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South Pasadena: A Dialogue on Dialogue

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"People in South Pasadena know how to fight well. Counterpunching is extraordinary and effective . . . more like a small display of martial arts than a drunken bar fight."

~South Pasadena Resident~

I. INTRODUCTION

I live in South Pasadena, California (population: 24,000), only a few short miles north of downtown Los Angeles. The city was incorporated in 1888 to prevent saloons from establishing themselves in the community. Even today it feels like a small town in the Midwest. Mission Street, the heart of the business district, looks like the kind of street where you are likely to bump into two or three people you know, perhaps at the Fair Oaks Pharmacy soda fountain. The residential districts are not grandiose but solid: Victorian, Craftsman, and mission revival houses shaded by huge old oaks, palms, and magnolias. When the director of *Back to the Future* wanted to depict a small-town street, he filmed his movie in South Pasadena. "It's the Mayberry of Southern California," say many residents and visitors. "The small town ideal, but with access to the big city."

In the last half century, South Pasadena has fought many land use related battles—from efforts to stop the extension of the 710 freeway (710) through the heart of the city, to the recent ballot measure (Measure SP) that sought to overturn the City Council's approval of the new Downtown Revitalization Plan. The pattern of engagement continues to be one of "us versus them," with locals assuming extremely polarized positions, escalating

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This article is dedicated to my husband, Robert Fung, and our son, Joaquin, for their loving support and for making South Pasadena home. The author also wishes to thank Phil Stewart for his comments on an early version of this article, and to the folks in South Pasadena who shared their thoughts and gave of their time to participate in this study.

the level of mistrust and demonization, and further dividing the city's civic and social fabric.

II. INTENT OF THE STUDY

Mediators are typically called in to help stakeholders resolve *specific* land use conflicts. However, there is increasing interest in addressing these issues early on—before the parties are in full crisis mode—through a series of facilitated dialogues aimed at exploring ways for communities to improve how they engage with each other outside the context of any one specific issue or project. A carefully constructed dialogue can be, and often is, the first important step toward further deliberation and other action.

This "dialogue on dialogue" process can offer untapped potential for preventing future disputes by: (a) surfacing existing tensions and potential sources of future conflict; (b) helping participants develop better communication and listening skills; (c) modeling more effective and robust engagement techniques; (d) providing a sense of possibility for discovering new ways of relating to and working with each other; and (e) serving as a foundation for more sustained dialogue in the months and years ahead.

The intention of this study was to:

1. Ascertain whether key stakeholders in South Pasadena would be willing to participate in a dialogue on dialogue;
2. Determine the extent of what can be accomplished in an initial series of two dialogue sessions;
3. Examine some of the challenges faced by practitioners in convening and facilitating a dialogue on dialogue process; and
4. Offer some lessons learned that might be replicated by other practitioners.

My initial focus was on a set of personal interviews to assess the existing situation and identify the level of readiness to take part in a dialogue on dialogue. If participants were receptive, I would then design and facilitate two dialogue sessions that could serve as the foundation for a more sustained process in the future.

III. CORE FRAMEWORKS/METHODOLOGIES

The methodology for this study draws on a variety of different models. I am generally reticent about relying upon one singular process or design methodology. In my experience, much of dialogue's potential can be found by carefully selecting various aspects of different models rather than by

being a strict adherent to any one particular approach.[1] There is often extensive overlap between frameworks; as such, I look for the common threads, which tend to be the most useful in practice. More often than not, holding to one particular course prevents one from seeing outside the scope of that structure and inhibits much of the "magic" from occurring, or from being perceived. A cross-methodological approach allows for permission to improvise, for a certain level of flexibility, and for choices that are more deliberate and wiser.

In that spirit, my intent was to use a combination of approaches including adapted versions of "Appreciative Inquiry" (AI) and "Sustained Dialogue" (SD), as well as two engagement techniques: "World Café" and "Speed Dating."

Sustained Dialogue: SD is defined as:

> [A] systematic, open-ended political process to transform relationships over time. SD differs from most other approaches to problem-solving and conflict resolution in two ways. First, it focuses on transforming relationships that cause problems and conflict—relationships that may appear calm but are undermined by destructive interactions. . . . Second, it offers a process that unfolds through five stages in a series of meetings.[2]

SD is comprised of five stages:[3]

1. *Deciding to Engage*: People in conflict decide to engage in dialogue as a way of changing their relationships.
2. *Mapping and Naming*: Participants come together to talk, to map, and name the elements of their problems and the relationships responsible for creating them.
3. *Probing Problems and Relationships*: Participants probe specific problems to uncover the dynamics of underlying relationships.
4. *Scenario Building*: Participants design a scenario of interacting steps in the political arena to change troublesome relationships and to engage others.
5. *Acting Together*: Participants devise ways to put that scenario into the hands of those who can act on it and ways of judging achievement.

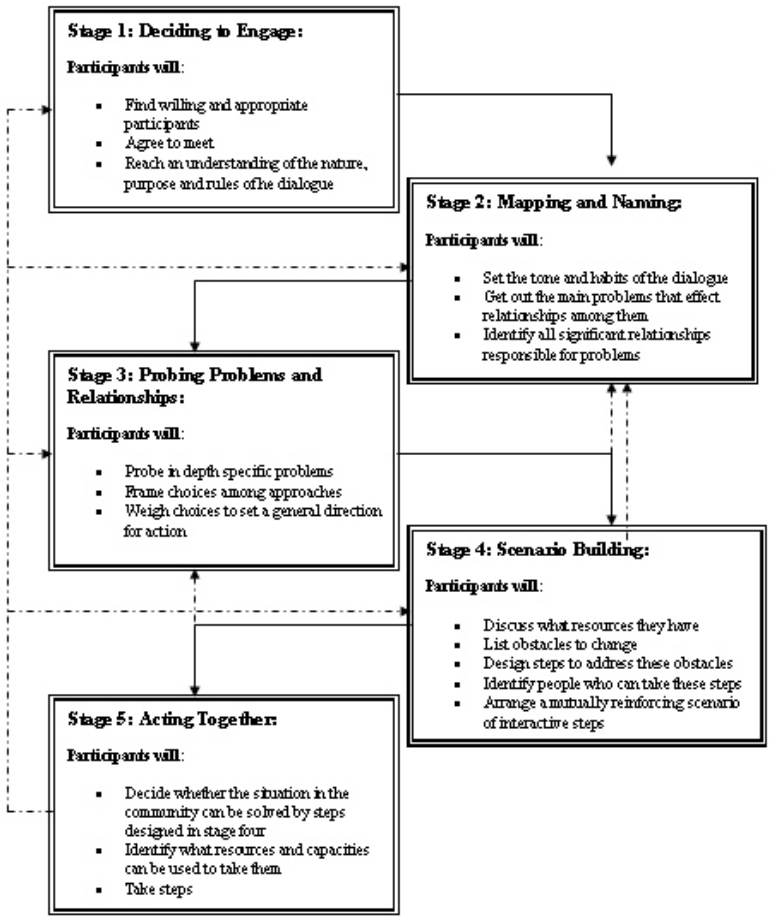
1. For example, the work of Australian practitioner Janette Hartz-Karp is based on adapting and combining a variety of deliberative designs.

2. The International Institute for Sustained Dialogue, What We Do, http://www.sustaineddialogue.org/ (last visited Feb. 20, 2010). For a visual representation of the SD process, see *infra* note 5.

3. The Process of Sustained Dialogue, http://www.sustaineddialogue.org/learn_about_sd.htm (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

According to Dr. Philip D. Stewart and Dr. Harold H. Saunders, SD is used for people who are not yet ready to collaborate but find themselves in crisis and are looking for another way.[4] This seemed to reflect the situation in South Pasadena, where my initial set of personal interviews took place in the weeks immediately following the very divisive Measure SP regarding the City's Downtown Revitalization Plan. The fight over SP created and fermented a lot of bitter animosity and further polarization. In its aftermath, people were angry, frustrated, and unprepared to collaborate with "the other side." While on the surface most relationships *appeared* to be calm, many of the key players were looking for another way. It was my hope that the dialogue on dialogue might serve that purpose.

4. Interviews with Dr. Philip D. Stewart and Dr. Harold H. Saunders (Oct. 2008).



[5]

The personal interviews reflected the first stage of the SD approach. To that end, my intention was to meet one-on-one with residents and stakeholders in order to explain what I was doing, to establish a sense of

[5] A Visual Representation of the Five Stages of Sustained Dialogue, http://www.sustaineddialogue.org/learn_about_sd.htm (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

trust, to listen deeply to their stories and experiences, and to establish their level of interest in taking part in a dialogue.[6]

In this regard, as a resident of South Pasadena, I wanted to establish a sense of legitimacy and "neutrality." In order to do so, I thought that I would first address how my project would help the community and *then* bring in my academic goals regarding the project. I was under the mistaken notion that prospective participants would be motivated first by what was in it for them as a community (how my project would help the community) and that my academic goals were secondary (and a distant second at that).

I quickly discovered that the opposite was true. People felt more comfortable taking part in the project precisely because it was an academic exercise. The scholarly nature of my work offered people a safe and novel forum in which to explore some very challenging issues. The academic underpinning was perceived as more neutral, and provided the opportunity for more open and candid conversation. With some, it felt like they were willing to participate and speak with "the other side" for the sake of the study. For others, the project served as a good excuse to "enter the room."

The SD model also assumes that it can take a considerable amount of time to change or transform relationships.[7] Stewart notes:

> People don't want to get to the difficult decisions. By playing nice, by maintaining the calm front, they don't have to address what it takes to really change relationships. After all, that change is usually not easy. That process takes time (in fact, many meetings) and participants have to be committed to going through that level of intensity. Dialogue needs to be sustained because people change slowly: they don't like change, they never did something like this, and they are reluctant when they have to do something differently. Most people are not that committed, or there isn't enough time for that commitment to develop. So participants resort to cordiality as a fall back position. Unless the dialogue is sustained, there isn't enough time and space for constructive surfacing of the issues as a group.[8]

Unfortunately, our brief academic timeframe did not allow enough time for a prolonged dialogue process (along the lines of Stage 2 and beyond) to occur during the course of my study period. Recognizing this limitation, I still felt that it was important to proceed given the long-term potential of the

6. This approach of listening deeply to people in crisis is similar to that taken by the Public Conversations Project (PCP). In June of 2008, I completed a three-day PCP training called *The Power of Dialogue* and found many similarities to the SD process. However, one important difference was that PCP was founded by a group of psychologists and psychotherapists, and that is reflected in the scope and approach to their work. See generally http://www.publicconversations.org/ for more on their practice.

7. Philip Stewart, *Sustained Dialogue in Practice: Some Examples* (July 15, 2008).

8. Interview with Dr. Philip D. Stewart (Mar. 2009).

SD approach, and to use the personal interviews and initial two dialogue sessions (Stage 1) to lay the foundation for later SD stages.

For example, in Stage 2, practitioners probe the problems in relationships, mapping or generating a picture of the problems as the participants see it. They determine key issues, consider divisions *within* and *between* communities, and live together through the pain that everyone feels.[9] As such, throughout the Stage 1 evaluation process, I intentionally explored these questions and issues in depth with a view toward the Stage 2 dialogue sessions.

Appreciative Inquiry:

> [AI] is a particular way of asking questions and envisioning the future that fosters positive relationships and builds on the basic goodness in a person, a situation, or an organization. In so doing, it enhances a system's capacity for collaboration and change. . . . The basic idea is to build organizations [and communities] around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't. It is the opposite of problem solving. Instead of focusing [on fixing what's wrong,] AI focuses on how to create more of [what is already working].[10]

AI is well-suited for helping people see past their anger, frustration, conflict, and dysfunction; and for taking parties from a destructive to a far more constructive mindset. "People grow in the direction of the questions they ask," notes David Cooperrider, one of the leading AI practitioners. According to Cooperrider:

> The questions we ask and the way we construct them will focus us in a particular manner and will greatly affect the outcome of our inquiry. If we ask: ["]What is wrong and who is to blame?["], w]e set up a certain dynamic of problem-solving and blame assigning. While there may be instances where such an approach is desirable, when it comes to hosting a [dialogue], we have found it much more effective to ask people questions that invite the exploration of possibilities and to connect them with why they care.[11]

In the initial set of personal interviews, participants expressed many common positive values concerning life in South Pasadena.[12] AI asks questions

> that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. . . . [I]nstead of negation, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis, there is discovery,

9. Interviews with Dr. Philip D. Stewart and Dr. Harold H. Saunders (Oct. 2008).

10. Wikipedia, Appreciative Inquiry, http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative_Inquiry (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

11. The World Café, Café Principles in Action, http://www.theworldcafe.com/know-how.htm (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

12. *See infra* Part IV.C.

> dream, and design. . . . AI deliberately, in everything it does, seeks to work from [a] "positive change core"—and assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive.[13]

The tangible result of the process is a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where it has been.[14] To this end, AI utilizes a four-stage process:

- *Discover*: The identification of organizational processes that work well.
- *Dream*: The envisioning of processes that would work well in the future.
- *Design*: Planning and prioritizing processes that would work well.
- *"Destiny (or Deliver)*: The implementation (execution) of the proposed design."[15]

The dialogue may look at a single question, or use a progressively deeper line of inquiry through several conversational rounds. My intention was to use the latter approach, and the questions, at least *initially*, would reflect the "Discover" stage of the AI process.

I say initially because I was concerned that participants might end up feeling shortchanged and frustrated if there was not an opportunity for them to release their more "negative" feelings, etc. at some point during the course of the group dialogue. While I liked the AI approach, I queried its effectiveness at getting to the real issues. I could see the value in using the AI approach to begin the discussion but wondered if I would need to shift away at some point during the dialogue sessions, toward a line of inquiry that might lend itself to less positive comments and perspectives.

"We need to test the water by going deeper, by having real conversations, by asking: 'Did we get at the things that really bother you?'" notes Stewart. "As practitioners, we need to keep taking them back to the question: *'What's really bothering you?'* SD addresses that central question and creates an environment for people to tell their stories and for others to simply listen."[16]

While I thought that using both SD (in the long term) and AI (in the short term) could be a very effective choice, I was also quite concerned

13. David L. Cooperrider & Diane Whitney, *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry (Draft)*, http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/uploads/whatisai.pdf.

14. *See id.*

15. *See* Theodore Kinni, *The Art of Appreciative Inquiry*, HARV. BUS. SCH. WORKING KNOWLEDGE, Sept. 22, 2003, *available at* http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/3684.html; New Paradigm Consulting, Appreciative Inquiry, http://www.new-paradigm.co.uk/Appreciative.htm (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

16. Interview with Dr. Philip D. Stewart (Mar. 2009).

about the challenges that might lie ahead in terms of balancing the tensions between these two approaches.

"This is the fault line in dialogue and deliberation practice today," argues Stewart.[17] Stewart also stated:

> Cordiality versus real surfacing. It's a challenge to the notion that the only reality is words, that if you change words (as they do in AI), you can change what is important, like values. But people can use nice words that still harbor hatred, deep-seated threats to identity, deep-seated reluctance to making hard choices. The idea is that if these issues are fully surfaced, people are more likely to make hard choices.[18]

To help address some of these tensions and provide for more effective forms of dialogue, I chose two engagement techniques: World Café and Speed Dating.

World Café: "[T]he World Café is an innovative yet simple [technique] for hosting conversations about questions that matter."[19] In a World Café, participants sit four or five to a table and have a series of conversational rounds lasting from twenty to thirty minutes about a particular question.[20] At the end of the round, one person remains as the host and each of the other three "travel" to separate tables. The host of the table welcomes the travelers and shares the essence of the previous conversation. The travelers also relate any conversational threads they are carrying and the conversation deepens as the round progresses. At the end of this round, participants may return to their original table or go to another table depending on the design of the Café. Likewise, they may engage a new question or go deeper with the original one.

The conversations link and build on each other as people move among groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions presented. After several rounds, each table usually reports out their themes, insights, and gained knowledge to the whole group, where it is captured on flipcharts or other means for making it visible, allowing everyone to reflect on what is emerging in the room. The information that is gathered does not reflect the work of only four people but rather of many other different

17. *Id*.

18. *Id.*

19. The World Café, What Is the World Café?, http://www.theworldcafe.com/what.htm (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

20. One can also use four chairs in a circle as if there were a table in the center. The idea is to replicate the level of intimacy and personal space one would find around a café table. THE WORLD CAFÉ, THE WORLD CAFÉ PRESENTS A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR PUTTING CONVERSATIONS TO WORK (2008), http://www.theworldcafe.com/articles/cafetogo.pdf.

voices, and is offered up as the collaborative results of many productive and seemingly anonymous dialogues. At this point, the Café may end or it may begin another round of conversational exploration and inquiry.

