

DIALOGUES ABOUT RACE RELATIONS:
WHAT KIND OF TALK IS NEEDED TO OVERCOME RACIAL CONFLICT?

by

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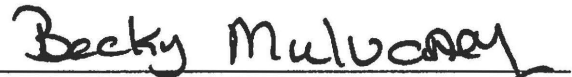
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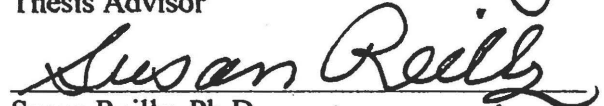
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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Becky Mulvaney, Department of Communication and Multimedia Studies, and has been approved by all members of the supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.


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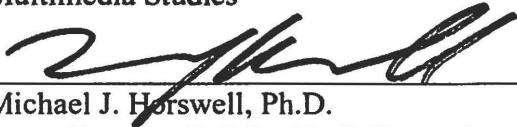


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ABSTRACT

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The Trayvon Martin shooting of 2013 and the Michael Brown shooting of 2014 by a White security guard and White police officer sequentially led to the Black Lives Matter movement which has grown internationally to 40 chapters. Police agencies have responded with active community outreach programs to proactively reduce conflict. The question arises whether a language of peace such as Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication would be an effective tool to be used in instances of conflict similar to the carnage involving Black men and White police officers between 2013-2017. Local members of the Black community, Black Lives Matter, and law enforcement were interviewed asking the efficacy of Rosenberg's NVC and deliberative dialogue as well. The study showed that since Blacks and Whites view racism differently, a more comprehensive approach is needed to address the challenges of racism and race relations. This thesis describes the possible use of a few models structured to discuss the racial conflict between all parties affected by racism.

DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this thesis to my father, Robert A. Hudgins who passed away half way through the pursuit of my Master's degree. No one instilled the value of education in me as strongly as he did. He also was a strong proponent of racial equality throughout his lifetime. I learned an interesting story listening to his eulogy at his funeral. My father was a high-school teacher and coach, and the eulogy was given by one of his past student athletes. In the 1960s, my father took his basketball team to dinner while traveling to a game. The restaurant refused to serve a couple of the team's Black student athletes. My dad took the team and walked out. I thank him and remember him for his dedication to education and resolute belief in racial equality.

DIALOGUES ABOUT RACE RELATIONS:

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INTRODUCTION	1
Research Question.....	4
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Race and Racism	6
Rhetorical and Dialogue Theories.....	10
Enfoldment	11
Invitational Rhetoric.....	12
Deliberative Dialogue.....	14
Nonviolent Communication	17
CHAPTER 2: ESTABLISHING A METHOD	18
Goals.....	18
Similarities	19
Differences	20
Effective Uses and Results	21
Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication Model.....	26
Sample Interview.....	32
NVC Overview	33
NVC Process.....	33
Two Parts of NVC	34

Questions	34
CHAPTER 3: INTERVIEWS.....	35
Analysis of Black Lives Matter and Law Enforcement Cultures.....	35
Black Lives Matter	36
Black Community.....	40
Police	40
Interviews and Practitioner Evaluations.....	45
Black Lives Matter	45
“Everyday” Member of the Black Community.....	55
Florida Atlantic University Police Captain	58
West Palm Beach Police Department.....	62
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS	67
Key Results	67
Recommendations	68
Final Thoughts.....	74
APPENDIX.....	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	78

INTRODUCTION

Six years ago, the world learned about Trayvon Martin and the violent circumstances under which he died, spawning the creation of a movement that would shape our future race relations and communication about it. Martin was a teenager who died at the hands of a neighborhood watch volunteer spurring a movement that lives on today: “#BlackLivesMatter” (BLM). Seventeen-year-old Martin was returning to his father’s fiancée’s home in Sanford, Florida. The young man had visited a local convenience store and was toting iced tea and Skittles when he was confronted by Neighborhood Watch Captain George Zimmerman. Zimmerman called 911 to report a “suspicious person” in the neighborhood (<https://www.cnn.com>). Even though Zimmerman was told by the 911 operator that it was not necessary to follow Martin, Zimmerman pursued the young man. A scuffle ensued resulting in the shooting death of Martin by Zimmerman. The shooting death of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of George Zimmerman sparked the Black Lives Matter movement. Other deaths since (e.g. Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray) have propelled a national conversation about race and policing.

The issue reached a particularly intense high with the death of Michael Brown little more than a year later on August 9, 2014. Eighteen-year-old Michael Brown was unarmed and walking down the street with a friend. Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson pulled up in his vehicle and told them to move to the sidewalk. A scuffle ensued in this instance too, and it ended in the shooting death of Michael Brown. The grand jury

decided not to indict Wilson, a decision that led to volatile protests and conflicts between protesters and law enforcement. News networks gave repeated coverage to the protests raising the issue of the event in Ferguson to national concern. BLM discontent and race relations seemed to have intensified significantly. The police were being portrayed in the news media as over-militarized, trigger-happy, racist, violence mongers who shot before listening to unsuspecting, unarmed people of color. Many demonstrators were described as peaceful however, many agitators destroyed property and assaulted police officers. “The protesters attacked police with bricks and bottles, and the officers responded by using tear gas and firing pepper-spray balls into the crowds of protesters” (<https://www.theguardian.com>).

What if an alternative method of addressing the situation had been executed in Ferguson, Missouri? Instead of bracing for clashes between police and protesters day after day, what if police and protesters had met in a dialogue? What if the elements of Marshall B. Rosenberg’s book *Speak Peace in a World of Conflict* were implemented? Rosenberg’s theory of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) stems from attempts to meet universal human needs that are never in conflict. According to Rosenberg’s theory conflict only arises when strategies for meeting those needs clash. NVC proposes that people identify shared needs by discussing the thoughts and feelings that are a part of those needs. Then they can collaborate to develop strategies to meet shared needs by creating harmony and future cooperation.

Why are these topics significant? The BLM movement originated six years ago to address concerns of police violence. It is described as follows:

Black Lives Matter Global Network is a chapter-based, member-led organization whose mission is to build local power and to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes... We are working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise. We affirm our humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression. The call for Black Lives Matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation (<https://blacklivesmatter.com>).

According to their website “Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression” (<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/herstory>). The website discusses how Ferguson was not a departure from the norm, but a clear point of reference for what is happening in Black communities everywhere. BLM’s goal is to develop new Black leaders and create a network where Black people feel empowered and determine their destinies in communities.

It is clear that this six-year-old movement has a voice. The police have their own organization with a similar mission. “Blue Lives Matter seeks to honor and recognize the actions of law enforcement, strengthen public support, and provide much-needed resources to law enforcement officers and their families” (<http://archive.bluelivesmatter.blue/organization>).

The police and BLM have very specific goals. What if the two engaged in a dialogue so both groups could work together to achieve their goals?

This thesis will examine the efficacy of Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication model in talking about race. This topic is significant because since the Trayvon Martin case and the beginning of BLM, little if any progress has been made in discussing race and the issues that aggravate and worry both sides. In this study I will engage in conversations with a member of the African American community, a member of the Black Lives Matter Alliance of Broward County, the captain of the Florida Atlantic University Police Department, and West Palm Beach Police Department Community Response Team to determine how they think NVC, as outlined in Marshall B. Rosenberg’s book *Speak Peace in a World of Conflict*, would work in dialogues about race relations. The study should provide a real-world evaluation of a communication model as a process for healing current racial tensions.

Research Question

The primary question addressed in this study is, “Do nonviolent communication acts—creating a dialogue and doing things from the joy of contribution—function to promote a harmonious rather than divisive discussion about race relations?” More specifically, the study focuses on addressing the following question: “Is Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication theory effective in the current racial climate and in South Florida?” To answer this question, several sub categories need to be addressed. Why focus on Rosenberg’s NVC Theory? Rosenberg’s NVC theory will be defined and its concepts thoroughly addressed hypothesizing why it would likely be effective in avoiding conflict by having a dialogue where people identify shared needs and develop strategies to meet them by creating harmony. I will discuss other frameworks for constructive dialogue and communication, such as invitational and deliberative dialogue and then

explain why I have chosen to focus on Rosenberg's theory. Also included will be the specific questions to ask the members of Black Lives Matter and local police interviewees. When discussing the NVC method, what process will be proposed to teach participants how to use it? How can communities secure commitment to participate in NVC concerning the divisive topic of race relations? Does NVC address the importance of understanding the local cultural contexts of NVC participants?

To answer these questions, I review literature introducing the models of invitational rhetoric, deliberative dialogue, and Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication in Chapter 1 and compare those models. Chapter 2 describes the method used to evaluate the NVC model. Chapter 3 includes interviews with Black Lives Matter and police. Interview and other data establish an informed understanding of the audiences (participants) that could hypothetically engage in these discussions in South Florida. The interviewees were also asked whether they think the NVC method would work or not. Chapter 4 provides recommendations based on the results of the interviews and concludes the thesis, providing a description of the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review analyzes relevant literature on race and racism. Scholars such as Miller and Donner (2000) recognize that the use of structured, public conversations about race and racism, known as racial dialogues are a means of responding to racism. In order to address specific assumptions about dialogue that guide this study, the review also addresses relevant literature on communication and methods of dialogue in order to identify rhetorical practices that will be evaluated in this study.

Race and Racism

The basis of the entire issue is in the definition of racism. Miller and Donner (2000) point out that there are different views of what constitutes racism. Whites mostly see racism as individual acts of prejudice, egregious acts, or denial of rights. People of color, on the other hand, often view racism as a pervasive part of our social fabric, an ingrained part of culture, institutions, social structures and relationships. Miller and Donner define racism in their essay as “the systematic subordination of members of targeted racial groups who have less political, social, and economic power in the United States (African Americans, Latinos/as, Native Americans, and Asian Americans- collectively referred to as people of color) by members of a privileged racial group (Whites/Caucasians/European descended) who have relatively more social power” (p. 33).

The Miller and Donner article explores the use of racial dialogues through structured, public conversations about race and racism. It looks at how people form social

and racial identities and identify with social groups, and how group conflict is one manifestation of racism in the United States.

A second assumption they explore is that, although race is a social construction, racism is a concrete reality. Whether examining the differential application of justice, unequal wealth and income, group differences in health and life expectancy, representation in the political system, access to high status jobs and industries, Whites have a consistent advantage over other racial ethnic groups (Council on Economic Advisors, 1998).

