DIALOGUE AND CHANGE

A Study of the Use of Community-Wide Study Circles Programs to Foster Action and Change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past decade, the Study Circles Resource Center has been helping communities across the country to engage their citizens in dialogue about the most important issues impacting their futures, ranging from race relations to growth management. As the Resource Center’s Community-Wide Study Circles model has evolved, the organization has become increasingly concerned with ensuring that communities are able to translate their dialogue into meaningful action and change through such pathways as personal transformations, collective action, and input to elected officials. The purpose of this study is to consider how successful the Resource Center has been at promoting community action and change in communities, and to offer recommendations as to how the Resource Center can provide stronger assistance to communities in the future.

This study makes two important contributions to the understanding of how the Study Circles model relates to action and change. It first develops a “Typology of Action and Change” that aligns the kinds of change that Study Circles programs may attempt to produce with three aspects of the Study Circles model:

- Pathways to Change: Theories or explanations for how Study Circles support communities in moving from dialogue to change.
- Action Elements: Primary elements of the Study Circles model that support these pathways.
- Action Tools: Additional things that Study Circles programs may do in order to support the change process that go beyond the primary elements of the model.

While the “Typology of Action and Change” does not offer any radically new ideas about the Study Circles model, it is significant because it provides a framework within which a strategic analysis of the model may be conducted by aligning how the model works with intended outcomes. The typology illustrates the potential strengths and weaknesses of the model by highlighting areas in which certain kinds of change or pathways to change are not well supported by the action elements and tools of the Study Circles model. Further, it emphasizes the critical importance of providing communities with strategic guidance as to how they should approach the process of supporting meaningful outcomes out of their dialogues.

Following the development of the typology, the cases of two communities that have conducted successful Study Circles programs are analyzed in order to better understand how the model is supporting action and change on the ground. The two communities, Fayetteville, NC and Springfield, IL, have conducted Study Circles programs for the past several years on the issue of improving race relations. The analysis of these two communities describes the kinds of outcomes produced (and not produced) by the programs and attempts to discern how the Study Circles model succeeded and failed in supporting meaningful change.

Generally speaking, while the Fayetteville and Springfield programs were both successful at improving communication on issues of race and impacting the individuals who participated in the dialogues, their track records in terms of supporting meaningful community action and change are decidedly mixed. In Fayetteville, for example, the actions produced by the program
seem to be relatively inconsistent with a plausible theory of change in regards to how the community deals with race. While the Springfield program seems to have resulted in more substantial outcomes, its progress has been slow and frustrating for organizers and many recommendations for action that have been generated through the process have not been addressed.

Based on the analysis of the programs in Fayetteville and Springfield in the context of the typology, the following conclusions were reached in this study.

1) One of the most important factors contributing to successful action and change in communities is the presence of a viable, well-resourced organization that is responsible for supporting the action-change process.

2) Several critical pathways to action and change require that a community provide significantly greater resources to support a Study Circles program than are currently provided by many communities.

3) The Study Circles model does not provide adequate opportunities for organizers and participants to be strategic about how they create and pursue recommendations generated through the process.

4) The Study Circles model must provide greater guidance to communities in how to successfully support collective action.

5) Many communities do not take full advantage of the Action Forum to advance the agenda of action and change.

6) Further analysis of the “Typology of Action and Change” is needed in order to discern how to best support change in communities.

The final chapter to this analysis provides recommendations to the Resource Center to address the above conclusions. It is recognized that the conclusions and recommendations generated through this study are preliminary in so far as they were based on the analysis of only two Study Circles. Further study of communities that have conducted programs on a different scale and on different issues is needed.
INTRODUCTION

Background

When the Study Circles Resource Center was created by the Topsfield Foundation in 1989, the organization focused on promoting authentic dialogue among citizens from every walk of life. It was only after working with communities for several years that the Resource Center began to emphasize the importance of linking public dialogue to action – having found that many citizens would not participate in dialogue unless they saw that it would result in meaningful outcomes. With the evolution of its Community-Wide Study Circles model\(^1\) in the mid-90s, the Resource Center placed action and change at the core of its mission, emphasizing a broad menu of options for how Study Circles programs could help communities move beyond discussion.\(^2\)

Positioning themselves at the crossroads of authentic dialogue, democratic deliberation and community organizing, the Resource Center has moved to the forefront of a nascent movement to revitalize American democracy.\(^3\) In doing so, it has become increasingly important that the organization be able to prove to a variety of audiences – ranging from foundations and academics to practitioners and community leaders – that the Study Circles model produces meaningful results and that it represents more than “just talk.”\(^4\) At the same time, as the organization continues to grow, the Resource Center faces the great challenge of learning from the experiences and innovations of the hundreds of communities that have conducted Study Circles programs over the years. The organization has much to learn from these communities about the link between dialogue and action – perhaps the least developed element of the model.

Efforts to grapple with the Resource Center’s capacity to support meaningful action and change in communities go back at least as far as 2000, at which time a study of staff attitudes revealed a deep division within the organization. Based on interviews of the entire staff, W. Scott Stiles found that staff members were divided between three approaches to action and change: “the hands-off approach, the democracy approach, and the power approach.”\(^5\) Advocates for the hands-off approach believed that decisions to move to collective action rested solely with the judgment of local organizers and that the model adequately supported the needs of communities. Other staff members, however, disagreed, arguing that supporting action and change was absolutely essential to the success of Study Circles and that significant improvements to the advice and tools provided by the Resource Center needed to be made. Said one staff member at

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1 For the sake of brevity, the Community-Wide Study Circles model will simply be referred to as the Study Circles model in this report.
2 According to its web site, five commitments guide the Resource Center’s work: (1) create opportunities for everyone’s voice to be heard; (2) make the dialogue diverse; (3) make the dialogue productive; (4) connect the dialogue to short-term and long-term change; and (5) make democratic dialogue for action and change a routine part of our public life.
the time: “We don’t have good advice. The advice and tools we have don’t really say how to create effective action. Our advice is not really effective and we are setting organizers up for failure.’ This study will continue to pursue this question by examining the mechanisms through which action and change are currently being supported.

**Research Objectives**

The purpose of this analysis is to consider how the Study Circles model has supported community action in the past and to recommend to the Resource Center how it may increase the likelihood that new projects will produce actions that support meaningful community change. The analysis will begin by exploring the “pathways to change” that communities may utilize in order to produce actions out of their Study Circles. It will then consider how the resources and advice provided by the Resource Center are contributing to action and change in communities.

Specifically, this analysis will ask the following four questions:

1) What kinds of action and change are being created by Study Circles programs?
2) How are Study Circles programs producing this action and change (i.e. what are the most effective “paths to change”)?
3) What resources, tools and support are the Resource Center providing to communities that contribute to these paths?
4) How can the resources, tools and support provided by the Resource Center do more to support community action and change?

By pursuing these four questions, it will be possible to consider the kinds of impacts that projects are having on communities and what it is about the interventions being made by projects that produces results. Perhaps most importantly, the analysis will help the Resource Center to think about what modifications and improvements it should consider in order to better help communities produce meaningful outcomes.

**General Approach**

This study examines two communities that have been conducting Study Circles programs for the past several years: Fayetteville, NC and Springfield, IL. Both Fayetteville and Springfield were identified by the Resource Center as exceptional communities that had implemented multiple rounds of circles and had produced substantial outcomes over the years. Both programs were launched in the late 1990s in order to address racial tensions being experienced by the communities. Since their initial launch, both programs have expanded to address related issues, such as police-community relations. In order to better understand how the Study Circles model supports action and change in communities, this study will examine the outcomes of the Fayetteville and Springfield programs and the circumstances that produced them. While the

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7 “Pathways to change” is a term used by Rona Roberts and Steve Kay in their “Best Practices” study of Study Circles programs. It refers to different theories for how Study Circles can produce action and change in a community.
experiences of two communities are not sufficient for this study to offer a comprehensive analysis of the Study Circles model, they will provide a sense of what may or may not be working about the model under certain conditions. The study of Fayetteville and Springfield may also help to guide future research on Study Circles programs by highlighting the important questions that must be addressed about the model and the important elements that must be examined more closely in other communities.

This study is divided into four primary chapters. First, an examination of the Study Circles model will be conducted through an exploration of the essential elements of the model and the pathways to change that various individuals have ascribed to it. From this examination, a comprehensive “Typology of Action and Change” will be developed. This chapter will be followed by case studies of the Fayetteville and Springfield programs. The examination of Springfield will be somewhat abbreviated, focusing on how the case differs from that of Fayetteville. Finally, the two case studies will be followed by recommendations to the Resource Center based on observations from the two cases in the context of the typology.

**Individual vs. Collective Change**

The kinds of action and change that may be produced by Study Circles cover a broad spectrum, ranging from individual learning and behavioral change to shifts in public policy and public institutions. For the purposes of this study, change that occurs on an individual level will only be considered to the extent that it represents a larger, community-wide shift or an impact on community organizations and institutions. While individual changes caused by Study Circles may be very important, they will not be the focus of this study for two reasons. First, individual shifts in behavior as a result of participation in facilitated dialogue have been studied elsewhere. While there is some debate about how deliberation impacts participants, there is little question among most of those who have participated in a Study Circle that individual change happens. Considerably less has been established about the capacity for small group dialogue to produce larger scale community action and change. Second, the Resource Center has positioned itself as an advocate for deliberative democracy in the United States. Deliberative democracy may be distinguished from the general promotion of greater dialogue in civic life by its central concern with empowering citizens through their direct participate in governance processes and community change. As such, it is critical to establish the “governance” role played by Study Circles in communities.

**Action and Change on Race**

Both cases being examined in this study concentrated on racial problems in the community (though both have expanded to address other topics.) This is primarily the case because Study

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Circles race programs tend to be older and more developed than programs on other issues, like smart growth, education and police-community relations. While the more developed nature of these programs is an advantage for studying how actions have played out in a community, the unique nature of the issue of race may make the change produced by the efforts more difficult to analyze. Race, as a community issue, presents challenges on the level of individual behavior and relationships, as well as the level of institutional policies and organizations. On the individual level, racial prejudice is often rooted in deep-seated values that may be difficult to address and slow to change. On the institutional level, reform may be a very slow, politically divisive, and resource intensive process. It is highly unlikely that a community dialogue process will “solve” community race relations, or even create a visible change over the course of a few years. To the extent that change does occur, it may be quite difficult to trace it back to its causes. As such, attempts to measure action and change in Fayetteville and Springfield represent a very “hard case” for proponents of dialogue as a vehicle for community change. The results of this study should be considered within the context of the complexities and difficulties that accompany efforts at change on the issue of race.

**Action vs. Change**

The Resource Center declares a commitment to supporting action and change as a core part of its mission. However, it should be noted that the terms “action” and “change” are not synonymous. In relation to Study Circles programs, action is an *output* – an immediate product of a round of circles that is a means to a greater end. The purpose of action is some form of change – the desired *outcome* of a project. In the past, the Resource Center has measured the success of its programs by a variety of benchmarks, including their scale, whether they complete an Action Forum, the actions taken following their completion, and their long-term sustainability. While these measures all relay important information about the quality of Study Circles programs, they do not demonstrate the long-term change created by the programs – they measure outputs, rather than outcomes.

There are several important reasons why action tends to be measured over change. Community change is a very slow process that may occur over a long period of time. This may especially be the case for complex issues like race relations. Additionally, community change may be driven by a wide variety of causes – many of which may have nothing to do with the Study Circles intervention or may be the driver behind the Study Circles program itself. As such, it is difficult to measure change and to correlate it with a Study Circles intervention. Measuring action, on the other hand, can be quite straightforward, involving little more than a description of activities made by Study Circles participants or organizers. However, it is important to clarify that while action is necessary for change, it is not sufficient.

This analysis will look at the following two aspects of action and change as they relate to the cases of Fayetteville and Springfield. First, what specific actions took place out of a round of circles? Second, are these actions consistent with a plausible theory of change? This approach will assume that while it will be highly unlikely that significant community change caused by Study Circles will be identified, it is important to evaluate the quality of actions taken in the context of the desired change.
EXAMINING AND EVALUATING THE MODEL

Evaluating Study Circles

In order to analyze and evaluate the capacity of Study Circles to support action and change, it is important to consider: (1) the essential elements of the model and how the Resource Center supports Study Circles programs, (2) the elements of the model that support action and change, and (3) theories and observations of how Study Circles help communities produce meaningful outcomes. By reflecting on these three items, it will be possible to construct a comprehensive typology that portrays how the Study Circles model relates to and supports action and change. Such a typology will raise important questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the model. It will also offer guidance in evaluating the cases of Fayetteville and Springfield against perceptions of how the model is believed to work.

Community-Wide Study Circles Model

While the composition of Study Circles programs greatly varies from community to community, the model – as developed and promoted by the Resource Center – consists of several critical elements, including: (1) a diverse organizing coalition, (2) non-partisan discussion guides, (3) trained facilitators, (4) multiple small group dialogues, (5) recommendations for action, (6) an Action Forum, and (7) Action Task Forces that follow up on recommendations. Important variations between different Study Circles programs include, among other things, differences in: (1) the size of the program, (2) the kind of issues being discussed, (3) the relationship to and involvement of elected officials and decision makers, and (4) available resources and staffing.

The manner in which the Resource Center supports Study Circles programs has a great deal to do with how the model is operationalized by the organization. The Resource Center’s primary function is to offer technical assistance to communities, providing materials and guidance to groups who are attempting to organize Study Circles programs. The Resource Center primarily supports communities through three capacities. First, it develops materials such as discussion guides, organizing manuals and other best practice documentation to support the needs of program coordinators. Second, the Resource Center consults with program coordinators by phone and in person to help communities get started or respond to challenges that arise over the course of a round of circles. Staff assigned to support communities may be responsible for working with as many as 60 communities at a time, so their availability to provide guidance to communities is limited. Finally, the Resource Center has developed a network of associates who provide more hands-on services to communities for a fee, such as facilitator training and an array of other service modules developed by the Resource Center.

The implications for how the Resource Center operates and relates to Study Circles programs are potentially quite significant. Most notably, communities must be relatively self-sufficient in order to conduct programs. The Resource Center does not offer staff to organize Study Circles programs for communities. Consequently, communities must develop a great deal of ownership over their programs and build up their capacity to support this work. As such, they have a great deal of freedom to be innovative and modify the model to meet their individual community needs and goals. While this clearly may be beneficial for a community, it also means that there is
very little quality control over Study Circles programs. The Resource Center has little capacity to ensure that communities abide by the values of the model or that they are sufficiently competent in carrying out its various elements. The extent to which programs are able to support action depends heavily on the quality, position and skills of the program’s coordinator. This may be significant given a clear commitment to empowering citizens. If communities are bringing citizens together with the expectation that their participation in circles will lead to change and those expectations are not being met, then Study Circles may be breeding skepticism and discouraging citizens from participating in future dialogues. As such, the Resource Center relies heavily on the quality of its materials and limited consultation time in order to influence programs and ensure that the voices of Study Circle participants are acted upon and listened to.

This situation poses another important challenge to efforts to evaluate and improve Study Circles projects in communities: How should the Resource Center target its advice towards communities, such that the most important messages about the model get through to them? Community coordinators are often overwhelmed by the task of organizing a round of Study Circles. While the Resource Center may have a great deal of advice about how to structure a program and how to deal with important challenges, only a small percentage of that advice is likely to filter through to local communities and become ingrained in the consciousness of coordinators as integral components of the model. Consequently, the Resource Center must be very careful about what information it chooses to emphasize to communities in order to ensure that the most essential elements of the model are implemented. While an analysis of the model may determine that a wide range of additional advice could be provided to communities to improve their likelihood of success, the Resource Center must consider each piece of advice in the context of this challenge.

The Resource Center’s funding situation also seems to have implications for how the model supports action and change. The Resource Center is funded by its own operating foundation, the Topsfield Foundation. As a consequence, the organization has had the freedom to provide an array of services and resources to communities without expecting a fee or payment in return. The resulting cost to launch a Study Circles program is quite low for local communities, essentially limited to staff-time for coordination, facilitator training, outreach materials (like fliers, mailings and possibly advertisements), and logistical support for small group meetings and an Action Forum. The benefits of this operating model are obvious – (1) smaller communities and organizations without larger institutional budgets can launch programs without great cost, (2) time spent raising funds from foundations and other sources is limited, and (3) communities don’t need to face the difficult choice between funding a process and supporting other community priorities.