My intent was to use the World Café model as the principal way for participants to engage with one another during the Dialogue sessions. I use this process often and have found it to be particularly effective, especially in more highly charged situations. It provides people with an opportunity to converse in an intimate space. The small number of people at each table limits the ability of individuals to raise their voices, grandstand, or both. A few interviewees stressed the value of speaking with one another on a "one-on-one" basis. World Café creates that level of dialogue. At this scale, people seem to respect certain unwritten rules. It also lets everyone around the table have a much greater chance of speaking if they wish, and they usually do.

Also, people seem to enjoy the freedom that comes with knowing that they will not be stuck with the same group for the full two hours. Changing conversational partners allows participants to "unstick" from a position they may have backed into (or been backed into), and carry forward ideas (their own or others) from previous tables. "People who arrived with fixed positions often find that they are more open to new and different ideas."[21]

World Café also invites "each person to express themselves authentically, and those who listen skillfully are able to easily build on what is being shared."[22] I intended to offer a few tips for improving the level of listening including:

- Noticing our tendency to plan a response to what is being said instead of listening more carefully;
- Listening with an openness to be influenced by the speaker;
- Listening to support the speaker in fully expressing themselves;
- Listening for deeper questions, patterns, insights, and emerging perspectives;
- Listening for what is not being spoken along with what is being shared.[23]

Speed-Dating:[24] Participants are seated in rows of five, facing one another in very close proximity with their knees eight to twelve inches apart. This spacing creates a sense of intimacy and also enables participants

21. Café Principles in Action, *supra* note 11.

22. *Id.*

23. *Id*.

24. Janette Hartz-Karp introduced me to this technique at a seminar conducted at the National Coalition of Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) bi-annual conference. I later refer to this technique as "Movers and Shakers," for the reasons outlined *infra* p. 405.

to hear one another as it does get rather noisy when everyone is speaking at once. One row is asked to move down every two or three minutes, with each new question task, or both. The other row stays put. Some practitioners see this technique as being akin to speed-dating (hence the name).

Participants are usually reluctant to start but then once they get going, things can get quite animated. With each move, participants are able to share a new question (or task) with a new partner or reiterate an earlier question, etc. to a new set of ears. Like the World Café process, these questions and conversations link and build on each other as people move down the row, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, or community.

One can attempt to capture the different questions and conversations in writing but the process works best when little is written down. It is better to ask participants immediately after the completion of the exercise (or series of rounds) to share with the rest of the group a few "Great Questions" or "Great Discussion Points" that arose during their conversations. As such, this technique is a wonderful way to warm up participants, or to generate a broad range of questions, etc. in a short period of time. Participants can then carry forward their questions, etc. into the next exercise.

IV. PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

I conducted nineteen individual face-to-face interviews with some of the key players in South Pasadena. "If the key relationships change," explained Stewart, "then the city can change."[25] I started by talking with a couple of people that I knew were quite active in town. I then asked each of them for more names of individuals who have been engaged in previous issues before and who might be appropriate for this dialogue. Given the recent SP ballot measure, many of the initial names flowed from that process but I also tried to elicit suggestions for other people who may have had little or no involvement in SP.

It was often challenging to get people to sit down and meet with me. Initially, there was quite a bit of suspicion: Who is this guy? What does he want from me? Is he from the other side? Can I trust him?

One prospective interviewee asked me for proof of my student credentials and then a letter from my faculty advisor. When that was not enough, I responded calmly and authentically in a telephone call: "I don't

25. Interview with Dr. Philip D. Stewart (Mar. 2009).

know what I can do, so maybe it's best that we don't meet." She then explained at length about all the tricks the other side had tried to pull on her. After almost an hour of intense discussion, she agreed to meet, at her house, with the stipulation that I come alone (which was my intention in the first place).

It took quite a while for elected officials to agree to meet with me, and they asked to meet in other places, away from South Pasadena. My attitude was not to push. I noticed that the more people I met with, the easier it was to meet with others. People talk with one another in South Pasadena. When prospective interviewees heard through the grapevine that I was "okay" to speak with, they would contact me and we would set something up. If I missed anyone, there was still a chance that they might decide to talk with me later, or maybe they were simply not meant to be part of the process. While initially I was hoping for particular individuals to get back to me (for example, certain elected officials and prominent businesspersons), as the days and weeks passed, I felt increasingly more comfortable with the notion that whoever was meant to show up would show up.

Each interview explored the following questions and subject areas:[26]

- General background/history in South Pasadena (length of time in the city, attendance of any children in school system, level of community/political participation, etc.)
- What has been your experience with land use issues in South Pasadena?
- What are your thoughts on the current approach to communication, civic engagement, and decision-making about land use matters in South Pasadena?
- What suggestions would you make for improving the current approach?
- What do you value most about this community?
- What would you be interested in saying to the other side if the other side would listen?
- Would you be willing to share your views with others?
- Would you be willing to listen to the others' views?

Where there is a deep-rooted and profound sense of threat, in order to move ahead Stewart and Saunders feel that participants need to listen to each other's stories.[27] To this end, during the personal interviews, I shared my thoughts on what the dialogue on dialogue might look like, including such matters as the importance of providing a safe and neutral environment for

26. The exact wording varied depending on the interviewee and the tone and direction of the interview.

27. Interviews with Dr. Philip D. Stewart and Dr. Harold H. Saunders (Oct. 2008).

people to share their stories and to listen to one another, the need for ground rules, and the potential use of engagement techniques like the World Café. I also indicated that, should there be a willingness by the interviewees to take part in a dialogue, I proposed two sessions—the first in late January and the second in late February.

A. Specific Land Use Issues

Recognizing that everyone's experience of a particular event or process will be different, I focused less on the so-called "factual truth" or "historical record" of prior events than on the *operating* truth for an individual (the "operative narrative"). Many people in South Pasadena were born and raised there, or moved to the city in the 1960s and 1970s. As such, a lot of folks have long memories concerning events that happened many years ago, and these events have dramatically shaped the dynamics of dialogue in the City.

The 710 Extension: Probably the most formative land use dispute in South Pasadena is the proposed surface extension of the 710 through the city. This plan dates back to 1959, when the State of California adopted its Master Plan of Freeways and Expressways. In 1964, the California Highway Commission officially adopted the "Meridian Route" as the freeway alignment, which would have split the city in half. In all, more than 1,000 homes in South Pasadena and neighboring El Sereno and Pasadena would be destroyed, many of them historic. The highway corridor was on the National Historic Trust's list of America's Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places for five straight years, from 1989 through 1993. In fact, many of the interviewees regarded preservation and heritage as the best leverage in the battle over the freeway extension: "Looking at the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), preservation goes the furthest in terms of our arguments against the 710."

South Pasadena vigorously opposed the proposal which has been the subject of numerous administrative proceedings, court actions, and legislative initiatives ever since. In 1999, the City, the National Trust, and a broad coalition of other groups obtained a federal court injunction against the project, which remains in place to this day. The freeway extension has been supported by other San Gabriel Valley cities, like neighboring Alhambra, that see it as a solution to their traffic woes.

In 2002, the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) came forth with a tunnel alternative, which has been met, not surprisingly, by

significant opposition in South Pasadena and some limited—mostly clandestine—support.[28]

The 710 has been the rallying cry for South Pasadena. It is what has brought the city together over the years; from Republican to Democrat, across racial divides and religious beliefs, it has helped define the way people engage with others and with one another regarding land use disputes. The vast majority of disputes are "us" versus "them", the "yes" forces versus the "no" forces.

"No 710!" and *"No Tunnel!"* are common slogans around town.

Positions on land use matters in South Pasadena are usually extremely polarized, and polarizing. A proud anti-710 resident proclaims, "We will not consider the project dead until CalTrans agrees to sell the 500 homes they bought. They're an equal-opportunity destroyer of neighborhoods." One opponent even has an email address that starts with "No710" and personalized license plates that read "NO 710."

While this reflects the feelings of most of the people I interviewed, there are some who are in favor of the 710, or at least, there are some who are willing to look at the *possibility* of a tunnel. Their support is based on a number of different rationales: the 710 fight has consumed our city and our resources and it is time to move on; we cannot ignore what may be valid mitigation possibilities; we have a responsibility to the region; there are too many cars and trucks on the surface streets, so something needs to be done.

This support, however, is usually very secretive. Subtle positions that might favor a middle position like the tunnel do not seem to work. It is a central challenge to resolving many disputes like the 710. A number of people confided: "How can I be in the room without necessarily being for the change itself? How can I even look at plans for building a mitigated freeway without someone taking it and turning it against me?"[29]

One person who would *like* to be more open but is frustrated concluded: "You can't slalom through the shoals. You need water without shoals, no grey area. The tunnel possibility is too nimble, too many hills ahead of your forces. You *have* to be against it."

Still others have said, "It's not whether you're for or against the 710 but rather how deeply committed you are to the fight." And yet another commented, "It's over. Now, it's just a war about power."

28. *See infra* p. 371.

29. This is where the dialogue processes like SD and AI can play a central role: by helping different sides be in the same room, by sharing common community values, by surfacing underlying interests and needs, by exposing gray area, by providing ground rules that encourage respectful listening and other enhanced engagement techniques, and by offering a safe space to explore alternatives without having to make any commitment.

Racism and Discrimination: A number of interviewees recalled the connection between land disputes and discrimination and racism in South Pasadena.

Reference was made to Romberger House, established in 1968-1969 for teenage wards of the court. "It was nasty and personal just like today. People would say things like: 'We can't have those people in our town or at our high school.' That attitude is still around today."

When the hills above South Pasadena (now known as Monterey Hills) were being developed in the 1960s and early 1970s:

> this city was still very white and Republican. But because the area was a community redevelopment project and the only one in South Pasadena to require federal funds, they couldn't discriminate. However, once they got the federal funds, the City closed the street to El Sereno (an adjacent lower income community with a population of mixed cultural backgrounds) and couched it in terms of 'safety.'

Another interviewee recounted a public meeting in the 1960s where the issue of race arose and a council member exclaimed, "People like you would like to have Martin Luther King Jr. marching down Huntington Drive."

Other Land Use Disputes: Interviewees mentioned other land use related disputes that have occurred over the years, including:

- Efforts to prevent the old school board building from being torn down thirty years ago (it was demolished);
- Formation of a committee in the 1970s to save the classic Rialto cinema (ongoing);
- Plans to restrict outdoor seating for coffee houses, which resulted in a compromise whereby stripes were painted on City sidewalks and spaces, designated for patio chairs ("People took pictures and showed up at the standing-room only council meeting . . . that was fun.");
- A proposal to develop a new school on city lands next to the Arroyo Seco, across from what was once the old Ostrich Farm. ("People came out 'en masse' to protest, and the proponents ended up surrendering," recounted one resident); and
- The Mission/Meridian townhouse project next to the Gold Line train station. While this was a large development, few people mentioned it, although one person did recall the day that trees were cut down without permission and nobody at City Hall was available. One neighbor had a heart attack and died.

There have also been lesser known efforts such as:

- Limiting smoking in multi-unit buildings;
- Designating as a landmark the quaint little plaza that is home to Mike and Anne's, a much-loved local restaurant with an outdoor patio; and
- Extending the lease of city lands to the existing golf course.

Comprehensive Planning Efforts: There have also been more comprehensive planning initiatives. Some of these came out of opposition to projects like the early 1990s "top-down hotel proposal by a Council member where they were trying to use an earthquake ordinance to get rid of a city block. We formed a grassroots organization called 'SPRIG' to stop the city from knocking down buildings the way [neighboring] Alhambra did."

SPRIG's efforts led to the creation of Design Review guidelines, the Downtown Revitalization Committee, and eventually the General Plan Committee. "We had thirty-one public meetings and came out with our new General plan in 1999. Then, in 2002, we upgraded our zoning code to be in conformity with the General Plan."

Downtown Revitalization Plan/Measure SP: In February 2004, the City's Community Redevelopment Commission (CRC) presented its *Framework for Downtown Development*.[30] "One of the goals," according to an interviewee, "was to define the community's vision for downtown's future development and revitalization, and to create a plan to implement that vision. The redevelopment area includes many surface parking lots and a substantial amount of 'under-utilized land.'"

Based on comments received during the preparation of the *Framework* document, South Pasadena residents expressed "clear interest in maintaining a 'small town' feel for the downtown area. The stated goal became one of creating a 'sense of place' that allowed for a diverse and attractive city center, without allowing for a significant increase in density."

In April 2005, the City of South Pasadena's Community Redevelopment Agency entered into an agreement with a developer, DECOMA, to develop and construct a combination of some or all of commercial, retail, restaurant, office, residential, entertainment, open space and parking uses for the Revitalization Area. From April through July of 2005, DECOMA held several "Town Talks" and "Architect Talks" in the library's Community Room. Some interviewees enjoyed the opportunities for discussion while

30. COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, FRAMEWORK FOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT: A SPECIAL REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION ADOPTED BY THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (2004), *available at* http://www.cityofsouthpasadena.us/business/PDFs/FrameworkforDowntownDevelopment.pdf.

others felt that they were too staged and one-sided. In March 2006, twelve affordable senior units were added to the Development Program. One year later, the Planning Department held a scoping session for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

On May 21, 2008, the City Council gave final project approval by a vote of three to two. Six weeks later, during the 4th of July celebrations, opponents of the plan rounded up enough signatures on a petition to effectively send the issue to the voters in November (Measure SP). The ballot measure, which dealt only with clearing up some ambiguous language in the Downtown Plan, still carried symbolic weight: Did the people of South Pasadena want the project to go forward or not? When Measure SP passed with 55.45% of the vote on November 4, 2008,[31] it seemed to pave the way for the project to proceed.

My initial set of personal interviews was conducted one week after the election and continued for another six weeks. It was clear that many people on both sides of the issue were still angry and frustrated with the Revitalization Plan process. Consistent with previous patterns of engagement around other land use disputes in South Pasadena, the campaign itself had been extremely positional. Even though the measure itself dealt only with a narrow point of clarification, people still framed it in terms of "Us" versus "Them." "Yes on SP" versus "No on SP." The respective sign wars exclaimed: *"No Overdevelopment—60 Condos!"* and *"Yes for South Pasadena!"*

B. Civic Engagement and Governance Issues

Interviewees had a number of things to say about civic engagement and governance matters in the City, including:

Meetings: The majority of interviewees expressed concerns about the current system for conducting meetings. The issues raised include:

- *Attendance*: So few people show up at meetings. "Do people even know about the meetings?" "Do they care enough to come?"
- *Quantity*: "Sometimes, there are way too many meetings, especially where nothing seems to get accomplished." "They tell us about how many meetings they had but most of those were the regular CRC meetings."

31. SmartVoter, Measure SP: Amended Redevelopment Plan for Downtown Revitalization, http://www.smartvoter.org/2008/11/04/ca/la/meas/SP/ (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

- *Who leads*: "Why is the developer leading the meeting? It should be the City." "They should use a neutral facilitator or a professional mediator."
- *Length*: "They're often way too long." "They don't need to go on and on, explaining everything, especially the politicians or commission members." "People end up going home and nobody's left from the public, or only the die-hard opponents are still in the room at midnight."
- *Grandstanding*: "It's the politicians and also the public, often the same few people getting up to say the same old thing. It's a drag really, very discouraging and it shuts down new people who may have something fresh to contribute."

Fresh Voices: "A small vocal group controls the government," asserted many. "In reality, less than a hundred people run this town." "A tight little group is engaged, but most aren't. For those that do speak up, it's the opposite of apathy. How do we bring in more voices?"

On the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) listserv last fall, one practitioner wrote:

> Even in a city like Portland, which is very "civic engagement friendly," it still plays out as getting feedback from many stakeholders, but the deliberation over priorities is still left in the hand of a few decision makers. The outcomes frequently stop short of testing assumptions fully enough to make real and significant change in the system.[32]

As one interviewee put it:

> We need to anticipate change. People want South Pasadena to remain idyllic but change is inevitable. We need to deal with the reality of change, the tremors of change. Here, anything that feels new is immediately attacked. But we can plan for that and try to help people feel more comfortable with change. New voices can help us gain new perspectives.

City Government: "The City government is a disaster," exclaimed one resident. This theme was very prevalent in the initial interviews. Other complaints include:

- *Lack of proper review*: "Council members don't have enough time to read the material."
- *Unbalanced positional approach*: "Staff doesn't balance the positives with negatives. They only present their position which is often out of touch with the community. They tend to view things as 'us' (staff) versus 'them' (the community)."

32. Posting of Judith Mowry to National Coalition of Deliberation & Dialogue listserv (Dec. 8, 2008), *available at* http://lists.thataway.org/SCRIPTS/WA-THATAWAY.EXE?A0=NCDD-DISCUSSION (Search for "Judith Mowry" and select Item # 001320).