For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be on race relations between Black and White Americans. A 2016 Pew Research Center Survey found “profound differences between Black and White Americans in how they view the state of race relations and racial equality and in how they experience day-to-day life” (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org>, 2016). Black Americans lag in homeownership, household wealth and median income. The economic system in this country favors powerful interests. The median wealth of White households is over \$171K and between \$17-20K for Blacks. White net worth is more than 10 times higher.

According to the Pew research,

Blacks are also more likely than Whites to say they have been treated unfairly in hiring, pay or a job promotion (21% vs. 4%) in the last year. Blacks now have a life expectancy of 75.6 years compared to Whites who average 79 years.

However, the homicide rate among Blacks aged 18-34 is nine times higher than Whites. Among Blacks aged 35-49, the homicide rate is five times as high as among Whites. (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org>, 2016)

Given the fact that we see the basic definition of racism differently—White Americans see it as blatant acts of prejudice while Black Americans see it as woven into culture—it is no surprise there are conflicts. Often people wonder why there is an uncomfortable silence when the subject of racism is brought up in groups of mixed races. It is because Black Americans see it as a much deeper underlying problem in the United States than White Americans typically do.

The issue of racism in the United States is a dichotomized way of thinking. However, the subject is so raw White people often decide to politely keep quiet. The inability of Whites to address the matter becomes frustrating for Blacks. On a subject such as racism, conflict seems inevitable, and violence can easily become a part of the conflict. What impact can dialogue have on these incredibly divisive issues? The goal is to temper to resolve.

This study will look at the general type of communication between police and Blacks in the community. Miller and Donner described their study on racial dialogues as “structured conversations that encourage expressing one’s self and listening to others talk about race and racism. It is hoped that by having direct, open, and honest contact there will be improved understanding and cooperation between groups” (p. 34).

They say that group conflict is a manifestation of racism. Whites often take a color-blind stance in an effort to transcend racism; however, colorblindness is an illusion that only Whites can sustain. The members of other groups become “others” who are seen as somewhat less human (p. 35). When members of the “other” group are viewed as deficient it can intensify the positive identities of members of the in-group (and negative

identities of the out-group possibly more so) (p. 35). Conflicts with members of the other groups can strengthen bonds among members of the in-group.

Fulton-Babicke (2018) spoke of in-group and out-group rhetoric to illustrate the ways Eric Garner's "othering" in popular news media discourse legitimated violence against him (p. 435). On July 17, 2014, the same year as the Michael Brown shooting, Eric Garner was approached by police for selling untaxed cigarettes. Garner protested and was put into a chokehold by one of the police officers. Four police officers wrestled Garner to the ground and a video taken at the incident captured Garner's repeated, distressed protest, "I can't breathe..." (p. 436)". Garner later died of cardiac arrest sometime between the apprehension and arrival at the hospital. Fulton-Babicke point out that using the spectrum between "insider" and "outsider" Black American men's default rhetorical location is closer to "outsider" than the average. She also discusses how narrative framing casts Garner as a "criminal" and "bad guy," the agent of disorder. Also, Pantaleo, the officer who put Garner in a chokehold, is cast as the defender of order or "good guy" (p. 437). Through a discursive practice called priming, rhetors may choose to cast a person as an ally or enemy of readers. According to Fulton-Babicke, journalistic narratives of police brutality often prime readers to think of Black victims as lawbreakers. She says the priming conditions readers to see victims of police brutality as deserving police punishment rather than the sympathy of the readers and viewers, the "law-abiding citizens" (p. 437).

In Garner's case, Fulton-Babicke argues that he represents danger not only for criminality but a for large body type (he was nearly three hundred and fifty-pounds). The physical size suggests power and the potential for violence. Therefore, Garner's threat

places him “outside” the protections afforded to members of the in-group by police officers, and he is situated in the category of dangerous Other. This scenario would also hold true of Trayvon Martin wearing the hoodie at night and appearing potentially dangerous. Also, Michael Brown was cast as a menacing, large, young man who protested when stopped by the police. Again, clothing, the physical size, as well as skin color, are seen as signs of a potential for violence.

Rhetorical and Dialogue Theories

Rosenberg (2005a) talks in his book about a meeting with a minister of a Black church in the heart of a St. Louis ghetto. A warlord of a street gang heard about Rosenberg—“a white man, talking to people on his turf”—and wanted to take part (p. 113). Rosenberg was talking to people about Nonviolent Communication, the process of communication that he was offering to help with race relations). After a while the gang leader said, “We don’t need no great White father coming down to teach us how to communicate. We know how to communicate. You want to help us, give us your money, so we can buy guns and get rid of fools like you” (p. 113). Rosenberg said he wanted to get into a competitive diatribe with him, but instead stopped and began applying the NVC training. Shifting his point of view, Rosenberg replied, “So you’d like some respect for how the people here communicate, and you’d also like some awareness of how other people have oppressed those people they originally say they’re going to help” (p. 114). Rosenberg said he tried to understand the gang leader’s feelings and needs. After the meeting, when walking to his car, Rosenberg was approached by the gang leader who asked, “What are you doing to me in there” (p. 114)? Rosenberg explained it was the NVC process. Then the gang leader asked, “Can you teach me how to teach that to the

Zulus (the name of his gang)” (p. 114)? That started a 13-year relationship between the two including working for the federal government doing conflict resolution between Blacks and Whites. In later years, the gang leader rose to a position of influence in St. Louis where he headed up public housing.

This story illustrates the power of Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication and leads to the next question—How does NVC compare to other models of dialogue? While numerous models for constructive dialogue exist, I review some relevant approaches here, concluding with Rosenberg’s theory of NVC.

Enfoldment

Sally Miller Gearhart’s process of enfoldment involves the rhetor’s search for common ground with the audience. In this joining, the communicators focus on “whatever interests or concerns are held in common” (p. 281). The process is rooted in a genuine curiosity and the effort to understand. Gearhart tells the story of encountering a man at the Kennedy airport in New York. The man was “railing about all these women and abortion rights” (p. 282). Gearhart took him on and had a loud argument professing her own pro-choice beliefs. An hour later as she was boarding a shuttle bus, she encountered the man again. There was only one seat on the bus—next to him. This time she decided to use a different approach. She “began asking him about his life and about the things that he did, seeking to understand his perspective and the reasons it made sense to him” (p. 282). They both listened to one another as she shared her own perspectives and, at the end of the interaction, they had come to understand and value one another’s point of view. As this story illustrates, the process of enfoldment requires emotional

disengagement from a highly volatile situation to develop a relationship with the “opponent.”

Invitational Rhetoric

Invitational rhetoric is a theory of rhetoric developed by Foss and Griffin in 1995. It is defined as “an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination” (p. 4). The theory challenges the definition of rhetoric as persuasion because invitational rhetoric does not seek to persuade but to gain an understanding of the perspectives of others, similar to Gearhart’s process of enfoldment. Invitational rhetoric is an alternative to traditional rhetoric that is not exploitive or oppressive but more humane. A key premise about invitational rhetoric is that traditional rhetoric is based in a culture of domination, while invitational rhetoric creates a more humane atmosphere through seeking to understand rather than to persuade others.

Since Foss and Griffin’s essay in 1995, numerous scholars have weighed in on the subject, many of them critical of invitational rhetoric. A repeated criticism of invitational rhetoric is that it is rooted in the premise that persuasion is violence. Pollock, Artz, Frey, Pearce, Murphy and Dow (“Feminism”) claim that by supporting invitational rhetoric, one implicitly supports that persuasion is violent. However, Griffin and Foss advocate that under certain circumstances, to attempt to persuade is inappropriate, but they don’t state that persuasion by its nature is always and only violent (Bone et al., 2008).

Cloud’s (2004) and Fulkerson’s (1996) criticism is that advocates of invitational rhetoric suggest it should be used in all situations. However, Foss and Griffin (1995) said “We suggest that invitational rhetoric is a viable form of interaction in many instances

but do not assert that it is the only appropriate form of rhetoric and should be used in all situations or contexts” (p. 8).

Another criticism is that invitational rhetoric is gender specific (Condit, 1997 and Mathison, 1997). Condit said that invitational rhetoric “portrays male and female activities and ways of being as radically separate from one another and assigns rhetoric to the realm of the male. More specifically, these theorists argue that rhetoric is patriarchal because it is a coercive practice and because it valorizes the public sphere” (p. 92). Mathison calls invitational rhetoric a “feminine rhetoric,” saying that it “naturalizes women’s ability to be in harmony with their environment, literally and figuratively, reinstating the belief that women are closer to nature because of biology” (p. 156). This is not supported in Foss and Griffin’s original article as they say, “Although invitational rhetoric is constructed largely from feminist theory, the literature in which its principles and various dimensions have been theorized most thoroughly, we are not suggesting that only feminists have dealt with and developed its various components or that only feminists adhere to the principles on which it is based” (p. 5).

An additional criticism is that invitational rhetoric is grounded in essentialist principles. Pollock and Frey (1996) say that the theory starts from an essentialized definition of persuasion. The underlying claim is that the theory’s essentialism makes it of little use to rhetorical scholars, whether it’s persuasion, feminism and patriarchy, or the category “woman.” In the original article, Foss and Griffin did not make claims about the biological nature or the essence of men and women. Bone et al. (2008) point out that “To define rhetoric as persuasion is to suggest what some see as its most irreducible and unchanging essence. This in itself is an essentialist move” (p. 444).

Lastly invitational rhetoric is criticized as lacking agency. Burke (1945) defines agency as “the instrument or the means by which an act is accomplished and is concerned with how things get done” (pp. 275-320). According to Fulkerson (1996) there is no agency when no effort to change others exists. When the goal is to achieve understanding, agency is absent because no pre-determined change occurs. According to Foss and Griffin, the agency embedded in invitational rhetoric is an interactive one, grounded in the “effort to understand” another person (pp.10-12).

Deliberative Dialogue

Scott London (2018) says “deliberative dialogue is a form of discussion aimed at finding the best course of action. The purpose is not so much to talk together as to think together, not so much to reach a conclusion as to discover where a conclusion might lie” (www.scottlondon.com/reports/dialogue).