One may question, however, whether the limited cost of supporting a round of circles doesn’t have two negative consequences in relation to action and change. First, does the low “start up” cost of a round of circles deceive communities into believing they can produce meaningful action and change when they actually don’t have adequate resources? If it were to be found that a substantially larger financial commitment is necessary to support the action-and-change elements of a round of circles, then it is possible that many communities launch programs without adequate funding to follow through on recommendations generated through the program. Second, does the low cost of a program mean that a round of circles may be launched without adequate
buy-in and commitment from decision makers? It is certainly conceivable that a local government that has not had to make a significant commitment to a project at the front-end might not take the process as seriously as it would otherwise. While these concerns should not be taken to suggest that the Resource Center should increase the cost of its model, they do suggest the possible need to compensate for unintended consequences of the Resource Center’s approach. Both concerns should be kept in mind when considering the cases of Fayetteville and Springfield.

**Action Elements of the Model**

Several elements of the Study Circles model stand out for playing an important role in contributing to how a round of circles supports meaningful action and change. While a range of other factors, activities and elements may also contribute to action and change in any given Study Circles program, these elements seem to represent the most explicit components of the model that play a role in producing meaningful outcomes. In considering the cases of Fayetteville and Springfield, it will be important to examine how each of these elements was used. Among these “action elements” are:

- **Coalition Building:** The formation of a diverse Organizing Coalition at the front-end of a round of circles offers a project with the opportunity to engage important stakeholders and decision makers who can play a significant role in carrying out actions and responding to recommendations. Early buy-in from stakeholders and decision makers may make them more sympathetic to recommendations made by the process. Additionally, the participation of important decision makers and stakeholders in dialogue may move them to change their own behavior – resulting in institutional or organizational changes in the community.

- **Facilitated Dialogue:** Small group discussion supported by trained facilitators between people from different backgrounds increases the likelihood that participants will learn from one another and that this learning will lead to personal changes. High quality facilitation creates a safe space for participants that helps them to be responsive to one another and open to learning. Meaningful dialogue between participants in a circle may increase the likelihood that participants will develop strong bonds with one another and collaborate together following the completion of a round of circles.

- **Discussion Guides:** Study Circles discussion guides provide rounds of circles with their structure, agenda and format. They play a major role in shaping the outcomes of a project – influencing how participants think about the issue, relate to fellow participants, and develop ideas for actions. Most discussion guides created by the Resource Center, for example, suggest that participants use the last session to develop recommendations for personal, group and institutional actions. In another example, the “Smart Talk for Growing Communities” discussion guide tasks participants with meeting with their elected officials during the fourth session.  

• **Action Forums:** At the conclusion of a round of Study Circles, participants from each circle are brought together to review the recommendations that were developed by the circles, identify the strongest recommendations that the community would like to pursue, and celebrate the success of the program. The Action Forum is the most explicit mechanism within the model to translate dialogue to action through the presentation of recommendations to community leaders and the recruitment of participants to serve on Task Forces that will pursue recommendations.

• **Action Task Forces:** During or following an Action Forum, Study Circles participants may volunteer to work on a recommendation/action with other participants. For example, they may lobby decision makers, start a new initiative, or launch another round of circles. Generally, the various Task Forces are supported by the Study Circles coordinator and the organizing team – though the format and structure for these groups seems to vary greatly between communities.

The element that seems to be missing from the core model is a tool to support participants in developing strategies to ensure that recommendations for action are implemented, especially in the case of recommendations for change on the level of public policy and governance. This issue is further complicated by the multiplicity of kinds of change that may be intended by participants and the wide variety of institutional contexts within which a project may fall, which would seem to make it difficult for the Resource Center to provide “standard” advice as to how a project should strategically orient itself towards institutional change.

**Pathways to Change**

Several efforts have been made to articulate the kinds of action and change that may be produced by Study Circles and the pathways through which they are produced. In addition to the action elements identified above, it may be useful to keep in mind these different theorized pathways as the cases of Fayetteville and Springfield are evaluated.

In 2000, Rona Roberts and Steve Kay conducted a thorough analysis of 17 communities that had implemented Study Circles programs (including Fayetteville and Springfield at an earlier stage in their development). While their analysis covered a far broader research agenda, their report provides a useful articulation of the role of action and change in the model. Roberts and Kay observed that change happened on the individual, organizational and community/institutional levels. On the individual level, they saw that:

> [First,] people got information about differences and became aware of their communities in new ways. Second, people gained courage that led them to take more direct stands for racial equity and against racist statements and actions. Third, people formed stronger attachments to their own community and became more willing to invest in it. Fourth, people formed new relationships across racial and other divides. ¹⁰

They found that Study Circle programs led to changes in organizations by creating: “new

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purposes; new allies; new ways of working; new capacity; new employees; new funding or resources; new credibility; and new opportunities to teach other communities and groups about study circles.”

At the institutional/community level, Roberts and Kay offered four broad categories of kinds of change: (1) highly visible, symbolic events that are important to the community, (2) changes that affected clusters of people within a community, (3) “changes [that] had a ‘rippling out’ quality that began with an impact on a limited cluster of people and then, over time, became more pervasive and reached others,” and (4) institutional changes that affected a large portion of the community.

Roberts and Kay described several noteworthy tools used by Study Circles coordinators to support action: (1) action measurements (community benchmarking), (2) written action guides, (3) action events, (4) action task forces, and (5) action moments (windows of opportunity for change). They also described several “pathways to change,” through which Study Circles support communities moving from dialogue to change. Among these are the critical mass pathway, the informed citizen pathway, the highly visible event pathway, the leadership pathway, and the governance and policy pathway.

The Resource Center has also attempted to articulate the kinds of change that may take place as a result of Study Circles. In its organizing guide, the Resource Center describes seven kinds of change:

1) Changes in individual behavior and attitudes based on a better understanding of the issues and one another.
2) New relationships and networks based on increased trust and understanding.
3) New working collaborations based on new relationships and ideas.
4) Institutional changes driven by the personal changes of institutional leaders or members who participate in a circle.
5) Changes in public policy as a result of recommendations made to decision makers, commitments made by decision makers to respond to circles, or personal changes on the part of elected officials who participate in a circle.
6) Changes in community dynamics after a critical mass of people have participated in circles.

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7) Changes in a community’s public life after a community adopts large-scale dialogue to how they do business.\(^\text{15}\)

To see the full table of kinds of action that is found in the Resource Center’s organizing guide, see Appendix III.

W. Scott Stiles, a former staff member of the Resource Center, developed a “Typology of Change” in 2000 based on interviews of Resource Center staff regarding the types of action that they believed the model should encourage. Stiles identified four types of change: personal transformation, citizen input, collaborative action, and confrontational action. Confrontational action, the only type not referred to previously, refers to the possibility that Study Circle participants may challenge the status quo as a result of their participation in a round of circles by “speaking truth to power.”\(^\text{16}\)

Staff members told Stiles that they knew the factors that needed to be present in a Study Circles program to support personal transformations as well as public input to governance processes. In order to support personal transformation, they said programs need: diverse circles, agreed upon ground rules, quality facilitation, quality discussion materials and peer-to-peer learning. In order to support public input, the following additional factors were believed to be necessary: consistent and timely note taking, a large number of diverse circles, more emphasis on the role of government and policy outcomes, someone to analyze the notes collected in each circle and provide a clear summary, organizing that reaches public officials and decision-makers, and buy-in from decision makers.\(^\text{17}\)

On December 8, 2002, the Resource Center convened a staff retreat to consider how effectively Study Circles support action and change.\(^\text{18}\) After reviewing the progress of several communities across the country, staff members identified several factors that had contributed to action in communities: (1) a savvy coordinator who knows the politics of the community and has institutional clout; (2) paid staff to support actions out of the circles; (3) making sure that the right people and resources are present in circles to respond to problems that are brought up in discussion; (4) keeping decision makers informed about the process and results prior to offering them the official report; (5) community benchmarking; (6) funding set aside for Action Teams through a foundation grant; and (7) strong project management of Task Forces.\(^\text{19}\) The pathways to change identified at the retreat were consistent with pathways described above.

Participants in the retreat identified several problems that tended to prevent communities from moving to action and change. First, they found that communities tended to not spend enough time up-front articulating their goals and analyzing how the circles could produce change. For example, organizers in Syracuse, NY, did not consider the important role that city agencies would play in addressing the problems being discussed in their circles. As a result, “citizens were

\(^\text{18}\) Based on personal notes from the author.
\(^\text{19}\) Personal notes.
energized and knocking on the doors of agencies” to help at the completion of the round, but the agencies were not prepared for these volunteers and were not able to utilize them. In general, the staff said that communities have trouble with many elements that could support action and change simply because organizing a round of circles is very labor intensive and coordinators often run out of time. Staff members also described the workings of the Task Forces as a “black box,” which the Resource Center didn’t know enough about. They did say, however, that Task Forces tended to break down when recommendations made out of the process were too broad. Finally, they singled out projects on race relations as being especially difficult to support because institutional change is more complicated on issues of race and because indicators of change on issues of race are not readily available.20

The pathways, tools and elements described above seem to provide a relatively comprehensive perspective on how the Study Circles model relates to action and change. However, little attention has been provided to (a) how the various pathways, tools and elements fit together, (b) when the pathways, tools and elements are appropriate, and (c) how communities might choose to orient themselves towards action and change in the case of a given set of circumstances and a given set of change objectives. A fuller “Typology of Action and Change” is needed in order to begin to address these issues.

**Typology of Action and Change**

The “Typology of Action and Change” offered below attempts to assimilate the ideas described thus far (plus additional elements collected through interviews and an analysis of how the model operates) in order to produce a comprehensive picture of the kinds of action and change that may come from a Study Circles program. The typology is divided into five columns: “categories,” “types of action and change,” “pathways to action and change,” “model elements,” and “additional action tools.” The categories in the first column provide a basic framework for the typology, dividing the matrix into broad groupings of kinds of change that may be pursued through Study Circles. The second column breaks these categories up into more concrete kinds of action and change, attempting to cover the broad range of objectives that might result from a program. The third column articulates the process through which a program might reach the targeted “action and change” through a Study Circles program. The fourth column suggests which elements of the model may play the most important roles in supporting the pathways for each category. Finally, the fifth (and least developed) column, suggests other kinds of tools that a given community might introduce into a program in order to support a given kind of change.

It should be noted that the typology below represents the broad spectrum of ways in which the Study Circles model might be used, rather than a description of the conditions present in every application of the model. Many pathways, elements or tools may be unavailable or inappropriate in any given project. For example, while a potential pathway for individual change is that an individual becomes empowered by having the opportunity to voice her opinions to a decision maker participating in her circle, this is obviously not a likely option if a given program does not recruit a significant number of decision makers to participate in circles.

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20 Personal notes.
## Typology of Action and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Types of Action and Change</th>
<th>Pathways to Action and Change</th>
<th>Model Elements</th>
<th>Additional Action Tools</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Individual Action and Change</td>
<td>A. Shift in individual’s values, beliefs or behavior</td>
<td>1. Individual participates in small group dialogue and:</td>
<td>a. Recruitment of diverse participants</td>
<td>i. Co-facilitation</td>
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<td>B. Individual becomes educated on issues.</td>
<td>- learns about issues or conditions in the community</td>
<td>b. Facilitated dialogue</td>
<td>ii. Special attention to ground rules</td>
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<td>C. Individual becomes more active in community or joins community organization/s</td>
<td>- learns about experiences of others</td>
<td>c. Discussion guides</td>
<td>iii. Recommendations for individual actions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D. Individual empowered to stand up for beliefs</td>
<td>- has opportunity to be heard</td>
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<td>iv. Monitoring of individual actions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E. Individual develops greater ownership of and attachment to community</td>
<td>- has opportunity to voice concerns to stakeholders participating in circle</td>
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<td>v. Exercise in making personal commitments</td>
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<td>F. New relationships and networks formed between individuals</td>
<td>- learns about how community works</td>
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<td>vi. Testimonials of individual change</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- forms new relationships with other participants</td>
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<td>vii. Community benchmarking</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>viii. Study Circles reunion of past participants</td>
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<td>ix. Organization to monitor, support and promote individual action</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Organizational / Institutional Action and Change</td>
<td>G. Organization/institution adapts or expands its mission</td>
<td>2. Organization/institution participates in organizing Study Circles program (greater buy-in leads to commitment to change)</td>
<td>d. Organizing coalition</td>
<td>x. Power/stakeholder analysis</td>
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<td>H. Organization/institution changes org. culture</td>
<td>3. Leaders or members of organization/institution participate in Study Circles</td>
<td>e. Recruitment of diverse participants</td>
<td>xi. Action moments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. Organization/institution creates new program, or changes existing program</td>
<td>4. Recommendation presented to organization/institution to initiate action or change</td>
<td>f. Action Forum</td>
<td>xii. Community benchmarking</td>
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<td>J. Organization/institution changes position on an issue</td>
<td>5. Representatives of different organizations/institutions begin communicating with each other in circles</td>
<td>g. Task Forces</td>
<td>xiii. Recommendations for group action</td>
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<td></td>
<td>K. Organization/institution improves credibility in community or increases political capital on an issue</td>
<td>6. Organization/institution</td>
<td></td>
<td>xiv. Organization created to monitor, support and promote organizational action and change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>L. Organization/institution develops new allies, collaborations, coalitions</td>
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21 Pathways that seem to receive greater emphasis from the Resource Center are in bold.
### III. Collective Action and Change  
*Individuals come together to form a group in order to initiate action towards change.*

| M. | Group forms new organization or program to address problem |
| N. | Group raises funding for program to address problem |
| O. | Group lobbies decision makers, organizations or institutions to address problem |
| P. | Group works with stakeholders/organizations to address a problem |
| Q. | Group organizes for or against a community policy or program |
| 7. | Groups form within individual circles and act |
| 8. | **Groups form among circle participants at Action Forum to act on recommendation** |
| 9. | Groups form among circle participants based on call to action through a newsletter or other communications vehicle |
| 10. | Individual participant in Study Circles program organizes group of non-circle participants after program |
| 11. | Group of non-Study Circles participants form after being influenced by media coverage or Action Forum |
| 12. | Group formed by members of organizing coalition or sponsoring organization |

### IV. Governance/Public Policy Action and Change  
*Change is made in the governance or public policy of a community.*

| R. | Programs receive public funding |
| S. | Public plans (e.g. strategic plan, land-use plan) are developed or changed |
| T. | Policies are developed or changed |
| U. | Policies or programs receive increased political attention, support or opposition |
| V. | Governmental leaders change |
| 13. **Recommendations presented to elected officials/public agencies** |
| 14. **Elected representatives/city officials participate in Study Circles** |
| 15. | Organization or group advocates for recommendations with elected officials/public agencies. |
| 16. | Elected representatives/public |

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22 It is noteworthy that this category is different in nature from the others in so far as it describes a kind of action, rather than a kind of change. In other words, it is not specified what kind of change collective action will generate. The other categories are targeted towards a specific type of change – an individual, an organization, public policy, or the culture of the community.
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<tr>
<td>their behavior, attitude towards issues, orientation towards the public</td>
<td>officials commit to implement recommendations prior to launch of program</td>
<td>taking</td>
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<tr>
<td>W. New agency or commission leaders are appointed</td>
<td>17. Influential stakeholders participate in Study Circles and use influence to impact elected representatives/public officials</td>
<td>xxxii. Someone to analyze the notes collected in each circle and provide a clear summary</td>
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<td>X. New representatives are elected</td>
<td>18. Critical mass of individuals participate in Study Circles</td>
<td>xxxiii. Clear prioritization of recommendations</td>
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<td>Y. New public agencies or institutions are formed</td>
<td>19. Rippling effect of participation in Study Circles creates critical mass</td>
<td>xxxiv. Monitoring of circles to know when to bring in resources and relevant stakeholders</td>
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<td>20. Media coverage of Action Forum and recommendations influences officials</td>
<td>xxxv. Power/stakeholder analysis</td>
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<td>xxxvi. Action moments</td>
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<td>xxxvii. Community benchmarking</td>
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<td>xxxviii. Organization created to monitor, support and promote public policy action</td>
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<td>V. Change in Culture of Community</td>
<td>Z. Permanent mechanisms or institutions are created to involve the public in public planning or decision making</td>
<td>v. Organizing coalition</td>
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<td>AA. New organization or institution is created to support on-going Study Circles programs</td>
<td>w. Diverse recruitment</td>
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<td>BB. Community groups use deliberative processes when community problems arise</td>
<td>xxxix. Repeated circles</td>
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<td>xl. Buy-in from community stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21. <strong>Critical mass of individuals participate in Study Circles</strong></td>
<td>xli. Power/stakeholder analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. Rippling effect of participation in Study Circles creates critical mass</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. <strong>Important public institutions, organizations or agencies organize Study Circles programs</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>24. Elected representatives/city officials participate in Study Circles</td>
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<td>v. Organizing coalition</td>
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<td>xli. Power/stakeholder analysis</td>
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This typology raises an array of interesting questions about the Study Circles model. How well do the primary elements of the model support the various pathways to change? How well do different tools support pathways and are there certain pathways that do not have explicit tools or elements of the model supporting them? Are there certain kinds of change that are better supported by the model, more likely to be implemented, or more appropriate for certain kinds of situations? How targeted and strategic must communities be in pursuing action and change? How might a given program organize itself differently given a desired kind of change?