- *Civic impediment*: "Customer service is horrible. They discourage residents from asking questions. They use cumbersome, bureaucratic language to dissuade residents from digging deeper and getting useful answers to their inquiries." "They're like zombies."
- *Arbitrariness*: "We need objective criteria instead of relying all too often on the subjective opinion of a city staff person. We need to watch the tension between the role of government and private property rights."
- *Fractured*: "It's a bad combination of inept staff and meddling politicians, with a lack of any solid knowledge about real estate development."
- *Turnover*: "There has been too much staff turnover. Look at how many school board supervisors and city managers we've had in the last few years. People here are intolerant of the weaknesses of people in power. They use them like Kleenex. It's the only government in the San Gabriel Valley like this, except maybe Sierra Madre."
- *Don't attract the best*: "They're either going up or coming down the employment ladder." "The City Hall building is a grim environment; most offices have no windows."
- *Power*: "The City Manager has more power than the elected officials."
- *Leadership*: "We need more 'enlightened' leadership."
- *Size*: "The smaller the city, the bigger the problem."
- *Oversight*: "A developer comes in, presents a trendy proposal, the city gobbles it up, becomes an advocate for the project and then there's no oversight. They need an oversight committee. For example, on the Revitalization Plan, they need to verse things related to the Development Agreement like liability coverage, overruns, payment bonds, financial statements, completion agreements, etc. We need to look out for the financial responsibilities that may fall on the City, especially with so many projects going under these days."
- *Grants*: "We don't take advantage of grants. We need more grant writers and a commission that oversees grants, both applying for them and then ensuring that we maximize them. For example, we received a grant for bicycle racks to be installed near the Gold Line

Station. When they arrived, they sat in storage until someone figured out what they were and where they need to go."

Communication: One interviewee summed up many of the sentiments about communication, as follows: "There's a lack of information going out to the community, and flowing to the people who make decisions." Other communication-oriented comments included:

- *Neutral or joint fact-finding*: "It would be great if we could have more agreement around the facts, some way of getting people to investigate things together in an unbiased way, for example on the parking situation in the City or the title question related to the Downtown Plan."
- *Media*: "The City-produced *Neighbors* newsletter is biased. People send their angry letters to the editor to the South Pasadena Review (the local newspaper) but the editor controls what goes in and what doesn't."
- *Honesty*: "Even if there's a conflict of interest, people just need to be clear about the conflict."
- *Listening*: "The politicians and city staff don't listen to the community, especially regarding the needs of the existing businesses." A couple of interviewees (present/former city officials) regretted not working harder with certain members of the community—"to include them, to talk with them, to listen more deeply to their concerns."
- *Anonymous feedback process*: "It would be great if there was some quick and easy way to offer our constructive suggestions."
- *Increase online access*: "We should be investing in more robust online communication so all residents can access reports, comment on reports, view Council meetings live from their kitchens or living rooms, provide public comments live via email, etc. The Neighbors newsletter should be online and sent directly to residents' inboxes along with any and all other information which would be of interest, including legal notices, etc."
- *City information kiosks*: "These should be located throughout the city especially near hubs like the Mission Street Gold Line station."
- *Intergenerational opportunities*: "Seniors and young people are untapped resources. We could have retirees volunteer as 'consultants' to help younger people and vice versa where young folks can assist older residents with things like the computer, etc. We need to find ways to use our collective creativity. South Pasadena could be a great place for pilot projects, like shared intergenerational housing."

- *The Brown Act*: "This legislation restricts the ability of decision-makers to collaborate and work together constructively. Members of Congress can talk but not city council members, even if they only wanted to get information."

C. Common Values

Although there are many divisions in South Pasadena over land-related disputes, interviewees also had a strong set of common values that were offered during the course of the personal interviews, including:

Sense of Community: South Pasadena has a homespun quality. It is very family-oriented (children, neighborhoods, and schools). Facilities are within walking distance and you easily run into people. It is easy to get to know your neighbors and city residents. People are generally friendly and warm. They tend to be highly educated but down to earth. You feel safe. The City is very stable with an unusually high number of long-term residents; many have grown up there or have lived in the same house for thirty to forty years. People stick around; they do not leave.

Historic Houses: The City has a good, historic housing stock. Residents take pride in the craftsmanship of their homes and take care of their properties. On its website, the City proclaims: "Few cities in California are better recognized for the quality of its small-town atmosphere and rich legacy of intact late 19th and early 20th century neighborhoods and residences. South Pasadena also has a strong claim to having the oldest and most historic sites in the San Gabriel Valley."[33] Related to this is a very strong sense of preservation.

Gracious Tree-lined Streets: South Pasadena's charm is closely related to its lush canopy of trees. "The City has as many trees as there are residents," commented a number of interviewees. Indeed, South Pasadena's efforts to maintain its urban forest have won the community acclaim as a "Tree City USA," a designation made by the National Arbor Day Foundation.[34] In 1991, the City adopted an ordinance governing the removal and replacement of trees. Tree removals are reviewed by the Public Works Department, which has a certified arborist on staff.

33. History of South Pasadena, http://www.ci.south-pasadena.ca.us/about/history.html (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

34. Arbor Day Foundation, Tree Cities in California, http://www.arborday.org/programs/treeCityUSA/treecities.cfm?chosenstate=California (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

School System: Many people move to the City because of its highly regarded schools. There is a tremendous pride in education, and people participate in the schools. For example, a local restaurant bakes hundreds of pies for the Middle School fundraiser, and the South Pasadena Education Fund (SPEF) is very successful as a result. Over 80% of South Pasadena High School graduates go on to college or university. Most kids can walk to school.

Public Services: The City has its own separate fire and police forces. While they "make no financial sense[,] they're a very important part of the community and they provide great service."[35]

Train Station: Metrolink's Gold Line came to South Pasadena in 2003 with a station right in the heart of the City:

> It's a great drop off point! A wonderful hub of social activity has sprung up around one of the City's coolest intersections. On a Thursday night, you can jump off the Gold Line and literally be at the foot of a lovely Farmer's Market. Across the street are restaurants, a bakery, antique stores, an independent video store, and benches to chill on. It's very charming.[36]

Proximity to Los Angeles: "South Pasadena is ten minutes and one hundred years from L.A." is a common saying in town. The City offers a feeling of the Midwest, but also provides easy access to the wonderful cultural venues and attractions of Los Angeles and neighboring Pasadena.

Connectedness/Cohesiveness: Because the City is small, there is a lot of interaction around school or sports-related events and volunteerism (SPEF, the Rose Parade Float, etc.). It is easy to get involved; there are many "joiner types." It is easy for one person to make a difference. "South Pasadena is small enough that you affect change," noted one interviewee.

> There's also a lot of cohesiveness because of the many battles over the 710 and the resulting hostility that comes from neighboring communities, from always being picked on. In fact, that's how many of the groups in South Pasadena have formed: through volunteering at the library or at the school board (SPEF), or fighting the freeway, promoting preservation, running a business, etc. But that's also what gives people their different perspectives.

Level of Civic Engagement: Most interviewees felt that South Pasadena residents are engaged and passionate, that there is very little apathy. They noted the 10,000 people who recently voted on Measure SP. Others, however, point out that this number reflects less than 50% of eligible voters (versus 80% who voted in Los Angeles County). Still others feel that people

35. Interview with a South Pasadena resident.
36. Interview with a South Pasadena resident.

are engaged, but generally after they should be. "A lot of intelligent people aren't involved or don't seem to care, unless it really impacts their life."

Preserving Relationships: Most of the interviewees were very concerned about preserving personal relationships:

- *Watching words*: "Once you squeeze toothpaste out of the tube, it's almost impossible to get it back in. We need to watch what we say."
- *Stopping personal attacks*:
    - "Many of us are on other committees; we have other connections. We need to leave aside personal character attacks. Otherwise, next time, people are too burned out."
    - "We can attack a position without attacking the person. Well-intentioned people can have disagreements and not be disagreeable."
    - A few did feel though that the dialogue "isn't nasty but robust. It's passionate, fair on both sides."
- *Listening to each other*: "As Commissioners and elected officials, we need to learn how to listen. We need to let people tell their stories. We need to appreciate diverse voices and be comfortable sitting in a room with people on all sides of an issue."

D. Behavioral Patterns

As I conducted the personal interviews, I noticed a number of behavioral patterns that provided significant insight into the dynamics and motivating forces behind land use conflicts in South Pasadena: (1) Polarization, Demonization, and Escalation; (2) Process Fatigue and Disappointment; (3) Mistrust in People; and (4) Mistrust of the Process.

Polarization, Demonization, and Escalation: Some interviewees have managed to remain on the sidelines through many of South Pasadena's battles, including the recent Downtown Revitalization Plan and Measure SP. "Unless the issue is a real dagger in the heart, I stay out of it," said one stakeholder who did not view SP as a dagger.

Most others, however, are still vigorously polarized. "For some, it's their life's work," noted one interviewee. This attitude so narrows their field of vision that one "No on 710" proponent commented, "[t]he slow growth, anti-freeway people are nicer . . . definitely nicer." Another interviewee sarcastically referred to an elected official who is open to hearing more about the tunnel proposal as "Mr. Tunnel Man."

One "Yes on SP" interviewee felt that the "No on SP" side was "Rovian" (a derogatory reference to the political tactics of Karl Rove), whereas "['Yes on SP'] had taken the high road."

An SP proponent acknowledged that she and one of the SP opponents "have a long history of not liking each other. Anything I'm for, she will be against. She has no positive alternatives. She's an obstructionist."

An interviewee who sees himself as more "middle of the road" offered: "People can demonize but it doesn't have to be that way. Two factors encourage demonizing: (1) a long history of enmities, and (2) the fact that most people don't attend meetings."

Regarding the first factor, the interviewee pointed to the long memories that many people have in South Pasadena. "You get to know a person and believe or not believe them based on their history." He gave the example of one stakeholder who claimed to want to save the Rialto (the local historic theater), but whose actions over the years were contrary to that claim. As for the second factor, he observed:

> Many opponents don't come to the meetings until late in the process. Then all those who have been working hard on the project (the planners, the developers, the commission, and some of the other stakeholders) feel that their work wasn't appreciated. The opponents show up at the last minute to destroy everything.

Another interviewee noted: "It seems to be always the same ten people. New people get shut out. People don't have the time or energy, so stuff is slipped in. Then people don't trust their neighbors or the system."

One interviewee compared project opponents to the previous residents of the city's old Cawston Ostrich Farm:

> They bury their heads in the sand. They claim they didn't know anything but the reality is that the process for the Revitalization Plan was more like a slow steady train than a punch out of left field. For them, it's the politics of destruction. They have no respect for time, for the time people have put into it already.

He paused and continued with a wry smirk: "People in South Pasadena know how to fight well. Counterpunching is extraordinary and effective . . . more like a small display of martial arts than a drunken bar fight. They fight the good fight."

Another interviewee commented: "All too often the 'No folks' can't even articulate why they're saying no. Or they change their reasons. When you try to find out more, they stop talking to you."

A less positional interviewee, who generally prefers to focus on the underlying interests, noted: "That approach is fine when it comes to specific issues but it's much more difficult when we're supporting candidates, and one wins and the other loses." He smiled when he told me about a campaign manager for the opposing candidate who, after his candidate lost, got to

know the interviewee better and said, "I had no idea you were such a nice guy."

One psychological and emotional pattern that emerges repeatedly in these types of situations (and certainly in South Pasadena) is the dynamic of escalation.[37] Once conflicts begin, the emotional levels of the participants tend to rise, and the situation becomes increasingly more difficult to defuse. This process is enhanced by the dynamics of "selective perception" and "attributional distortion." Unless these psychological tendencies are understood and overcome, it is extremely difficult to move from a positional approach to interest-based bargaining.[38]

Escalation is both a cause and a result of significant psychological changes among the parties involved. Negative attitudes, perceptions, and stereotypes of the opponent can drive escalation, as well as be caused by it.[39] One psychological process that contributes to negative attitudes is selective perception, i.e., only noticing things that confirm initial suppositions.[40]

Through selective perception, the perceiver is processing information about the other in a way that tends to feed into, stir up, and strengthen stereotypical views of the other.[41] Once parties have expectations about the other side, they tend to notice the behavior that fits these expectations. But this tendency to make observations that fit their preconceptions simply makes those preconceptions stronger.[42] As a result, the actions of distrusted parties are seen as threatening, even when their actions are ambiguous. There is a tendency to misinterpret their behavior, and to give them little benefit of the doubt. Even when an adversary makes some conciliatory actions, this conduct is likely to go unnoticed, or to be discounted as deceptive ("They must have some trick up their sleeve!").[43]

37. *See generally* LAWRENCE SUSSKIND & JEFFREY CRUIKSHANK, BREAKING THE IMPASSE: CONSENSUAL APPROACHES TO RESOLVING PUBLIC DISPUTES (1987).

38. Dialogue can help reduce selective perception and attributional distortion. By suspending judgment and creating opportunities for deeper listening, people are more likely to see each other as whole human beings.

39. Michelle Maiese, *What Is Conflict Escalation?* (2003), *available at* http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/escalation.

40. SUSSKIND & CRUIKSHANK, *supra* note 37.

41. Jeffrey Z. Rubin, *Conflict from a Psychological Perspective*, *in* NEGOTIATION: STRATEGIES FOR MUTUAL GAIN 123, 129 (Lavinia Hall ed., 1993).

42. DEAN PRUITT ET AL., SOCIAL CONFLICT: ESCALATION, STALEMATE, AND SETTLEMENT 156 (3d ed. 2004).

43. LOUIS KRIESBERG, CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICTS: FROM ESCALATION TO RESOLUTION 152 (1998).

This process of selective perception is further enforced by "attributional distortion." Through attributional distortion, parties distort their explanation of another's behavior in the service of preconceived notions. If a party does something charitable or benevolent, it is because they are good, kind people. But they explain adversaries' kind behavior as manipulative, ingratiating, not to be trusted, a momentary lapse from their true, evil, and malevolent state.[44] Once one party has formed preconceptions about the other, any information that supports those preconceived notions will be attributed to the opposing side's basic disposition. Any observations that do not fit their expectations, such as friendly behavior, will be attributed to situational causes or regarded as a fluke.[45] As a result, there is almost nothing that the opponent can do to dispel the party's negative expectations. These negative evaluations allow parties to rationalize their own hostile behavior, which simply intensifies the conflict.

As such, selective perception and attributional distortion tend to lock parties into destructive patterns that are hard to escape. By only noticing things that confirm their worst impressions, by behaving in ways that trigger the worst possible response, and by asking only those questions likely to support their initial impressions, they make matters worse.[46]

This dynamic can be seen when looking at the pattern of escalating land use conflict in South Pasadena. The disputes are very emotional, and for good reason. A great deal may be at stake. Changes in land use can threaten the quality of our lives. Reactions to proposed policy changes may reflect a rational response to a clear threat ("The 710 will pose an extreme risk to our health!"), or an emotional response ("The developer and the City have gotten together to ram this Downtown Plan down our throats!"), or both.

As such, when an issue such as the Downtown Revitalization first emerged, the local community may have expressed only mild interest. As often happens, some residents may have tried to obtain information and received unsatisfactory answers, or were ignored. From the City's perspective, inquiries may have come at a time when plans were incomplete and officials wished that citizens would go away until they could develop more, or better, information.[47]

Misperceptions easily grow as reluctance to discuss plans is seen as deliberate stonewalling. Caution on the part of the City is interpreted as deceit. Citizen groups write letters to officials and try to persuade the news

44. Rubin, *supra* note 41.

45. PRUITT ET AL., *supra* note 42, at 159.

46. SUSSKIND & CRUIKSHANK, *supra* note 37.

47. SUSAN L. CARPENTER & W.J.D. KENNEDY, MANAGING PUBLIC DISPUTES: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HANDLING CONFLICT AND REACHING AGREEMENTS 11-15 (1988).

media that their position is the only correct one. After awhile, information between the parties is exchanged haphazardly, or not at all. Communication becomes increasingly adversarial. Public hearings become too heated to have a positive influence. People are frustrated and angry. Parties lose objectivity in their perceptions of the conflict, and of the character and motives of their adversaries. Shades of gray disappear, and only black and white remain. Whatever "our" side does is honest, and whatever "their" side does is malevolent. They become intolerant of other points of view and lose interest in talking about perspectives other than their own. Information is used as a weapon to promote a position or win a point.[48]

A number of the interviewees related experiences that reflected this dynamic of polarization, demonization, and escalation. In order to protect the identities of those involved, I can reveal only limited information. As in the examples above, interviewees described situations in which city officials did not return their phone calls which led to them becoming very bitter, angry, and mistrustful about the City's intentions. "I don't want to talk to them anymore. I don't feel that I can be in the same room with them. I have lost all trust in the process, and all sense for the positive values of living in South Pasadena."

Others described situations that quickly escalated and became highly personalized. One resident felt that he was being mocked when he appeared before a commission: "I took the issue seriously and once that happened I felt disrespected, diminished." He became one of the project's biggest opponents.