London describes how the process takes place,

Deliberative dialogue tends to unfold in a fairly predictable sequence. The moderator...typically begins by welcoming the participants, having them introduce themselves, and reviewing the guidelines for dialogue before launching into conversation. Once the preliminaries are out of the way, participants enter into exploratory dialogue. This is the most delicate and tentative phase of the process since people are usually uncomfortable speaking up at first, particularly among strangers. Sometimes they are suspicious of the process itself, preferring to simply sit back and listen before contributing thoughts of their own. Relating personal stories of their relationship to the issue at hand can go a long way toward

establishing a comfortable dynamic in a group.

(www.scottlondon.com/reports/dialogue)

In deliberative dialogue participants are working toward a common goal. Striving for mutual understanding while pursuing an open-minded approach, they re-evaluate, weigh, and possibly change their own points of view. As there is an attempt to change points of view, deliberative dialogue would be considered somewhat persuasive, thus departing from invitational rhetoric.

McCoy and Scully (2002) describe how deliberative dialogue is used to “build relationships, solve public problems and address public issues” (p. 118). They add that deliberative dialogue is effective for community building. Their organization, the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) developed a model described as follows:

Communities use the process to involve large numbers of people in face-to-face dialogue and action on critical issues. The model consists of small, diverse groups called study circles that simultaneously meet across the community to address an issue of common concern. The groups consist of people from all racial, ethnic, educational backgrounds, men and women, public officials and citizens. After meeting several times, they find ways to address issues. (p. 119)

McCoy and Scully (2002) discuss that deliberative dialogue in its most public engagement processes include these principles:

1. Encourage multiple forms of speech and communication to ensure that all kinds of people have a real voice. Once a diverse group of people come together in deliberative dialogue, it's possible for everyone to participate on an equal basis.

2. Make listening as important as speaking.
3. Connect personal experience with public issues. The best way to overcome people's hesitancy to discuss public issues is to have them share issues that affect their daily lives.
4. Build trust and create a foundation for working relationships. This is necessary for deliberative dialogue to lead to meaningful action and change.
5. Explore a range of views about the nature of the issue. How is the issue affecting the community, region, state or nation? What is the nature of the problem? What are the root causes of the problem?
6. Encourage analysis and reasoned argument. Most political theorists who focus on the importance of public deliberation emphasize the importance of critical thinking for sound public policy.
7. Help people develop public judgment and create common ground for action.
8. Provide a way for people to see themselves as actors and to be actors. Action steps are needed after public conversation and analysis of the issue.
9. Connect to government, policymaking, and governance—report the results of deliberation to elected officials. Involve policymakers as participants on an equal basis in the dialogue.
10. Create ongoing processes, not isolated events. Rather than a single session, the time should be divided into at least three or four separate meetings over a period of several weeks. (pp. 120-128)

As can be seen, deliberative dialogue is effective for discussing and finding the best course of action for resolving issues and exploring courses of action in the

community, region, state or nation. It is a process that generally includes several groups meeting simultaneously over an extended period of time. It lends itself effectively to civic engagement.

Nonviolent Communication

Rosenberg (2005a) asserts this as the primary purpose of NVC:

Nonviolent Communication is to connect with other people in a way that enables giving to take place: compassionate giving. It's compassionate in that our giving comes willingly from the heart. We are giving service to others and ourselves—not out of duty or obligation, not out of fear of punishment or hope for a reward, not out of guilt or shame, but for part of nature. It's in our nature to enjoy giving to one another. Nonviolent Communication helps us connect with one another by allowing our nature to come forward in how we give (and are given to) by others (pp. 16-17).

Invitational rhetoric, deliberative dialogue, and Nonviolent Communication will be compared and discussed in greater depth in Chapter. 2.

CHAPTER 2: ESTABLISHING A METHOD

In this chapter I first compare relevant models of rhetoric and dialogue and then elaborate on the choice of Nonviolent Communication and how it will be examined. The models are compared in terms of their goals, similarities, differences, and effectiveness.

Goals

Foss and Griffin (1995) describe invitational rhetoric as an alternative form of rhetoric that seeks to provide communication for “marginalized groups to use in their efforts to transform systems of domination and oppression” (p. 16). Foss and Griffin maintain that traditional rhetoric has a patriarchal bias, and the definition of traditional rhetoric as persuasion is steeped in domination and intimidation. Invitational rhetoric disregards the common goal of traditional rhetoric to persuade the audience to adopt the rhetor’s beliefs. Invitational rhetoric focuses on three principles—“equality, immanent value, and self-determination rather than an attempt to control others through persuasive strategies designed to effect change” (pp. 4-5). According to Foss and Griffin, invitational rhetoric “is an alternative to be used in instances when changing and controlling others is not the rhetor’s goal” (p. 5).

Deliberative dialogue participants, on the other hand, converge to listen closely and understand the perspectives of others, find common ground and meaning to where they can agree. They analyze, reconsider, weigh and possibly change their own or other’s opinions and views. McCoy and Scully (2002) point out that deliberative dialogue is used effectively for civic engagement.

Civic engagement implies meaningful connections among citizens and among citizens' issues, institutions, and the political system. It implies voice and agency, a feeling of power and effectiveness, with real opportunities to have a say. It implies active participation, with real opportunities to make a difference. (p. 118)

Invitational rhetoric has been criticized for lacking agency. Deliberative dialogue, on the other hand, involves strong agency.

NVC uses close listening and positive language to create a connection with other people that leads to compassion and empathy. Rosenberg stresses the process aims to understand and serve one another, not out of fear, guilt, shame, or hope for reward, but to connect to others through contribution. One of the areas of focus for NVC is conflict resolution where participants focus on settling disputes peacefully, both domestic and international. The goal is to get to the source of conflicts to improve relations. This is done through listening closely, so all are heard and understood, and to transform contention into connection. The further goal is to prevent future pain and misunderstanding in conflict. The process is complete in that there is strong sense of agency.

Similarities

All three methods emphasize listening as a key element to effective communication. Bone et al. (2008) refer to a part of invitational rhetoric called absolute listening, defined as “hearing to speech” and “hearing into being.” It requires that individuals take themselves out of the discussion for a time in order to listen fully to the perspectives of others. Absolute listening is linked closely to the condition of value, or

the acknowledgement that audience members have intrinsic or immanent worth (Foss and Griffin, p. 11).

One of the principles of deliberative dialogue is to make listening as important as speaking (McCoy and Scully, 2002). “Good listening...increases the chance that people will truly understand—and empathize with—each other, thus increasing the odds that they will find common ground for solutions to the public issues being addressed” (p. 121).

Listening which leads to empathy are the cornerstones to Rosenberg’s NVC. Rosenberg (2005b) speaks of listening with our whole being; that empathy with others is only achieved when judgment is shed. Rosenberg cites the Buddhist saying “Don’t just do something, stand there” (p. 92). He says we give others the time and space to express themselves before offering advice or reassurance. Rosenberg points out that “fixing” a situation by giving advice or sloughing off with a comment like “Everything will work out,” prevents us from being in the present (p. 92).

Differences

Invitational rhetoric was offered as an alternative to traditional rhetoric because, according to Foss and Griffin (1995), most traditional rhetorical theories reflect a patriarchal bias in the positive value they accord to changing and dominating others. Invitational rhetoric is grounded in feminist principles and the purpose is an invitation to understanding. Its communicative modes are offering perspectives and the creation of external conditions of safety, value, and freedom.

Deliberative dialogue is part of a movement to strengthen democracy and civic life searching for ways to expand and deepen civic engagement. It is used more among

groups to find the best course of action to solve a problem or resolve issues. It is more of a group action where invitational rhetoric focuses more on individual communication. McCoy and Scully (2002) discuss deliberative dialogue being used for individuals and organizations developing new relationships and ideas for solutions; institutional leaders and members gain new insights in study circles that lead to changes within the institution and larger community; public officials pledge to work with citizens to implement action ideas.

NVC again gets back to more of an individual communication. It speaks to nonviolence in language allowing the positive to emerge. Arun Gandhi says that if we can change ourselves, we can change the world. “It begins with changing our language and methods of communication’ (Rosenberg, 2005b, pp. xvi-xvii). Rosenberg (2005b) speaks of the crucial role of language and discusses Nonviolent Communication “using the term non-violence as Gandhi used it—to refer to our natural state of compassion when violence has subsided from the heart” (p. 2). Rosenberg says that words can be violent because they cause hurt or pain; that NVC is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen the ability to remain human even in trying situations. It is done through reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. “We identify and articulate what we concretely want in a situation” (p. 3).

Effective Uses and Results

A key element of invitational rhetoric is absolute listening. It is defined as “hearing into being” which means individuals take themselves out of the discussion and listen intently to the views of others. Bone et al. (2008) talk about how this component of invitational rhetoric was used by President Jimmy Carter throughout his four-year term.

Bone et al. point out that absolute listening is linked closely to the condition of value, or the acknowledgement that audience members have intrinsic or immanent worth. They further discuss how absolute listening and the value of other perspectives are illustrated in Carter's speeches on energy. His "hearing to speech" or "hearing into being" assisted him in creating an environment of value and safety, in which Americans felt able to express their ideas and concerns when he quoted many people whom he had met—"a Southern Governor; young Chicano; religious leader; a Black woman and mayor of a small Mississippi town; a labor leader" (p. 450). Carter described how he respected their thoughts and opinions and how they "confirmed his belief in the decency and the strength and the wisdom of the American People" (p. 450). Bone et al. point out that absolute listening became a mechanism for Carter understanding the energy crisis more, and for hearing other concerns of the American people.

McCoy and Scully (2002) discuss how deliberative dialogue provides a way for citizens and officials to work together in day-to-day activities and decisions of governing. The deliberative process includes residents and public officials in solving specific tangible problems. They refer to a specific example of a community-wide study circle program in Decatur, Georgia with the city commission being part of the organizing process from the beginning. The circle produced over 400 recommendations for a range of community problems, many of which were acted on by city government. They said that bringing together citizens and office holders in this collaborative form of deliberation may tend to transform the way citizens and community officials practice politics.

In NVC Rosenberg (2005b) speaks of a specific incident where he was invited to work with some high school students who had grievances against their principal whom

they regarded as a racist. Rosenberg was called in because the school was concerned about the prospect of potential violence. Students began by describing what they saw as discrimination on the part of the principal. Rosenberg asked the students to clarify what they wanted from the principal. When asked for specifics, the students responded that they didn't want the principal telling them how to wear their hair. Rosenberg suggested that they might get more of a cooperative response if they expressed what they *did* want, rather than what they *did not* want. At the end of the meeting the students had clarified 38 actions they wanted the principal to take including such requests as "Black representation on decisions about dress code," and "We'd like to be called 'Black students' and not 'you people'" (p. 69). The students presented their requests to the principal using the positive action language as practiced with Rosenberg, and the principal agreed to all 38 requests.

Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication was initially chosen for this study due to its emphasis on understanding as well as its proven track record in addressing racial conflicts. First, the goal of NVC is to understand. Given the difference in perceptions of racism between Blacks and Whites and the volatile landscape that has evolved over the past few years, understanding is an important goal. Invitational rhetoric also focuses on understanding rather than adversarial persuasion. Deliberative dialogue, as well, focuses on finding common ground. It asks participants to keep an open mind and to consider reevaluating, weighing, and possibly changing points of view. Discussing race relations is not a matter of changing other's points of view as much as making a genuine effort to understand each point of view. While each of these approaches prioritizes mutual understanding, Rosenberg's NVC has been applied specifically to various racial conflicts worldwide. Rosenberg has used NVC training in mediation by people in conflict in Israel,

the Palestinian Authority, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone. His training is used for communities facing violent conflicts and severe ethnic, religious, or political tensions. Following are some specific examples of where Rosenberg applied the NVC theory successfully in areas of conflict.

Rosenberg (2005b) talks about an NVC training he conducted which was attended by Israelis of various political beliefs discussing the highly contested issue of the West Bank. Many of the Israeli settlers living on the West Bank are doing so because of religious beliefs. There was ongoing conflict with Palestinians and other Israelis who believe in the Palestinian hope for national sovereignty in the region. During the session, the trainers modeled empathetic hearing through NVC and participants role-played each other's position. As a result, there were settlers who said "they would be willing to relinquish land claims and move out of the West Bank into internationally recognized Israeli territory if the political opponents could listen in the way it had been done in the training" (p. 11).

In another example of NVC being used in conflict, Rosenberg (2005b) references a three-day training in Belgrade with citizens working for peace. Their country was in a brutal war with Bosnia and Croatia. In the following weeks they conducted training in Croatia, Israel, and Palestine where he reported "desperate citizens in war-torn countries regaining their spirits and confidence from the NVC training they received" (p. 11).

To break NVC down to its simplest form, this is an example of Rosenberg using the method successfully. The prevalent way that we handle communication about racism is to not handle it all. In other words, we hide our feelings. Rosenberg (2005b) tells a story of a personal incident that taught him the effects of hiding our feelings. He was

teaching a course of NVC to a group of inner-city students. He walked into a classroom engaged in a lively conversation among the students and it became suddenly quiet. “Good Morning!” he greeted. There was silence. He admitted feeling very uncomfortable, but proceeded professionally, “For this class, we will be studying a process of communication that I hope you will find helpful in your relationships at home and with your friends” (pp. 40-41). He said one girl started filing her fingernails and several other students peered out the window to the street below where a fight had ensued. Rosenberg said he felt increasingly uncomfortable. Finally, a young student spoke up, “You just hate being with Black people, don’t you” (p. 41)? Rosenberg admitted being stunned but understood he had contributed to the student’s perception by trying to hide his discomfort. “I am feeling nervous,” Rosenberg admitted, “but not because you’re Black. My feelings have to do with my not knowing anyone here and wanting to be accepted when I came in the room” (p. 41). The vulnerable reaction had a pronounced effect on the students as they started to ask questions about Rosenberg, NVC, and talk about themselves. This story demonstrates how expressing our vulnerability can help resolve conflicts. It also breaks NVC down to its simplest form and shows how NVC is successful in times of racial conflict.

Invitational rhetoric seeks not to use persuasion as an effort to change others, but to gain understanding of the perspectives of others. Cindy Griffin wrote a public speaking textbook, *Invitation to Public Speaking* with the goal of engaging students in public dialogue, encouraging civic engagement and illustrating how they will apply speaking skills in their course work and throughout their careers.

McCoy and Scully (2002) recommend deliberative dialogue as a means of expanding and deepening civic engagement. They assert that civic engagement implies meaningful connections among citizens, citizens' issues, institutions and the political system.

While invitational rhetoric is effective and has been used as an approach to teaching public speaking, and deliberative dialogue has been used effectively in labor relations and disputes, NVC has been used consistently in racial conflicts with success. Race is an elusive subject that people often avoid. In the current environment, with the divisiveness between Black Americans and police, a method with a successful track record resolving racial conflicts is needed.

Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication Model

This study evaluates the potential effectiveness of Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication approach in talking about race. Specifically, the NVC theory and approach will be introduced to area participants already involved in community discussions about race and ask practitioners to evaluate the efficacy of the NVC approach in South Florida.

Rosenberg's NVC theory is based on the belief that all human behavior comes from attempts to meet universal human needs and essentially the needs are not in conflict. However, the conflict arises when strategies for meeting the needs clash. NVC proposes that people in conflict identify their shared needs, found and acknowledged by thoughts and feelings through self-disclosure that surround these needs. Finally, there is a collaboration to develop ways to meet shared needs, thus creating harmony and learning for cooperation in the future. NVC is taught as a process of interpersonal communication

designed to enhance a connection with others and resolve differences empathetically through understanding.

NVC supports change on three interconnected levels: with self, with others, and with groups and social systems. Therefore, it's proven to be effective in areas of personal development, relationships and social change. Rosenberg discusses ways he used NVC in peace programs in conflict areas including Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Columbia, Serbia, Croatia, Ireland and the Middle East (Rosenberg 2001, p. 212).

Rosenberg (2005c) has published many training materials to bring about social change and peace. He worked on transforming the “gangs and domination structures” using a method called “ask, ask, ask,” He suggested social change activists could access those in power as to “ask, ask, ask” for changes that will make life better for all involved, including those in power. (pp. 10-12).

Rosenberg's practice of NVC focuses on four components:

- Observation: the facts as distinct from our evaluation of the meaning. “When we combine observation with evaluation, people are apt to hear criticism” (*Nonviolent* Rosenberg 2005c, p. 26).
- Feelings: emotions free of thought and story. Feelings are distinguished from thoughts (e.g. “I feel like I got a raw deal”) and from words used as feelings but convey what we think we are (e.g. “inadequate,” “not good enough”), how we think others are evaluating us (e.g. “unimportant,” “insignificant”), or what we think others are doing to us (e.g. “ignored,” “misunderstood,” “trivialized”).

“Expressing our vulnerability can help resolve conflicts” (Rosenberg 2005b, p. 40).

- Needs: universal human needs being distinguished from strategies for meeting needs. “Everything we do is in service of our needs” (Rosenberg 2005a, p. 10).
- Request: this is asking for a specific action apart from demand. The distinction between request and demands is based on acceptance of hearing a response of “no.” If one makes a request and receives a “no” it is recommended not to give up, but to empathize with what is preventing the other from saying “yes” before deciding how to continue the conversation. The request should be made in clear, positive, concrete language.

NVC has three primary modes of application:

- Self-empathy--means compassionately connecting with what is going on inside us. This may include noticing the thoughts and judgments we are having, noting our feelings, and examining the needs that are affecting our actions.
- Receiving empathetically--involves “connection with what’s alive in the other person and what would make life wonderful for them....It’s not an understanding of the mind where we just understand what another person says...Empathetic connection is an understanding of the heart in which we see the beauty in the other person...Empathy involves emptying the mind and listening with our whole being” (Rosenberg 2005b, p. 80). NVC recommends that we focus on listening for the underlying observations, feelings, needs and requests, however the other person expresses them. Paraphrasing is used to reflect what the other person has said, as to enhance understanding.

- Expressing honestly--goes back to the components of NVC: observation, feeling, need, and request. An observation sets the context, feelings support connection, and needs support connection identifying what is important, while the request clarifies the preferred response. Using these components together minimizes the chances of people getting stuck speculating what you want from them and why.

The first question in Rosenberg's (2005a) dialogue is "How can we make life more wonderful" (p. 24)? According to Rosenberg, we get to a different place with people when we are clear about what we want, rather than just telling them what we don't want.

On the subject of domination, Rosenberg (2005a) says that some people believe you can't have order in your home, business, organization, or government unless you make demands and force people to do things. However, we actually do things from the joy of contributing. Rosenberg (2005a) distinguishes between "power over" vs. "power with" (p. 54).

Power over gets things done by making people submit. There is punishment or there is reward. Companies, families or organizations that use power over tactics pay for it indirectly through morale problems, violence, and actions against the system. Power with is getting people to do things willingly because they see how it's going to enrich everybody's well-being by doing it. It is created by showing people we're just as interested in their needs as our own. People are much more concerned about our well-being when we share power than when we tell them what's wrong with them. If we connect in the NVC way, everybody's needs get

met. But, if the other person senses we have singlemindedness of purpose to get our request complied, then the request becomes a demand. (pp. 54-55)

We need to connect with others empathetically, and it can be done effectively with NVC through the steps of dialogue: observation, expressing your feelings and needs that aren't being met, and your request. Rosenberg (2005a) explains:

We don't have to agree with the other person, and we don't have to like what they're saying. No matter how they respond, we try to connect with their needs and we keep the flow of communication going until we find strategies that meet everyone's needs. Once people don't have to defend themselves against our single-mindedness of purpose to change them--and once they feel understood for what they're doing--it's much easier for them to be open to other possibilities. (pp. 78-79)

The timing for this study is right. Local police recently celebrated National Coffee with a Cop Day. Several departments across South Florida held events at coffee shops. Lieutenant Frank Distefano of the West Palm Beach Police Department said it's a way of strengthening the relationship between the community and the police force. "We get a better understanding of what's important to them and vice versa," he said (<https://www.wptv.com/news/region-c-palm-beach-county/riviera-beach>). One of the members of the community commented that he got to meet many officers and understand what they do. "There's a bad stigma that cops normally get. But with this event, it's good to finally put a face to the badge," said Shawn Sarsour, a community citizen attending the event (<https://www.wptv.com/news/region-c-palm-beach-county/riviera-beach>).

Also, the Riviera Beach Police Department recently formed a new community policing program in June. Officer Justin Borum of the Riviera Beach Police Department said, “Once people realize, ‘Oh he’s just like me,’ the only way that we can do that is to be able to sit down and take that time and speak with residents and business owners who have these concerns.” Borum said officers say the key to solving and preventing crime could lie in special movements like the ones they experienced at this event. “It humanizes law enforcement,” said Borum (<https://www.wptv.com/news/region-c-palm-beach-county/riviera-beach>).