The most immediate observation that may be made from a review of the typology is that the Study Circles model seems to be more well oriented towards certain kinds of actions and change pathways than others. The older elements of the model, like discussion guides, diverse participant recruitment, and facilitated dialogue, are ideal for supporting individual change. If one begins with the assumption that high-quality public deliberation does support learning and behavioral changes for participants, then the primary elements of a circle should be sufficient to support some degree of meaningful change. The power of dialogue to produce individual change may in turn be translated into higher levels of action and change through the engagement of influential leaders, members of organizations, or elected officials in deliberation (as is reflected in the change pathways for organizational and public policy change, for example.) Notably, these latter pathways require additional work on the part of organizers to recruit the “right” elected officials or community leaders to participate, so that they may serve as catalysts for change after they experience the dialogue process.

The remaining pathways to change require something more to support action and change, like an Action Forum or Action Task Force. A majority of these other pathways seem to fall into one of three categories: recommendations made to external groups or institutions, the formation of groups to take action, and the recruitment of a critical mass of citizens. The “recommendation” pathways have become a formalized aspect of the Study Circles model through the Action Forum process. During a round of circles, participants are tasked with generating recommendations to individuals, groups and institutions that are later presented to the community at an Action Forum. Two questions may be raised about this category of pathways. First, on what basis are individuals, groups or institutions expected to respond to recommendations? Second, how is an Action Forum expected to support the recommendation process?

Five possible answers may be given to the former question. Individuals, groups or institutions might respond to recommendations because: (1) they participated in creating the recommendation, (2) they have bought into the recommendation process and see the recommendations as a legitimate representation of the will of the community, (3) the recommendations address the authentic needs of the community – they make sense, (4) the recommendations are supported by a politically active segment of the community that possesses some degree of power or influence, or (5) the recommendations are highly publicized in the media. An Action Forum would seem to make two potential contributions to these pathways. It provides a highly visible public forum for the presentation of recommendations to community leaders, organizations, the media and individual citizens. Depending on how an Action Forum is

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23 This is a somewhat controversial assumption in some academic circles, but one I’m willing to make for the purposes of this study.
used, it might also provide the community with the opportunity to engage more deeply with the recommendations and prioritize them.

One may question whether these “recommendation” pathways may be reasonably expected to produce action and change (and under what circumstances?) and whether the elements and tools of the model are sufficient to support them. Does the model support the development of recommendations that are concrete enough to be acted upon? Does the model provide adequate mechanisms for monitoring and supporting recommendations that are generated? Does the model adequately help communities to prioritize recommendations and make strategic decisions about them in the context of political realities and power relationships?

The pathways within the collective action category represent another type that requires a different kind of support from the model. Study Circles’ Action Task Forces seem to have been created to explicitly support this kind of pathway – though most of the pathways listed in the “collective action” row of the typology would necessarily fall outside of the Task Force process. This category offers two challenges to the model. First, the logistics of motivating and supporting groups to take collective action can be quite difficult. While the Resource Center has created a process to launch Task Forces out of a round of Study Circles, it is not clear what communities should do to provide adequate support for these groups, keep them on track, and design systems for connecting them to a larger process. Second (and more importantly), this category of change requires some degree of strategy on the part of the group to ensure that the collective action being taken will support meaningful change. The Study Circles model itself does not help groups to consider the appropriate means of collective action in light of the nature of a given problem, stakeholders involved, and the community’s political environment.

Developing a “critical mass” of citizens who can be a force for action and change relies on the initial notion that participation in dialogue will change citizens, but also assumes that a Study Circles model has the capacity to recruit enough people to reach a critical mass and that those who participate in a round of circles will support a similar agenda. Both of these latter assumptions may be questionable.

In the coming pages, the typology will serve as a framework against which the cases of Fayetteville and Springfield may be interpreted. The cases will shed light on how, under certain circumstances, given communities may choose to utilize various pathways, elements and tools, and how successful those communities are at pursuing their desired action and change.
CASE I: FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Demographics and History

Fayetteville is the sixth largest city in North Carolina with a population of 121,000 people and a land mass of about 60 miles. The city’s population is almost evenly divided between white and African American residents with small Hispanic, Asian and Native American communities. The median family income for the community is $41,900. Located east of Charlotte in Cumberland County, Fayetteville is the home to one of the largest military complexes in the world, including Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base. The two military bases anchor the city’s economy and dramatically impact the community’s culture, politics and development.

For years, Fayetteville struggled with the image of a “seedy military town” that catered to the needs of single soldiers. In the 1970s, the city center suffered severe economic losses as local retail businesses moved to suburban shopping malls. An initiative to renew the city center and dispel its unsavory identity in the 1980s resulted in the National Civic League awarding Fayetteville with an All American City Award in 1985.

Fayetteville has also struggled with racial tension, primarily between its white and African American communities. Two highly publicized incidents in the mid-1990s brought renewed attention to race relations in the community that would lead to the initiation of its Study Circles program. In early December 1995, the racially motivated murder of an African American couple by two Fort Bragg paratroopers sent shockwaves through the community. An investigation by the Pentagon would reveal that more than 20 soldiers were involved in the “skin head culture” that led to the killings. In 1996, four police officers filed complaints with the EEOC over discriminatory employment practices. A lawsuit was filed against the city by the officers and a local NAACP chapter, which began a chain of political events that led to the firing of Fayetteville’s City Manager in 1997. Two years later, a 1999 study sponsored by the chamber of commerce found that 79 percent of African Americans in Cumberland County believed they faced at least some discrimination. The study found that 41 percent of residents in the County agreed with the statement: “While I know it is wrong, sometimes I have a hard time trusting members of a different ethnic group.”

In December 1997, Fayetteville hired a new City Manager with a background in human relations, Roger Stancil. Stancil took two important steps to address racial tensions in the city that would lead to the creation of the Study Circles program: (1) he gave the City’s Human Relations

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24 www.fayettevillenc.net/demographics.htm
25 www.fayettevillenc.net/statistics.htm
26 www.fayettevilleallamerica.com/application.htm
Department a more prominent position within the government, and (2) he brought together the leader of Fayetteville’s traditionally white chamber of commerce with the president of the Fayetteville NAACP chapter to form a new group, called Fayetteville United, with the mission of bridging racial divides in the community. Following the creation of Fayetteville United, the organization partnered with the city’s Human Relation Commission (HRC) to launch a round of Study Circles that would seek to address racial tensions in the community.

**History of Study Circles Program**

Over the course of the past four years, Fayetteville’s Study Circles program engaged approximately 700 residents in several rounds of circles. The program has been led by the HRC, staffed by the City’s Human Relations Department and has received strong support from City Manager Roger Stancil. Following the initial dialogue on race, rounds of circles have been held on youth issues, economic development, collaboration among the faith community, police-community relations, and problems faced by recent immigrants. Of the rounds of circles, only the initial round on race seems to fit the full definition of a Community-Wide Study Circles program. The other programs share many elements of the model, but either seem to be too small or lack an important element of the model to fully fit in that category.

The first round of Study Circles, sponsored by the HRC and Fayetteville United, began training facilitators in mid-1998 and held five pilot circles prior to the program’s kick-off in January 1999. The circles were managed by a 14-person Working Group (primarily members of the HRC and Fayetteville United) and supported by the three-person staff of the Human Relations Department. Between February and May, approximately 300 people participated in the program, using the Resource Center’s “Facing the Challenges of Racism and Race Relations” discussion guide. By all accounts, participation in the round included average citizens as well as community leaders from the City Council, the chamber of commerce and other organizations.

Each circle produced recommendations for what individuals, organizations and institutions could do to improve race relations in the community. The recommendations were submitted to the Working Group, which proceeded to identify the strongest themes from the recommendations. At an Action Forum in June, the Working Group presented a “Blueprint for Positive Change” that included 15 recommendations to the community based on the recommendations made from the circles: five recommendations to individuals, four recommendations to groups, and six recommendations to institutions. The four recommendations made to community groups were:

- Reach out to other organizations with different ethnic make-ups to create partnerships and programs for the purpose of increasing racial understanding (especially places of worship.)
- Continue Study Circles group discussions and process in our City and County.
- Join together to create a watchdog group to monitor progress on improving race relations in our City and County.
• Make a commitment to help improve understanding and communication between and among the different racial/ethnic populations in our area.  

The six recommendations made to institutions were:

• Provide diversity training for their personnel (recommended for City and County government, public school teachers and guidance counselors, corporations, small businesses, etc.)
• Have leaders speak out against unfair treatment of any citizens in employment, housing, and other areas. Local government leaders need to make strong public statement of support for equal opportunity and affirmative action, which need to be revisited and reinforced.
• Implement a major public relations campaign to fight racism in our area (for City/County government to undertake; suggested was a City/County-wide theme emphasizing our diversity, to be used widely on all governmental materials.)
• Promote an honest, integrated history curriculum in our public schools.
• Sponsor and support more activities to draw citizens of different backgrounds together for the purpose of celebrating different cultures and promoting racial harmony (recommended in particular for City/County government action.)
• Establish a Cumberland County Human Relations Board or empower the Fayetteville Human Relations Commission to address issues county-wide.

The Action Forum was used to celebrate the completion of the round and to unveil the Blueprint, rather than as a working session. Recommendations were presented to the City Council as well as the School Board.

According to the September 1999 Study Circles Newsletter, 100 people volunteered to serve on Action Task Forces that were to begin meeting in October to “develop goals, objectives and action plans” for the recommendations. However, it seems that few of these people ended up participating in on-going Task Forces. By most accounts, only two Task Forces became active after the Action Forum (one to engage youth in Study Circles and the other to engage the faith community in Study Circles). Each Commissioner of the HRC had been appointed to chair a Task Force following the Action Forum. According to one person familiar with the process, many of the Task Forces didn’t get off the ground because of limited available staff support and a lack of time, interest or leadership on the part of designated HRC Commissioners. Those recommendations without an active Task Force were left to the HRC to pursue and monitor. One indication of the eventual composition of the Task Forces that did form is the list of “Youth Study Circles Action Team members responsible for writing” a grant to the Resource Center to

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support a round of circles on youth issues. The list, which is provided in the January 2000 *Study Circles Newsletter*, included nine people, eight of whom were either members of the HRC or the Study Circles Working Group.

In mid-1999, three Presbyterian churches began holding Study Circles to address issues of race and increase communication between their congregations. Four other churches launched another round of circles soon after. At a “Mini-Summit” in August, the congregations’ recommendations to the community were unveiled that included: Develop youth Study Circles group and cross-generational group; worship services involving all three churches, joint activities and projects, encourage more churches to become involved; maintain relationships developed through the groups. These recommendations were apparently channeled into the Working Group.

In late 1999, a Study Circle of faith leaders from more than a dozen congregations began meeting in response to an action recommendation out of the first round of circles. The group, was chaired by a Muslim Imam, who was a member of the HRC, and was facilitated by members of the Human Relations Department and Commission. Membership included faith leaders from Christian, Jewish and Muslim denominations, mostly representing middle-sized congregations. The group’s objective was to build stronger relationships across the various congregations in order to increase understanding and communication. The group has not evolved into a community-wide Study Circles program: it remained a single circle, it did not use a discussion guide, and has not used an Action Forum, among other things.

The interfaith group produced two significant outputs. First, it created a program to feed the homeless, called FEED Fayetteville, that sought to provide an opportunity for their various congregations to work together towards a social good. In doing so, the group hoped to build strong relationships and understanding across congregations. Two FEED Fayetteville events have been held thus far, providing food and social services to hundreds of people. Second, the group sponsored an event that brought a spiritual leader from the Focolari international organization to Fayetteville to talk about common themes of service and the “golden rule” found in all religions. The event was attended by 100 members of the community. According to one member of the interfaith group, the group would have liked to engage more congregants in dialogue, but it has not had the resources to do so. The interfaith group has since been incorporated as a sub-group of the HRC and continues to meet today.

Following the first round of circles, several efforts to engage young people in Study Circles have been made. The first round began at the beginning of 2000 and engaged about 70 young people through youth organizations (because the organizing group found it too difficult to initially work through the school system). Using the “Youth Voices, Youth Issues” discussion guide, the circles sought to help young people to “talk openly about youth issues, develop new ideas and work together to implement them.” The round was sponsored by the HRC, several community-based

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35 Power point presentation created by Ron McElrath.
organizations and Fayetteville State University. An Action Forum held on June 2, 2000 produced 21 recommendations for individuals, groups and institutions (eight individual, four group, and nine institutional). Among the recommendations made to the community were:

- Develop a theme park closer to the Fayetteville area.
- Sponsor and support clean, large parks and campgrounds.
- Implement after-school and community events.
- Fund and promote a “stay in school” campaign.
- Build a “teen” center that will provide activities for middle and high school students.

According to the current Director of the Human Relations Department, youth programming provided by the Department of Recreation did shift due to the recommendations. A second round of circles was held in 2001 that engaged about 75 young people. Three local high schools were paired together for the round, as were a junior high school and a middle school. The round was sponsored by the HRC and the five schools involved. A May 2001 Action Forum produced 27 recommendations for individuals, groups and institutions (eight individual, eight group, and 11 institution). Recommendations included:

- Provide after school treatment programs for students with specific problems
- Offer a minority studies class.
- Provide a cultural sensitivity workshop.
- Make sure that all races are equally represented in classes.
- Install metal detectors in all school.
- Create better relationships between police and youth.

The Action Forums for the youth circles were attended by members of the City Council and School Board, as well as staff from the local government. Recommendations were presented to the School Board and City Council.

In March 2001, the HRC partnered with seven law enforcement agencies to become one of the first communities in the country to conduct a round of Study Circles on police-community relations. About 60 citizens and 30 representatives from law enforcement agencies participated in three pilot circles and another five regular circles. One of the organizers of the circles estimated that 10 percent of law enforcement representatives were “brass,” but that most were zone officers. According to organizers from the HRC and law enforcement, the motivation for sponsoring the circles was that law enforcement and members of the community didn’t understand one another. Law enforcement complained that the community was not cooperative in preventing and responding to crime and community members complained of mistreatment on the part of law enforcement. While an Action Forum was held, it is unclear whether the 123 recommendations developed from each of the five circles were ever prioritized or compiled by organizers. By most accounts, there was never a prioritization process, but at least one interviewee believed prioritization had occurred. Among the themes evident from an analysis of the 123 recommendations made were:
• Increase community awareness of law enforcement activities and needs through the media, web, programs in schools, and other marketing programs.
• Train the police for more sensitive treatment of community diversity.
• Create public forums for the community to interact with police.
• Engage law enforcement in community events and community programs to improve relations.
• The community should participate in preventing and reporting crime.\(^{36}\)

The results of the round were presented to the various law enforcement agencies, as well as the City Council. Some actions were taken prior to the completion of the round of circles. These actions were made possible by monitoring of the circles from the Human Relations Department and HRC.