Another example of a highly personalized scenario involved the Chamber of Commerce which decided early on to support the Downtown Revitalization Plan, alienating a number of merchants who opposed the project. Tensions escalated when one merchant shook a finger at the Chamber's CEO proclaiming: "We're coming after you next!" Things spiraled downward as both sides got increasingly more personal. By the following summer, the merchant was on the street, asking residents to sign a petition opposing the Downtown Plan.

Process Fatigue and Disappointment: These same interviewees told me that they were exhausted and disheartened. Indeed, they seemed the most hurt and disappointed—especially in themselves. "I was naïve about the dynamics of the situation. I thought that realistic people given unbiased facts would come to see my position." "We won but didn't win. It was a

48. *Id.*

Pyrrhic victory." "I overestimated my ability to influence change; I delivered the vote but not unity." "I was hoping to guide people to a more neutral place. I thought I could talk some sense into people."

As for the future, one interviewee preferred the metaphor of a toll booth on a bridge. "I'm open to working and talking with people on the other side but I've got my boundaries up. It's no longer a free ride. I have to protect myself."

My Aunt Lea used to say, "Bury the bone but don't forget where you buried it." A number of the interviewees were waiting for apologies about things that happened on the recent ballot measure, and about things that happened twenty and thirty years ago. There are a lot of bones in South Pasadena, and little is forgotten.

Mistrust in People: A number of interviewees told me that "council members think they're in charge." Others added: "Certain people think they run the town. Beware of the power freaks." Regarding the Planning Department, several people thought that for the planners it is more "about getting things done to show on their resumes."

Much of the mistrust concerned the Chamber of Commerce which many perceived as not being neutral. Some thought that the Chamber's decision to support the project was highly disappointing and lacked transparency. An interviewee stated:

> The members didn't vote on it, nor did we sign any petition. They should be making decisions to help *all* the businesses and not just one development. I have no respect for them as professionals. They're confused about the role of the Chamber. They should be helping businesses succeed, *all* businesses.

One life-long city resident initially liked the Downtown Plan, but as things proceeded, "[he] trusted the City and the developer less and less." He recalled the time when they showed him a model of the project which included a good-sized plaza. Then later, when they displayed a model at City Hall for the public to view, the plaza was smaller. "Bait and switch . . . maybe? What do *you* think? That was the beginning of my mistrust of the developers. Then I started to realize that the developer always had such pat answers at the meetings; their presentation never varied. I had more and more trouble trusting them."

A business owner recalled:

> The first time we met with them, they told us that they owned the Rialto [theater], but they didn't. We checked it out right away because we thought that maybe they had somehow bought it and would finally bring it into the whole Downtown Plan. But it was a lie. It was a bad foot to start on. It was hard to trust them after that.

Another side of the coin was expressed by one resident who felt that all too often the City operates out of fear and mistrust to its own detriment:

> Anytime there's a proposal, people look to the negative side, out of a kind of "fear mentality." They doubt the intentions of the proponents and ask questions like: "Where's the money for us?"; "Why can't we use a local developer?"; "What are we going to lose?"; "What are we going to get?"

Mistrust of the *Process*: There is also a general mistrust in the process which arises in a number of ways. One resident stated:

> I can't stand the lying, the misinformation. There are too many cozy relationships, like the relationship between the Chamber of Commerce and the developer, or the CRC and City Hall with the developer. The developer is the one pushing the Downtown Plan when it should be the city. The folks at the city can't even see that anymore. And you can tell because they don't know the value of the property they're giving to the developer. They've never appraised it, or determined whether the bond will even cover the land.

Another resident lamented that there is a

> disconnect between what is presented at meetings and what gets built. People at the meetings will say that it's all in the report. But you can't even read or understand that long document. And even if it does say something, they build something different. There's no or very little oversight.

"Established business owners get the raw end of the deal. The newer businesses get all the attention," said one retailer. "They don't listen to us. Look at the way they run their film shoots in this town. They never consult with us."

People want a more fair and open process. "Things should be run with absolute transparency and integrity. Whether it's for city hiring, film shoots, zoning changes, parking changes, or big projects like the Downtown Plan. We need a more open, less cozy process that is understandable to the people of South Pasadena."

Another area of concern is the implementation of a more comprehensive process. For example, a number of stakeholders felt that the Downtown Plan area should have studied not only the project lands but all the businesses and residences located in the three-block area. "They should be looking at the parking implications for the whole area, not only for the project itself. They don't seem to care what happens to the parking for the rest of us."

While many had optimistic attitudes toward the 2006 survey and community meetings conducted to look at upcoming projects, they were disappointed with the results. "[Sixty percent] said no condos and then the Plan included condos. It would be better to have professional offices and other commercial uses. That's what the people wanted and the survey reflected."

Others questioned why the development agreement was signed before the Environmental Impact Study was done. "It should have been the other way around."

Many are very unhappy about the City's process for the Downtown Plan, claiming there was insufficient public outreach and input. Proponents for the Plan responded by claiming that they had over eighty meetings. They then point to the inadequacies of the opponent's ballot process: "It was simply a matter of getting enough signatures on a petition cleverly gathered over the 4th of July holiday celebration when everyone was on the street. People were asked if they were against overdevelopment in South Pasadena. Well, who wouldn't be?"

E. Other Observations, Challenges & Questions

As I conducted the personal interviews, I encountered a number of other observations, challenges, and questions, including:

Emotional Venting: Because the interviews were conducted in the wake of the November SP ballot measure, the political climate was still emotionally charged. A number of the key players were having a lot of difficulty engaging with one another in the street, much less around a table. As such, the interviews appeared to serve as a way for interviewees to vent their frustration and anger. A number thanked me for giving them the chance to talk about what happened in the Downtown Plan process, to vocalize their thoughts without being judged. A few did tell me that they were not yet ready to sit down with the "opponents." I hoped they might change their minds when they would see plans coming together for a dialogue. As such, I intended to meet with them again if necessary, to provide another opportunity for further venting, and to "coach" them toward the dialogue process.

Agendas: Listening to interviewees, I observed the presence of "agendas." It seemed that everyone had some type of an agenda. Certain agendas were fairly obvious, such as elected officials figuring out how this might play out for them politically, or retailers looking to protect their business interests. Others were more subtle, such as the "No on SP" proponents who were searching for a "reduced project alternative" or who invited me to speak to their "opponents" for the purpose of investigating their alleged wrongdoing.

As I proceeded with the interviews, I wondered what to do with these agendas. Do I dig deeper to find out where people are really coming from? Do I surface the agendas and draw their secret motives out in the open? I decided that it was important to dig deeper, but also to reframe the concept

of "agenda" to one of "self-interest;"—in other words, to dig deeper for people's self-interests.

Much of consensus building is based on each participant acting in their self-interest, expressing that interest, and looking for commonalities and opportunities to trade-off among varying interests. As parties engage in this process, they tend to gain a greater understanding of their mutual needs, the bases for those needs, and how those needs might best be met.[49]

Co-opting: A few interviewees discussed their preference for "co-opting" people into the process—for example, by getting people to serve on a commission or giving them something they really want from a project (like parking spaces, a "piece of the action," etc.). Others said that this approach was like assembling consensus one self-interest at a time and had the potential to be very political, piecemeal, and ultimately unfair. They also pointed out that this practice easily leads to more conflict, especially if people feel that the co-opted party does not deserve or is not the right person for the commission, or the special perk or benefit was not warranted. They felt that a more transparent, comprehensive process would avoid these results and would be a much better direction.

Status and the Role of Money: "San Marino residents are self-confident and just get things done," commented one long-term South Pasadena resident of the high-income community immediately to the east. "San Marino has the inner confidence of wealth. The power structure in South Pasadena is not wealth; people try to get cache in life from something besides money."

I was intrigued by this observation. I am curious about the extent to which status (monetary and non-monetary) plays a role in the way people engage in South Pasadena. I understand that a number of the interviewees have significant wealth but live in a fairly modest, understated style. I have also noticed that many interviewees are very frugal and when it comes to spending money for the city, they are very reluctant. This is in stark contrast to San Marino where I have been told that "if something needs to be done, they vote on it and do it."

I also link this to the words of one interviewee who said: "South Pasadena residents need to find a place where they can make a difference, but maybe at the expense of someone else." And another: "It's their way of moving up in town, while knocking down the other. They don't use money here; they use small 'p' politics."

49. SUSSKIND & CRUIKSHANK, *supra* note 37.

Talking with Politicians: When interviewing elected officials, I was not too surprised when they would skirt or deflect my questions. However, I did notice that I was also doing a bit of a dance with them, listening to what they had to say but also trying to "sell" them on my plans for the dialogue.

Recognizing the role that leadership can play in pulling people together, my efforts to enlist their support were probably natural and fair. However, I wondered whether this process really needed the blessing of elected officials. In other words, what role, if any, do elected officials need to have in creating this type of dialogue? If there is limited or no interest on their part, can or should the dialogue still proceed?

One practitioner recently wrote the following about her own challenges on this issue:

> I've decided that I need to revisit the work of "interviewing" community leaders, activists, and others in regards to the work that lies ahead of us as a community. When I approached it the first time around, I was not truly prepared to listen. My intent was to persuade folks . . . to buy into this abstract proposal that I could help get dialogue started in our community. . . . I realize that I need to go in without the agenda and authentically dialogue with these people . . . .[50]

While my selling agenda formed part of my discussions with elected officials, I realized that it was also important to have an authentic conversation with them. I needed to be prepared to move forward with the dialogue even without their support, given sufficient interest on the part of other interviewees.

Sharing Myself: Given the highly emotional air in the wake of Measure SP, I found that by sharing some of my own background and experience, individuals I interviewed opened up to me.

For example, a few stakeholders felt that they could not be in the same room as their "opponents." After talking about this for a while, I spontaneously decided to share my own difficulties with being in the same room as those on the other side of the Proposition 8 (Prop 8) "battle" here in California. I shared my own challenge of being gay, having a husband, and adopting our son in the face of this initiative. I shared my continuing efforts to look for answers—for a way through this—with family members who voted "yes" and with colleagues at Pepperdine University who are strongly supportive of Prop 8. The interviewees seemed to appreciate my honesty and openness, which offered them a certain level of comfort in doing the same. Sharing my own struggles—my own humanity—empowered them to share theirs. The essence of dialogue is authenticity. By modeling authenticity, I hoped to elicit the same from others.

50. Posting of Linda Blong to National Coalition of Deliberation & Dialogue Listserv (Oct. 9, 2008) (on file with author).

Neutrality: I like to stay open and flexible, sharing parts of myself where appropriate but firm in my commitment to neutrality. On several occasions, interviewees tried to test me, like a young student might do with a teacher, to see if they really do have another life beyond the walls of the school building.

One resident asked for my position on the SP ballot measure to which I responded simply, "It's not appropriate for me to share that as I need to remain neutral." Another stakeholder heard that I had opened up a law practice and inquired via email whether their "side" could hire me at some point in the future to represent them on a specific legal issue. I emailed back and made it clear that it would be a conflict and that I would decline the retainer. He pushed further and asked about other issues in the future. I replied that I could not say whether something is or is not appropriate until it is represented to me and I could look at it in more detail. Given my involvement in this study, I would need to look at all proposals in that light. Later, after the first dialogue, one of the participants tried to "friend" me on Facebook. Looking back, I feel that all these somewhat "awkward" moments served as good ethical checks.

When to Move Forward: After I had conducted about fifteen interviews, there seemed to be general support for a dialogue to take place. Some said they would not participate but then suggested that I keep in touch (which I took as an opening). While I still had a few more interviews scheduled, it was starting to feel like the time to begin the process of setting a date and designing a face-to-face dialogue for the participants. But how would I frame the conversation and bring everyone together? How best to move forward?

I asked several interviewees which dates might work for them. They suggested that I set a date and put it out there as I'd probably never get a date that would meet with everyone's schedule. They told me that some days are better than others (Saturday or Sunday afternoon are probably best). Also, they felt that I should suggest a strawman proposal for the design of the process (including such things as ground rules, etc.) as it would be very challenging to get the different parties and factions to agree on very much at this point. By having a strawman, it would be coming from me as a neutral (and not from the other side). The interviewees could then review the proposal and, if it looked workable, they could give me the nod, and we could proceed on that basis.

Also, a number of interviewees felt that once the date and process were in place, some of the more reluctant participants would probably follow suit.

If not, I could email them with the meeting information and suggest that it would be better to have them take part in the dialogues than be left out, etc.

V. DESIGNING THE DIALOGUE

While it is common practice for the facilitators to work with the parties to design the dialogue process, I decided to do most of the design on my own, with only limited input from the participants. One of the major factors for taking this approach was the limited timeframe and the polarized nature of the parties. I felt that I simply would not have enough time to achieve consensus about the design of the process, especially given the lack of communication among some of the participants.

I did consult with most of the participants regarding the location, as I wanted to be sure they were comfortable with the library as a neutral setting.[51] But even with the proposed dates, I did not have the time to go back and forth trying to find dates that would work for everyone. Therefore, I spoke to one or two participants to get a sense for which dates and times worked best. It seemed that Saturday mornings were the best option (given other activities during the week and church on Sunday mornings). I preferred the morning because people would be fresh for the interactive nature of the dialogue.

Regarding the core methodologies and engagement techniques, I proceeded on the basis of my own knowledge and instincts. For the most part, participants seemed comfortable with that approach, especially because they viewed the whole exercise in light of my academic work. Also, as mentioned above, many were anxious to try a fresh approach, and they were open to what I might offer in terms of novel ideas to achieve that end.

In the process of designing the proposed dialogue sessions, I found that a number of interesting issues arose, including:

Who Is at the Table: I interviewed nineteen people and one important question that arose for me was whether all of them needed to be (or should be) at the dialogue.

A common approach is to include those individuals who represent other voices or interests in the community. For example, one could ask if they speak for the business community, homeowners, tenants, pro/slow/no growth, heritage/preservationists, parks, transportation, etc. Of course, there will be overlap between interests—for example, a business person may also be a preservationist or environmentalist.

51. *See infra* p. 390.

A few interviewees seemed to be representing only their own relatively narrow interests. For example, certain business people appeared to be focused only on their own specific issues with little connection to any other interest, commercial or otherwise. Similarly, others claimed to be representing other parties but seemed to be manipulating the process to advance their own singular interests.

As for elected officials, they are usually seen as representing their constituents, but at times I could not discern whether particular politicians were representing the community or their own political aspirations. I also wondered whether they would respect the ground rules—for example, sharing the air space, no grandstanding, etc.

What about the City's planning department? In the end, I did not interview any of the City's planners for two specific reasons: (1) they do not live in South Pasadena and many residents do not consider them an integral part of the community; and (2) there is a lot of anger and frustration from all sides concerning the way the planners have handled matters and they could easily become targets too early on in the dialogue. Of course, with the agreement of the group, it may be appropriate and useful to bring them into later meetings.

Another concern was position-focused representation. For example, should I be sure to have representation from those who are for and against the 710 extension, or from the Yes and No sides of the SP ballot measure? I felt this approach could have the effect of keeping participants aligned with their respective positions. In other words, because they are at the table representing that position, they may feel compelled to defend that position and reluctant to be more open to other positions or even consider other (unrelated) issues. It is important to note that, over the years, most of the interviewees have been on different sides of the issues. For example, people that were on opposite sides during the recent SP ballot measure may have been on the same side regarding the 710.

In the end, I decided that participants should be representative of other interests—for example, business, schools, parks, preservation/heritage, transportation (hopefully with some range of opinions on the 710 extension), and a good balance of Yes and No voices related to Measure SP. Note that I used the term "representative of" and not "represent." No one was stuck with his or her particular interest or position, and each individual was accountable only to himself or herself. In fact, in my individual invitations to attend the dialogue sessions, I did not indicate the representative nature or capacity of the individuals' presence. This was meant to be only a loose

reference point for myself as the facilitator. I wanted to make sure that the people at the table were representative of more than just their individual interests and could engage with others about a variety of interests.

Location: I asked interviewees where they would imagine a dialogue taking place. They wanted a neutral venue and most pointed to the South Pasadena Library's Community Room, which has been the home of many meetings in the past. That seemed like the best choice as it is a big space with plenty of light, right in the heart of town, and can accommodate the types of processes I envisioned for the dialogue.

Another suggested option was the senior center adjacent to the library. That is also a neutral location and would make a good second choice.

Some people mentioned Kaldi's, a small coffee shop across from the library and community room. It has the advantages of offering an intimate space, particularly appropriate for the World Café model. However, given that Kaldi's is a private commercial business and that there are other coffee houses in town, it was not viewed as being neutral in the sense of the other community room and the senior center.

Other participants felt that a school facility was a good choice, but given the disputes that often occur between stakeholders concerning school board issues, this would also have limited value in terms of neutrality.

Lastly, one interviewee offered the offices of a local businessperson who is commonly thought of as a very polarizing character. Obviously, this was not a good choice and I thought this suggestion reflected how out of touch this interviewee was in terms of the meaning of neutrality.

