishment for mistakes.

Looking ahead. The scenario we foresee if our approach to the overall issue were dominated by this tone is characterized by antagonism and even fear, despite efforts we may make to make enforcement neutral. Legal actions of various kinds would sever communications even further. Everyone would have reason to be on constant guard, looking over their shoulders because we were not careful about what we asked for, and got stuck in it.

Approach 3: The intention & tone of preparing to take a positive “strategic encouragement” approach to get changes rolling

The main thing we like about this approach is its positive, non-antagonistic nature, especially by comparison with the first two approaches. It gives us an optimistic feel that we *can* work things out in a way that involves enough give and take from everyone to get a job done without causing problems. It means being proactive, creative, and the potential to get people excited about positive change and looking for the positives everywhere we can, including complimenting officials when they do commendable things. These are underlying modes or tones that we need in order to change the dynamics.

At the same time, there can be a concern that it would be effective in only tiny increments, because overall, it is important that government and relationships be working right. We shouldn't have to negotiate our way to proper operations. However, it does not prevent us from being assertive about what our concerns are, and we can still ground this approach in our root concern so it stays in the forefront.

Even if we adopt this tone willingly, there is a worry about how realistic it is. What incentives do citizens have to offer besides promising to not create an uproar or organize to vote out officials who don't want to engage?

To avoid the potential downside of coming up with exchange offers everyone may not want to live with, we assume this tone includes the necessity of developing good community networking. The voice of many must be brought to the table, not the voice of only a few who are ignorant of what the community wants and is willing to offer in the course of negotiating exchanges.

Toward improving relationships, it changes the tone by the prospect of going to officials and saying: “We know there has been a lot of conflict over the years, we're tired of it, you're probably tired of it too, let's find a better way to work together on things...and when contention arises, let's agree to find tradeoffs we can live with.”

However, this approach assumes there is willingness on both sides, and there may not be. Also, while it may make us feel better, it could come across as weak, too, to the other “side.” By contrast, if we come from a more oppositional approach, there may be more willingness in others to engage in negotiation.

A benefit of this approach is that it does not narrow options down, but can serve as a springboard for either genuinely more collaborative approaches, or for taking stances suggested by the earlier two approaches if they are needed as backup systems. This provides the tone of an initial overture, and gives all of us the time and opportunity to do our homework and figure out what we bring to the table. It would be a good, educational process for everyone, if this characterized working things out.

One unresolved downside is that some people prefer “ready-resonance” with ideas, letting natural alignments and attractions to visions bring people together, rather than negotiating our way through everything. Realistically, this approach cannot work yet, because we do not have any venues for such conversations to take place. That gap would have to be filled first.

Looking ahead. The scenario we foresee if our approach to the overall issue were dominated by this tone is one of wanting to work together enough that we're all willing to give something to get something. We wouldn't be taking stances of either “yes” all the way, or “no” all the way. We would be breaking through such either/or gridlocks, and finding a third way. We would not be going into every endeavor expecting, or looking for, a fight.

Approach 4: The intention & tone of preparing to take a fully collaborative community-wide approach to work on changes

This is the approach that captures our overall goals, it addresses the overall issue we're concerned about. We want to replace our long history of mistrust with a new pattern of trust and reduced tensions, and have a greater quality of community life. None of the other approaches strive for this directly.

But if any tone portends negotiating from a weak position, this one does. It does not have any strong positions built into it. We may have a concern that it could be easily dismissed or manipulated. At the same time, we're aware that it does not prevent us from using the tones and tools of the other approaches that have some sharp edges, as needed.

The benefit of risking this stance is that it could lead to a broad, long-term framework to get the whole community up to speed, and able to take any kind of action. That means we could work on focused issues, find ways to get people talking, find out and define the issues, and have various meetings facilitated by someone neutral when needed. Along with all this, there would be small group meetings happening all over town that make the web of connections we've talked about, a very empowering prospect.

Once that happens, information starts moving back and forth, and it's harder to steer people down a path where they don't want to go. Once they know what's going on, with communication methods that work, people aren't easily manipulated, if that should be attempted. Starting off with this tone could lead to such wide spread meetings, and they wouldn't be gripe sessions. They could be productive and educational, like learning the aspects of the laws about something of keen interest, for example, for businesses. It could also be the means to the end of fostering community, something we all hold as highly valuable.