In May of 2001, the HRC, Fayetteville United and Fayetteville State University partnered to sponsor several “focus circles” to explore whether a Community-Wide Study Circles program might be appropriate to address the community’s economic challenges. An Associate of the Resource Center was brought in to Fayetteville to assist with the design and facilitation of the circles. Bringing together business leaders from the chamber of commerce and city officials with citizens from low income backgrounds, the focus circles asked participants to consider individual and community economic problems and conducted a “table top” poll to determine how participants felt about various economic development solutions, as well as the likelihood of success for community-wide dialogue on the subject. The results of the circles were presented to Fayetteville United, Fayetteville Futures (an effort to revitalize the local economy sponsored by the chamber), and city officials. No subsequent circles have been held.

In 2002, a former member of the HRC who teaches English-as-a-Second-Language students at the local technical college approached the HRC about sponsoring a round of circles for her students at the college in order to teach them citizenship skills and help them to empower themselves. Fifteen students participated in facilitator training and 31 students went through the entire round of circles, which included a kick off and action forum. Recommendations were made to the college, as well as the Human Relations Department, the City Council and state and federal agencies. The coordinator of the program reported significant changes at the college based on the recommendations, as well as significant changes in how the students (all recent immigrants) participated in the school community.

**Examining Actions Taken in Fayetteville**

Over the course of the past four years, hundreds of recommendations for action and change have been made by Fayetteville residents through Study Circles. A fraction of these recommendations have been presented “to the community” in Action Forums after some process of prioritization or theming. A still smaller number have been acted upon. It is worth considering why some recommendations were carried out in a given round of circles and why others were not. Equally

\(^{36}\) These themes were identified by the author, not the program organizers.
interesting are those actions that take place that do not come through the recommendation-Action Forum process. For example, significant organizational changes may take place that fall outside of the recommendation process when organizational leaders who participate in a circle are influenced to change their organization through dialogue in their circle.

Rather than attempting to review every recommendation and action out of the Fayetteville process, it may be more useful to focus on the kinds of actions that seem to have resulted from two individual rounds of circles. Below is such an analysis, focusing on the initial round on race and the police-community round.

**Actions Out of Initial Round on Race**

The initial round of Study Circles on race relations in 1999 produced 15 recommendations in a Blueprint for Positive Change that was presented to the community at a well-attended Action Forum. Of the 15 recommendations, five were made to individuals. No organized effort out of the circles was made to support individuals in acting upon these recommendations. While there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that some individuals out of the circles did take to heart recommendations like: “develop a consciousness, sensibility, and respect toward people of other races,” there is no evidence to suggest that any of these recommendations had any noticeable effect on the community.

In interviews with organizers and participants of the circles, three actions out of the “group” and “institutional” recommendations were consistently referred to as evidence of follow-up on the Study Circles round. First, a recommendation was made to “establish a Cumberland County Human Relations Board or empower the Fayetteville Human Relations Commission to address issues county-wide.” This proposal had been discussed for several years within the city government and HRC. The City Council received the recommendation positively after it was presented to them following the Action Forum and proceeded to enter negotiations with the County Board on the formation of a joint City-County Commission. According to several community leaders, the fact that this conversation happened at all is significant given jurisdictional divisions and territorialism.  

Rather than forming a Task Force, the Working Group “handed off” the recommendation to the City Manager, who took the lead in the negotiations with the County. The Working Group and HRC adopted the role of continuing to raise the issue and monitor its progress. The negotiations have primarily revolved around funding of the joint body with the County Commission, which has argued that the greatest need for services lie within the city of Fayetteville and has refused to financially support a new program. It was only quite recently (after three years of on-and-off negotiation) that an agreement was reached through which the City agreed to financially support the Commission for a period of one year, at which time a new agreement will have to be reached. According to the City Manager, the city agreed to shoulder the burden of the joint Commission because the city HRC was already supporting county residents and it was important for the official expansion to occur. It appears that the initial Study Circles recommendation had little to

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37 This observation was also made in interviews conducted for Roberts and Kay’s Best Practices report. (see notes: Steve Kay. “Thick Description.” Roberts and Kay, 2000.)
do with the recent resolution of this issue, but that the recommendation did play a significant role in raising the visibility of the issue and giving it momentum with the city. Additionally, the recommendation put the issue firmly on the agenda of the HRC, giving it justification to push the city to continue to pursue the issue.

The creation of the faith Study Circle was also cited by many as an important product of the first round of circles. It responded to the recommendation to groups to: “Reach out to other organizations with different ethnic make-ups to create partnerships and programs for the purpose of increasing racial understanding (especially places of worship).” The interfaith group was initiated by faith leaders who were members of the HRC or had participated in the circles. As such, their Task Force focused solely on faith leaders, rather than the broader recommendation of helping groups reach out to other organizations. It seems clear that the key to action on this recommendation was several highly motivated faith leaders who had been effected by their participation in the circles and saw a real need for greater communication and interaction.

Several months after the recommendation was made, the group of about 15 faith leaders began regular meetings that rotated between their respective houses of worship. The ongoing success of this group seems to be highly related to the early facilitation provided by a member of the Human Relations Department and a member of the HRC, as well as the continued logistical support of this group by the Department. According to one member of the group, the structure provided by the facilitators, who prodded the group to remain on task and to think about action, was very important. It is worth noting that the group has not been very successful at engaging their respective congregations and increasing communication between them (the underlying intent of the recommendation.) One faith leader remarked that even at FEED Fayetteville, the tasks for supporting the events were divided between congregations and there was very little interaction between volunteers from different congregations. However, it does seem apparent that participation in the group has impacted how at least some of the faith leaders work with and relate to their congregations.

The third action cited in several interviews was that of engaging young people in dialogue. While this recommendation does not seem to appear in the 15 recommendations of the Blueprint document, it was a recommendation made by the three Presbyterian churches that met in Study Circles soon after the completion of the race round: “Develop youth study circle group.” According to several interviews, a task force was formed around this recommendation because there was a great deal of energy around the issue and it had come up often in the circles. In general, the success of moving this recommendation to action seems to be largely due to the interest and support for the recommendation within the initial Study Circles Working Group and subsequently in the HRC. Soon after forming, the Task Force on youth identified a funding need and applied for a grant from the Resource Center. It also began forming partnerships with local community-based organizations to conduct a youth round. The HRC later formed partnerships with five principals to sponsor another youth round with public schools. The youth circles produced several actions, including a multi-cultural festival at Fayetteville State University and a workshop for high school and middle school students to talk about issues of race and violence.

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38 A recommendation was made in the Blueprint for individuals to work with youth to build understanding, etc.
While Study Circles have successfully engaged almost 150 young people thus far, it seems that the program’s success is limited by the lack of participation from the school system as a whole. The lack of participation and buy-in from the School Board during the initial Study Circles round may be an important factor contributing to the limited reach and impact of the youth circles.\(^\text{39}\)

While no organized response was made to the recommendation that the city “sponsor and support more activities to draw citizens of different backgrounds together for the purpose of celebrating different cultures and promoting racial harmony,” the city has initiated several programs that support this recommendation: most notably an international festival that highlights cultural diversity and a “fourth Fridays” program that essentially is a community event at the end of each month that encourages interaction within the community. All of these programs were initiated by the City Manager, who was influenced by Study Circles themselves – if not the specific recommendation made in the Blueprint.

Several recommendations were not acted upon at all. For example, there is no visible evidence of follow-up on a recommendation to “join together to create a watchdog group to monitor progress on improving race relations in our City and County.” No one who was interviewed referenced the recommendation and no one knew of the formation of any such group. It is unclear why the HRC and Working Group chose not to follow up on this recommendation. A recommendation to “promote an honest, integrated history curriculum in our public schools” was presented to the School Board by the former Chair of the HRC and the President of the local NAACP chapter. While one interviewee suggested that a progressive member of the School Board has worked on the issue, there is no indication that the recommendation has been seriously considered or acted upon at all. It seems noteworthy that these two recommendations that were not acted upon are more controversial than other recommendations that were acted upon.

An important set of apparent outcomes from the first round of circles that did not come through the recommendation process fall within the “organizational change” category. Both the chamber of commerce and the city government seem to have been impacted by the participation of leaders in the Study Circles process. In the case of the chamber of commerce, the organization elected its first African American president and adopted a policy that made it easier for organizations like African American churches to become members. Several leaders of the chamber had played an important role in organizing the circles and chamber members were heavily recruited to participate in the dialogue. As for the city, Roger Stancil, Fayetteville’s City Manager, has become a strong advocate for greater community participation in government activities. Two notable examples of the government’s response to Stancil’s charge to engage the public are (1) a program called “Third Thursdays” that brings in different ethnic or other interest groups to City Hall once a month to meet with city officials to discuss their issues with how the city is run; and (2) the launch of more participatory planning processes for land-use redevelopment by the planning department. Additionally, many of those interviewed said that the Study Circles program has dramatically impacted how the Human Relations Commission and Department interact with and are perceived by the community.

\(^{39}\) Interviews were not conducted with school board members, so this is speculative.
Several Study Circles participants who were not involved with the HRC or Working Group said they were not aware of any actions out of the Study Circles beyond personal changes and new relationships that were formed. At least one interviewee adamantly denied that the development of a county HRC was a priority for participants in the circles.

**Actions Out of Law Enforcement-Community Round**

There are three notable kinds of actions that seem to have come out of the round of Study Circles on law enforcement. First, several recommendations generated by the circles were addressed by the police (though this may have been complicated by a lack of prioritization of recommendations). The means through which recommendations were considered by the Fayetteville Police Department seems to be through high level officers who were enthusiastic about their participation in the circles and brought recommendations into the department’s planning for new programming.

The clearest recommendation made from the circles was to increase communication to the community about the role, policies and procedures of law enforcement. Since the round, the Police Department has initiated several programs to increase community awareness of law enforcement issues. For example, it created a Citizens Academy and a Youth Academy that provide members of the community with an abbreviated training program in crime prevention. While this and other programs began soon after the Study Circles, it is unclear to what extent they were a direct result of the Study Circles program. Recommendations were also brought to the City Council. This would seem especially important for those recommendations that required new funding for the department. However, there is no indication that the Council took any action based on recommendations from the circles.

A second category of actions out of the law enforcement round involves issues that were brought up and resolved while the circles were being held. During the law enforcement round, the Human Relations Department monitored the progress of each circle. After each session, staff and members of the HRC met to discuss what had occurred in the circles in order to identify what support was needed. An example of the impact of this system on action and change came to pass when community members in several circles complained that the police department’s translations cards – cards that list people who had volunteered to provide translation service to the police – were out of date and were not used by officers in situations involving people who didn’t speak English. Staff monitoring the circles noted this theme and responded the next session by asking participants in the circles to compile up-to-date lists of translators, so that new cards could be created by the department and provided to the police by the completion of the circles.

A third category of actions was initiated by participants in the round to address problems independent of the Study Circles process. For example, after the completion of the Study Circles, a Zone Commander in the Police Department contacted several participants from his circle to discuss an area of Fayetteville that the police had been having difficulty addressing. The group developed a plan to involve more community members in the area’s Community Watch program and, reportedly, have since made progress in lowering the area’s crime level. The important factor at play here was bringing together in the same circle, police and citizens who were
responsible for the same area of the city and could potentially work together after building a relationship during the circles. Notably, this was the only example that arose in interviews of this kind of action.

Many recommendations out of the round of circles were not implemented, like developing a citizen advisory committee and creating police sub-stations. Several recommendations were non-starters with the City Council and Police Department because they would have required substantial resources. By and large, the recommendations seem to have suffered from not having a systematic way for participants to evaluate how realistic they were or how they would be best pursued. Equally important, no mechanism was available to participants to remain involved or to organize them around recommendations. Apparently, no effort was made to support the development of Task Forces. Rather, the police department and the Human Relations Commission were left with the responsibility to follow up on the recommendations made through the process. It is not apparent that the HRC participated in any follow up or action.

**Action Elements**

Earlier, five elements of the Study Circles model were identified as playing an important role in supporting action and change. How were each of these elements used in Fayetteville and what was their impact on action and change?

**Coalition Building:** Each round of Study Circles in Fayetteville was anchored by the HRC and Human Relations Department. Members of the HRC are appointed by the City Council. While HRC members represent a diversity of racial backgrounds, many do not represent a distinct organization or constituency. In the first round of circles, Fayetteville United’s co-sponsorship brought several important players into the Working Group, including the chamber of commerce and Fayetteville State University. In subsequent rounds, the HRC and Department seem to have worked relatively alone, partnering with significantly less active groups like the Police Department and school principals.

The strong presence of the city in the Organizing Coalition of each round has undoubtedly played an important role in ensuring that several actions have taken place. However, the predominance of the HRC and its ability to rely on the Human Relations Department to staff the circles may have allowed the circles to work without strong coalition partners. As such, actions like those involving the school system might have suffered because stakeholders from the schools were not active participants in the planning process.

**Discussion Guides:** The formats of the discussion guides used in the Fayetteville circles seem relatively consistent. Each uses role playing and scenarios to help participants explore issues and build relationships, and each directs participants to develop action recommendations for individuals, groups and institutions in the final (fifth) session. The important problem with all of the discussion guides seems to be that they provide very little context to the recommendation process. They don’t help participants to think about how their recommendations may turn into action, who needs to be involved to make them come to pass, or provide support in thinking through how realistic different kinds of recommendations may be to the process.
**Action Forums:** Action Forums in Fayetteville were used as a vehicle for presenting the results of the circles and celebrating the program. As such, they were highly successful at raising the visibility of the recommendations and ensuring that community leaders were aware of them. Unfortunately, it is not clear that any recommendations were moved to action as a result of the Action Forum or that the event’s celebration of the recommendations galvanized any participants to action. A significant number of people were recruited to participate on Task Forces following the first Action Forum, but their participation was not sustained. Personal testimonials given at the first Action Forum of how participants were affected by their participation in the circles were also reported to be quite moving, but it is not apparent that this had any result on action and change. The predominant format in the Action Forums seemed to be presentations and speeches made by Study Circle participants, organizers and community leaders. This is a missed opportunity. The Action Forums could have been used to actively engage participants in discussing recommendations that they had not been exposed to before, to prioritize the recommendations, or to do strategy work on how recommendations could be implemented.

**Task Forces:** Task forces only seem to have been successfully utilized in two instances in Fayetteville: for the youth and faith recommendations out of the initial race circles. To the extent that they worked, it seems that strong leadership from members of the HRC was an essential element of their success. Additionally, one may describe as a Task Force the faith circle that was initiated out of this round may be interpreted as a Task Force that went on to produce two kinds of events: FEED Fayetteville and the Focolari session for the public. As such, it would seem that the additional factors that were necessary for success were strong facilitation provided by the Human Relations Department and HRC to keep the group on track and focused on action, as well as general staff support from the Human Relations Department to ensure that meetings were scheduled and other support of logistical details.

**Facilitated Dialogue:** The importance of facilitated dialogue in supporting action and change seems most important in promoting individual change and new relationships, which are not the focus of this study.

**Pathways to Change**

Returning to the “Typology of Action and Change” articulated earlier, it appears that the Fayetteville program attempted to utilize seven pathways to action and change (not including personal change pathways that are not being studied here).

- Organization/institution participates in organizing Study Circles program
- Leaders or members of organization participates in Study Circles program
- Groups form within individual circles and decide to act
- Groups form among circle participants at Action Forum to act on recommendation
- Group formed by members of Organizing Coalition or sponsoring organization
- Recommendations presented to elected officials/public agencies by Study Circles
- Elected representatives/city officials participate in Study Circles

\[40\] It is not clear whether Task Forces were used following the youth round as well.
However, each of these pathways was not equally successful at supporting some form of action or change. It does not seem that recommendations presented to the City Council, nor participation in the circles by elected officials, led to significant changes (though some interviewees reported observing shifts in the behavior of some City Council members). Additionally, while some collective action clearly took place – through the youth and faith task forces (as well as the example of the police officer who worked on a community watch program with community members) – the scope of the actions taken by these groups seems to be minimal. This is especially true in relation to the initial objective of the program; to improve race relations in the community.