This is an example of the police making themselves available in the community to develop relationships with the local citizens. Such programs are a step in the right direction to heal and rebuild community relations after the police shootings of unarmed Black men from 2014-2017. To some degree the dialogue of Rosenberg’s NVC is being employed:

- Observation: the relationship between police and community members has been deteriorated.
- Feelings: it is the police department’s responsibility to serve the community and they sense a breakdown of trust among community members. There is a growing perception that all police officers are bad.
- Needs: They have a responsibility to uphold, and want to serve the public. Also, they want to develop relationships with the citizens and demonstrate that they are human as well, despite the official garb and vehicles.
- Request: Please join us at the local coffee shop so we can get to know each other, develop a relationship, and discuss our mutual objectives.

This is one example of what the police department is doing to reach out to the community. NVC methods could effectively be employed as Rosenberg has a program of training materials and certified trainers that have been used in areas of conflict. Concerning the divisive topic of race relations, NVC has been used productively in meetings with Israelis regarding the West Bank and in Belgrade with citizens working for peace with the country at war with Bosnia and Croatia, to name a few. Such instances addressed the importance of understanding the local cultural contexts of the NVC participants.

To evaluate Rosenberg's NVC method, I talked to a representative of Black Lives Matter, a member of the Black community at large, and local police to get their feedback about the effectiveness of the NVC approach. Their evaluations assisted in determining if the model is appropriate, or if it needs revision.

Below is the sample NVC overview and questions as presented to the interviewees:

Sample Interview

The interviews will begin with general questions and discussion of contextual issues to be used in the first section of Chapter 3 Analysis of Black Lives Matter and Law Enforcement Cultures. The questions will establish a familiarity with interviewees and will be used to learn about the roles each member plays in the community, the make-up of their job or role, training if applicable, issues dividing the two groups, and what they're doing to resolve those issues. Additional questions will explore their fears and apprehension in performing their roles.

Then, each interviewee will be given an overview of NVC and asked questions as outlined below. As the discussion may lead into further details that enhance the understanding of the subject of this thesis, further impromptu questions may follow.

NVC Overview

I'm now going to give you a basic outline of Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication, starting with a description of violent communication:

If "violent" means acting in ways that result in hurt or harm, then much of how we communicate – judging others, bullying, having racial bias, blaming, finger pointing, discriminating, speaking without listening, criticizing others or ourselves, name-calling, reacting when angry, using political rhetoric, being defensive or judging who's "good or bad" or what's "right or wrong" with people – could indeed be called "violent" communication (Rosenberg 2018, p. 1).

Conversely, these are benefits of Nonviolent Communication:

- Resolve conflicts peacefully—personal or public, domestic or international
- Get to the heart of conflict and disputes quickly
- Improve cooperation—listen so others are really heard
- Transform criticism and blame into compassionate connection
- Prevent future pain and misunderstanding

Here is the strategy:

NVC Process

- A. The concrete actions we are observing that are affecting our well-being.
- B. How we feel in relation to what we are observing.

- C. The needs, values, desires that are creating our feelings. If we express our needs, we have a better chance of getting them met.
- D. The concrete actions we request in order to enrich our lives. Requests instead of demands. People want to contribute. (example: a child willingly shoveling snow for physically challenged older woman, but not taking out the trash at his own home when repeatedly requested by his parents to do so). (Rosenberg 2005b, p. 7).

Two Parts of NVC

- A. Expressing honesty through the four components
- B. Receiving empathetically through the four components (Rosenberg 2005b, p. 8).

Deep listening is an important part of the dialogue--listening with the whole being. We give others the time and space to express themselves before offering advice or reassurance. "Fixing" a situation prevents us from being present. In the dialogue, we are listening for feelings and needs. Paraphrasing is used, confirming we have accurately received the message. Behind intimidating messages are people appealing to us to meet their needs.

Questions

Question 1: How are you involved in community discussions about race?

Question 2: Please evaluate the effectiveness of the NVC approach in South Florida.

Question 3: Do you think the strategy would work? Yes or no

Question 4: Why?

CHAPTER 3: INTERVIEWS

The genesis of this thesis lies in the events of 2013-2014, the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. These were unarmed, young Black men who lost their lives to a White neighborhood watch coordinator and a White police officer sequentially. Both assailants were acquitted, which gravely disappointed many in the Black community. Black Lives Matter grew out of these events and the movement evolved with the familiar catchphrase “Hands up, don’t shoot.” The rallying cry was that simple—don’t shoot us. And, from that, a six-year old organization with over 40 chapters has grown.

The interviews in this chapter will cover asking the two groups—BLM/Black community representative and law enforcement—their opinion about the efficacy of Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication. But prior to that, it’s important to learn the make-up of the people comprising both groups—to understand their backgrounds, education, training, intentions, and fears. To tackle a subject as complex as race relations, it’s essential to know what is being done about the problem and what are the results.

Analysis of Black Lives Matter and Law Enforcement Cultures

The culture of both Black Lives Matter, the Black community, and local police representatives is examined in this section. An historical background of BLM and their leaders and some members is included. The viewpoint of an “everyday” Black citizen is considered, as well as information from local police officers regarding their role and community policing issues that separate them from the community. To get a local

perspective, local representatives who were interviewed for this thesis provided much of the information for this analysis.

Interviews with a local BLM activist, Black community representative, and law enforcement personnel were conducted for two purposes: 1. to flesh out information about the culture of the groups and 2. To provide practitioner evaluation of NVC and deliberative dialogue.

Black Lives Matter

In 2013, three radical Black organizers—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi—started a movement called #BlackLivesMatter as a response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman who killed Trayvon Martin. The BLM project is now a member-led network with chapters across the country. The members organize and build local power to intervene when there is violence inflicted on Black communities, according to Black Lives Matter (<https://blacklivesmatter.com>).

The BLM movement identifies specific groups within their race who have been omitted from the black liberation movement:

There are significant gaps in movement spaces and leadership. Black liberation movements in this country have created room, space, and leadership mostly for Black heterosexual, cisgender men—leaving women, queer and transgender people, and others either out of the movement or in the background to move the work forward with little or no recognition. As a network, we have always recognized the need to center the leadership of women and queer and trans people. BLM seeks to include groups that they say have been excluded...in past

movements for liberation, and they have made a commitment to bring those at the margins closer to the center. (<https://blacklivesmatter.com>)

The Michael Brown shooting in 2014, and the subsequent events in Ferguson, Missouri, were a critical turning point and inspiration for the movement. “We understood Ferguson was not an aberration, but in fact, a clear point of reference for what was happening to Black communities everywhere” (<https://blacklivesmatter.com>).

The goal of BLM is to continue organizing Black power across the country by strengthening communities to end violence against Black people the way Ferguson organizers were doing. The Black Lives Matter Global Network infrastructure is described as “adaptive and decentralized.” The further objective of BLM is to “create a network where Black people feel empowered to determine...destinies in our communities.” The BLM website refers often to the people in St. Louis and Ferguson who “put their bodies on the line day in and day out, and who continue to show up for Black lives.” (<https://blacklivesmatter.com>)

One of the most visible faces in the Black Lives Matter Movement is DeRay Mckesson. In August 2014, days after the death of Michael Brown, Mckesson traveled to Ferguson. At the time he was a 29-year-old school administrator in Minneapolis. As he drove to Ferguson he live-tweeted his journey and posted it on Facebook. Once in Ferguson, he and other participants used Twitter as an organizing tool rather than the news media which they thought had wrongly portrayed the protests as violent.

Mckesson, known for his signature blue vest—worn often, but only for warmth he claims--eventually took on the role of documentarian and organizer for BLM. He has recently assisted in creating a database to track police shootings. Mckesson has received

criticism for projecting himself as the face of the movement which proclaims to have no leaders. Additionally, McKesson wrote a book, *On the Other Side of Freedom*, which is “a combination of memoir, self-justification and inspirational guide to imagining a different world of racial politics and criminal justice”

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook>).

What about local BLM? Jonathan Jackson was recommended as a committed member of the Black Student Union whose work, advocacy, and activism in BLM locally would make him an effective representative to discuss the movement in South Florida. Jonathan Jackson is a Master’s student in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Florida Atlantic University who resides locally in Plantation, Florida. He epitomizes the BLM ethic in that he is active in several organizations as an advocate for local citizens in the margins. Jonathan joined in 2014 volunteering for BLM Alliance of Broward County. His purpose in joining will be detailed in the interview section of this thesis, but he points out that Michael Brown was the case that made him want to take action. Similar to the purpose of BLM, Jonathan is concerned about helping “the community that centers around Black lives and folks who are disenfranchised.”

The reason for joining BLM is echoed from the three women founders, McKesson and Jonathan. They all found the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown to be unjustified, and they want to give a voice and strength to the disenfranchised and build local power to counter violence inflicted on Black communities.

Where do the problems lie for BLM? Many will be discussed in the interview with Jonathan Jackson later in this thesis. Statistics show in a 2016 Pew Research study, 36% of Americans familiar with Black Lives Matter say they don’t understand the goals

of the movement. About six-in-ten blacks (59%) believe that BLM will eventually be effective in bringing about racial equality. Whites, on the other hand are split, 34% say the BLM movement will be helpful in Blacks achieving equality while 39% say the movement won't be effective and 26% either don't know or don't have an opinion (<http://www.pewresearch.org>).

The survey also found that fully 43% of Blacks doubt that the United States will ever make the changes needed for Blacks to have equal rights to Whites. The study showed that 11% of Whites felt the same way (<http://www.pewresearch.org>).

One of the three female founders, Patrice Cullors herself said the organization is “in the middle of an evolution...For the last five years we've been on the streets. We've been protesting we've been shutting down highways...and now we have to ground down and decide what are the strategies, what's our institution going to look like.” (<https://www.newsweek.com>).

So, while the BLM movement has a voice and has been going strong for nearly six years, strategic direction is yet to be defined and racial equality seems to remain elusive. Clearly Black and White Americans don't share the same view of racism. While Whites see it as unfair acts and refusal of rights, Blacks see it as much deeper, woven throughout our social structure. Therefore, the issue affects all Black Americans not just members of BLM. This introduces the reality that all Black citizens are affected, not just those who protest and join BLM. Therefore, another member of the Black community was interviewed, this individual being a business person, more of the “everyday--nine to five” individual as referenced in the first interview by Jonathan.