In the end, I decided to go with the library's community room. I reserved it for two sessions: January 31st and February 28th, from 9:00-11:00 am.

Ground Rules: I drafted some basic ground rules that I felt would work well for at least the first couple of dialogue sessions. When presenting these rules to the stakeholders, I used a "normalization" technique that I have found to be very effective. That is, instead of telling stakeholders what to do and how to behave, I share what others normally do, and what ground rules are normally used in these situations.

The proposed *behavioral* ground rules were:

- *One meeting*: No side conversations; One person speaks at a time;
- *Share air space*: Give others a chance to express their views; Encourage discussion, not speeches;
- *Suspend judgment*: Talk about *your* ideas and thoughts; All ideas and points of view have value; Each participant's job is to fully understand the other person's views, although the participants are not necessarily required to agree;
- *Listen respectfully*: Refrain from interrupting.

The proposed *administrative* ground rules were:

- Meeting will start and end on time;
- All agree to dialogue in good faith and not undermine or delay the discussions;
- Confidentiality, especially of private conversations between the parties and the neutral (even if the process is public).

Framing: I spent a considerable portion of the initial interviews considering the "back story" for events in South Pasadena, exploring reasons why things are the way they are, or at least some theories as to what may have happened. I did this because I believe that painting rich portraits of the participants, and understanding the depth and breadth of their operative narratives, is critical to designing a meaningful path forward. While most of this initial framing was not shared with the participants, it helped me, as the facilitator, to navigate a careful path between and among the various parties, and to plan my next steps.

A number of interviewees stressed that I should be sure to frame the initial dialogues as part of, and in the context of, my academic study. They reasoned that this would: (1) maintain the neutral tone created in the personal interviews; (2) offer participants the explorational freedom that comes with academic endeavors; and (3) give stakeholders permission to talk to one another in a different context. I thought this made a lot of sense.

I have heard it said by agencies, elected officials, and stakeholders that they are not interested in dialogue for dialogue's sake. They want action. I believe that a carefully constructed dialogue can be, and often is, the first important step (or action) toward further deliberation and other action steps. Perhaps the most important action that South Pasadena needs is what this dialogue is intended to produce: a sense of possibility, of working together, and developing new ways for relating to and working with each other.

Initial Engagement Approach: With this framing in mind, and with the long-term goal of creating a SD, the first dialogue session would be critical. In order to build a solid dialogic foundation and to begin on a positive and constructive note, my intent was to use an adapted form of AI as well as two small group engagement techniques known as World Café and Speed-Dating.

In the spirit of World Café, the library's community room was a warm, inviting environment with plenty of natural light and comfortable seating. My intent was to honor long-standing traditions of human hospitality by offering food and refreshments. This "hospitable space" also means "safe space"—where everyone feels free to offer their best thinking. It has been

pointed out that when we ask people where they have experienced their most significant conversations, nearly everyone recalls sitting around a kitchen or dining room table.[52] There is an easy intimacy when gathering at a small table that most of us immediately recognize. When you walk into a room and see it filled with café tables (or at least in small groupings of four chairs), participants will know that they are not in for the traditional format of a public meeting.

Also, the AI approach was consistent with many of the sentiments expressed by interviewees, including:

- "I'm not sympathetic to the politics of destruction. I'm not going to skewer people that have worked hard on a project."
- "There are constructive and unconstructive ways to approach things. I look forward to a *constructive* process. In my professional life, I put things together that are good for both sides, rather than taking things apart."

It was my intention that AI would reflect and build on a natural optimism that I found among interviewees, even those who were more emotionally hurt in the short term: "What happened on Measure SP won't change my fundamental optimism about bringing people together, matchmaking." Similarly, a number of interviewees talked about the value they place on learning the best practices and about bringing out the best in each other. One interviewee stated, "South Pasadena is an incubator for innovative ideas. Look at all the great businesses that got their start here: from the Cawston Ostrich Farm in the early days, to Trader Joe's, Panda Express, and don't forget Wham-O, the guys who invented the Frisbee and the Hula Hoop."

There is a lot to appreciate in South Pasadena and the long list of common values that surfaced during the interviews is a testament to that value. I felt that this commonality was a great foundation on which to build an AI. I found myself wondering what would happen if these same individuals who spent so much energy fighting each other were to actually work together in a constructive direction, building on everything that is positive in the City. What if . . . indeed!

Questions Addressed in the First Dialogue: The AI approach is grounded in the belief "that the system will move in the direction of the first questions that are asked."[53] The questions addressed by participants during

52. *See supra* p. 390.

53. *See* NORMA RUDOLPH, INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: USING AN APPRECIATIVE APPROACH IN UGANDA 4 (2003), *available at* http://www.comminit.com/pdf/Uganda_AI_Technical_Review_Report2.pdf.

the first dialogue session reflected the "Discover" stage of the AI process,[54] as follows:

Question #1: What are the existing strengths of South Pasadena—what works well here? Because many of the interviewees expressed so much anger and frustration, I wrestled with the idea of providing them at the outset with an opportunity to vent or release these feelings. Around the time of the personal interviews in late November and early December, one dialogue and deliberation practitioner wrote something on the NCDD listserv that resonated with my work in South Pasadena: "I notice that [a participant's] comments become increasingly more creative as he's had a chance to let out his suppressed feelings. . . . I notice this a lot in communication[.] When people are fully heard, they become more open to other perspectives and more embracive and co-creative . . . ."[55]

While this notion seemed attractive, it felt too risky to begin the dialogue with venting.[56] I also looked at posing an initial question that explored participants' "hopes and expectations for the day." At first, this sounded positive and constructive, but when I looked at the direction the conversation might take, I could see participants using it as an indirect opportunity to vent. They might vent about what their hopes would be for a process to address their negative experiences, and they would then relay those bad experiences.

In keeping with the traditional AI approach, I decided to begin the dialogue with a question that would look at the existing strengths of South Pasadena. From my personal interviews, I knew that there were many strengths and a lot of commonality in this regard among the interviewees. I thought that it would be particularly constructive for participants to discover (during the first stage of the AI process) these strengths and commonalities together.

By taking this approach, I did not intend to ignore or bury the anger and frustration. In fact, I recognized that bringing those feelings to the surface could prove to be a critical part of moving forward, and to that end, a healthy amount of venting had already taken place privately during the personal interviews. Also, these feelings could well arise in response to Question #4

54. *See supra* p. 362.

55. Tom [no last name] to National Coalition of Deliberation & Dialogue listserv (Dec. 8, 2008) (on file with author).

56. I came to this conclusion after consultation with my faculty advisor, Alana Knaster.

below on "obstacles." In addition, I could imagine a later dialogue session or process that would specifically focus on any latent anger and frustration.

Question #2: What positive collaborative efforts have worked? What are some examples of projects, efforts, etc. that were successful and done in a collaborative spirit? This question was intended to take participants down a progressively deeper line of inquiry, exploring examples of projects and other efforts that were successful and done in a collaborative spirit.

Question #3: What made those collaborative efforts successful? This question would take participants further down the previous line of inquiry, exploring some of the reasons why collaboration works.

Question #4: What isn't working well in South Pasadena? I intended this question as a careful transition point in the dialogue—from using AI to highlight the "positives," toward an examination of what might be some of the "negatives." As mentioned above,[57] I was concerned that participants might end up feeling shortchanged and frustrated if there was not an opportunity for them to release their more negative feelings at some point during the course of the group dialogue. While I liked the AI approach, I questioned its effectiveness at addressing the real issues. I could see the value in using the AI approach to kick off the discussion, but wondered if I would need to shift away at some point during the dialogue sessions toward a line of inquiry that might lend itself to less positive comments and perspectives. As Stewart notes, "We need to test the water by going deeper, by having real conversations, by asking: 'Did we get at the things that really bother you?' SD addresses that central question and creates an environment for people to tell their stories and for others to simply listen."[58]

As such, I decided to use the so-called Speed Dating technique to ease this transition. This technique is particularly useful for helping a participant to listen and for allowing the other person to vent. Because participants, and partners, switch seats every few minutes, they are given multiple opportunities to say the same thing and the listener is not aware of the repetitive nature of the speaker's comments. The speaker is able to release whatever pent-up emotions or energy may be bound up in a particular issue, and to feel that they have been heard a number of times. In a relatively short period of time—ten to twelve minutes—they are able to get a lot "out [of] their system."[59]

Question #5: Looking at some of the challenges that lie ahead, what might be some constraints or obstacles? This question builds on the previous "transition" question by letting participants dig deeper into the

57. *See supra* p. 362.

58. *Id*.

59. See *infra* p. 408, for how this worked out in the first dialogue session.

City's challenges. The term "obstacle" was intended to connote the temporary nature of problems and to offer hope for overcoming these challenges.

Question #6: What is one small thing that you would change? Many key players tend to focus on the "big projects" and yet it is often the little things that can be accomplished. This question is intended to encourage participants to think smaller, and more realistically, at what can be achieved.

After participants weighed in with their individual thoughts on small things to change, I then asked each group for its "best small thing" to present to the larger group. This is the only item for which I would ask them to reach a consensus, and by that I meant 100% agreement. This was intended to offer participants a taste for the challenges of creating consensus and for the work they would be doing in the next session around collaboration and consensus building.

Questions to be Addressed in 2nd Dialogue: The series of questions that participants would address during the second dialogue session reflected the next two stages of the AI process— "Dream" and "Design"—as follows:

Question #1: What questions do you have about South Pasadena twenty years from now? My intention was to demonstrate the challenges of imagining what things will be like in twenty years, especially as so much of our planning process is based on random ten and twenty year timeframes.[60]

Question #2: What current issue in South Pasadena could we solve in the next five years? I wanted to return to the near future and explore what issues are appropriate for addressing in that closer timeframe.

Question #3: What process would you design to address the issues in Question #2? Because this would be the last question for the dialogue, I wanted the group to begin to explore the challenges of designing a process to address the issues they raised in the previous question.

With this framework in mind, I decided to invite fifteen interviewees to participate in the two dialogue sessions. On December 31, I sent out the following email:[61]

60. See *infra* p. 422, for how this worked out in the second dialogue session.

61. I am including the full text to provide the reader with a sense for the feeling that I was intentionally trying to convey to participants, which was one of hope for the process that we were about to embark on. The sessions were not meant for the public, or for other uninvited parties.

Dear [Participant's First Name],

I hope all is well. I just wanted to drop you this short note to save the following two dates for our South Pasadena Dialogue on Dialogue:

Sat. Jan 31, 2009, 9:00-11:00 am
Sat. Feb 28, 2009, 9:00-11:00 am

Venue: South Pasadena Library Community Room

I do hope you can attend. I will be emailing you further information in the next week or so. Please know that these gatherings are meant only for the people I have interviewed and are part of my thesis study at Pepperdine. I think it should be very interesting and insightful for all participants.

Please confirm whether you'll be able to attend. Thanks so much for taking part in this process and I look forward to talking more in the new year.
Warm regards, Steve

On January 14th, I sent out a follow-up email:

Hi [Participant's First Name],

I'm very encouraged by the enthusiastic response regarding the upcoming South Pasadena Dialogue on Dialogue sessions.

The focus of the 1st dialogue will be on South Pasadena's strengths[62] *and how to design better processes for engaging the community and making decisions related to land use issues in 5, 10, or 20 years. I intend on using some new and very effective techniques aimed at fostering insightful, respectful and deep dialogue within a short timeframe. The 2nd session will build on the first.*[63]

62. As discussed above, I knew that we would encounter some challenges, obstacles, and other potentially negative issues. However, I wanted to stress that our focus was still on the strengths—for example, how to use the city's strengths to solve its problems.

63. I struggled with how much to reveal to participants before the actual dialogues. After deliberation, I decided to keep it very brief, positive, and reassuring so that the dialogue would remain respectful. Significantly, I did not reveal who would be in attendance because I wanted to minimize posturing. I was also concerned that if certain people did not show up, there would be no prior expectations as far as who was supposed to have been present.

And yes, it's true . . . I will be serving fresh homemade quick breads (pumpkin, apple, etc . . . baked by yours truly) for all to munch on. If you would also like to bring some delicacies, that would be great . . . but no obligation.[64]

With this in mind, please confirm in the next few days, say by next Tuesday the 20th (Inauguration Day), whether you'll be attending the sessions on January 31st and February 28th. Again, both sessions will be taking place at the Community Room from 9:00-11:00 am.

If you have any questions, feel free to email or call me.

Thanks again for your interest and participation in this project, and I really hope you can make it. It's shaping up to be a unique and exciting opportunity.

Warm regards,

Steve

Initially, a few of the most emotionally charged interviewees did not reply. Eventually, one did send me an email declining participation, but only after I had bumped into her at a local venue. I never heard back from the other two.

A fourth interviewee wanted to attend, but could only make it to the second dialogue. I told her that I required attendance at both sessions, and especially the first session. I explained that the first dialogue would lay the groundwork for the second dialogue and I wanted everyone to be on the same page, especially since there were to be only two sessions.

Regarding elected officials, I never heard back from one of the council members whom I had interviewed and a second indicated that unfortunately he would be out of town for the first dialogue. As such, only one elected official would be able to attend.

64. Given the small town feel of South Pasadena, I thought that serving home-baked items would lend a certain intimate quality to the event. In order to create an initial sense of ownership in the gathering, I invited participants to do the same if they wished, without feeling the obligation to do so.

In the end, ten interviewees confirmed that they would attend both sessions. As it turned out, that number was evenly split between the so-called "Yes on SP" and "No on SP" proponents.

VI. 1ST DIALOGUE (JANUARY 31, 2009)

Pre-Dialogue Notes: Here are a few notes and observations based on what occurred before the first dialogue began.

Confirmation Email: On January 28, I emailed all participants confirming the date, time, and location. Naturally, I was concerned that people may not show up even though they had indicated that they would. I also wanted to let them know that we would be starting on time. Meetings in town often start late (as they do elsewhere) and I wanted people to know that I respected their time. As such, I asked participants to arrive between 8:30 and 8:45 so that we could get started precisely at 9:00 am.

Room Preparation: I arrived early to arrange the room. I set up three circles of chairs (2 x 3, 1 x 4) on one end of the large Community Room. At the other end, I set up two rows of five chairs facing each other at close proximity. I did not want to waste any of our precious time arranging furniture. I also opened up the blinds to let the morning light shine in through the historic leaded glass windows. In the center of the room, I laid out the two home-baked loaves on a nice plate in the center of a large wood table.

Arrival of Participants: Only two participants arrived at 8:30, and by 8:45 there were still only three people present. I was nervous that others might not show up, but by 9:00, nine out of ten participants had arrived.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Release: I intended to ask all participants to sign the IRB release before the start of the session, but I was worried that it might make people uncomfortable. As it turned out, nobody had a problem with it. They seemed to view it as matter of course, as business to be taken care of before the meeting. Of course, I think it helped that they also saw others signing it.

One interesting point was that the release had to be witnessed and certain participants ended up witnessing the signatures of individuals who had been on the opposite side of the recent SP ballot measure and with whom they had not spoken for a while. Ironically, the Release helped release some of that tension, even before the official start of the first session.

Level of Initial Communication: Despite the animosity among many of the participants over the previous months, once they entered the Community Room, people seemed relatively comfortable with one another. In the minutes before we began, I could see that most were chatting away about

everyday stuff with a few talking politics and strategies related to upcoming city issues.

Because I had not told anyone who would be in attendance, some of the participants were a little anxious about who would turn up. One light-hearted moment occurred when a participant arrived, looked around and, seemingly relieved, commented: "Well, looks like familiar faces." To which another participant quipped: "There aren't any new faces in South Pasadena." Everyone laughed.

Commencement of Dialogue: At 9:05, with nine out of ten participants in the room, I gently nudged everyone from their respective conversations and asked them to take a seat so we could begin in a timely fashion.

Brief Introductions: I wrestled initially with whether I would ask participants to introduce themselves. After all, this is normally what people do at meetings. However, this often seems like a waste of time, especially when time is so precious and everyone already knows each other. If anyone were new to the room, I would have done introductions. Additionally, introductions offer participants the opportunity to lead off with their own agenda. Even when the facilitator is clear as to what is requested in terms of introductions (e.g., only your name and address), I have seen participants elaborate by adding, for example, "My name is _____ and one thing I'd like to say before we begin is that I hope we get to discuss how the planners didn't provide enough opportunities for residents to be heard . . . ." One way to manage this is for the facilitator to model exactly what she would like participants to say by introducing herself first. However, in my experience, the grandstanding participant can still make an end run to the soapbox. As such, I decided to dispense with the introductions in favor of wiser uses of our brief time together.

Opening Statement: As mentioned above, I highlighted the research aspect of the dialogues. I reiterated the academic nature of my work and my neutral role as modeled in the personal interviews. I explained that I hoped this would offer participants a certain amount of explorational freedom (that comes with academic endeavors) and permission to talk to one another in a different context. I also offered some inspiration for our gathering from President Obama who had shared these words of hope in his Inaugural Address a week earlier: "We will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."[65]

65. Barack Obama, U.S. President, Inaugural Address (Jan. 20, 2009), *available at* http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/.