It is not entirely clear why some pathways were not effective at producing meaningful action and change. Lack of resources to support the action and change process seems to be one problem. Had the Human Relations Department had more funding to advocate for and monitor progress on recommendations, it is certainly possible that greater progress would have been made at following through on recommendations. Additionally, it seems that many recommendations out of the process were either too broad, too unrealistic, or lacked any organization or institution that would advocate on its behalf.

The most successful pathway in Fayetteville seems to be the engagement of organizational or institutional leaders in circles in order to support organizational change. Participation in the circles by the City Manager, police officers, and members of the chamber of commerce seems to have led to organizational shifts in each of these institutions that are significant.

**Meaningful Action and Change**

Interviews yielded highly mixed responses to the overall questions of whether Fayetteville’s Study Circles program had made any impact on race relations in the community. Those who responded positively tended to cite the impact that the dialogue had on individuals and the increase in communication between participants. While it seems to be true that the program did “change” individuals who participated in the circles, the relatively small number of people who have participated in the program to date suggests that the resulting impact on the community was likely not great. Others cited the election of the city’s first African American mayor as an indication that change is occurring. However, it is very difficult to discern a link between the Study Circles program and the new mayor’s election.

Many of those interviewed couldn’t cite significant changes in the community that were caused by Study Circles, but suggested that the process of making change on the issue of race takes a long time and that the program represented a good start. Others said that they had not seen any change in the community, arguing that the Study Circles program had failed to produce change because it didn’t engage enough people, didn’t produce meaningful action, or hadn’t received strong enough support.

Many of the notable actions that have been generated through the program thus far do not seem to be sufficient to support significant change in addressing race relations or racism in the community. For example:
• The decision by the city to support a county-wide Human Relations Commission seems to only make official the services that the city’s HRC has already been offering to county residents. However, if the County were to decide to make a stronger investment in such an endeavor, this assessment could change.

• The youth circles do not seem to have engaged enough young people to make a substantial impact. However, were the program to be adopted on a larger scale within the school system, this assessment would likely change.

• While the faith circle did seem to impact the faith leaders who have participated, the effort has not addressed the initial goal of bringing people of different races and different denominations together in any substantial way. Additionally, only a dozen or so faith leaders have been engaged in the process, compared to the hundreds that lead congregations in the area.

The most significant changes created by the program seem to be on the organizational level. Shifts in the diversity, approach or culture of the city government, chamber of commerce and police department could have an impact on improving race relations and racism in the community.
CASE II: SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

Introduction

Springfield, Illinois, shares many similarities with Fayetteville in terms of its size and character, as well as the events that led to the creation of a Study Circles program on race relations in the community. The value of examining the case of Springfield will be to discern how a similar community facing a similar situation (though with many unique qualities) was impacted in a different way through its use of a Study Circles program. This chapter will be somewhat less comprehensive than the previous chapter and will highlight how the program is unique.

Demographics and History

Springfield is the capital of the State of Illinois and the seat of Sangamon County. It has a population of 111,454 people. Eighty percent of the city’s population is white and 15 percent African American, with small Asian, Hispanic and Native American communities. The average family income for the city is about $44,500. Springfield is located in central Illinois, 200 miles southwest of Chicago and 100 miles northeast of St. Louis.  

Springfield has a long history of racial tension between its white and African American communities that can be traced back at least as far as 1908, at which time a violent race riot in the town served as a catalyst for the formation of the NAACP. In recent years, hate groups have made a small resurgence in the region with the most notable example being Matt Hale’s World Church of the Creator, located in East Peoria (70 miles north). In 1987, a federal lawsuit forced the city to change its form of government to give minorities more representation – leading to the election of the city’s first African American City Council members. The 1996 firing of an African American police officer caused a community uproar in Springfield that prompted the city’s mayor, Karen Hasara, to look for a program that would build greater communication and understanding in the community. According to Hasara, “History and recent events had placed us at a juncture in our city’s existence where decisive steps were in order to put us on the right course toward fostering and maintaining racial harmony.”

Hasara and her Community Relations Commission brought the Study Circles program to Springfield in 1997 and launched it in 1998. Just as City Manager Roger Stancil championed the city’s Study Circles program in Fayetteville, Hasara drove the launch of the program in Springfield – going so far as to make a public commitment at the beginning of the process to carry out the recommendations generated by participants. The Springfield Department of Community Relations (SDCR) organized and managed the program and dedicated a full-time employee to coordinating it.

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41 http://www.gscc.org/index.html
History of Study Circles Program

Over the course of the past five years, Springfield’s Study Circles program engaged more than 600 residents in several rounds of circles. The program has been led and staffed by the SDCR and has received strong support from Hasara. The program has had a sophisticated coordinator with a solid commitment to the Study Circles program and its values – a staff member of the department who has since been promoted to be the director of the SDCR. Springfield has conducted four community-wide rounds on race. It has also conducted pilot youth and faith programs. More recently, the Community Relations Department launched an innovative round of “beat circles” this year that is engaging law enforcement and community residents in dialogue about neighborhood issues. The SDCR is also planning to start a “2nd Tier” round of circles that will allow former Study Circles participants to take the initial round of discussions on race to a deeper level.

The pilot for the first round of Study Circles in Springfield began in early 1998. It was planned and coordinated by the SDCR in conjunction with a committee of seven community members with experience in dialogue, facilitation and diversity issues. A diverse group of 48 people participated in four circles during the pilot round. They were followed by more than 200 people who participated in 18 circles over the course of several months. At an Action Forum in June, each circles was allotted five minutes to present their recommendations to the mayor and the Community Relations Commission.43

The recommendations generated from the circles were compiled and prioritized by the SDCR and developed into a report presented to the mayor and the Community Relations Commission. Though the report included the recommendations developed by each circle, the highlighted items in the report were six recommendations addressed to the City of Springfield. No recommendations to individuals or organizations were highlighted in the report. According to the report, Study Circles participants recommended that the city should:

1) Spearhead the formation of a Race Relations Task Force.

2) Address the issue of underutilization of minorities within city government, especially within the Police and Fire Departments.

3) Produce a newsletter that informs the community of progress in the area of race relations and should produce an annual report on the State of Race Relations in the city.

4) Continue, expand and improve upon the Study Circles program.

5) Articulate and promote its commitment to racial harmony by sponsoring informative seminars and community events.

6) Recognize and reward individuals, groups and community organizations that are working to improve race relations within the city.\textsuperscript{44}

In December of 1999, the Mayor created a 15-member Race Relations Task Force that would be responsible for (1) implementing recommendations from the Study Circles program, (2) serving as a clearinghouse of information on activities related to promoting racial harmony, (3) acting as a rapid response team to racial incidents in the community, and (4) developing community-wide events to promote racial harmony.\textsuperscript{45} According to the mayor’s Chief of Staff, there was initially some disagreement as to the role of the body:

“Some saw it as a vehicle whose sole purpose is to guide and grow the operations of the Study Circles program. ... Some saw it as a means to implement recommendations of the Study Circles. Others yet saw it as a formalized tool to be used to speak out on all race-related issues, regardless of any connection to the program. Eventually, the Task Force took on all three roles, although with much more emphasis on the latter two.”\textsuperscript{46}

The coordinator of the Study Circles program remarked that it took a great deal of time before the group settled on its working identity – continually rethinking how it wished to relate to the city and what its chief role should be. For example, he said he had to ask the group several times whether it was his role to staff the group, be a member of the group or serve as a liaison for the group, and that their answer changed several times.

The Task Force was given no formal power and served largely in an advisory capacity. Task Force members were appointed by Hasara and served “at her pleasure.” The Task Force divided into various committees, each one responsible for dealing with a different kind of recommendation generated through the Study Circles process, including diversity in the police and fire departments, schools and education related issues, the production of a newsletter, the fostering of greater dialogue among the faith community, and the expansion of the Study Circles program. After an Action Forum, the Task Force would review the recommendations that had been developed and delegate them to an appropriate committee. Each committee would then determine the recommendations that it believed to be the most important on which to follow through. According to Task Force members, there was no formal process for identifying which recommendations would be acted upon. While Study Circles participants were invited to work on committees, few seem to have done so.

Earlier in 1999, Springfield launched a second round of Study Circles on race that engaged about 80 people and ended with an Action Forum in December. The circles attracted more high profile leaders than the previous round, including city department heads, police officials, and Hasara (who had not participated in a circle in the first round). According to the \textit{State Journal-Register}, one of the most prevalent recommendations made by groups at the Action Forum was to expand

\textsuperscript{44} Sandy Robinson II, “1998 Springfield Community-Wide Study Circles Program on Race Relations.” (Springfield, IL, 1998) 13-16
\textsuperscript{45} Sandy Robinson II, “1998 Springfield Community-Wide Study Circles Program on Race Relations.” (Springfield, IL, 1998)
\textsuperscript{46} Matt Leighninger, “Shared Governance,” unpublished.
the Study Circles program. Other recommendations included the creation of a cultural diversity fair sponsored by the city, an anti-hate campaign based on experiences in other Illinois towns called “Not In Our Town,” and the formation of a group of Study Circles participants to address a social problem like hunger. Recommendations out of the process were presented to the Race Relations Task Force, which was then responsible for integrating them into the activities of its on-going committee structure.

In 2000, the Task Force began working with the SDCR to pursue the strongest recommendation that had come from the circles thus far: to improve the diversity of the police and fire departments. Only three percent of the police force and less than two percent of the fire department were African American at the time. Mayor Hasara had already begun work on the recommendation through negotiations with the police and fire departments, focusing on the testing practices that were at the center of the departments’ hiring. She received substantial resistance from the police and fire department unions, but gradually made progress in the negotiations. Hasara’s Chief of Staff described her motivation for working on the difficult issue:

“It was very powerful to hear group after group at the action forum say that an increased minority presence on the police and fire departments was their top priority. … The overwhelming response from the Study Circles gave her a huge personal and emotional boost in what has been a bruising battle. The Study Circles’ response also helped tremendously in the ensuing public relations efforts. In many ways, it gave the issue moral high ground, helping to elevate it above the ongoing political and labor relations wrangling that had plagued previous efforts and discussions.”

In March, Hasara held a press conference to announce a goal of increasing the racial diversity of the police and fire departments to 15 percent by 2005. According to members of the Task Force, while Hasara may have been sympathetic to the objective, she would not have made a public commitment without their prompting. Hasara acknowledged that she would not have acted as quickly on the issue as she did had it not been for the Study Circles and the Task Force. Despite Hasara’s actions and successful agreements to shift hiring practices, the local chapter of the NAACP filed a lawsuit against the city in May.

Over the next three years, Hasara and the Task Force continued to work on the issue of police and fire department diversity, helping to change the city’s testing policies, institute a lateral hiring policy and increase the diversity of those applying for positions with the departments. Progress on the issue, however, has been slow, as it has been interrupted by multiple lawsuits and community flare ups. Over the years, the politically divisive issue would take more and

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47 Jason Piscia. “Group to Create Harmony/Efforts to Improve City’s Race Relations” in the State Journal-Register (Springfield, December 12, 1999)
50 While one would have hoped that the presence of Study Circles and the Task Force would have lessened these controversies by impacting the community culture, it seems unreasonable to expect such a great change in community dynamics in such a short period of time.
more of the Task Force’s time – shifting its attention away from other recommendations out of the Study Circles process. Several members of the Task Force would resign from their positions because of frustrations over lack of progress or dissatisfaction with the city’s actions on the issue. By 2002, the Task Force’s committee structure was abandoned, so that the group could solely focus on police and fire department issues in a “committee of the whole.” In doing so, the Task Force put on hold its work on all recommendations generated through the process that did not involve the police and fire department diversity issues.

To a great extent, it appears that the Task Force has struggled with the broad scope of its mission. While the group was tasked with following through on recommendations made through the Study Circles process, it was also created as a “rapid response” team to deal with community problems as they arose. Over the course of the past several years, the group has established itself in the community as a vehicle for responding to community problems and addressing tensions (and has affected how the community deals with them). Unfortunately, the “hot issues” that are brought to the Task Force easily took the energy and focus of the group away from the Study Circles program. Additionally, the group has struggled with its limited authority. Several members have expressed substantial frustration that the mayor has not involved them enough in decision making and that they have been provided with inadequate resources to fulfill their stated responsibilities.

In February 2000, more than 150 Study Circles “graduates” from the first two rounds were convened at a “reunion” by the Task Force and SDCR. At the event, participants discussed their experiences with the circles, the future of the program in Springfield, and planning for the next round. Fifty past participants of circles agreed to help with recruitment for the upcoming round. A “second-tier” round of circles was also discussed at the event that would allow past participants to take their dialogues on race to a deeper level.

Two hundred people participated in a third round of circles in 2000. The Study Circles reunion was credited with generating high turn out for this round, as each reunion participant was asked to recruit two people to take part in the new round. An important recruitment goal set for the round was to increase the number of white males who participated in the process, which was achieved. According to the coordinator of the program, while the presentation of recommendations from this round was more dynamic than in the past, the content was extremely similar – revolving around issues of police and fire department diversity, engaging youth in dialogue about race, and expanding the Study Circles program. The recommendations were once again used by the Task Force to reprioritize its activities through its committee structure.

In 2001, the Task Force and SDCR launched a “Not in Our City” campaign in response to the planning of a meeting in Springfield by hate-group leader, Matt Hale. The idea for the campaign had been originally offered during the first round of circles and again in the second round. When Hale’s group scheduled a meeting in Springfield, the Task Force and SDCR implemented the

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51 See Appendix V for an article published in the Illinois Times on the Task Force that focuses on the frustrations of its members.
52 Jason Piscia. “Study Circles to Enlist More Volunteers” in the State Journal-Register (Springfield, February 6, 2000).
recommendation in order to channel energy away from Hale’s visit towards something more positive. Several months earlier, when Hale’s group had held a similar meeting in Peoria, a “near riot” broke out between supporters and opponents of the group. The Springfield campaign organized a celebration of diversity on the day of the hate group’s meeting, drawing more than three times as many people. According to the *State Journal-Register*, collaboration between the police department, city officials and community groups – that largely began as a result of the Study Circles effort – was responsible for diffusing the situation and turning the hate group’s visit into a “big yawn.” A second visit by Hale a year later was largely ignored and the “Not in Our City” campaign has not had to be conducted again.

A fourth round of circles was completed in 2001 and engaged about 150 people. According to the coordinator of the program, recruitment for the round seemed to be much more difficult than in the past despite improvements in recruiting and registrations procedures. He attributed the difficulties to the sense that many groups in the community had grown skeptical that a round of circles on race relations would be effective in generating change. In a sense, the program seems to have suffered from its own success by raising expectations of action and change that could be produced by the program. While many past participants had been happy with their experience with the program, continued problems with the police and fire departments left many groups that had been active with the program frustrated. Once again, recommendations generated during this round reportedly mirrored recommendations from previous rounds.

The SDCR opted to not launch another round of circles on race relations because of the perception of many in the community that the race circles had accomplished as much as they could. Instead, it has chosen to pursue “beat-based” circles that engage citizens with police officers in their neighborhoods to discuss neighborhood issues, as well as the “2nd tier” round of circles. Organizers hope that the new uses of the Study Circles model will help the community to address more focused problems and leverage the action and change methodology in a new way.

This March, the Race Relations Task Force sponsored a well-attended community meeting on the creation of a Citizens Review Board and brought in three experts from around the country to discuss their experiences with different kinds of Review Boards. The recommendation to create a Review Board has been discussed in Springfield for several years, but no one has acted to move the initiative forward. The meeting was reported to be a success and has solidified the Task Force as a proactive group in the community.

**Examining Actions Taken in Springfield**

The Race Relations Task Force is both the most significant outcome of the Springfield Study Circles process, as well as the most unique element of the program in relation to action and change. In forming the Task Force, Hasara created an institutional home for the Study Circles process that had the implementation of Study Circles recommendations as a core part of its mission. At the same time, the Task Force became an important community institution responsible for addressing racial issues and mediating between the city and advocacy groups.