Some of us believe that starting off this way could lead to city council finally feeling it has a way to get a broad enough sense of what people want. It needs to feel assured it knows, and this could begin to change the way it thinks about a lot of things, and change the way business gets done, for a lot of reasons.

Despite those positives, we are aware that there are people whose feelings of animosity run deep, and this tone is probably not aggressive enough for them because it holds out little realistic hope that things will change. We could, potentially, lose the prospect of their participation in community change efforts like this. On the other hand, this kind of open approach affords a soapbox for everyone, regardless of what is on their minds. They can all say their piece. In the process of hearing one another, we would begin to find things out that we need to know, that put us at greater ease, etc.

This could be too optimistic, and we might find out that no one is really interested in wide-spread collaboration to make change, then efforts toward our goals would fizzle. We can only hope that having easy access through such processes would start to encourage more activity. We are telling ourselves that if we threw a big enough party, a lot of people would want to come.

Looking ahead. The scenario we foresee if our approach to the overall issue were dominated by this tone is that there would be a lot fewer "us and them" dynamics. The more connections people began to have with better communication methods among them, the fewer the biases that would remain. We would be changing our perspectives, toning things down, and becoming more tolerant. It would be good for both "sides," and we'd be finding out we can agree on some things even when we disagree on other things, without the tensions and adversity.

Comparing Across the Approaches

After we deliberated the tensions within each of the foregoing four approaches, we looked for any overall tensions among them.

We characterized the differently-toned approaches in terms of which ones block other tones, and which tones are open to others. While we recognized that there can be specific situations where actions based on approach 1 may be practical or necessary, its tone is not one of choice because it pits one group of citizens against another, and acting on that adversarial basis—as we know so well from experience—leaves long-lasting scars on the community and individuals. In that sense, it is in tension with approaches 3 and 4, which have markedly more positive tones. On the other hand, as we said earlier, if we had a system in place where citizens were involved at the early stages of things, this might not be needed.

The second approach to *action* (as compared to just tone) also has potentially legitimate uses that are not necessarily at odds with any of the other approaches, but its tone of distrust blocks healthy relationships and is in tension with approaches 3 and 4, which assume some degrees of trust and willingness between people.

The tone of approach 3 could co-exist to some extent and in certain situations with that of approach 4, but there is tension between their assumptions about who is “at the table,” how they got there, and what brought them there. Approach 3’s tone assumes there are probably fewer people involved directly, and that it could be an elite few who bring others to the table to negotiate the gives and takes of coming to agreements. Its aim is focused more on dealing with specific decisions, than with changing the culture of the community. In that sense, it blocks the full expression of approach 4.

By contrast, approach 4 assumes community issues or questions require some ongoing venues for fully collaborative and community-wide involvement. It is the most open of all the tones that could be adopted. It is not in competitive tension with any of the other tones because their situational uses fit within the openness of approach 4, which indeed, may influence the others toward moderation. It does not imply taking everything on blind faith or being naïve; it accommodates realism and flexibility.

In that vein, we considered how the strong tones of approach 2 would actually “look” and play out in a scenario where approach 4’s tone was dominant. This seemed important because of the charged emotions, judgments, and suspicions that people express either verbally or by not speaking at all to certain people. We imagine the adoption of approach 4’s tone could meet people where they are, wherever they are. Eventually, such a tone characterizing relations should underlie enough new, positive experiences that people’s anger and anxiety levels would gradually diminish. People who would feel more comfortable and secure in tone 2 might relax more as the open tone of 4 leads to more information acquiring and sharing. It should also lead to the feeling of being more supported in general, rather than dependent on only their own efforts to meet needs. We do not foresee that people preferring the tone of approach 2 would feel in tension with or alienated within approach 4.

When we compared the time-and-energy demands implied by enacting each approach, we concluded that each, in its own way, could certainly take time. The tone of the energy expended in approaches 3 and 4 would be generally more positive and satisfying. This would be so because both products and relationships would be held in equal value, not sacrificed for expediency’s sake. We can imagine that proceeding on the basis of approach 4 would initially be heavier in such demands, but that in the long term, it would result in fewer urgent situations to deal with.