Black Community

Kevin Suggs is a longstanding South Florida resident and business person living and working in Miami. Kevin considers BLM an honorable cause and that will be detailed in the interview. He said he thinks the issue goes beyond BLM and police, and he considers much of the problem due to leadership of the country.

Race relations in the public view are worse. Unfortunately, because of Obama...those who liked the idea of Obama as president...didn't like the fact Obama was the face of the country. They couldn't find anything on him. Those who didn't like him spent tons of time digging up dirt on him. They never found anything. They couldn't stand the fact that he was in office.

Kevin commented that he found the 2016 election and results to be discouraging, and that it has played a role in dividing the nation. He said:

We're going to take back America. What did that mean? We had our normal democratic process...Back from who? Back from where? Let's take it back to the way we liked it in the late 50s when Black people knew their place and women stayed home...Ignorance spawns racism.

Police

Interviews were conducted with the Florida Atlantic University Police Captain L. Ervin and a few members of the West Palm Beach Community Response Team (CRT). Details of those discussions will follow in Chapter 3; however, much of the following information regarding the role of police, training, etc. was provided by the same individuals.

What is the role of police today? According to FAU Captain Ervin, a police officer's role is to serve all communities, not just the communities they live and work in, but every community that they encompass. According to Sergeant Steven, West Palm Beach Police Department CRT, their agency has patrol officers who help citizens in emergencies and it's the job of the community officer to get to the root of problems over time; the latter builds relationships in the community. Sergeant Steven said they try to strengthen community ties,

I look at it as...an old school police agency and community...like an old movie, where the cop would walk down the street and everybody would tell him everything that's going on. He knew everybody in the neighborhood. That's ideal...to have that relationship with the community. That's what we try to do in our particular division.

Training begins in the police academy which is six months in length. It is basic training where they learn law, traffic laws, physical fitness, driving, shooting, first aid, cultural diversity and scenario-based trainings.

Who joins the police? Both Captain Ervin and Sergeant Steven said that it's people who want to be helpful and who want to make a difference. Sergeant Steven said they have seen people leave careers as accountants and pastors to become police officers. Captain Ervin said the former military comprise about 40% of police officers, and Officer Treu of the West Palm Beach Police Department CRT said it's about a third.

Sergeant Steven added, "There are military people that like the structured environment, and there's college people that just want to help people and that was me. I went to college for drafting and design and switched to law and justice."

How do they view the job? Captain Ervin said he views the job as providing a service,

When you leave people, they should feel that they've received a service. Some people may run into things that are unpleasant. And that might happen a lot of times. But at least they feel that I was fair, and that's what I try to be.

The West Palm Beach Police Department CRT views their job as working with kids, gang members, and citizens of the community while building positive relationships and proactively circumventing violent disturbances in the community.

Is community policing a new program or has it become a focus of recent years? Sergeant Steven said,

I think it's always been important...it's been more in the front of every agency due to the issues we had years ago, Ferguson and so forth. That...tore everybody apart. Our Chief Sarah Mooney's...main goal is to get back to community policing.

What are the intentions of the police? Lieutenant Frank Distefano of the West Palm Beach Police Department stressed that early education and getting to know kids in the area is important for building relationships with the community. Lieutenant Distefano talked about how his sergeants have attended gang conferences in multiple cities and the consensus is "you have to reach out to the kids when they're young before they start having this bad influence." Lieutenant Distefano said they changed their focus and are getting into schools and developing a relationship with the kids. He said, "it broke down that barrier...they see us more as people instead of 'oh my God, that's the police.'"

Lieutenant Distefano added they're trying to reach as many kids as possible within their community.

What are the fears of police officers today? "Judgment," answered FAU Captain Ervin. He went on to elaborate:

A lot of times we're prejudged...In the last 5-6 years...soon as you walk past a crowd [you hear] 'Don't shoot me, don't shoot me! Hand's up!' Every time we come into a situation, the very first thing they say, and this is a prejudgment, 'What are you going to shoot me now? Are you going to shoot me now?' And they start their video. So now what they do is take a cellphone up right away...I'm not sure in a two-second reaction because I'm trying to pay attention to the person in front of me. All of the sudden I see that come out. I don't know what that is. I can't tell [if] it's a plastic gun, I can't tell [if] it's a water gun. I can't tell that from where I'm at. Right away they're going to post me on YouTube. So, every decision I make is always being judged [as with] any police officer.

What are the issues keeping the police separate from the community? Sergeant Steven answered that he thought it was the news media:

Granted there's not a huge uproar here because of our community outreach programs, but the media definitely made a negative impact for law enforcement in general everywhere you go. Whether it's us or anybody else. Even with all the programs we have, the media has definitely played a negative role for us because all they show is the bad things that police officers do. They never really show the good things.

On the subject of where the problems lie with police in the community, Captain Ervin had a similar answer:

All police departments in the country have problems and some of them are big. Chicago had [multiple] trials recently in regards to police abuse. So, the media shows that right away...Now, because of that, everyone is saying 'all cops are bad.' Now everybody's running, because they figure I can fight a cop. I can shoot a cop. I can challenge cops, because they're bad. So, now we're on guard. There is no trust between the community and police officers now. And that's...a big problem.

The differences in perceptions between BLM, the Black community, and the police are vast. BLM's focus is on empowering Black people in the community and uniting all its members including those in the margins. Locally there's a pride in helping Black lives in the community. However, according to Pew research, many people don't know BLM goals and Blacks have doubts that equal rights will ever be achieved in the United States. The direction of BLM seems yet to be determined.

The police are clear that their goal is to serve the community. They seem to take pride in training kids and conducting community outreach to proactively avoid conflicts. However, the CRT team seems to believe there isn't a significant problem in their community due to their community outreach activities, although it's evident the Black community doesn't share that sentiment. There is an anxiousness among the police with the reaction of civilians repeating "Don't shoot me," and videotaping and posting confrontations. They are also aware of the belief that many civilians have the misconception that all cops are bad.

Proceeding, these issues and more are discussed in greater depth; however, the interviews that follow focus on their opinions and evaluations of the potential effectiveness of Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication and deliberative dialogue for discussions about racism.

Interviews and Practitioner Evaluations

Black Lives Matter

Jonathan Jackson was selected for interviewing Black Lives Matter locally as he was recommended by the president of the FAU Black Student Union. Jonathan is an effective interviewee because he is a local community organizer working for the Aids Healthcare Foundation. Jonathan's interests are aligned with Black Lives Matter because he does work for them and is an advocate and activist for the community of "Black, Brown and queer folks," as he said. In addition to BLM he is involved with Food not Bombs and Dream Defenders. According to Jonathan, his intent is to "branch off and do things in the community that center around Black lives and folks who are disenfranchised."

Interestingly, just as with BLM, Jonathan said that the Michael Brown case is what originally got his attention and moved him to action. At the time, Jonathan was a young man in his early twenties. "We speak about racism as if it's a thing of the past that we've already conquered," said Jonathan. He said there was a notion at the time that it had been overcome. Jonathan said he expected Brown's murderer (Officer Darren Wilson) to be indicted and for "justice to prevail." Jonathan said he thought it was a clear-cut case--that if Wilson didn't get first degree murder, he would surely get manslaughter. "I was existentially displeased," said Jonathan. "That was the first time I

really realized a child could get shot and someone could claim that the person who got shot was the suspect.”

Jonathan said he learned that BLM was founded by three career Black women and that moved him. He found the chapter in Broward County and began volunteering and protesting. Jonathan commented that 2014 was a big year for him as far as activism goes. When asked if he thought racial dialogues between the races are getting anywhere, he responded,

No. I don't know how to have the conversation anymore without having the sort of metaphysical and spiritual complications between the two. I feel like the conversations are more on the surface level. We don't understand that, in order for someone to kill another, there has to be some sort of displacement with them. He explained that people are not murdered over a racial miscalculation or misunderstanding. “I think if we really investigate how Blacks interact with Whites, the way that we see each other...the conversation about violence itself is...not even productive.”

At this point in the interview, Jonathan was given the overview of Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication as outlined in the previous chapter, including the principals of NVC and how it works in conflict resolution. The four steps of NVC were described and it was explained how deep listening is employed, which leads to empathy and understanding. Jonathan's answers and comments in response to the questions follow, and it led to several pursuant questions, as well.

Do you think NVC would work effectively in racial dialogues between BLM and police?

Jonathan answered that the one thing predominantly taught in BLM is the powerful notion of empathy that can be fostered through listening. “The problem with racial dialogues is the ‘us versus them mentality’ that I was victim of when I first started doing this work,” said Jonathan. He explained that initially he was pro-violence. “I thought that the answer was to go blow up some stuff,” he said. “That’s terrorism though. You can’t go blow things up; however, I do think violence is the intuitive solution.” Jonathan added that the intuitive reaction has to be overlooked in order to be productive with our anger.

“I am very philosophically profound...nonviolence is the only way. I do support people who are violent, if they think that way,” Jonathan said. He stressed that BLM is completely nonviolent, but that he does support people who are violent for purposes of liberation, and it took him a long time to unlearn that method in order to see the power of nonviolence. He added,

That (violence) is not my method, but I do understand people who do, because it’s like saying ‘these folks have had their foot on our necks for centuries, and every time we revolt, it’s like--Oh, look at them, they’re being what we said they were, violent and angry.’

Jonathan went on to discuss how colonization is very violent, but that the White populace doesn’t see it as violent. He added that the White populace sees people of color as violent offenders; however, most people don’t “deem the White populace as violent.” Further discussing colonization and the non-complicity of the White population, Jonathan said,

The only people who know what White Americans have done...are Black folks. And this refusal to grapple with history, this refusal to realize 'I raped an entire country—multiple countries—brought these folks over to a land that I didn't own, pushed them out to bring other people in, and then after we liberated these people, we still enacted social instances of violent phenomena in order to justify why we had them mislead in the first place.'

Jonathan pointed out that the only way to accept that history would be to love, and added that love is something that we undervalue or don't value at all.

Jonathan got to the heart of the matter as discussed earlier in the thesis. The way we often handle racial discussions is to not handle them at all—to turn a blind eye, to be silent:

Silence is a lot darker than the doingness of violence, because the doer of violence has to believe that there's a God or a moral judge to hold you accountable. But when you watch someone being raped, and you say nothing, that is what I would term the White liberal. That's what most White liberals do, they just watch it happen. When you just watch things happen and you don't say anything, that's a greater evil than the person doing it...because you have the responsibility to do something but don't, because it would be like confronting the possible monster that lives inside you.