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53 Editorial, “Give City Credit for Defusing Hale Visit” in *State Journal-Register* (Springfield: July 17, 2001)
By and large, the Task Force became the primary pathway for initiating action and change in Springfield, as recommendations out of the process were largely used to inform the activities of the Task Force. Unfortunately, the Task Force seems to have been a poor mechanism for supporting collective action. While Study Circles participants were offered the opportunity to participate on Task Force committees, few seem to have done so.

The charge of the Task Force to serve as a “rapid response team” in times of racial tension in the community has had a significant effect on how the community deals with racial problems. On an array of issues that have risen over the past several years, the Task Force has articulated a strong public voice as it worked with the mayor and advocacy groups to resolve problems. It is worth noting that while the Task Force is an advisory body for the mayor, the group seems to have considerably more independence than the Fayetteville HRC. On several occasions the Task Force has publicly challenged city policies that were not consistent with improving race relations in the community. At one point, Task Force members decided to stop using City Hall letterhead in their communications in order to signify their independence. Unfortunately, the group has often found that it did not have adequate authority or leverage to convince the city to act in a manner that was consistent with the Task Force’s positions on issues related to race.

Hasara’s commitment to the process seems to be a critical factor to the extent that the Task Force has been successful. While the creation of an advisory body may not be a significant act for an elected official, Hasara gave the body credibility by heeding many of its recommendations – like the creation of a public goal of 15 percent diversity in the police and fire departments. However, it seems that the Task Force has not had enough resources and authority to adequately live up to its mission. This has caused significant frustration and disappointment among many early members on the body. Additionally, the dual role of “rapid response team” and overseer of Study Circles recommendations has been too much for the organization, as the group has chosen to solely focus on the former role for the past year because of the intensity of the racial issues involving the police and fire departments. As a consequence, all recommendations not related to fire and police departments have been put aside for the past year.

While it is unlikely that Springfield will reach the goal of 15 percent minority participation in the police and fire departments by 2005, the city has made progress over the past several years in increasing the number of African American and female officers in the police department and has made significant changes in hiring practices. Progress in this area may be credited to the genuine commitment to respond to public priorities by Hasara, the persistence of the Task Force, and the strong pressure put on the city by community groups like the NAACP. The Task Force is currently holding hearings on the creation of a Citizens Review Board that may be instituted in the coming year. Additionally, attempts were made to create a youth academy to support young people interested in careers in the police and fire departments, but the effort did not attract sufficient funding.

Other significant recommendations that were implemented by the Task Force include the creation of the Study Circles newsletter (discontinued when the committee structure was abandoned), the “Not in Our City” campaign, and a facilitation training component of a leadership development program for students at three high schools. Efforts were made to launch
a round of youth circles, but insufficient funding was available. The Task Force and the SDCR have also worked to launch a round of dialogue within the faith community, but resources to support such a process have been limited.

Three examples of actions were cited in interviews that were not initiated by the Task Force or by the city. First, the creation of an early curriculum for the “2nd Tier” round of Study Circles was initiated by a group of past participants who came together at the end of a round of circles to consider how they could take the process to a deeper level. The SDCR later funded a local Associate of the Study Circles Resource Center to help the group further develop the curriculum. Second, a past participant of an early round of circles launched a program called “The Lillian Way” that sought to engage Springfield residents in intimate discussions on issues of race in their homes. Unlike Study Circles, the effort did not seek to produce action and change. According to the founder of the program: “Only individuals can improve personal relationship problems.”

Third, many participants from the first round of circles worked together to halt the discontinuation of a bus line on the east side of Springfield that would have disproportionately impacted the African American community. The bus line continues to run today.

As was the case in Fayetteville, a wide array of recommendations generated from the process were never acted upon. In many cases, this may be due to the fact that an individual recommendation was not deemed to be a high enough priority by the Task Force, given its limited capacities. Alternatively, some recommendations required the active support of institutions outside of the Task Force, like the school system in order to conduct youth circles, that wasn’t not sufficiently available.

No one interviewed knew of organizational shifts that occurred as a result of the Study Circles program. According to Hasara, the city has not adapted the participatory approach of Study Circles to other areas of the government.

**Action Elements**

Generally speaking, it seems that Springfield’s use of the five major Action Elements of the Study Circles model was relatively consistent with Fayetteville. Three aspects of the Springfield program stand out as being unique in terms of how the Action Elements were utilized. First, the Springfield program modified the five-session format that is prescribed in the Study Circles discussion guide in order to add a second session for action planning. Organizers felt it was important to give participants more time to discuss recommendations and to emphasize the importance of action within the process. Organizers said that adding the session did make a difference in the character of recommendations produced through the process, but it is difficult to evaluate this claim.

Second, in the final two rounds of circles, the program expanded the “organizing coalition” to include the Task Force and past participants in the program. This approach leveraged community resources to recruit participants and yielded highly diverse groups of participants. On the other

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54 Steven Spearie. “Hearing the Other Side: The Lillian Way Sets the Stage for Frank Discussions on Race Relations” in the *State Journal-Register* (Springfield: August 19, 2001)
hand, use of the Task Force and past participants for recruitment meant that the program did not need to engage strong institutional partners to recruit participants – partners who might have contributed to the implementation process. Third, the Race Relations Task Force seems to have been used to replace the “action task forces” element – although it did not engage a significant number of participants in the action process. In a sense, it seems that Springfield recognized the need for a more formal structure than the “action task forces” to monitor and support implementation.

Pathways to Change

Returning to the “Typology of Action and Change” articulated earlier, it appears that the Springfield program attempted to utilize five pathways to action and change (not including personal change pathways that are not being studied here).

- Groups form among Circle participation at Action Forum to act on recommendation
- Recommendation presented to elected officials
- Organization that is formed to oversee implementation of recommendations advocates for them with decision makers.
- Elected representatives/city officials participate in Study Circles
- Elected representatives/city officials commit to implement recommendations prior to launch of program

The active commitment of Mayor Hasara to act on recommendations made through the process and the presence of the Task Force as an implementation mechanism seem to be the two most important pathways to change utilized in Springfield. Whereas Fayetteville had a strong advocate in its City Manager, it is not clear that he played a major role in the action and change phase of the process. Hasara, on the other hand, clearly took several recommendations from the process to heart and has expended significant political capital to pursue them. Opposition from certain stakeholders in the community has slowed Hasara’s progress, and many advocates would argue that her commitment to change has been insufficient. However, one perspective on such criticism might be that the real failure of the process was in its inability to sufficiently engage the opponents to change, like the police and fire unions, in the dialogue process.

The Race Relations Task Force has brought to the process a group of energized individuals that have the explicit objective of acting on behalf of the community to advance the recommendations made through the process. This seems to be a distinct orientation from something like an established HRC, whose members may or may not be highly committed to overseeing recommendations from the process. While many members of the Task Force have been disappointed by its progress, the group has clearly advanced recommendations made through the process.

Whereas organizational change made an important contribution in Fayetteville, this doesn’t seem to be the case in Fayetteville. Three possible explanations may be offered to explain this: (1) the right organizational leaders did not participate in Study Circles (for example, the program did not engage many members of the business community), (2) organizational shifts did occur, but people interviewed for this study were unaware of them, or (3) the program’s orientation towards
actions made by the mayor and Task Force led participants to not act within their own organizations to create change.

**Meaningful Action and Change**

Most of those who were interviewed about Springfield noted two examples of significant change as a result of the Study Circles program. The first was the creation of the Race Relations Task Force. The Task Force is a new community institution that impacts how the community deals with issues of race and has provided a mechanism for the city government to address issues of race. It is yet to be seen, however, as to whether the Task Force will become a permanent institution in the community or whether it will expire at the end of Hasara’s term as mayor. Many of those interviewed said that they expect both the Task Force and the Study Circles program to continue under a new administration.

A second example of significant change cited by many is that the issue of race has been put firmly on the community’s public agenda. According to many, the issue of race had often been swept under the run in past years, but that that has changed since the creation of the Study Circles program and the Task Force. While it is difficult to measure this claim, it was repeated by several people and seems evident in the amount of activity on race that has occurred over the past few years.

A third example of meaningful change in Springfield is the diversification of the police force and fire departments. Although significant resistance and legal turmoil has accompanied the diversification efforts, clear progress has been made in diversifying and changing the hiring policies of the city’s police and fire departments that may have ramifications for how minority communities in the city relate to the city government. Substantial work remains to be done in this area, but the Study Circles process has clearly led to action towards this end.

While significant actions have come out of the Springfield program, many of those who have been involved with the program are justifiably frustrated that more change hasn’t resulted from their efforts. Initiatives to engage youth and the faith community in dialogue have not made significant progress. Racial tension and controversies continue to arise in Springfield, most notably in the form of an array of lawsuits and investigations related to the police department. Additionally, the effort has not been successful at engaging a significant number of citizens in playing a more active role in the community and taking responsibility for acting to improve race relations.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General Observations

A great deal can be learned from the successes and disappointments of the Fayetteville and Springfield programs when considered in the context of the “Typology for Action and Change.” The successful examples of meaningful action and change in each community highlight the strengths of the model in producing meaningful outcomes and suggest lessons that the Resource Center should pay attention to as it provides guidance to other communities. Likewise, the shortcomings of the two programs offer important insights into where the model is currently failing to support the needs of communities or which advice being provided by the Resource Center is not getting through to communities.

In the end, while both programs have been successful at improving communication on race in their respective communities and making an impact on the individuals who participated in the dialogue, their track records in terms of action and change are mixed. Springfield has been successful at creating its Race Relations Task Force and moving forward on police department diversification. However, its progress has been slow and many recommendations generated through the process have not been acted upon. More dramatically, in Fayetteville, most of the actions that have been taken seem to be relatively small and inconsistent with a viable theory of change for the larger community. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the task of supporting action and change on the issue of race is a very “hard case” and limited visible progress should not be taken as a failure of the efforts. Rather, the successes and challenges of the two communities should be learned from in order to produce stronger future projects.

The single most important factor in determining whether or not a recommendation generated through the process was acted upon seems to have been whether or not there was a viable organization to manage the implementation process for that recommendation. In Fayetteville, the Study Circles Working Group and the Human Relations Commission spearheaded the creation of the youth circles program. Again, the dedication of members of the HRC and the support of the Human Relations Department were critical in supporting the faith Study Circle process there. For many of the other recommendations generated in Fayetteville, the HRC and Department seem to have simply not had adequate resources to follow through. In Springfield, the Community Relations Department and the Race Relations Task Force were the critical vehicles for acting upon most successful recommendations generated through the process, most notably in relation to the diversification of the police and fire departments. The presence of an active group of people working on the recommendations made an important difference for the community.

In those instances where recommendations were not acted upon, one of several conditions may have been to blame:

- The recommendation was too broad, unrealistic or did not appreciate the political context within which it would have to be implemented.
- No organization or institution had the resources to advocate for and monitor implementation of the recommendation.
• Inadequate resources were available to support and manage Study Circles participants in working on the recommendation.
• Important stakeholders or decision makers did not adequately buy-in to the process or the recommendation.
• Too many recommendations were generated – making it difficult to focus attention and political capital on those recommendations that may be more important or more difficult to address.

To the extent that the process of generating recommendations through Study Circles had any power, it seems to have come from the degree to which people perceived the recommendations to be strongly held among a significant segment of the community. In Springfield, Mayor Hasara was deeply influenced by the unanimity of the community behind the recommendation to diversify the police and fire departments. In Fayetteville, members of the HRC were impacted by the strength of support for engaging youth and the faith community. However, neither program seems to have engaged enough people for recommendations to have real political power – i.e. they were not strong enough to represent real public pressure on elected officials or decision makers. This fact may have something to do with the reason for why in no instance was formal legislation reported to have passed as a result of a Study Circles recommendation in either Fayetteville or Springfield.

Both programs had difficulty generating significant collective action on the part of Study Circles participants to pursue recommendations or advocate for change, except for the participants who volunteered to serve on the Race Relations Task Force in Springfield. It is not entirely evident why this is the case, though part of the problem clearly had to do with the lack of a structure and resources to actively manage volunteer task forces at the same level that the rounds of Study Circles had been managed.

At least in the case of Fayetteville, organizational change seemed to be an important outcome of the process. For an issue like race that has so many institutional roots, the prospect of finding ways to support organizational changes in community institutions is quite intriguing. Unfortunately, it is far more difficult to track these changes and monitor their progress. Conceivably, Study Circles programs could do more to support and promote this kind of change if a given program were to decide early on that it wished to specifically focus its attention on it. For example, an Action Forum could include a segment during which members of organizations would gather together to talk about what the outcomes of the dialogue had meant for their organization. Alternatively, participant recruitment could highly focus on specific institutions that would play an important role in a certain type of community change.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The following six conclusions may be drawn from the analysis of how the Study Circles model supports action and change. Recommendations to the Resource Center are offered with each conclusion.
Conclusion #1: One of the most important factors contributing to successful action and change in communities is the presence of a viable, well-resourced organization that is responsible for supporting the action-change process.

In contrast to depictions of the Study Circles model that highlight actions being taken by individuals, groups or elected officials who are influenced by their participation in the Study Circles process, it seems that the most successful vehicle for supporting action out of the Fayetteville and Springfield Study Circles programs was an organization or institution that drove the implementation process. As described above, the persistent efforts of the Springfield Race Relations Task Force and Community Relations Department and the Fayetteville Human Relations Commission and Human Relations Department that were the most important vehicles for action in those communities.

The following recommendations are offered to the Resource Center to address this conclusion:

1) Develop a document that depicts options for the make-up and structure of successful organizational “homes” for the action and change process. It should include descriptions of how different kinds of institutions may choose to organize and staff the process, ranging from a government agency to a volunteer organization. This depiction of options should fit within the “two tiered” approach to communities described below.

Conclusion #2: Several critical pathways to action and change require that a community provides significantly greater resources to support a Study Circles program than are currently provided by many communities.

In both Fayetteville and Springfield, several people complained that the programs simply did not engage a significant enough number of people to create community-wide change. This is especially important when relying on pathways to change that rely on engaging a “critical mass” of people or pressuring elected officials. The capacity of a program to recruit large enough groups of people to participate in circles may depend on the availability of resources to support recruitment. While volunteer coalitions may certainly yield high levels of turn out, the ability to pay staff to perform outreach and support functions can make a critical difference in recruiting hard-to-reach groups.

Perhaps more importantly, the process of supporting and monitoring action after a round of circles requires resources to pay for staff to support the action process. The management of task forces and the monitoring of progress in implementing recommendations requires significant attention and staff-hours that may be difficult to obtain from volunteers or staff with other responsibilities. Even in those cases where communities dedicate staff resources for Study Circles programs, those resources often are side tracked from the action and change process by the need to plan future rounds of circles. In Springfield, many Task Force members complained that they had inadequate staff support to fulfill their responsibilities. In Fayetteville, the one staff person responsible for supporting the HRC was highly over-worked and could not balance her substantial responsibilities with actively staffing the Task Force process.

The following recommendations are offered to the Resource Center to address this conclusion:
2) Develop a two-tiered approach to working with communities. First-tier communities must show that they have adequate resources to support the action and change process. These communities would receive more attention from the Resource Center because they are more likely to satisfy the Resource Center’s goal of empowering citizens through dialogue. Second-tier communities that do not satisfy the Resource Center’s criteria should receive organizing materials, but also should be cautioned to not “over-promise” on outcomes and to pursue pathways to action and change that are less resource intensive.

3) Provide clear guidance to communities about the degree to which action and change requires long-term commitments of staffing resources. Provide communities with models for staffing the action and change phase of a round of circles.

Conclusion #3: The Study Circles model does not provide adequate opportunities for organizers and participants to be strategic about how they create and pursue recommendations generated through the process.

The Resource Center has been firm in its commitment to providing a neutral process through which communities may determine their own priorities and the actions they wish to take to address their priorities. In some instance, this commitment seems to have produced a disconnect between the process of organizing community dialogues and the process of strategically positioning the dialogues in such a way that ensures meaningful action and change. While it is indeed important that organizers of a program not “stack the deck” of a program and determine what should come out of the dialogue before it begins, it is essential that they consider the kinds of recommendations that are likely to come out of the process and the kinds of change that the program intends to create. Without conducting this kind of strategic analysis, communities are likely to fail to anticipate the needs for supporting meaningful action, like recruiting important stakeholders to participate in the process who may play a role in carrying out a specific kind of recommendation. More importantly, without serious consideration of the kinds of outcomes desired for the program, organizers will not have the capacity to consider what “action tools” and “action elements” must be available to support intended pathways.