"No New Faces": At this point, the sole Council Member arrived a few minutes late, carrying his newborn daughter, Bella, in her little car seat. He apologized for being late and sat down quietly.

Earlier in the process, I had entertained the idea of bringing in a couple of new people for the dialogue (for example, a student, new resident, etc.), but decided to stick with the "old voices." There was the quip at the beginning of the above dialogue that there "aren't any new faces in South Pasadena." However, now we had a new voice in the room: the silent voice of a child who, in twenty years, will be a young adult.

The metaphor of Little Bella's presence was perfect for the theme of looking forward and made our discussion that day all the more relevant. It also shifted the dynamics (and polarities) of the room. In an especially poignant moment, one of the participants—who was on the opposite side of the Council Member regarding Measure SP—held the baby as they talked in their World Café group (see images on the next page). Bella's presence in the room had a gentle but powerful effect on participants, and of course it was unplanned—serendipity working its magic.

Ground Rules: I reviewed the ground rules[66] and everyone nodded in agreement. I had the same feeling as when they signed the IRB release—that it was just a part of doing business that day. In addition, I think they were prepared to respect the rules I presented because of the academic/research nature of our time together.

Engagement Techniques: I spent a few minutes explaining the World Café and AI models. After I was done, I felt that I should have spent more time going over tips for improving the level of listening,[67] and I made a note to do so for the second dialogue.

1st Dialogic Exercise: Using the World Café model, participants formed two small groups of five. Groups of four are the preferred size, but because there were ten participants, I thought I would try groups of five (see images on the next page).

Note-Taking: I asked each group to select one scribe and stressed that they should feel free to share that responsibility. I gave each group a small 8" x 11" notepad. While I am aware that many practitioners like the larger pads propped up on an easel, I prefer the smaller pads as they help keep things more intimate and help everybody remain seated. This in turn helps prevent participants from standing up, taking over the easel, and dominating the conversation.

66. *See supra* p. 390.

67. *See supra* p. 364

First Dialogic Exercise using World Café model (note Baby Bella's presence)

Question #1: What are the existing strengths of South Pasadena—what works well here?

The following are the transcribed notes from the small group dialogues. So as to maintain the integrity of the participants' work, the wording has not been edited. Where notes are similar but worded in a slightly different way, I have included the different variations. As such, the comments regarding the first question were:

- Group 1:
    - Participation / volunteerism: a number of different people who participate
    - Community involvement
    - Caring
    - Bringing concerns to the table
    - Genuine affection
    - Passion
    - Differing opportunities
    - Schools / education: community supports schools
    - Newer / younger people
    - Staff commissions / volunteers–110 commissioners / 22 commissions
    - Community Redevelopment Commission (CRC) selection process is not appointed by mayor
    - Sense of community
    - Neighborhoods
    - Behave like a family (clannish): stick together when it comes to issues
- Group 2:
    - Preservation
    - Community involvement
    - SPUSD (South Pasadena Unified School District)
    - SPLL (South Pasadena Little League) and AYSO (American Youth Soccer Organization)
    - Dynamic demographics
    - Core loyalty/community
    - Connectivity
    - Fostering of exchange
    - Neighborhood

Question #2: What positive collaborative efforts have worked? What are some examples of projects, efforts, etc. that were successful and done in a collaborative spirit?

The comments noted by the two groups were as follows:

- Group 1:
    - Golf course / banquet: leveraging legal agreements
    - Collaboration on Diamond Avenue and Rowland Street closure
    - Moving the location for building the South Pasadena Rose Parade float to the War Memorial
    - Fourth of July parade
    - Relay for Life
    - AYSO / Little League: work in progress
    - Strings (music) program
    - New Chamber of Commerce
    - Mission Street Specific Plan
    - Haven't lost track of neighborhoods
    - General Plan collaboration
    - Traditions, historical memory, institutional fabric, continuity
- Group 2:
    - Relay for Life
    - Fourth of July
    - SPTOR (South Pasadena Tournament of Roses)
    - Katrina Project
    - No on 710
    - Local ballot measures
    - Shop local attitude
    - Farmers' market
    - Gold Line anchor site
    - Chamber of Commerce

Question #3: What made those collaborative efforts successful? I also asked participants to note the top three reasons that stood out for each group.

The comments noted by the two groups were as follows:

- Group 1:
    - Great number of people who care
    - Neighborhoods
    - Many opportunities
    - Personal power of buy-in (passionate)
    - 110 commissioners / 22 commissions
    - Size helps to get to know each other

    - Top three reasons:
        - Caring
        - Participation / volunteerism / involvement
        - Neighborhood
- Group 2:
    - Community members care
    - Many churches and faith organizations foster community efforts
    - Volunteer spirit
    - Appreciation for architecture fervor: "openness," inviting
    - Shared core values of community = passion
    - Reverence for historic importance of community
    - Sense of place
    - Top three reasons:
        - Connectivity/enrollment (doing the work, volunteering/the people, "you can make a difference")
        - Neighborhoods are vibrant
        - Involvement through our many community events and organizations

Reporting Back: While "reporting back" is a very common practice in small group work, I have found it to be overrated as a use of valuable time. In my experience, participants seem most interested in reporting what their own group did and tend to pay little, if any, attention to the reports of other groups.

However, given the recent animosities in South Pasadena and the fact that there were many commonalities between the two small groups, I felt that it would actually be a valuable use of time for participants to listen to their respective comments and commonalities. This was particularly the case in view of our use of the AI process, where discovering and building on commonalities is one of the goals.

To do so, the participants stood up, gathered in a circle, and one person from each group quickly reported back. Not only did this serve as an opportunity for everyone to stretch their legs, but more importantly, it allowed everyone to look at one another and to be with each other, as a community. An especially light moment occurred when someone reiterated the words of another participant during their small group discussion: "In South Pasadena we don't practice apathy." Everyone laughed and it seemed that each participant took particular pride in that observation.

2nd Dialogic Exercise: For this exercise, I used the Speed-Dating technique[68] with two rows of five chairs (see images on the next two pages).

Movers and Shakers: When I was explaining how the technique would work, I referred to those who would move as "Movers" and one of the participants quipped "like Movers and Shakers," which drew laughter from the others. Since then, I have come to like that appellation. It allows a facilitator to call the row that is moving "Movers" and the people in the other row who are to remain in their seats "Shakers." It makes each transition easier and, as everyone moves through the process, it is fun to say: "Okay Movers, get going; Shakers, wait for your new conversation partner." It also has a cool ring in the political context.

Question #4: What isn't working well in South Pasadena? I used the Movers and Shakers technique to discuss this more difficult question.

I modeled the technique with the statement: "What isn't working for me is . . .," and I offered some random examples of how I might complete that sentence. I indicated that the Shakers would start.

Approach: I also specified that for the first couple of rounds, participants would just make their statement, without a corresponding reply from the person sitting across from them. The listener's responsibility was to listen—to simply sit with the question. I noted the natural tendency for many of us, especially in planning-related matters, to immediately try and look for solutions. This exercise was intended to help participants raise issues that they feel are not working first before they indulge in a conversation about any particular issue.

As expected, participants were reluctant to start, but once they got going, the room buzzed and after a couple of rounds, I opened up the exercise to conversations.

68. *See supra* p. 364-65.

Second Dialogic Exercise using Speed Dating / Movers and Shakers

Second Dialogic Exercise using Speed Dating / Movers and Shakers

Venting / Being Heard: I noticed that a number of participants were sharing the same point(s) that they had made with previous partners with each respective new partner instead of moving on to other issues. This repetitive voicing struck me as a form of venting that could be very helpful to those participants. The Movers and Shakers technique is particularly useful for this venting process because it offers participants multiple opportunities to say the same thing. Furthermore, the listener is not aware of the repetitive nature of the speaker's comments, which could otherwise be quite irritating. The speakers are able to release whatever pent-up emotions or energy is bound up in a particular issue, and to feel that they have been heard a number of times. In a relatively short period of time—ten to twelve minutes—participants are able to get a lot out of their system.

For those participants who did move on to other topics, they would also feel that they had been heard (regarding their different issues) and had covered a lot of ground in a short time.

Moving On: Initially, some participants were annoyed at having to move on from their respective conversation partners—even partners with whom they were initially reluctant to engage. But then one participant, after being "forced" to move on, joked to her previously estranged partner: "To be continued . . . ." It was encouraging to witness her enthusiasm for the interaction, and the hope for further conversation in the future.

Adjustments: Two participants asked if we could move the chairs further apart so they could cut down on some of the side chatter while maintaining the proximity to their talking partner in the opposite chair. I had not tried that technique before but agreed to try it next time.

Capturing the Conversation: As noted above, conveners can try to capture the various conversations by asking participants to make notes, but Movers and Shakers works best when little is transcribed and participants remain focused on the discussion. Instead of asking participants to take notes, conveners can ask participants immediately after the completion of the exercise to share a few "Great Discussion Points" that arose during their conversations, carry those points forward into the next exercise, or both. As time was limited, I held off on sharing those points (at that stage) and instead asked everyone to carry what they expressed or heard into the next small group exercise.

3rd Dialogic Exercise: Using the World Café model again, I asked participants to form three small groups (2 x 3 and 1 x 4). Looking back on the first exercise, I thought that the groups of five were too big. Even though it was only one more than the four participants traditionally preferred for the World Café technique, the larger number seemed to allow some participants to remain quiet. It also meant that the participants sat further

apart. Somehow, that slight change may have made for a less intimate conversation. As such, I reverted back to using groups of three and four to preserve the level of intimacy and active participation.

My intention was to bring the participants back to the small group format in order to explore the many ideas expressed or heard during the Movers and Shakers session, in the context of the next question.

I held off on handing out note pads until halfway through the session in order to keep participants focused on the conversation, especially listening. Most people in these types of discussions like to take notes and create action lists. While these can be useful, they also stress results over process and detract from participants' ability to be fully present in the discussion.

Question #5: Looking at some of the challenges that lie ahead, what might be some constraints or obstacles?

The comments noted by the three groups were as follows:

- Group 1:
    - Procedures and processes in city government: authoritative management style
    - City officials undermining stated goals and policies
    - Need for training of council members: how to hire city manager or city attorney
- Group 2:
    - Insufficient buffer between council and city staff
    - City council needs to stay on target with long-range coals and objectives
    - Temptation for city council to focus on Brown Act
    - Need to keep city management longer to promote continuity
    - Once people come to consensus, require timetable for completion of project
- Group 3:
    - High turnover rate that hampers effectiveness of city staff
    - The Brown Act hampers effective direction from city council and causes them to waste time or effort
    - Leads to strained relations and unclear direction between city manager or city council and superintendent and school board (lack of consensus or direction)

It was interesting that almost all of the comments concerned city governance and management. None of the comments mentioned Measure SP or for that matter any other issue. I queried whether participants had

somehow found an area that they could all agree was a constraint or challenge, and thereby avoided any discussion about other matters where they might not all be in agreement.

Question #6: What is one small thing you would change? I also asked each small group to present one "best small thing" to the larger group.

This is the only item for which I wanted them to reach a consensus. Again, this was intended to offer participants a taste for the challenges of creating a consensus, and for the work we will be doing in the next session around collaboration, consensus building, etc.

Only two of the three groups came back with their "best small thing," as follows:

- Group #1: Train council members on things like how to hire a city manager or city attorney
- Group #2: Once people come to consensus, require a timetable for completion of the project

Reporting Back: Participants gathered around the food table where each group's spokesperson summarized their respective conversations. Again, there was a lot of commonality, especially about the way the city is run. One participant commented, "Between all of us, we have 450 years of education" to which another quipped, "And we haven't learned much."

It was a welcome, and wry, note on which to end our first dialogue session.

VII. FIRST DIALOGUE: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

After the first dialogue, I spoke privately on the phone with each participant. From my experience with the initial set of personal interviews, I assumed that most participants would probably have things to share with me that they may not have felt comfortable sharing with others during the first session. I welcomed all comments and invited any specific thoughts regarding: (1) their overall feeling or impressions as they left the dialogue, (2) the engagement techniques used, and (3) the diversity of the participants in the room.

Overall Feeling / Impressions: Some of the more general comments noted that the dialogue helped mend fences, created a respectful format for communication, surfaced common goals, and especially, helped people listen.

- "The place settings have been set. It gave him a chance to mend some fences, to repair some strained relationships. It was an opportunity for people to 'reintroduce' themselves. It felt good talking to [one of the participants] about issues in common and I

have spoken to him twice since then. It left me looking forward to the next session."

- "It felt positive and healthy. This format doesn't happen in the city. We're usually lobbying for a point of view. This felt respectful and honest—a positive way of dialoguing."
- "It was good exercise in talking aloud about things that you don't normally talk about. It was an even exchange of dialogue, thoughtful conversation—a good way to express and hear other opinions. It worked because of the guidelines [ground rules] and the neutral setting, versus a s setting for lobbying. It allowed people to talk about opinions centered around common goals."
- "It worked because of the guidelines [ground rules] and the neutral setting, versus a setting for lobbying. It allowed people to talk about opinions centered around common goals."
- "I didn't feel that anything was accomplished, but then I walked out with [another participant] who I hadn't talked to since the SP battle. I also didn't go after [another participant] like I thought I would. I assumed there was going [to] be more conflict when I first walked in and saw the group, but I don't recall any conflict. There wasn't any chance to be confrontational. Maybe the process made us better listeners."
- "Most of these people talk much better than they listen. They only listen politely. But I was notice[ing] that they listened more than I had thought. In the small group talks, I was surprised that the Council Member really listened and nodded, that he heard me and invited me in."

Engagement Techniques: All of the participants thought that the engagement techniques were useful. Some participants expressed the hope that they could find ways to use the techniques at public meetings.

World Café: Most of the participants really enjoyed the World Café model and thought it was very useful. Comments included:

- "It helped to initiate good thoughts."
- "Writing things down helped us [to] be specific."
- "Participants respected their small group and didn't want to tear it down. It's a great opportunity to get information out on the table without tearing it apart. It's like team cohesiveness in sports where you become supportive of the unit, in this case, the particular small group you're in."

Suggestions and observations regarding the World Café process included:

- "I would prefer to have stuck with the same group right up to the one small thing."
- "I would have shifted groups between questions."
- "I felt like the recorder (scribe) wrote down what he wanted."

Movers and Shakers: While most participants preferred the World Café model, they also felt that the Movers and Shakers technique was quite useful and in some ways "the most interesting." Comments included:

- "It was the first time [another participant] talked to me in fifteen years. Of course, I [would] just as soon not [talk] to her but still it was quite effective in doing that."
- "It let me listen in on other people's conversations and they didn't know it."

Suggestions and observations included the request to move the chairs further apart so they could cut down on some of the side chatter while maintaining the proximity to their talking partner in the opposite chair.[69] Other comments included:

- "The Shakers (the non-movers) tended not to change their topic whereas the Movers switched topics, etc."
- "Although it's a nice way to meet people and to understand their views, I'm not sure how good this technique [would] be to resolve things. It seems fine for generating ideas, but I don't know if it helps with solutions."
- "I thought it was too cutesy."

Diversity of participants: Overall, participants felt that it was "fairly representative of who's usually involved." For some, this meant there was a "limited range of ideas." A few noted that "there were too many Democrats" or "there were too many Freeway Fighters." One commented: "I was a bit surprised to see more allies than opponents, or maybe it's because I liked the people." Another thought that some of the "usual people" were not present and should have been. I asked her who she was thinking of and when she told me, I explained that I had tried to interview those individuals but they had never gotten back to me.

Some would have liked to see more diversity in terms of age:

- "There was nobody under fifty."
- "Maybe a high school kid would have been a good voice to have in the room."

69. *See supra* p. 408.

- "It would have been nice to hear from more people active with the School District, like parents of school children."
- "Most of us older, de facto activists who are diverse in opinion but not in terms of length of time of activity."

"It was the same old faces," said another. "I thought there would be new faces but I suppose that only a handful of people are interested to begin with, and they have a lot of strongly held opinions."

On the other hand, one participant felt strongly that "having other new voices would have changed the whole dynamic. It would have been a whole different dialogue, and what we had is what we needed."

I wondered what new faces, if any, would be at future dialogue sessions should this practice move forward. I also thought about the challenges of working with people who know each other, as this group thinks it does. But do they really?