Jonathan then said that nonviolence is the only answer, but not his preferred answer. He admitted he'd prefer to take arms and kill people if they were killing his wife, kids, or relatives. "But I have to be better than that," said Jonathan. "I have to love because love is the only thing that shows us who we are."

Jonathan was then asked about conducting NVC training in scenarios like the Michael Brown case. What if somebody went in and spoke together with protesters, police, and members of the community—conducted dialogues such as we discussed in the overview? Would that be effective—yes or no?

Jonathan asked where the cops would be from, and the answer was local police. Jonathan stressed that in such instances it's not effective to have police involved who are not from the area. He then described a scenario,

What if my local friend Billy (a drug user living in Broward County) is to have an episode? But the cop from West Palm doesn't know Billy like I know Billy. He (the West Palm cop) comes..and shoots [Billy]--[doesn't] take him to the hospital, doesn't take him to rehab, just shoots him.

Jonathan expressed concern that some cops don't have the right to police others, because "they can't police themselves."

Jonathan was then asked if he, as a representative of BLM, would be open to sitting down with police and having dialogues using the NVC strategy. "Do I think these (dialogues) could be productive?" he asked, and then elaborated:

Only if there were people who genuinely want to make the world better. Every time I've sat down with a cop, I've thought he was doing it to check off a box for his quota. Or to say, 'Oh, I've talked to the Blacks, so now I know what I have to do.' But then you don't do it. I've sat down with local officials and it feels like a political meeting. It feels like a political circus. In order for policemen to really care and liberate folks, they have to think about themselves last. But really isn't that the job? You go out every day and say I'm willing to risk my life for the

people that I'm serving. The premise of being a police officer is love...Love has to be the only answer because love thinks about you, before it thinks about me...And cops are not willing to do that, because it would mean that they would have to be vulnerable. Cops are not willing to put their guns down in order to make the community a more inclusive space. That's why I don't want to sit down in the same room with them.

Jonathan was asked again, "You're saying that something like this probably wouldn't work?" He replied, "Essentially yes." He expounded,

We've done it before. It's hard to be a millennial and not be a cynic. Because on the downfall of Mike Brown when everybody was so happy that we were getting heard...we had all these meetings and then six months later somebody else got shot. I remember 2014 to 2017; probably, every single summer, there was a murder. That was hard! I remember there were four summers in a row. That is hard as a Black person.

Jonathan was asked if he was happy with the media coverage of Michael Brown and the aftermath in Ferguson, Missouri. "I was," he answered.

I really liked that...To me, they shouldn't have rioted, especially in their own communities, but it felt good to see passion. To see people who love and care, to see that people were really moved by this. Because sometimes we get so callous to death that we don't even do anything. Now I'm seeing people who care and people that outcry. I like that.

Jonathan was asked, “So it sounds like essentially you don’t think NVC would work and the reason is you don’t see the police sitting down and having a dialogue.”

“They don’t care,” he answered, then added,

The policemen are the attack dogs. I want to talk to the people who write the legislation. I want to talk to the people who create TV shows where a white man portrays a Japanese person.

Jonathan was asked, “So you think it goes further than the police?” He answered,

Oh, yeah! The people who don’t talk, the people...who sit in their mansions while others suffer in poverty. Those are the people that we need to be talking to, because if you have money, you have the power. So, our news networks--no matter how vast and diverse they appear--are owned by a handful of people who have more money than the 90-plus percent of the country. The country that we grew up in prepares us to be bigots, and we keep trying to root out the bad apples. What if we’re all bad apples? These people don’t get called out. As a matter of fact, we don’t even know their names...We don’t know the people’s names who tell news networks to report certain things for propaganda. Those are the invisible hands that need to be called out, and we have no access to those people.

Jonathan then explained why the dialogues would be more effective between everyday citizens and legislators rather than BLM and police:

You know we want to blame the police. I love calling out police for racism, but until we can...call out the larger systemic problems, we’re only solving the symptoms.

You say you want to talk to people at the higher level. Do you see the possibility of that happening? Jonathan answered,

Yes, there are people who will die and who have died without meeting face to face with that invisible hand. And that invisible hand to me is capitalism that functions off of exploiting people's lives. You don't know who runs capitalism, just that we're living in its reality because of its consequences. If we could actually meet these people who enact systems of violence that impoverish not just Blacks...but Whites, too. If we could meet the people who...affect the lives of Black and Brown people by their racial violence, we got some change. But, they're so invisible.

It seems you believe in listening and empathy, so you believe in NVC. How do you see it working? Jonathan answered:

Who extends the olive branch first? Blacks have done it too many times. When Whites do it—it doesn't seem genuine. Maybe if someone from outside America [were to mediate dialogues between the races]. Maybe a non-American. It's like marriage. You don't want to talk to your cousin about your wife, you want to talk to a therapist.

Jonathan recommended the possibility of Whites and Blacks participating in racial dialogues using the NVC method with the mediation of someone outside the country, for instance someone from Britain, France, or Canada. Jonathan elaborated:

There are people who know us even better than we know ourselves, and they're nonpartisan. They won't benefit, although they will benefit from our resolutions, but they don't see any immediate benefit from us resolving our issues. So...if we

have someone from the outside to say ‘this is what I’ve observed...from afar. Your violence is not only a cancer to yourselves but...to the globe.’

If we have someone from the outside do it, I would be OK with that. I would prefer that person be Black, or African, or whatever it is outside my country. But in order to keep it very justifiable, I would love to hear someone else’s opinion on this country from the outside. As dark as this time is in America, there’s so much light here too. This is the first time in my whole life I’ve ever seen churches that are nondenominational talking about racial issues in this country.

Do you see this heading in a positive direction? Jonathan answered:

Yes and no. I know there are people who care just as much as I do. Just like I believe in me, I believe in them. However, idealism can be the enemy of progress...We need to take everything in stride...Our immediate problem is homophobia, Islamophobia. These are immediate problems...The way things are looking, I don’t have much hope in the future of the country, because...we have a good 30 years and the following 10 are just really bad.

You’re saying NVC would work but we need a mediator from outside the United States?

“Maybe someone like me,” Jonathan answered. “Maybe someone who doesn’t have anything to gain from it. I don’t have anything to gain but my freedom. That is it.”

At this point, due to Jonathan’s answers and comments, I considered introducing the concept of deliberative dialogue to see if he considers it a viable option. I discussed how deliberative dialogue study circles on race relations have been conducted in communities over a period of time. People learn to work together on differences and feel a stronger sense of community. He was provided this description of deliberative dialogue:

Deliberative dialogue study circles are conducted in small, diverse groups. They meet across the community to address an issue of common concern. The groups consist of people from all racial, ethnic, educational backgrounds, gender identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, public officials and citizens. After meeting several times, they find ways to address issues.

Deliberative dialogue principles include: encouraging speech from all diverse groups making it possible for all to participate equally; a strong emphasis on listening to understand and empathize with each other; sharing personal experiences; building trust and forming working relationships; examining a range of views for the issue; encouraging critical thinking, analysis and considerate argument; exploring solutions and creating common ground for action; creating a sense of agency; connecting with government leaders; and ensuring ongoing processes to lead to meaningful results. (McCoy and Scully, 2002)

Do you think this strategy (deliberative dialogue) would work?

As much as I love...BLM and as much as I love speaking on their vision, I don't think a BLM rep is the best person to speak to the cops. And I don't think the cops are the best people to speak to us. I think people who go to grocery stores, who work nine to five, who watch "Real Housewives of Atlanta" or HGTV or TLC—everyday people...who raise kids. These are the people who need to have the conversation...We need a diverse group of people. It can't only be cops, we need the people in between."

Who would represent the Blacks? Jonathan replied:

I would say my pastors, but they are political. Everything is political. Rap fans who live in Sistrunk...an impoverished neighborhood in Broward County.

They're effected by our conversation. I have a nice job. I can go home and pay my bills...They're people that are in need, impoverished Black people. You need to see how they live (people in Sistrunk, Broward County)...that is not the best place for anyone to raise a family.

Jonathan concluded, saying:

I'm very concerned about the heart of America, which is...the heart of the men and women in America. If you want to know where America is today, talk to the people that live in America. Talk to the people who shop in America, the people who stand in lines for iPhones, the people that wait outside Foot Locker for fancy shoes. These are the people who shape America. We really undervalue everyday people, but these are the people who know America...intimately.

After the meeting with Jonathan Jackson, it appeared that he thought deliberative dialogue might be more effective in racial dialogues than NVC alone. The remainder of the interviews were conducted the same way, but a description of deliberative dialogue was added as well. The same interview question format introduced in Chapter 2 was used in the remaining interviews with the addition of the same description of deliberative dialogue as given to Jonathan.

“Everyday” Member of the Black Community

Kevin Suggs is a middle-aged Black man who resides in Miami. He has a longstanding career as a media advertising sales representative. Kevin's point of view is relevant from the standpoint of verifying if members of the Black community believe

racism is pervasive, and gaining insight whether Black Americans think that BLM is effective in its efforts to achieve racial equality. The 2016 Pew Research study reported the majority of Blacks see BLM as being effective; however, 36% of Americans familiar with BLM say they don't understand the goals of the movement. Considering this, I decided to interview a Black South Florida resident who is not a member of BLM to get the viewpoint of an "everyday" citizen.

How are you involved in community discussions about race? Kevin asks if this pertains to police, and the answer is that it pertains to everyone.

I try to stay away from the law...I haven't been in trouble, and haven't been mistreated by police..From personal experience, my girlfriend is White...She told me when we went to a restaurant...that the table she got [while I was parking the car] was better than if we walked in together. I didn't notice it. You can be treated differently if together in public...We can still get stares because people don't necessarily put you together.

What are your thoughts on the Black Lives Matter movement?

It's a worthy cause. The phrase itself has been twisted and misconstrued...The phrase should probably be Black Lives Matter *Too*, because those who wanted to discredit the movement say 'why, don't police lives matter', etc.? The whole movement was about police treating us as if we don't matter. You shoot us because our lives don't matter to you. It doesn't mean we're more important than anyone else.

Kevin is then given the overview of NVC and asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the NVC approach for dialogues about racism between Blacks and Whites in South Florida.