A related challenge to the model is providing adequate context within the process, such that recommendations are focused, realistic and strategic. Since discussion guides are generic to a given community, the recommendation process heavily relies upon facilitators and participants to have an adequate understanding of the political realities of the community in order to generate meaningful recommendations. Mechanisms are needed to provide the recommendation process with greater opportunities to be strategic.

The following recommendations are offered to the Resource Center to address this conclusion:

4) Develop a process through which participants of pilot circles conduct a strategic change analysis at the end of the pilot round. Assuming that the outcomes of their discussions will be fairly typical of future circles, they should consider who should be recruited to participate in the process and what resources should be available to participants based on the kinds of recommendations generated through their circles.
5) Strongly encourage communities to utilize the “Power Analysis” exercise developed by Michael McCormick as a means of helping Study Circles participants to consider the political context within which their recommendations are being made. Alternatively, build in a set of benchmarking exercises that help a community think about the measures that will constitute progress for the program and focus them on the steps that will be needed to reach their benchmarks.

6) Consider following Springfield’s example by expanding each round of Study Circles by a session to give participants more time to consider the recommendations that they are developing.

7) Provide stronger encouragement to communities to use their Action Forum to support strategic discussions of top priority recommendations.

8) Begin providing advice to communities that differentiates how they may want to structure and orient their program based on the different kinds of change pathways available to them.

Conclusion #4: The Study Circles model must provide greater guidance to communities on how to successfully support collective action.

At their retreat in December, staff of the Resource Center described the Task Force process as a “black box” that they knew little about. The experiences of Springfield and Fayetteville suggest that the Task Force element of the model is not being well used, at least for medium-sized communities on issues of race. Further, it seems that the resources and structure needed to manage the Action Task Force process is comparable to managing the dialogue component of a Study Circles rounds. Whereas members of Study Circles have an opportunity to get to know one another and work through issues in facilitated dialogue, the current structure for Action Task Forces provides no such opportunity for groups to think through the action process in any structured way. In Fayetteville, the presence of a facilitator was critical to the progress of the faith Study Circle that came out of the first round on race.

The following recommendations are offered to the Resource Center to address this conclusion:

9) Develop a guide for managing and conducting Action Task Forces that is comparable to materials that currently guide the circles themselves.

Conclusions #5: Many communities do not take full advantage of the Action Forum to advance the agenda of action and change.

The Action Forum offers communities with a unique opportunity to engage everyone who has participated in the Study Circles process, as well as community leadership, at once. This opportunity should be taken advantage of to do any number of things, including: (1) prioritize recommendations, (2) cross-fertilize Study Circles groups, so that they engage with each others’
recommendations, and (3) strategize about next steps. Unfortunately, both Fayetteville and Springfield seem to have largely used the sessions as a public unveiling of group recommendations.

The following recommendations are offered to the Resource Center to address this conclusion:

10) Provide detailed examples of Action Forum agendas that show communities how they might conduct the sessions differently.

11) Partner with AmericaSpeaks to integrate the Action Forum with their 21st Century Town Meeting model in order to support stronger interactivity and prioritization during Action Forums. Offer a module of services from Associates of the Resource Center to support these large group sessions.  

Conclusion #6: Further analysis of the “Typology of Action and Change” is needed in order to discern how to best support change in communities.

While the “Typology of Action and Change” developed for this study does not offer any dramatic new ideas about how the Study Circles model works, it does provide a distinct view of the model that links the Study Circles’ elements and tools directly to kinds of action and change. In doing so, it pushes the Resource Center to consider the strategic needs of action and change in the context of the advice they provide to communities. Traditionally, the Resource Center has taken some degree of pride in a “let a thousand flowers bloom” approach to action and change in which communities may choose any number of pathways to action and change. However, it must be asserted that not all pathways are equal and that different pathways require different kinds of support and resources from the model. As the Study Circles model continues to evolve, the Resource Center must seriously consider what kinds of action and change its model should be supporting and how the model can best support it.

The following recommendations are offered to the Resource Center to address this conclusion:

12) Conduct a 1-2 retreat with Resource Center staff and Senior Associates to consider the typology and its implications.

Further Study

This study has attempted to draw conclusions about Study Circles from a brief glimpse into two communities that have utilized the model. Additional data is needed in order to generate recommendations that are well grounded in the experiences of the hundreds communities who have used it across the country. Most importantly, it will be important in the future to look at communities that have conducted programs on issues other than race relations and on different scales than that of Fayetteville and Springfield to discern how these differences impact the model’s application.

55 Note: the author is a senior associate with AmericaSpeaks.
Among the questions that should be considered in further research on the Study Circles model are:

- What pathways to change are most successfully at supporting meaningful change and under what circumstances?
- How do different kinds of issues impact the success of different pathways to change?
- How does the scale of a community impact the success of different pathways?
- What “action tools” have successful communities used to make up for deficiencies in the Study Circles model? Which of these tools offer the greatest application and should be integrated into the core the Study Circles model?
- What “best practices” have been used to operationalize the Action Task Force process? Under what conditions does the model support collective action well?
- How were the cultures and activities of major community institutions impacted by programs?
APPENDIX I

What is a Study Circle?

A study circle:\textsuperscript{56}

- Is a small, diverse group of eight to twelve participants.
- Meets regularly over a period of weeks or months to address a critical public issue in a democratic and collaborative way.
- Sets its own ground rules for a respectful productive discussion.
- Is led by a facilitator who is impartial, who helps manage the process, but is not an “expert” or “teacher” in the traditional sense.
- Considers the issue from many points of view.
- Does not require consensus, but uncovers areas of agreement and common concern.
- Progresses from a session on personal experience of the issue, to sessions that examine many points of view on the issue, to a session that considers strategies for action and change.

What is a Community-Wide Study Circle Program?

A Community-Wide Study Circle Program:\textsuperscript{57}

- Is organized by a diverse coalition that reflects the whole community.
- Includes a large number of participants from all walks of life.
- Uses easy-to-use, non-partisan discussion material.
- Uses trained facilitators who reflect the community’s diversity.
- Results in specific opportunities to move to action when the Study Circles conclude.


APPENDIX II

The following individuals were interviewed for this study, (an asterisk marks those names of individuals who were interviewed more than once). Most of the contents of this study were derived from these interviews. Most interviews conducted in Fayetteville and Springfield were with organizers of the Study Circles program or community leaders.

1. John Abercrombie, SCRC*
2. Carolyn Abdulla, SCRC
3. Molly Holme Barrett, SCRC
4. Adam Beyah, Fayetteville
5. Tom Bergamine, Fayetteville*
6. Robert Blackwell, Springfield*
7. Sally Campbell, SCRC*
8. Luiz Collazo, Fayetteville*
9. Maria Costas, Fayetteville
10. Theodore Debose, Fayetteville
11. Elmer Floyd, Fayetteville
12. Marcia Fuson, Fayetteville
13. Larry Golden, Springfield
15. Mary Kay Hennessy, Fayetteville
16. Michael Hines, Fayetteville*
17. Janis Holden, Fayetteville
18. Victor Juarez, Springfield
19. Laurence Johnson, Springfield
20. Steve Kay, Roberts and Kay
21. Grace Kim, Fayetteville
22. Doug King, Springfield
23. John Landesman, SCRC
24. Matt Leighninger, SCRC
25. Amy Malick, SCRC
26. Michael McCormick, SCRC
27. Martha McCoy, SCRC*
28. Ron McElrath, Fayetteville*
29. Rona Roberts, Roberts & Kay
30. Sandy Robinson, Springfield*
31. Pat Scully, SCRC*
32. Bill Seltzer, Springfield
33. Lindy Seltzer, Springfield
34. Ray Shipman, Fayetteville
35. Roger Stancil, Fayetteville*
36. Alan Tazari, Fayetteville
37. Jimmy Teal, Fayetteville
38. Faith Thompson, Fayetteville*
39. So Hee Weatherall, Fayetteville
40. Lauren Wike, Fayetteville*
41. Gwen Wright, Fayetteville*
42. Charles Yates, Fayetteville

Participants in December “Learning Exchange at the Study Circles Resource Center:

1) Molly Home Barrett
2) Sally Campbell
3) Joe Goldman
4) Matt Leighninger
5) John Landesman
6) Amy Malick
7) Michael McCormick
8) Martha McCoy
9) Francine Nichols
10) Pat Scully
11) Melissa Wade
12) Bianca Wulff
## APPENDIX III

“Action and Change in Study Circles Programs” as published in the Study Circles Resource Center’s organizing manual.58

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of change</th>
<th>How does it happen?</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in individual behavior and attitudes</td>
<td>Better understanding of the issues and of one another inspires people to “make a difference.”</td>
<td>A participant in a community-wide program on racism decides never again to let racist remarks go by without a comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New relationships and networks</td>
<td>Trust and understanding develop between participants in the dialogue.</td>
<td>Following study circles on community-police relationships, young people and police officers hold weekly meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New working collaborations</td>
<td>Individuals and organizations develop new relationships and new ideas for solutions.</td>
<td>After study circles on neighborhood issues, residents, police officers, and mental health advocates create an emergency team to help mentally ill people who wander the streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional changes</td>
<td>Leaders and/or members of an institution gain new insights in study circles that lead to changes within the institution and in the larger community.</td>
<td>After doing study circles on race, leaders of several banks work with others to improve banking services to communities of color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in public policy</td>
<td>Public officials help organize study circles, and pledge to work with citizens to implement action ideas. OR Public officials take part in the organizing and dialogue, and gain new insights that have an impact on their policymaking. OR Information from the study circles is collected and reported to decision makers.</td>
<td>Following study circles on education, participants develop a plan to close the gap in achievement between the races. The school board – a leading organizer of the circles – funds the plan and helps carry it out. After participating in study circles, a school superintendent creates new policies to involve parents in the district’s schools. A report from study circles on growth and sprawl is turned over to the planning board, which uses this information to help shape the town’s strategic plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in community dynamics</td>
<td>Many hundreds of people take part in study circles. Once there is a “critical mass” of people who have a new understanding of issues and of one another, their capacity for community work increases.</td>
<td>Study circles on race relations happen in a community over years. In all kinds of settings, public meetings begin to operate according to study circle principles. People learn to work together across differences, and feel a stronger sense of community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes in a community’s public life</td>
<td>Once people see the benefits of large-scale dialogue to action, they make it an ongoing part of how their community works.</td>
<td>After a round of study circles on education, the school district decides to use study circles routinely to involve citizens in creating and implementing its annual school improvement plan.</td>
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APPENDIX IV

The following article was published in the *Fayetteville Observer* on March 17, 2003:

Study Circles at Risk\(^5^9\)
By Allison Williams

In 1999, two former Fayetteville police officers filed racial discrimination lawsuits against the city.

The same year, community groups troubled by the allegations began a series of forums - called Study Circles - to talk about racism.

Fast forward five years.

The lawsuit drags on, and Study Circles organizers are frustrated that some institutions across the city and county are stuck in their ways. The organizers say they have seen shifts in individual attitudes, but churches, schools and businesses have been slow to change.

Religious leaders are splintered into different clergy groups. The Cumberland County school board has not acted on recommendations that Study Circles participants suggested four years ago. The city requires every employee to undergo diversity training, but the county government does not.

Some community leaders are not aware, organizers say, that the Study Circles program even exists.

Michael Hines is chairman of the Fayetteville Human Relations Commission, the advisory board for the city's Human Relations Department, which oversees Study Circles.

"There has been success," Hines said, "success with individual people, but institutionally speaking, not so much."

The need for money

As the city faces a possible budget shortfall, Fayetteville City Council members are considering cuts in the Human Relations Department. Allen Taziri, a member of the Human Relations Commission, says cuts would threaten the Study Circles program. He is incredulous that the city would consider cutting the same program that it highlighted in its winning application for an All-America City award in 2001.

"If they use it as showpiece," Taziri said, "then I think it behooves us to keep the program in action and expand on it."

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The city is facing a possible budget shortfall partly because commissioners are considering changing the way sales tax revenue is allocated. The change under discussion would cut the city's share by $4.4 million.

Councilman Curtis Worthy said the city is more inclusive now than it was before Study Circles, a sign the program is working. But he said budget problems may force the city to cut Study Circles, at least temporarily.

"It may be on hold for a while," Worthy said. "That doesn't mean it's dead. It doesn't mean it can't be revived."

**A beginning**

In the winter of 1999, five groups sat down to talk about racism. They met five times, two hours at a time, at a church, a school, City Hall, a fire department and a recreation center.

There has been a Study Circles every year since. Each one works the same way. People volunteer to talk frankly about their lives. They are white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, plumbers, teachers, businessmen. A self-avowed white supremacist even participated in Study Circles, organizers said.

Facilitators, who are volunteers, lead the discussions. At the final session for each Study Circle, participants make recommendations that they hope individuals, private groups and government officials will adopt.

When the Fayetteville Human Relations Commission and other groups started Study Circles, the timing was no coincidence. Four years earlier, in 1995, two white soldiers murdered a black man and a black woman as part of a skinhead initiation rite. The year after that, some black police officers complained that there was discrimination. Their complaints, and a disagreement over how they should be handled by the city, grew into a year-long political fight that saw two city managers fired and a voter backlash against two black council members.

In 1999, two of the officers who complained in 1996 filed federal lawsuits, which have yet to be heard.

As the case has lingered, Study Circles have kept meeting. Organizers followed up the 1999 sessions with others:

In 2000, middle school, high school and college students from Northwood Temple Academy, Albritton Junior High on Fort Bragg, Spring Lake Middle, E.E. Smith High, Pine Forest High and Fayetteville State University talked about challenges facing young people.

In 2001, police officers sat down with residents to talk about the relationship between the community and law enforcement officers.
In 2002, students enrolled in English as a Second Language courses at Fayetteville Technical Community College gathered to talk about what it means to learn a new language and adjust to a new culture.

And this year, the Study Circles program has gone to the Savoy Heights neighborhood.

So far, about 1,500 people have participated in Study Circles. Hundreds more have trained to become facilitators.

Now, organizers want to bring teachers, school administrators and parents together to talk about the so-called academic "achievement gap" between white and minority students. They want to start a Study Circles for people of different ages. And Study Circles organizers are planning another session on racism.

"I don't think you could ever do enough," Hines said.

Some participants in the first session on racism are still meeting.

"It was the first time they were able to sit down and talk to one another in a safe place," said Leesa Jensen, a city worker in the Fayetteville Human Relations Department. "They developed those relationships and continued them."

Phil Cannady, Fayetteville's assistant police chief, participated in the Study Circles for police officers and residents.

"It gave (officers) a different type of environment to get out and let their hair down a little bit and talk with members of the community in smaller groups," Cannady said. "It gave them an opportunity to explain and voice their issues and concerns. At the same time, they got excellent feedback from the groups they're working with.

"It was another reminder about what just a little dialogue will do."

The police take part

Of 320 communities with Study Circles programs, Fayetteville was the first to start a Study Circles with police officers. The program has received awards from the National League of Cities and the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials. The Study Circles Resource Center in Connecticut was so impressed with Fayetteville, it invited a former Fayetteville State University student to speak at a national conference.

When the resource center decided to study how effective Study Circles programs have been, it chose Fayetteville and one other city, Springfield, Ill.

Joe Goldman, a student working on his master's degree at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, spent two days in Fayetteville. He said people felt strongly about how Study Circles changed them.
"In terms of relationships that were built, it seemed to really make a difference," Goldman said. "There is definitely some real movement on some of the recommendations, but I think there are definitely areas in which the Study Circles model could do more to ensure that recommendations are followed through on."

At the end of every Study Circles, participants make recommendations. Those recommendations have led to:

Other Study Circles.

Creation of the Communities of Faith Dialogue, a group of clergy and lay people. The group now holds FEED Fayetteville, an annual event to feed hundreds of needy people and provide information about services that could help them.