Other issues raised by participants: Beyond the specific areas that I asked participants to address were a number of other issues, including:

Cordiality: Many of the participants noted that nobody had raised the issue of Measure SP and the Downtown Revitalization Plan. While some felt that this was due to process fatigue or impending CEQA lawsuits, most attributed the absence of any discussion related to Measure SP (or any other controversial issue) to a certain measure of cordiality on their part:

- "People were on their good behavior."
- "The unconscious nature of [the] structure was touchy-feely. People didn't want to destroy the spirit of cooperation, so they avoided the SP issue. I didn't bring up the contentious and sensitive stuff, but it was my choice, as it was with the others. Maybe the operative spirit was to even be friends."
- "Your instructions to us helped. It really matters how you start. You made it clear that it wasn't an attempt to solve problems but to learn how to talk about things. So, people felt that there was no point in bringing up controversial things."
- "People weren't as honest as possible because they wanted to be cordial. But how can you solve the problems of the past without talking about them? I didn't raise them because I dutifully did what I [was] asked. For example, during the Movers and Shakers exercise, I was listening to the people next to me talk about the eighty or ninety meetings that were held for the Downtown Plan. They still have it in their head[s] that there were these meetings, that

people could have come to give their input. I wanted to say something, but I know you didn't want us to do that."

This is a very significant observation. Perhaps participants were merely respecting the ground rules (or what they perceived as being my wishes), but they could have respected those rules while wading into deeper waters, into issues that may have touched on some raw nerves. I think this might be getting to the fault line notion that Stewart described earlier between cordiality and real surfacing, and between approaches like AI and SD.[70] As he noted: "People don't want to get to the difficult decisions. By 'playing nice,' they don't have to address what it takes to really change relationships. After all, that change is usually not easy."[71]

During the initial set of personal interviews, many of the issues that were really bothering participants surfaced, but that was done solely within the context of our private conversations. The first dialogue was critical in that it successfully brought people back into the same room; however, participants did not share what was really bothering them (or even the issues and their interests), preferring to keep most of what was really on their minds to themselves. Perhaps they wanted to respect my effort to keeps things positive at the outset, but even when they were invited to do so, when the questions and conversation turned to obstacles and constraints, participants still played nice, maintained the spirit of cooperation, and remained cordial.

Listening: Many participants commented on the level of listening that occurred in the first dialogue session. "The dialogue helped people to listen and to be heard."

On a related note, in one follow-up conversation, a long-time city resident (and dialogue participant) told me: "The tunnel is a stupid idea. I don't know why people go on about it. It's dead." Hearing the dismissive phrase "stupid idea," I asked her whether she was prepared to really listen to the other side. I reiterated the importance of deep listening in this work. She replied, "I have listened to everything that's been said about it." I wondered if she really had listened deeply to the "stupid idea" and whether she (and the others) would do so in the future.

Similarly, another participant told me that someone in her small group said that the Chamber of Commerce was working well. She really wanted to tell him how wrong he was, that the Chamber was not working well. She wondered whether he was really listening to the complaints about the Chamber, but she suppressed her impulse to correct him (again, in order to

70. *See supra* p. 10.

71. Interview with Dr. Philip D. Stewart (Mar. 2009).

be respectful and cordial), and decided to raise it with him separately over the phone.

Sustainability: Sustainability was a big issue for many of the participants raising questions such as: "How can this type of dialogue process continue?" A number of participants asked me if I would be doing more of these dialogues beyond the two sessions. Other comments relating to sustainability included educating the public about leadership styles, the role of neutral fact-finding, and the use of World Café—as follows:

- "We need to educate people about different leadership styles and break the larger problems down into smaller problems to solve."
- "There are so many hidden agendas. It would be better to have more transparency, to have a healthier dialogue around people's interests, positions, and even agendas. One way to have a dialogue is through neutral fact-finding, like for the 710 tunnel proposal."
- "A good use for neutral fact-finding is the Brown Act. We need to understand it better as a community."
- "World Café works really well for sustainability. Participants respect their small group and don't want to tear it down. It's a great opportunity to get information out on the table without tearing it apart. It's like team cohesiveness in sports where you become supportive of the unit—in this case, the particular small group you're in."

Public Outreach: Comments about public outreach addressed matters such as defining a public meeting, having key players arrive earlier in the process, creating a more robust online presence, and bringing in new faces—as follows:

- "I heard [one of the other participants] talking about how they had eighty to ninety meetings. They still have it in their head that there were these meetings that people could have come [to] to give their input. It's ridiculous!"
- "A number of regulars were not at the meetings. Perhaps they didn't want to give their opinion at that time because [they] might have more power later. Or maybe people are too busy to show up and don't wake up until the hotheads do something."
- "The city is now gathering email addresses for the new online version of its 'Neighbors' newsletter. They could use those email addresses to create more robust public participation, etc."
- "Not enough newer faces go to meetings. The question is how to get newer faces into the room."

Baby Bella: Despite my own enthusiasm for the metaphorical significance of Baby Bella's presence during the dialogue, some participants felt differently:

- "[The Councilman] was drawing too much attention to himself."
- "I thought it was totally inappropriate. I don't think that babies belong in adult activities; they're just a distraction. I didn't like it."

Introductions: Most participants did not notice the absence of introductions and felt comfortable without them, especially given the time constraints and the fact that they already knew everybody ("so what would be the point?"). However, one did feel that "not having them seemed out of the ordinary."

VII. SECOND DIALOGUE (FEBRUARY 28, 2009)

Pre-Dialogue Notes: Here are a few observations based on what occurred before the second dialogue began:

Participant Attrition: Two weeks before the session, I received an email from one of the participants saying that unfortunately, he would be on the East Coast on February 28, and would not be able to attend. After confirming with all ten participants that they would be available for both sessions, I was not pleased about his withdrawal but appreciated the fact that he gave me two weeks' notice.

Then, three days before the second dialogue, another participant emailed to say that he would not be able to make it because of a family conflict. I wrestled with the notion of replying. I wanted to respect the integrity of our group process, and felt that he owed it to the group to be there. As such, I emailed him back with the following: "Of course, I'm sorry to hear that as I asked for a commitment to the dates and it's a small group. Thank you for your participation to date and if things change, please let me know." I never heard anything further.

As it turned out, one of the non-returning participants was a proponent of "No on SP" and the other had voted "Yes on SP," so we still maintained the balance of participants at least as far as their positions on SP (four yes and four no). This ballot measure balance was not intended, but it did factor into the dynamics of the dialogue sessions.

Also, one attendee who could not make it to the first dialogue called to ask if he could audit the second session. I told him that I did not feel it would be appropriate, noting that no other observers would be present, and I thought being observed would make the other participants too self-conscious and uncomfortable. I also doubted his ability to stay out of the dialogue once he was in the room.

Arrival of Participants: As participants mingled before the session, they discussed the CalTrans meeting that took place in the same community room only three days earlier on February 25. The meeting focused on the hole-boring studies that CalTrans was conducting regarding the 710 tunnel option. I also attended that meeting to observe how the agency handled the public participation aspect of their efforts. It was a very traditional public scoping meeting and the participants in the room reflected a similar sentiment:

- "It was the same old 'Dog and Pony' show, all dressed up in their suits and ties . . . even the women. They told us what they wanted to tell us."
- "The CalTrans people kept stressing that it wasn't a tunnel meeting but rather a meeting about the boring study. They kept calling it the 'boring meeting.' And it was."

Of course, the discussion was very prescient given our focus on engagement techniques. It seemed participants were even more aware of that given our current discussions.

Commencement of 2nd Dialogue: I began five minutes late because it was hard to interrupt people while they were talking with each other. I appreciated and valued their interaction, and I expressed that before indicating that we needed to begin.

Opening Statement: Before we started the day's dialogue, I quickly:

- Noted that two people wouldn't be joining the group for the reasons given above;
- Reiterated the academic nature of our time work, as well as my neutral role;
- Repeated the ground rules—especially about listening—and the tips for improving the level of listening in the room;
- Drew attention to the next two stages of the AI four-stage process: Dream (envisioning processes that would work well in the future) and Design (planning and prioritizing those processes); and
- Highlighted some of the group work from the last session, especially the extent of commonality about what is working well and suggestions for "one small change."

Civic Engagement Spectrum: To lay a foundation for our final dialogue, I facilitated a brief discussion about the meaning of the term "civic engagement." One participant defined it simply as "government" while another nodded her head in disagreement and said, "Bringing the public in to deliberate, to make decisions."

To better illustrate the possibilities for designing community systems, I then distributed a copy of a chart entitled "Building Bridges: From Community Consultation to Community Engagement" created by Janette Hartz-Karp and 21st Century Dialogue in Australia.[72] I intended this as a sort of "strawman" for participants to use during the session discussion and beyond. I emphasized that it is only one of many such spectrums and participants should consider it with a critical eye.

72. 21st Century Dialogue, Building Bridges: From Community Consultation to Community Engagement, http://www.21stcenturydialogue.com (last visited Feb. 20, 2010).

Building Bridges

From Community Consultation to Community Engagement[1]

Community Engagement requires three critical levers: Inclusiveness, Deliberation and Influence[2]

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

INCLUSION

- The incensed and the articulate are heard[3]
- Squeaky wheels & powerful elites bargain, negotiate, lobby and campaign
- Aligned to interest groups
- Identified as stakeholders
- Silent majority's opinions are sought superficially

DELIBERATION

From Advocacy

Asserting our own point of view:

- Explaining
  "Here's how the world works and why I can see it that way"
- Asserting
  "Here's what I say and here's why I say it"
- Dictating
  "Here's what I say and never mind why"
- Testing
  "Here's what I say and what do you think of it

INLFUENCE

Inform	Consult	Involve
Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions	Obtain public feedback on analysis, and/or decisions	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues are consistently understood and considered

[7]

TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION[8]
"Fixes that Fail" (Vicious Cycle)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INCLUSION

- Diversity through random selection
- Formerly voiceless are given a voice
- Silent majority are heard
- Involving 'the voiced' as local experts—changing role of activists[4]

Inclusiveness within Community Engagement ensures participation that is:

- representative of the population,
- inclusive of diverse viewpoints and values,
- based on equal opportunity to participate

DELIBERATION

To Skilful Discussion[5]

Balancing:

- Advocacy
  - explaining and asserting our own point of view
  - making our own thinking and reasoning visible to others
- Reflection
  - slowing down our thinking so we become more aware of our own thinking and reasoning, and how we form our ideas about the world
- Inquiry
  - inquiring into others thinking and reasoning
  - openly sharing views and developing knowledge about each others' assumptions

Deliberation in Community Engagement involves[6]:

- speaking honestly and openly;
- seriously considering differing viewpoints and values;
- thoroughly understanding the issues and their implications;
- reframing issues;
- seeking a range of solutions;
- searching for common ground

INLFUENCE

Collaborate	Empower
Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	Place final decision making in the hands of the public

Influence in Community Engagement provides

- capacity to influence policy and decision-making

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT[8]
DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY
Building a Cooperative Environment (Virtuous Cycle)

[1] 21st Century Dialogue – "Engaging Diverse People in dialogue that builds bridges towards the common good" www.21stcenturydialogue.com
[2] Carson, L. and Hartz-Karp, J. (forthcoming). "Adapting and Combining Deliberative Designs: Juries, Polls, and Forums", in Gastil, G. & Levine, P. The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century, Jossey Bass, USA.
[3] Carson, L & Martin, B (1999) Random selection in politics, Praeger,Westport, CT
[4] Carson, L (2001) "Innovative consultation processes and the changing role of activism", Third Sector Review, Volume 7, No. 1, 2001, pp. 7-22
[5] Senge, Peter M. The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization, New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1994, c1990.
[6] Hartz-Karp,J. "Deliberation as a Key to Community Engagement", International Conference on Engaging Communities, (forthcoming, 14 – 17 August 2005)
[7] International Association for Public Participation 2000, http://www.iap2.org
[8] Hartz-Karp, J. "Harmonising Divergent Voices: Sharing the Challenge of Decision Making" Public Administration Today, Issue 2, Dec – Feb 2004, pp14 – 19.

Useful Websites: www.activedemocracy.net - www.21stcenturydialogue.com

The spectrum proposes that community engagement requires three critical levers: inclusiveness, deliberation, and influence.[73] Deliberation ranges from "advocacy" to "skillful deliberation." The levels of Influence are inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower.

Referring to the group's earlier conversation about the CalTrans meeting, I suggested that the so-called "boring meeting" might be viewed as an example of "old school" community consultation where sides naturally form and polarization is perpetuated.

Participants reviewed the chart for a few minutes and found it to be very helpful in terms of articulating where South Pasadena is in terms of civic engagement. Most felt that the city is on the side of community consultation whereas they would like to be part of community engagement. I asked them to keep the spectrum in mind as we proceeded through the morning's discussions. In later discussions, many participants commented favorably on the chart's usefulness in thinking about the challenges that lie ahead.[74]

1st Dialogic Exercise: I returned to the Movers and Shakers technique for the first exercise of the day. This would for the foundation for the dream (or imagine) component of the AI process.[75]

Technique: Based on some participants' requests for more spacing during the last dialogue, I shifted the chairs so they were seven to eight feet from the chairs on either side. While at first I welcomed the opportunity to experiment a little by making this adjustment to the technique, I found it much harder to manage the participants. When they were closer together, there was a certain buzz that I believe made people feel like they were part of the community of conversation, and they stuck to the program. Perhaps that was because they heard others engaging, and felt inclined or compelled to do the same. Once the chairs were moved further apart, however, this focus seemed to dissipate. Participants tended to drift off topic, chatting with one another about other things. I also found it harder to move people along in their chairs and also to talk to them as a group between tasks. Maybe next time I will try it with the chairs only two to three feet apart and see how that goes.

73. Lyn Carson & Janette Hartz-Karp, *Adapting and Combining Deliberative Designs: Juries, Polls, and Forums*, *in* THE DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY HANDBOOK: STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT 120 (John Gastil & Peter Levine eds. 2005).

74. Over the course of the study, a number of participants asked me questions about the best practices for public engagement. When replying, I was careful to present the pros and cons of each practice. Examples of some best (or better) practices that I shared were: defining the goal of the engagement process (e.g. community consultation, community engagement, etc.); using an interest-based, collaborative approach; using "intimate" techniques for enhanced engagement; conducting pilot projects; and creating a process for evaluation and adaptation.

75. *See supra* p. 362.

Question #1: What questions do you have about South Pasadena twenty years from now? I asked the Shakers to begin with one question and then without any discussion, the Movers would offer their question. This would continue until I would direct them toward a more conversational back and forth.

My intention with this question was to demonstrate the challenges of imagining what things in South Pasadena would be like in twenty years, in light of many planning processes that tend to be based on ten and twenty year timeframes. To bring this point home, I asked them to think back to 1989 (when most of them were around and active in city affairs) and compare how things have changed. By way of example, I pointed to one fundamental change: the Internet. I emphasized how much the Internet has impacted our lives in terms of the way we communicate and engage with one another. Yet it was something unimaginable twenty years ago and therefore almost impossible to plan for in any realistic way.

At first there was a quite a bit of resistance to beginning the exercise, so much so that I started to doubt whether it was a good or valid question. Once they got going, most of the participants still struggled to form questions, finding it easier to articulate statements. To facilitate the process, I offered an example: a statement such as, "Technology is always changing" can be turned into a question like, "What will technology be like in twenty years?"; or, "People aren't going to be interested in what happens because they'll be so distracted" can become, "What kind of citizens will we be?" or even, "What kind of city do we want to be?"

In hindsight, I now see the confusion inherent in the wording of the original question. Perhaps a better question that would have yielded similar results would have been: "What do you think South Pasadena will look like in twenty years?"

The questions posed by participants included:

- What will the ethnic make-up be like?
- What will people's financial situation be like? Will the recession be over?
- While this seemed highly unlikely, someone noted how the present can color future thought and action.
- How much free time will people have?
- What media will there be in town? Will the South Pasadena Review still be around? How will its absence change things?

In a world where there is now so much information and everyone has an opinion, how can we avoid anarchy? Where will we get our facts? How do get people educated?
    - Some questioned whether younger people would have the same concern. Others pointed out that people are currently looking at ways to make sense of these more robust forms of civic engagement.
- To what extent will people be involved in civic decision-making?
- Will people be as entrenched as we have been?

2nd Dialogic Exercise: With one hour left in the session—and our dialogue process—I thought it would be a productive and interesting use of our time to employ a full group discussion format. While it was my original intention to continue with the small group World Café technique, it felt like the group wanted to spend some time together, to discuss things as a whole. In many ways, this is the goal: getting people together again, bouncing off ideas, having healthy and respectful discussions with everyone around the table. One thing that often arises in the course of small group work is the desire to come together again. It felt like the right time to give it a try. One of the key features of effective facilitation is being flexible and this moment seemed to call for a slight change in plans.

As such, everyone placed their chairs in a circle. To make the transition easier and to manage any potential problems, I facilitated the discussion and started off by reminding everyone about the ground rules. Again, given the strong personalities in the room, I wanted to avoid any one person taking over the dialogue. I then posed the next question for the whole group.

Question #2: What current issue in South Pasadena could we solve in the next five years?

