Action Evaluation
Cincinnati Police Community Relations Collaborative

"Basically, underneath the presented problem of perceived or factual racial profiling is a sense of the plaintiff's side—the African American community—that their dignity, their legitimacy, their needs, their rights are being threatened and frustrated."
*—Jay Rothman, **The New York Times,** September 9, 2001*

History of Program

In March of 2001 a lawsuit was filed against the City of Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Police Department, alleging racial profiling. Judge Susan J. Dlott of US District Court ordered an alternative, consensus-based process to prevent further polarization in a city known for racial tensions. Over the previous six years, police had shot 15 suspects—all of them black—. In the midst of the development of this court-ordered process, a white police officer shot an unarmed black man, which was soon followed by riots in the street by African American residents.

In May 2001, in keeping with Judge Dlott's court order, the Police Community Relations Collaborative formed and the City of Cincinnati signed a contract with the ARIA Group to facilitate the process. Judge Dlott appointed Jay Rothman, ARIA Group President, as special master. Support for the process also came from the Andrus Family Foundation and the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. The consensus-building process that the ARIA Group facilitated attempted to provide broad and deep grassroots participation by the community to identify the goals, values and ideas for improving race relations. An advisory group made up of representatives from the Cincinnati Black United Front, the Ohio ACLU, the Cincinnati Fraternal Order of Police, and City Administration, actively assisted the ARIA Group in the process design.

The Collaborative presented their agreement in April 2002. Judge Dlott signed the comprehensive agreement in August 2002, which included parameters for police use of force and additional training for officers.

Program Overview

The ARIA Group used a three-phase process, known as Action Evaluation. Phase 1 consists of establishing a baseline and goal setting. Phase 2 is the implementation phase and includes formative monitoring. Phase 3 is the evaluative phase and follows a summative assessment process. In the Cincinnati case study, the three phases of the Action Evaluation model consisted of 9 major steps, which were chronological in sequence.

1. The ARIA Group began by working internally with each of eight identity groups—black citizens, city officials, youth, white citizens, religious and social service leaders, business, education, foundation leaders, and the police with their families. Each group worked on their general goals for police-community relations, their values, hopes or what they really cared about, and concrete ideas for action. The deep and passionate concerns felt by each

group were translated into concrete proposals for lasting change in police-community relations.

2. Through a massive media campaign, the ARIA Group created three avenues for participation—a web-based survey, hard copy surveys distributed by religious and community institutions, and interviews conducted by field workers. They attempted to survey all possible stakeholders, which were eventually organized into eight internal identity or stakeholder groups. They received a total of 3,500 responses.

3. The ARIA Group analyzed and organized all data from the 3500 survey responses according to stakeholder group. They then summarized the data from each group

4. A separate feedback session attended by interested representatives was held with each of the eight stakeholder groups. The ARIA Group presented the summary forms of all responses from the stakeholder group present and then received feedback from the representatives. The eight stakeholder groups and the number of individual responses for each group were as follows:
   a. African Americans—697 responses
   b. Youth—749 responses
   c. City Administration and employees—176 responses
   d. Police and their families—226 responses
   e. Religious leaders and staff from social service organizations—259 responses
   f. Business, foundations and educational institutions—764 responses
   g. White citizens—334 responses
   h. Other minority citizens—220 responses

5. The ARIA Group analyzed these responses and provided each stakeholder group with a draft set of goals. Each group was then used this draft platform to negotiate a set of consensus goals that they owned. In some groups, such as the youth, a group of 10 of the 30 representatives worked to negotiate the youth goals. The work developed in these sessions was open and shared publicly communicated through the media, which wrote about each session as they occurred (see http://www.ariagroup.com/printmedia.html for press reports).

6. The ARIA Group integrated the goals from all stakeholder groups to arrive at a set of five goals for the entire city.

7. Sixty representatives of the eight groups came together for a final meeting, known as the Integration and Action Planning Group, where they voted on and affirmed the five citywide goals for the future of community-police relations in Cincinnati. The goals were:
   a. Police offices and community members will become community members will become proactive partners in community problem solving.
   b. Build relationships of respect, cooperation and trust within and between police and communities.
   c. Improve education, oversight, monitoring, hiring practices, and accountability of Cincinnati police division.
   d. Ensure fair, equitable, and courteous treatment for all.
   e. Create methods to establish the public's understanding of police policies and procedures and recognition of exceptional service in an effort to foster support for the police.

8. These goals were the cornerstone of the final Collaborative Settlement Agreement. During the winter of 2002, the partners in the collaborative entered into intense negotiations to build the landmark agreement, based on the five goals and research on best police practices. University of Cincinnati criminology professor John Eck spearheaded the negotiation among attorneys from the FOP, Black United Front, and the City of Cincinnati.
9. Judge Dlott assigned an independent monitor to track the implementation of the agreement over the next five years.

Central to the agreement was Community Problem Oriented Policing whereby the police are required to partner with citizens to reduce crime and address quality of life issues in neighborhoods. A community problem-solving center is being established to further place the future of community-police relations into the hands of the citizens of Cincinnati.