Finally, we recognized that another reason that approach 4 has the least amount of tension with the others, is that it does not presume a stance of telling others what to think or inducing them to react in particular ways. Rather, it assumes creating the venues and processes to work with whatever people think, even when it is in tension with others.

Summary of Deliberative Outcomes

The foregoing work helped us formulate the following reasoning and preferences, as we summarized our conclusions about tone-adoption and its relational impacts.

In this group, there is a sincere desire to build community and to be as non-adversarial as possible. We conclude the fourth approach can best support this. Values underlying this consensus include: the importance we place on healing relationships and having more good ones; wanting the democratic ideal to prevail in our community; preferring the benefits of long-term thinking for real change over short-term efforts; higher levels of information-sharing; and the tangible benefits of fostering community for its own sake.

A down-to-earth realism goes along with this. We realize that desire does not preclude using the sharper-edged tools available for doing community business when they are a last resort, or when they would be more practical and effective for particular issues or circumstances. Until we deliberated this issue, we had not been considering that the third approach existed or that it fit anywhere in accomplishing our ultimate goals of addressing the overall issue that concerns us.

We realized toward the end of our deliberations that our focus had shifted considerably with regard to that overall issue, placing less emphasis on government, and more on people. This may be because, as one of us commented, “if we’re worried about being pushed around or some of those other things that seem to be a root of a lot of this issue, the sense of building community gave us a sense of empowerment.” There may be other valuable things to understand about this shift, too. For example, it may be about interplays we intuit between processes we hope the community adopts, and the products they can produce. We did not explore this idea beyond naming that when we use ourselves and each other to solve our problems, we find out not only that we can, but also that our “products” become much more than we aimed for at the start. Another dynamic behind our shift may be quite natural: the shifts that occur as hope takes root, that we become freer to place our attention on the positives as we become less weighed down by the negatives we have struggled with. We talked about the real impacts for changing public relationships by doing very simple, positive things; for example, conveying compliments even to people with whom we disagreed about something else.

We identified that we experienced diverse benefits from deliberating our issue. A significant one was the usefulness of having each approach described separately so we could explore it thoroughly and clearly distinguish it from the other ones. This had value for the sake of considering its tone, practical usefulness, and relational impacts. It also equipped us to weigh it against the others and see how, when, or if it could complement the others.

We concluded that the first approach is like a return to a familiar ground zero, and none of us favor such a return. Our hope is that even if an issue in the future requires such a strategy, that the deeper changes we hope take root across the community will help to prevent it becoming personalized as *us vs. them*. We hope approach 4 helps such issues be seen as just being issues, which we do not need to personally identify with to the point of destroying relationships over them.

We share the assumption that broad community networking is essential to the life of the community, communication and information-flows within it, and our ability to achieve a better

quality of civic life overall. We believe there may be quite a period ahead before the spirit of mistrust and adversity dissipates in the community, yet it has to start somewhere. We agree that community life that is rooted in the tone of approach 4 is the “somewhere” it has to start, even if it takes generations.

Preferences for the tone of approach 4 do not overshadow the challenges it represents to us. For a couple of us, the spirit and practice of negotiation reflected in the third approach is more familiar and easier to envision using as an individual. As our issue-framing mentioned, using approach 4 for public business implies citizens learn new skills. Leadership questions arise in connection with sustained commitment and neutrality that ensures truly collaborative efforts to meet others needs as well as our own. We wonder about people’s interest levels and ability to see long term change develop gradually, without reverting to inactivity or business as usual. At the same time, we see the third approach as a viable option when the fourth does not work, for whatever reason. A real challenge is suggested by the idea of creating new venues for productive citizen-citizen and citizen-official interactions. Developing a shared imagination for what they need to look like may prove challenging, too.

As our discussions kept showing us, and the foregoing illustrates, deliberating the issue of our own tone led us inevitably to imagining how things would work in practice. How things will work is obviously up to everyone, not just this group. At the same time, our participation in this process leaves us feeling that we have more company now. Things seem pretty hopeful, and we look forward to finding ways to get some wider agreement on what kind of interactions we want to have in the community, and spread that hope in such interactions more widely.

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