Participants raised the following issues:

- Effective city government: better process, not us versus them
- General plan: need a robust and accessible official plan, consultation and process, education, review every five years
- Cooperation between school district and city government
- Personality conflicts
- More diverse public outreach: age, time in the city, socioeconomic, renters
- Economic readiness
- Transportation: sale of CalTrans homes, "the killing of the tunnel"
- Green: set a direction for a sustainable community

As with the first dialogue, many of the issues raised related to city governance and management. Again, it seemed that participants were addressing issues that they felt they could all agree on, and which avoided any discussion about other matters where they might not all be in agreement.

Of course, we were still using a modified AI approach, so maybe that is fair but it made me wonder.

Question #3: What process would you design to address the issues in Question #2?

While we had only twenty minutes left for this final question, the participants did touch on the following concepts:

- Use the existing General Plan process, and the General Plan review process.
- Create more commissions: some also felt that there should be fewer commissions.
- School District: the district has a $4 million budget shortfall and is looking to raise the money from the community through a parcel tax. Some believe there are other alternatives—e.g., by encouraging or even forcing the district to develop its parking lot that stretches for one city block fronting on Mission Street. Not only would this raise the much needed funds, but it would also serve to help link the two downtowns (historic Mission District and Fair Oaks) that are currently separated by a number of empty city blocks. Even if the parcel tax passes, it would be a good time to look at ways in which the district could develop the property to avoid future shortfalls while at the same time giving back to the community by improving the Mission Street frontage or linkage. Participants discussed the possibility of a future collaborative or consensus building process to explore these options.
- Goal setting: currently, council sets its goals on a weekday. Participants felt that this should be done by the community and not on a weekday.
- Laws cannot become barriers: design a process to ensure that our laws help make the lives of South Pasadena citizens easier, and that government (especially City Hall employees) carries out that intention.
- Civic education: create a series of educational programs to show citizens how city government is run (e.g., tax issues).

Closing Remarks: With only a couple of minutes left for closing remarks, participants offered the following insights:

- "I'm not normally into process but now I see that it can be important, especially when I think about things like an oversight committee."

- "I'm really glad that we were all able to talk to one another but I felt that there is a long road ahead and this would have to be a regular monthly effort to improve the way the city works, to deliberately plan for the pitfalls (e.g., how the school district and the city works, rainy day funds, etc.)."

One participant talked to me right after the dialogue and shared this observation:

- "I felt like you broke through the ice. You managed the situation in a neutral way, which was great. It was also helpful that it was part of a study. But there is a lot of work to move forward. If your idea of a SD does happen, then I'm sure there will be conflict. We need to ensure that the ground rules are respected and the relationships are kept open."

IX. SECOND DIALOGUE: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

After the second dialogue session, I conducted another series of follow-up interviews which provided further opportunities for input and insight from the participants.

Overall Feeling / Impressions: Participants commented on the subdued tone of the second dialogue, the usefulness of the engagement spectrum, and the value of listening as follows:

- "I thought the second session was more subdued, less responsive. Maybe it was because we lost two participants or because people had things to say and didn't want to ruin the good feeling in the room."
- "It felt like we weren't functioning on all cylinders."
- "I liked the engagement spectrum or chart that you gave out to us. I thought it was very useful in terms of focusing us and it was a great way to think about where we are as a city in terms of bringing people into the conversation."
- "Both sessions provided the civility that people needed to see. Before, we had to work hard to listen to each other. The exercises helped us work on listening. It's hard to listen, to really listen. Listening was a major component, so I focused on listening."
- "It was very beneficial. It reemphasized things like the importance of listening, and the need for genuine effort to understand others' views. We're normally a room of talkers, not listeners."

Cordiality: I can now see that the second dialogue had a fairly good chance of falling flat. I also felt that it seemed to be more subdued, especially in the first hour. This may have been due in part to the absence of two participants from the first session. But, more significantly, it may have

been a reflection of the fault line that Stewart described.[76] In other words, there was a different subdued (or even suppressed) energy in the room during the second dialogue because people were holding back. After all, where do people go in a conversation if they cannot say what they really want to say—what is really bothering them?

The initial cordiality served a good purpose during the first dialogue by keeping people on a positive note and in the room. But then, as the exercises and questions progressed and as the engagement continued into the next session through the third and fourth hour, that restraint and suppression may have hindered healthier, more productive, and more real discussion. As Stewart noted:

> Dialogue is sustained because people change slowly. They don't like change, they never did something like this, and they are reluctant when they have to do something differently. Most people are not that committed, or there isn't enough time for that commitment to develop. So participants resort to cordiality as a fallback position. Unless the dialogue is sustained, there isn't enough time and space for constructive surfacing of the issues as a group.[77]

Unfortunately, I think that may have been the case here—just not enough time for constructive surfacing.

Techniques: Participants enjoyed the last group exercise when everyone got together, as well as the potential for simple techniques that change the traditional public meeting format:

- "I preferred the last couple of rounds or questions, when we all got together and talked as one group."
- "We didn't move nearly as much as before. I don't know if that's good or bad, but I did notice it. I suppose that I liked moving around. It made it more interesting."
- "I liked our discussion about the CalTrans meeting. It made me think about how they could have tweaked things just a bit and achieved much better results. For example, they could have set up the seats in a circular formation like an amphitheater, with their team of suits sitting in the audience, amongst us. It would have made it more intimate and even friendly. We could look at each other's faces and exchange conversation. Also, the World Café approach would have been very effective."

76. *See supra* pp. 363, 414.

77. Interview with Dr. Philip D. Stewart (Mar. 2009).

- "Having a moderator really helps. It allows other quieter people to speak; it allows everybody the opportunity to engage."

Process Design / Sustainability: Comments concerning process design and sustainability

included the need for a stronger process and less focus on personality, having more neutral fact-finding, and changing the physical set-up at meetings:

- "I'm glad it came out toward the end of the last topic that people now understand that our problem is with process. Focusing on people (the personalities) is like trying to hit a moving target. Whatever we do, we need to focus on the process."
- "I really would like to see more neutral fact-finding; I think that's a great idea."
- "We need to change the physical set-up of our meetings, how we're seated. City council does not lend itself to community dialogue. It's easier to say negatives things when in our traditional set-up."

X. CONCLUSIONS

I view dialogue as an emerging process. As a result, it is often difficult to cherry pick so-called results at a particular moment in that process. However, I conducted more than thirty-five personal interviews and designed and facilitated two dialogue sessions. This process may have produced a number of notable developments for the participants:

Common values: A strong set of common values surfaced among participants from both the personal interviews and the various dialogue exercises. These common values laid the foundation for the AI process, which in turn reinforced the more positive attributes of South Pasadena.

Fence-mending: The process provided the opportunity for most of the key players to be in the same room again and talk—albeit cordially—following the recent divisive Measure SP. It gave them a chance to "mend some fences, to repair some strained relationships. It provided a critical opportunity for people to re-introduce themselves."[78]

Safe space: The process provided a unique academic environment where participants could feel relatively safe and begin to explore new ways of engaging with one another.

78. Interview with a South Pasadena resident.

New engagement techniques: The dialogue sessions modeled new techniques for more robust, intimate, and sustainable forms of engagement. These included World Café, Speed-Dating, and Movers and Shakers.

Venting: The process revealed the potential for personal interviews and engagement techniques to help participants release their anger and frustrations in a managed and constructive way. This was especially apparent during the course of the personal interviews and, to a limited extent, during the dialogue sessions. By shifting partners, the Movers and Shakers technique allowed for some degree of venting to take place. The World Café also provided the opportunity for people to talk (and vent) with one another in small groups, which were designed to encourage people to speak more freely.

Behavioral patterns: Dialogue can help reduce entrenched behavioral patterns like polarization, demonization, mistrust (in people and in the process), and escalation. By suspending judgment and creating opportunities for deeper listening, people come to see each other more as whole human beings. This occurred, to a limited extent, even in the few short hours that people spent together in the two dialogue sessions. Many got fresh glimpses of their fellow participants, even those who had known each other for more than thirty years.

Listening: The two dialogue sessions offered participants a greater appreciation for the value of deep listening by creating more meaningful dialogue and for its potential to resolve conflict. Both the World Café and the Movers and Shakers were especially effective in this regard. However, one might question the extent to which the participants were prepared to listen to some of the more controversial issues.

Subtle middle positions: Processes like SD and AI can play a central role by helping different sides be in the same room, sharing common community values, by uncovering underlying interests and needs, exposing gray area, providing ground rules that encourage respectful listening and other enhanced engagement techniques, and offering a safe space to explore alternatives without having to make any commitments. Even in the two dialogue sessions, participants acquired a sense for the potential of deep listening and allowing for subtle, middle positions.

Baby steps: Participants enjoyed the "best small thing" exercise. It helped them recognize that there are *little* things that participants (and the City) can do to start making changes for the better. It helped them acknowledge the value of baby steps.

Using a neutral: The process demonstrated some of the advantages of using a neutral mediator or facilitator to conduct this type of engagement process—from conducting personal interviews to designing and facilitating a dialogue process that had ground rules and a structure that was respected by the participants.

Dialogue's potential: The whole process seems to have imparted a heightened awareness among the participants regarding the collaborative possibilities presented by dialogue and deliberation. In the weeks since the last dialogue, I have met a number of the participants around town who have mentioned several issues, both in South Pasadena and the surrounding area, that might benefit from collaboration and consensus building initiatives. They also mentioned their continuing interest in the "Building Bridges" chart/spectrum that I distributed at the second dialogue. They would like their city to shift from the community consultation model toward robust forms of community engagement.

They now see the dialogue process as a tool that facilitators or mediators can use in a situation where the parties are not ready to sit down for formal negotiations. It is particularly useful where, as in South Pasadena, there has been a long history of conflict, personal animosity, mistrust, and other obstacles that prevent settlement of a specific conflict. The dialogue process can be used early on before the community finds itself in another ballot measure battle, so that it may design a better engagement process and set the stage for subsequent substantive discussions. Before they are in the midst of a specific conflict, stakeholders can get together in small groups like World Café and proactively deliberate over how they would like to make future land use decisions, improve their civic government, find better ways to communicate with each other, and get to know one another as whole human beings. If it succeeds, then the participants might decide that they are ready for the next step. If they still believe that issues cannot be negotiated, then it can help them wage their conflict in a manner that will not tear the community apart.

As mentioned above, participants started looking at ways to incorporate more engaging, dialogue-based techniques into their meeting process and public outreach. The recent CalTrans meeting served as a good model for what not to do. Participants realized that with some minor tweaking, the CalTrans conveners could have achieved much better results. For example, they could have set up the seats in a circular formation with the agency folks sitting among the public. This seating arrangement would have made it more intimate and inviting. Audience members and agency officials would then be able to look at each other's faces and exchange conversation. Dialogue participants recognized that a similar approach could be utilized in

South Pasadena and elsewhere. These simple dialogic techniques can be employed to enhance the traditional public meeting process.

Similarly, participants were intrigued by how the World Café approach might be used to make public meetings more effective. They wondered whether they might be able to set aside a part of a public meeting for small group discussions—in groupings of four—where audience members get to share their thoughts with one another on a deeper and more intimate level, and cross-pollinate ideas.

The dialogue process also helped participants appreciate the value of ground rules in terms of creating a safe, respectful environment that was more conducive to listening. They saw how important it was to "set things up correctly in the beginning." Again, the dialogue process demonstrated the importance of having a neutral mediator or facilitator: "It allows other quieter people to speak; it allows everybody the opportunity to engage."[79]

In addition, the dialogue on dialogue process offered many lessons learned for facilitators, especially the following highlights:

Sharing oneself: By sharing some of our own backgrounds and experiences, participants opened up to us. They appreciated our honesty and openness, which offered them a certain level of comfort in doing the same. Sharing our own struggles—our own humanity—empowered them to share theirs. The essence of dialogue is authenticity. By modeling authenticity, we can elicit the same from others.

Adjustments: I appreciated the opportunity to experiment with various techniques. It was interesting to try World Café with five participants (instead of the traditional four), but I would stay with tables of four. I also welcomed the chance to adjust the spacing on the Movers and Shakers (and would recommend the new name). However, I felt that the participants were too far apart and would like to experiment with the participants two to three feet apart instead.

I would also make adjustments to some of the awkward questions. For example, "What questions do you have about South Pasadena twenty years from now?" could easily become "What do you think South Pasadena will look like in twenty years?" to achieve the same goal.

The value of the whole: The last hour of the second dialogue reiterated the tremendous value in getting together again as a group. While I initially intended everyone to continue in small Café groups, the desire to come together and spend some time discussing things in plenary was evident. As

79. Interview with a South Pasadena resident.

facilitators, we need to look for this opportunity at the end of our process. Although I would use small group techniques at the outset when parties are so polarized, I would continue to look for any signs of the polarization dissipating. Recognizing that shift and accompanying opportunity, I would then look for a way to reassemble as a whole.

Cordiality: While on an overall note, the chosen methodologies seemed appropriate, the most significant shortfall had to do with the issue of cordiality. Cordiality works to a point. It helped get people into the room. It helped move things forward at the outset. It helped people acknowledge common values. But I think Stewart makes a very good point. In my experience working with other practitioners, I have found there is too much of an emphasis on keeping things cordial. Managing the dialogue to maintain respect among participants is one thing, but using polite words may be only skin deep. Respectful dialogue is important but this can often lead to a concurrent suppression of feelings and emotions, of anger and frustration, of what is *really* bothering participants.

In some ways, AI and the academic nature of this project both fed into this focus on cordiality. All too often, practitioners and participants do not dig deeper to uncover the real issues—the real fractures in a community. As facilitators and mediators, we have to ask ourselves if we fear the loss of control, if we fear the journey from "managed" to "unmanaged," and if we fear the part when things might get a bit messy.

On the other hand, most of us are not psychotherapists (although it can feel like that sometimes).[80] We may not have the skills to work with that level of emotion. Perhaps the question is: "*What* should we be surfacing?" I would argue that real surfacing should be about *interests*, the interests of the respective parties. Stewart's question ("What is really bothering you?") should focus on the parties' interests. To reframe Stewart's question: "What is really bothering you, *in terms of your interests*?" Yes, there may be times when somebody's feelings were hurt and it would help for everyone to hear the victim's request for an apology, but that still gets back to their needs, their interests—in this case, an apology.

Regarding the situation in South Pasadena, those who were the most emotionally hurt chose not to participate in the dialogue sessions and probably would not have been very effective in moving forward. In the personal interviews, I did ask what was really bothering them. I met with deep emotional narratives that had little to do with their underlying interests regarding land use issues.

80. *See supra* note 6.

Real surfacing needs to focus on the interests of the respective parties. I heard a lot of this in the personal interviews but little came out in the course of the dialogue sessions; much remained unspoken. People were cordial. As noted above, Stewart states:

> People don't want to get to the difficult decisions. By playing nice—by maintaining the calm front—they don't have to address what it takes to really change relationships . . . participants resort to cordiality as a fallback position. Unless the dialogue is sustained, there isn't enough time and space for constructive surfacing of the issues as a group.[81]

As facilitators, we need to move toward a process that provides the time for participants to fully surface their interests and for others to listen deeply to those needs. SD takes time and our time was limited. The dialogue on dialogue was a start; it provided the foundation for a more SD. We need to acknowledge these process limitations from the outset and gear the structure of (and expectations for) our time together accordingly. We can also employ some techniques for shortening the process. For example, by modeling the answers to questions, practitioners can gain some ground. By way of illustration, to address the critical question posed by Stewart, a facilitator might say, "Let me tell you one thing that is really bothering me, or that I really needed in the Downtown Revitalization project, and why."

Listening: But "telling" is only one half of the equation. Real surfacing is about telling *and* listening. Through deep listening, people may not be able to change their values, but they can change relationships, and acquire empathy and understanding. "In sustained dialogue, we look at the relationship," says Stewart. "We go from 'blaming the other' to 'what can we do together.'"[82]

During the personal interviews, a couple of participants regretted not working harder with certain members of the community—including them, talking with them, listening more deeply to their concerns. They shared their secret hope to do that someday—to change the way they act, talk, and listen. With sufficient time and commitment, I can foresee future dialogue processes going deeper to heal some of the more hurtful occurrences that have taken place over the years. Future dialogue processes would be designed in the spirit of "deep telling, and deep listening."

Serendipity: There are always the "Baby Bella" stories, those surprises that can serve to shift the dynamics in a room in subtle and not so subtle

81. Interview with Dr. Philip D. Stewart (Mar. 2009).
82. Interview with Dr. Philip D. Stewart (Mar. 2009).

ways. They serve as wonderful metaphors to remind us that we can only do so much and sometimes there are other hands at work.

There is much to be done in South Pasadena, but there is also a lot of promise. People may know how to "fight the good fight" but the city has the talent, creativity, and ingenuity to be at the forefront of civic engagement in discovering better ways to address and resolve land use issues. All it takes is a commitment by its citizens to harness these qualities toward the common good. And, the time.