Principles of Practices

Facilitators/Third Party

The third party carries four distinct roles: process design, data gathering, data analysis/proposal development, and meeting facilitation.

Facilitation follows a clear agenda and ground rules, including an invitation to participants to begin with a focus on their passions, personal experiences and values. In the meetings, participants are free to express what they had written or something new that occurs to them. Local facilitators were also trained to assist the ARIA Group with the stakeholder group meetings.

The third party gathers and analyzed information and uses a qualitative research approach to sorting, synthesizing and grouping responses.

Confidentiality and Neutrality

A third party made up of outsiders works best when it integrates its work with existing power structures. Ideally, the facilitators are a diverse team and include locals who will do the work and sustain it over time. The staff of the ARIA Group is predominantly white but included other facilitators who were African American to assist in the process. The race of the facilitators is less significant than the process and skills they bring to their position. Key to this role is the ability to translate the verbatim stories and text from the surveys into value and goal statements without inserting personal bias.

Confidentiality is central to the process. The data from the surveys was not confidential. It was specifically a public record, open and transparent. Yet confidentiality was critical regarding the names and identifiers of those involved in the process. In fact, these were protected by a federal court order, which the ARIA Group did in order to help the police and youth in particular feel comfortable sharing their goals candidly).

Process

Broad and deep grassroots input is essential. Identify all stakeholder groups in the community and then seek direct input from each of them. Multiple outreach methods are required to ensure that written surveys are completed by a critical mass from each group. Data gathering from individuals is a preliminary step to group process and is gathered, entered, and analyzed by the project staff prior to taking the findings to the respective stakeholder group.

Internal identity groups need a safe space to explore their values and hopes and should therefore have separate, confidential meetings. The principle of reflective practice guides the work, where the facilitator helps group members reflect on and compare their practice (behavior) with their core values. The objective is to bring into alignment the values, goals and practice of each group.

Move from superficial to more personal motivation, passion and values. The vehicle for doing this is to ask each internal identity group three "whys," three "what's," and three "how's". The process should translate people's passions and concerns into a deeper understanding of their values, which can then lead to proposals for the future. Facilitators use verbatim notes from participants to uncover the positive reasons, called "passion points," underneath the negative concerns or grievances.

> The power of why is critical to the process. Why taps deep-seated passions, is rooted in narrative, links social identities, and moves people from antagonism to resonance.

> The power of why disarms participants as it accepts the validity of each person's experience. Why also provides a forum for voicing passions without becoming accusatory or negative.

Individuals in internal identity groups go through the change process at different paces. The process must engage a critical mass from each group, which is tracked by the database. Action Evaluation is a process for building community and developing leadership in each group. The process encourages empathy within a group to respect and value everyone's voice.

Negotiation takes place within each internal identity group. Participants challenge each other and are free to ask each other questions. Eventually a group of 10 representatives sit in a fish bowl among their internal identity group to arrive at consensus on the shared goals for the entire group. The facilitator asks each participant to show a thumb up (absolute consensus), a thumb sideways (relative consensus) or a thumb down (cannot agree). Each goal is linked to the passion points and together the goals and passion points create the group's proposed action plan.

Those with power do not want to give up the process to an outside facilitator. It is therefore important not to create a coalition of the willing against the old way or old power structure. The outside third party must integrate the process and graft onto existing structures. People will not give up power willingly unless it is in their self-interest.

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Youth are a marginalized group that must be brought into the process through specific strategies. This includes simplifying language, conducting targeted outreach, and even sending field workers into the neighborhoods to meet youth in their settings.

Goals

1. Translate passion and concerns into values and goals for a new future.
2. Using an analytic framework, create consensus among all stakeholder groups.
3. Build new problem solving attitudes, relationships, and methods for the community to use after the formal process is completed.

Content

Action Evaluation is a data-driven, group process. The data is collected by web-based questionnaires, or by field workers and becomes a vehicle for giving voice to each internal identity group. The group process builds on the extensive survey data and attempts to make everyone a reflective practitioner. Content is not prescribed by the third party but emerges from the group. The facilitators play a major hand in process decisions but not in content decisions, which belong to the group.

The community process in Action Evaluation sets the agenda for the legal process that follows.

Methodological Note

Research on Action Evaluation began with a review of Resolving Identity-Based Conflict in Nation, Organizations, and Communities, by Jay Rothman. The ARIA Group, which Rothman founded, designed and facilitated the Action Evaluation process in Cincinnati. I then attended a conference session and a workshop presented by the ARIA Group and the Andrus Family Fund (project funder) at the Association for Conflict Resolution Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida. During and following the session, I engaged Dr. Rothman in a series of observations and conversations around guiding principles of practice underlying explicit and implicit processes. Following the conference I reviewed the article, "From Riots to Resolution: Engaging Conflict for Reconciliation," written by Rothman and Chris Soderquist in The Systems Thinker. I also viewed an interactive audio-visual compact disc produced by the ARIA Group on the Cincinnati work. I analyzed these documents to learn of the process and to identify principles of practice, some of which were explicit while others were implicit from the structure of the Action Evaluation process. This report was then submitted to the ARIA Group and revised to take into account their feedback.