Diversity training for all city employees.

A joint city-county human relations commission.

Maria Velazquez-Constas participated in Study Circles.

"I do think that it made a difference in our community," she said. "People are talking more. Study Circles was criticized because it was just talk. But people have taken it seriously. Today, we are talking about a Fayetteville Human Relations Commission that is countywide. That came from Study Circles. Better communication with police. That came from Study Circles."

But other recommendations sit on the shelf, including:

Diversity training for county workers.

A public relations campaign to fight racism in the community.

A citizen review board for the Fayetteville Police Department.

A minority studies class in Cumberland County schools.

A school-based international festival.

Allen Taziri serves on the Human Relations Commission and participated in several Study Circles sessions.

"Study Circles had wonderful suggestions for city and county government," he said. "Were they listened to? I don't think so."

When the rubber hit the road, he said, "The tire blew out."

**County receptive**
County Manager James Martin said he was unaware of the recommendation for diversity training, but said the county would certainly be willing to hear from Study Circles.

"County employees are quite good at recognizing issues of diversity," Martin said, "and do a good job in that respect."

Superintendent Bill Harrison said school board members did not act on the recommendations, but they too would be willing to listen to suggestions from Study Circles.

"They probably need to give us a little nudge again," Harrison said.

The school system does offer a minority studies class and an American Indian studies class, Harrison said. It is up to high school principals to offer them. There is a not a schoolwide international festival, Harrison said, but many students are involved with the International Folk Festival held every fall in downtown Fayetteville.

Harrison said Study Circles has been beneficial. "Just talking about issues brings a level of awareness and understanding that results in higher levels of cooperation," he said. "If students are involved and they identify ways in which be can more responsive to our increasingly more diverse student body, we would be interested in hearing from them."

Hines is particularly disappointed that religious leaders are fractured into different groups. Study Circles created Communities of Faith Dialogue, but two years later, the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce formed its own clergy group. The Fayetteville/Cumberland County Ministerial Council is another group. And there are others.

The Rev. Dimitrios Moraitis is pastor of Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church and a member of three different clergy groups. He would like to see clergy groups come under one umbrella.

"The leaders of the faith community have the ear of the people of Fayetteville," Moraitis said. "Issues of equality and diversity need to be discussed from the pulpit."

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APPENDIX V

The following article was published in the Illinois Times on December 5-11, 2002:

Fed Up, Frustrated, andFocused: Gentle Talk on a Delicate Subject
By Traci Moyer

In November 1999, Mayor Karen Hasara bestowed upon a citizen panel the titanic task of improving race relations in Springfield. An outgrowth of her popular and successful 1998 program of Study Circles, this Race Relations Task Force appeared full of potential, even when a handful of the original 15 members disappeared after only the first couple of meetings.

Soon a core group of committed activists emerged, led by co-chairs Monica Chyn and Leroy Jordan. But the group’s initial game plan—to implement ideas proposed by the Study Circles—was quickly sidetracked by the more urgent business of attending to various volatile situations that cropped up in the community.

Each of these crises presented a new test of the task force and of its effectiveness and influence on city policies. Eventually some members became so disillusioned that they quit in protest. Robert Blackwell, a member of the original panel and still on the task force, describes a schism in the membership between people who became “so frustrated and fed-up that they quit, and people who became so frustrated and fed-up that they stayed.”

This description is ratified by four task force veterans recently assembled at the invitation of Illinois Times: Monica Chyn, a medical translator; Baker Siddiquee, associate professor of economics at University of Illinois; Victor Juarez, an IRS agent and member of the central Illinois chapter of National Image Inc., which promotes the Latino community; and Larry Golden, professor in UIS’s political and legal studies programs and member of the executive committee of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Chyn and Golden resigned from the task force earlier this year. Siddiquee and Juarez chose to remain. Illinois Times also invited former task force members Leroy Jordan and Rudy Davenport, but they were unable to attend.

IT: In the beginning of the task force, did you all take on this responsibility thinking it was a genuine chance to change things?

GOLDEN: The group that was [originally] appointed to this task force were people I had faith that if anyone could have influence, together we could do it.

I think we all were at that time feeling pretty good about this process. We were very complimentary to the mayor at that point. It was the first time that a mayor, in recent history,

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acknowledged the need to deal with race relations in this community. . . . The city had just spent more than a million dollars fighting [a voting rights case] to prevent a change in the election process that would just allow basic representation [ward- based instead of at-large elections]. That has been the attitude of this city for as far back as people can remember. This was a start. Not that it was going to solve anything right off the bat, but it was a start. It was acknowledging the fact that we had to have this dialogue and that there was a problem in the community.

**JUAREZ:** It was also the first time that a commission like this had been set up that included Latino representation. . . . Now at least we had a place at the table.

**GOLDEN:** Here’s the letter of invitation from the mayor that was in November 1999, indicating that I would be part of a “dynamic team.”

**JUAREZ:** A “dynamic team”! What happened?

**IT:** How many of these goals do you think you accomplished? Did you “develop and promote community-wide events that foster racial harmony,” as it says in this letter?

**JUAREZ:** We were working with the suggestions of the Study Circles. They had all these suggestions so we separated into different topics. . . . Economic development was one, law enforcement was one, and continuing the Study Circles was one. But as soon as we started, police department issues started coming up. We were always getting derailed, I think, from our main goal, which was implementing the suggestions from the different Study Circles.

**IT:** And what were you getting derailed by?

**SIDDIQUEE:** In general, issues relating to the police department, and, later on, the fire department.

**IT:** What were the issues with the fire department? Their minority numbers are lower than the police department’s, right?

**SIDDIQUEE:** Yes. One of the recommendations I remember from the Study Circle report, very strongly, concerned the lack of minority representation in city government. . . . But what happens is when you have these crises, issues come up and you kind of bog down. And I think in one of the meetings we said, OK, we have so many things to do, can we do all of them? Why don’t we limit ourselves to certain issues that we know we can achieve promptly and use those as a kind of starting point? If we can achieve something in the police department and the fire department, maybe it will give a signal to the other departments.

Early on we tried to develop some goals. And based on our discussions among ourselves and with city officials, particularly the mayor, we made a recommendation that the city’s police and fire departments both should have 15 percent minorities by the year 2005. The mayor agreed, and then she made a public pronouncement where we were all present, in one of the churches, right? She committed to the city that that’s her goal, her administration’s goal.
IT: Did you feel like you had achieved something?

SIDDIQUEE: Well, we felt like now we have a target. And the City is committed. So the next task for us was how to achieve that. And that’s where we started talking with the police and fire departments on a regular basis. We met countless times.

JUAREZ: We worked with them on their plans to improve testing procedures, and they used to report to us on the efforts they were putting forth to get to 15 percent.

SIDDIQUEE: We were told that we don’t have enough minority applicants. So one task for us was to find out why they’re not applying and how we can improve that. And secondly why there are so few minorities who eventually pass those tests. One of the things we found out is that many minorities are frustrated. I mean, it just hadn’t happened in the last 10 or 12 years, there was not a single minority hired. That’s not good data to present to the minority population to convince them to come forward and take the test. So we knew it was an uphill battle.

In the meantime, we thought that we made significant changes in terms of testing procedures so that the built-in discriminatory practice was, to some extent, removed from the procedure.

IT: There’s a perception that you lowered the standards. What changes did you make?

SIDDIQUEE: [People who say that] don’t know what they’re talking about. First of all, the numerical criteria was set at 70 percent on the written test and 30 percent on the rest of everything—emotional, psychological, physical agility. . . . So giving 70 percent emphasis on some written test for a job that significantly required these other aspects to be a police officer, or for that matter to be a fire officer, that was one question: what was the justification of that? You don’t need rocket scientists here. What is so special about scoring 98 over 97 and then say you’re a better-qualified officer? To me, I teach statistics, and making a point or two or three or five difference [is not] statistically significant in terms of one’s qualifications to be a successful police or fire officer.

IT: The written test I’ve heard about is basically reading, writing, and arithmetic. It’s not particular to police work.

SIDDIQUEE: That’s my understanding.

JUAREZ: The NAACP had been in a lawsuit with them and they are the ones that finally had the changes made in testing.

SIDDIQUEE: The other problem was the number problem. We had a target of achieving 15 percent by 2005. To achieve that goal, the normal recruiting process won’t do that job. Why? First of all, minorities are discouraged, and they are not going to come forward and apply en masse. So you’re not going to have a significant number of applicants to begin with. And another problem is here you have a community where only 20 percent or so are minorities, so you have 80 percent who are not minority, and you are limited to only 20 people at most out of 100. So in a group of 20, the probability of getting two or three minorities is very slim.
Cities across the country have used different models to attract and recruit minorities. The model is different from ours.

When we organized the first recruitment right after this announcement, we were all supposed to go out and encourage people to come forward and take the test. And I remember one day I went to my mosque and told the leadership it’s going to be different this time around. And I made an announcement to our congregation. And no one believed that.

**GOLDEN:** You have to remember, this is a mosque that had been burned.

**SIDDIQUEE:** It’s a long story. In fact, it’s an outrage. [The Sangamon County Sheriff’s Department] asked for the local Muslim leadership to come forward and take lie detector tests. They invented the story that maybe you guys did it to get insurance money. And it was clearly a swastika painted right in front of the light post right after the incident.

**GOLDEN:** Well, you guys could’ve done that too. (laughs)

**SIDDIQUEE:** Oh yeah, that’s right. So anyway, that’s why people didn’t believe I’m sure. But I was convinced through the mayor and city leadership.

**GOLDEN:** You asked about things that got us diverted. We also got diverted on racial profiling. We spent probably months on that. Finally, we came out with a general policy. But the problem was there was no way of tracking it or enforcing it. And when we tried to get tracking or enforcement, we couldn’t do it.

**JUAREZ:** We worked with the Regional Institute for Community Policing in developing a card that collected the race of the person stopped by the police. Chief Harris stated that the Association of Chiefs of Police opposed such data collection and there was no support also from the [local police union]. The police eventually developed a contact card that did not include the race of the person.

**GOLDEN:** We got derailed by that. We got involved in discussions over lateral entry [into SPD]. But again, all these things were things the NAACP was doing in tandem with us. In fact, there were some problems there in terms of cross communication between us, the NAACP and the city, because the NAACP was going its own way. So there was all this stuff going on.

**IT:** When did you start deciding that you might need to leave the task force?

**GOLDEN:** It wasn’t real slow. I mean, it wasn’t like a year that I was sitting there.

**SIDDIQUEE:** It was the fire department.

**GOLDEN:** That’s what really sealed it.

**IT:** What happened?
CHYN: They changed the [test] dummy weight.

IT: By 70 pounds, right?

CHYN: Potential test takers were not prepared for this change. And I think several task force members were disappointed at learning about this change from the newspaper. Even though I kept in regular communication with the [now retired] fire chief!

JUAREZ: Before that, they hired 10 new recruits from the old list . . .

GOLDEN: Which would’ve been all white males . . .

SIDDIQUEE: We’re all negotiating about the new test and 15 percent, right? What happens? We saw in the newspaper—while we’re negotiating!— the fire chief hired 10 firefighters from the old list, which was about to expire.

GOLDEN: The idea was it would’ve taken too long to recruit a whole new list and they needed to act quickly.

JUAREZ: While they’re working on the test and really promising us . . .

SIDDIQUEE: This happened conveniently right when we’re doing this negotiation. And that’s what made us really angry, because we are negotiating here and we’re not even informed that they’re about to hire 10 people off of that old list.

JUAREZ: But the [State Journal-Register] came out with a nice pretty picture that they’re about to hire these 10 white guys. No women. We had a subcommittee working with the chief, negotiating . . .

GOLDEN: There were two or three incidents like that over the course of the year.

CHYN: [After the fire chief hired all white male recruits], he came to our meeting to convince us he’s going to do everything in his power to diversify his department. And we believed him. And then he changed the weight of the dummy, and we have to read about it in the newspaper.

GOLDEN: And their explanation of why they never told us? Because it involved women instead of minorities. It wasn’t race relations.

CHYN: It was about diversity! Diversity is people who are different.

GOLDEN: He said, oh, if I’d known that you guys were interested in this—of course I would have come and told you!

CHYN: And some of the task force members agreed with that statement.
GOLDEN: Some of them. But not the majority.

SIDDIQUEE: I always thought we were talking about diversity. Even though the title was race relations.

GOLDEN: That’s where [current task force chair] Lawrence Johnson came in and said, “I can understand this. This wasn’t an issue of race relations. Of course I can see where they wouldn’t have brought this to you!” And I remember we tussled over this.

SIDDIQUEE: One member raised the question, well, what is our charge? What was the mission of this task force? Was it race relations or more broadly gender issues? As far as I remember, it was overall diversity, which was both race and gender and other issues.

JUAREZ: Something happened when we sent an e-mail to the mayor to stop this hiring, to let the time expire so it wouldn’t harm the 15 percent. Somehow she didn’t get the e-mail or she got it late or something.

SIDDIQUEE: We sent a recommendation to the mayor to stop this process because it would jeopardize our ability to get to 15 percent by 2005. And then we said let’s expedite the recruitment process, the hiring process, then bring a new list and hire from that. And the story was that the mayor didn’t get the e-mail on time.

CHYN: No, [then co-chair] Leroy Jordan hand-delivered the letter and she never responded.

SIDDIQUEE: So that was the story that later on we were told: “It has already been done.”

GOLDEN: The frustration started to build particularly last year when we started to encounter more and more of these things. And I think when we got to the end of last year, I felt that the breach of trust between us and the City, for me at least, had just gotten past the point I felt I could stay. For each of us it was an individual decision. We didn’t sit down and say we all agree on this and then walk away. Each of us really independently came to the similar conclusion for our own reason.

CHYN: It was perplexing to me given two years of service to this community that even though we were appointed by the mayor, we were not trusted. We should have been involved with many policy and procedure changes. But we were not consulted. So I felt: I have tried. I have given the city sufficient time to trust me. And if my service was not needed, it’s time for me to leave.

Of course my initial involvement with the task force was to show the community Asian immigrants do care too. Many Americans’ perception of Asian immigrants in particular is that we come to this country, enjoy all the benefits, but don’t want to do anything in return. I wanted to represent a different side of Asian immigrants. But I find that if I cannot gain the trust of city officials, if you don’t like my ability, there is no point for me to hang around.

GOLDEN: You don’t go into something if you don’t have hope. . . . I know the mayor, I’ve known her for years, she was a student of mine way back when at the university, so I know that
she is constrained politically. But as Baker has indicated, I think that we felt that she wanted to do the right thing. And maybe the problem is that she didn’t know how, maybe people around her wouldn’t let her. She wanted to do the right thing.

IT: When did you resign?

GOLDEN: I never have. Really, I had talked about sending a letter and I never did. It was sort of inertia. Probably the February [2002] meeting I turned to Victor and said I can’t do this anymore, I’ve had it. But I never sent a letter, no one asked me to send a letter…

IT: To those of you who stayed, how did you make the decision to stay on the task force?

JUAREZ: We thought about stepping out. But I have a responsibility to the people I represent. They would have nobody to come to the table to present their views. So that’s why I stay. And I always have the concern that they say when you don’t want to solve a problem you set up a task force. So I always have in my mind not to be that kind of task force.

IT: So have you thought about leaving?

SIDDIQUEE: Yeah, I thought about it. I was frustrated with all those failures and disappointments. I think we expressed those forcefully to the mayor at one of those meetings. We raised those issues: How effective are we, and are we being used for the right purpose at the right time? Despite all of that, I decided to stay on. One reason was to continue the representation of the community I was appointed to represent.

I’d like to see a society with fairness and justice for everyone. But I also understand the politics. That’s why I say I believe that the mayor was serious with her commitment, and I still believe that she is sincere with her goals and ideals. But I also believe what Larry said about politics. At least on several occasions she alluded that there are so many powerful forces she has to work with. . . .

Even though my hopes were really high . . . I think that my expectations are not that high. The task force formed with these high goals and ideals. But I never expected that we would actually be able to get much done. So since my expectation was not that high, even a little bit of progress is progress is my judgment. Even a minor change is a hopeful sign. That’s the minority mentality.