People of society should be open to talking to and spending time with people different than themselves. Don't be afraid of someone who looks different than you. Don't automatically think Muslim is bad... 'I should be afraid of this person because they're a terrorist' ...Engage with them. You might learn something. They are not that different from you.

Kevin is given the overview of deliberative dialogue, and this is his response, Until people are able to be open to others opinions, nothing will change. Fear and ignorance breeds racism and prejudice. I've read studies that many who consider themselves conservatives value education less than liberals. They're afraid the more they learn will go against what they were raised to believe. Why expose myself to different opinions? Fear of change keeps people in their same mindset. They get deeper entrenched in their own ideas and that leads to racism.

The interview leads to the subject of equality. The 2016 Pew research study is referenced, specifically that the survey found that 43% of Blacks doubt that the United States will ever make the changes needed for Blacks to have equal rights to Whites, and 11% of Whites felt the same way. He responded:

I don't know that it can ever be equal. My forefathers couldn't start out with the wealth. People of Color can get rich. Rich and wealth are two different things. Wealth would change generational lives. Because People of Color don't have the underpinnings of J. Paul Getty or the Rockefellers, it's going to be hard to be

equal in wealth, because White people have a head start. We came over in slave ships and started with nothing.

What I took away from the interviews with the Black representatives is that this is a much bigger issue than the strained and sometimes violent relationship between police and BLM. In fact, as Jonathan said, it's more a symptom of the overall issue which is racism. The further issue among Black Americans is frustration that amidst the formation of a strong movement, protesting, and seemingly ubiquitous media coverage, no real progress is being made.

The interviews now move to the other side of the issue in this thesis, law enforcement.

Florida Atlantic University Police Captain

Captain L. Ervin has been with the FAU police department for 14 years. Prior to that he was a New York Police Department detective for 30 years. Captain Ervin said his father was a police officer and, while growing up, a grade school teacher and his father told him that a police officer is the person that you go to for help. "As it evolved, you shouldn't just go to a police officer when you need help," said Ervin. "You should also depend on police officers for advice... You should feel comfortable in your neighborhood, your community," he added.

Ervin is self-proclaimed "old school." As a matter of fact, "Old School" is his nickname and he admits to liking it. Here, he explains the growth of community policing:

Years ago, the police were still a paramilitary organization. So, a lot of [police officers] came from the military. Then..in the 70s and 80s when communities were broadening, people began saying [police officers] don't

understand the nuances of community, so they started asking people within the community to join the police department...Now [we're attracting] people who are trying to make a difference and changing certain aspects of policing.

I'm a community person. I like people. As a young police officer...you're concerned about keeping law and order, and [coming to] the universities you...learn that education is a big part of policing. That helps me. I like to educate and see these young people mold into something.

Community policing is central to Captain Ervin's commitment. Captain Ervin was given the synopsis of Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication and asked if it would be effective in the current racial climate and in South Florida.

Ervin prefaced his answer by asking "That's assuming that no one has had training like that already?" His question is answered with a "yes," and he continued:

I think training is effective, but training is not the problem sometimes. It's the application. (Ervin then refers to Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Freddy Gray, Eric Garner killings.) In some of those instances, one or two errors might have been made. But the training was there. So, I do think the training can be effective, but it's only as effective as the application.

Ervin is then given the description of deliberative dialogue and asked if it would be effective in the current racial climate and in South Florida, and this was his answer:

We have that on campus already. During the course of [the last couple years] we set up a panel and I was a part [of it]...We had all sides come, BLM was there, attorneys were there, ACLU was there, and the police were there. We tried to

bring out what we thought were issues that we had to talk to each other about. We do have that on campus now.

Ervin confirmed that the panel was ongoing and consisted of people from all races, ethnic educational backgrounds, gender, police and citizens. He also confirmed that after meeting several times they found ways to address the issues that were raised. This is an example of deliberative dialogue working effectively at the university.

Ervin added the following to the discussion of the efficacy of Nonviolent Communication and deliberative dialogue:

I think that people have to feel free to say things, give opinions, in order to have a positive outcome...Sometimes these discussions help break [issues] down, because we do talk to each other and we're allowed to say what we really feel. And we can't be offended by what people feel or vice versa...You have to put yourself in a position where you don't call somebody names, because your opinion is your opinion. You're entitled to it...You may not come to my opinion, but at least you should let me say [it]. Until I've heard your total opinion, I can't come up with a total solution.

Commenting on the importance of the panels being ongoing and coming up with mutual solutions, Ervin said, "It's important to come back and see how [the issues discussed in the panel] have changed. You have to have a solution and you have to follow up on that solution. Same thing in policing."

Ervin was asked to think about such cases as Michael Brown, Freddy Gray, Eric Gardner—What do you think would be effective dialogues between the races to mend that going forward? He answered, "A constant evaluation. And it has to be

substantive...Don't send someone to a meeting just to be sitting in a chair. It has to be someone that can make a decision and can change something.”

Ervin then went on to comment on a recent event in St. Louis where a police officer was charged with manslaughter for allegedly shooting a colleague as the two played Russian roulette. Ervin mentioned that national police chiefs are responding to incidents such as these and implementing practices to improve relations between police and citizens. He commented,

Then all of the sudden you get an incident [a couple weeks ago] where a cop shot another cop...playing Russian roulette. Now the community [responds] ‘see, see?’ Now the police chief of St Louis is trying to hit that hard saying, ‘no, no, no that’s just [an isolated incident]. It’s not the whole police department.’ So, we have to stay on top of these things.

Ervin referred to a specific group that meets at FAU called Students in Crisis. When students have problems, they set up a community meeting that includes meeting with the upper management at the university. This transpires every two weeks. According to Ervin the meetings take place covering racial dialogues as well. “BLM and the BSU set up meetings with us. They have panels. They bring in the ACLU and we sit down and we talk about history and we talk about issues,” he said.

This is another instance of a form of deliberative dialogue being used in the FAU community. The next interview is with a local police department that has a specialized division dedicated to community outreach.

West Palm Beach Police Department

The West Palm Beach Police Department expressed opinions similar to Ervin's about community policing. However, they stressed ongoing education with community members, especially youth, throughout the interview.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, police have a national activity called "Coffee with a Cop." The purpose is to have police officers meet face to face with citizens to improve community relations. Lieutenant Frank Distefano who is active in the "Coffee with a Cop" program was contacted and an interview was conducted with members of the West Palm Beach Community Response Team (CRT).

The West Palm Beach Police Department CRT has 15-20 officers, and according to the members of the team, what sets them apart is that most agencies have only one person in community response. The few CRT members participating in this interview commented that other agencies are surprised at the number they have dedicated to community relations and that's because their leader, Chief Sarah Mooney, is committed to the process.

Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication and deliberative dialogue were discussed in this meeting. They were asked if these theories would be effective in the current racial climate in South Florida. Their responses will be discussed, but what transpired was a lengthy discussion on specific programs in which their department participates and their effectiveness. This was Lieutenant Distefano's answer:

To touch on what you said as far as the racial stuff, we never really had a huge issue here, I mean the general public, yeah, we kind of felt a sense of it. But the people in our community never really saw a big backlash during that whole

timeframe (police shootings of unarmed black men around the country from approximately 2013-2017) which I think says a lot about our agency... [Recently two of our Sergeants] have gone to gang conferences in different cities at different times and the consensus was you have to reach out to the kids when they're young before they start having this bad influence... and so that's how we changed our entire focus. Getting into schools letting them see our faces and so forth... We're trying to reach as many kids as possible within this community.

You see these events with police interaction in the news and in Facebook, and that's great, but that might be once in a blue moon. That's our job and we do it constantly. We constantly reinforce that relationship within the schools and the community.

Distefano was then asked if they go through any specific training to conduct racial dialogues and how to listen effectively. Distefano answered that it's a selection process. He said they look for a specific personality for being in the Community Response Team. Team members also commented that they benefited by having a diverse staff as well. Distefano said:

It's number one the personality of the individual and number two, it's the job experience. We're constantly dealing with the public over and over. You kind of learn your way around... like any instructor you have to learn your own target audience... what level of vocabulary you're using... But as far as specific for this area... it's kind of a self-taught and learned thing as you travel through your career here.

The CRT does have ongoing contact with gang members. Sergeant Steven, a gang sergeant, deals with the juvenile unit. He said:

Our contacts are 90% with gang members. Even they understand the difference. In talking with them and having open communication with...violent criminals, they know what they can and can't do. When Trayvon Martin or Michael Brown [incidents] occurred, our community understood don't fight the police. So, it wasn't like 'why did that White officer kill that Black kid?' Most of the people we talked to were mainly on our side because of our community outreach programs. Because we're out there talking to them. Usually we have real good open communication. Does everybody like us? No. Are people afraid of us? Yeah. Would people take a fight to us? Yeah. But for the most part with our community outreach programs they...know where we lie. And they know that most of us aren't here to make an arrest. For the most part I would say our community is 100% on board for us as law enforcement. Even [the] Cory Gray [incident] that happened right down the street.

Cory Gray is a local police officer who participated in a routine DUI patrol conducted in Royal Palm Beach Boulevard in Royal Palm Beach on October 18, 2013. Officer Cory Gray smelled marijuana from citizen John D. Flanagan's vehicle. Gray and another police officer, Munro, tried to remove Flanagan from the car when Flanagan intentionally put the vehicle in reverse. The car dragged Officer Munro about 50 feet. The officers fired at Flanagan who stopped his car after being shot. An investigation cleared the officers of wrongdoing, and Flanagan was acquitted of aggravated assault of a police officer.

The Community Response Team Officers went on to discuss a number of programs in which they participate including G.R.E.A.T., Gain Resistance Education and Training, which is like the new DARE from the 1980s. There is also Cops and Scholars and PAL--Police Athletic League. All of the programs have a goal in common as Sergeant Graves said, "We're in hopes that we'll keep them (community kids) from getting in trouble down the road." Sergeant Graves went on to discuss the kids in the West Palm Beach Community:

They are considered at risk kids and they're in the low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Some of them are achieving well, some are not, but we work with all of them. We're teaching [the kids] how to have a dialogue with a police officer when you meet them, because they have street knowledge...and that usually doesn't get you too far. It usually creates problems, but when you interact with a police officer on a regular basis, now they know how to speak to them.

Sergeant Graves was essentially talking about training that possibly could have saved Michael Brown in his encounter with Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson.

At the conclusion of the interviews it was surprising how BLM and the Black community have such different views and goals than law enforcement. These two groups aren't so much diametrically opposed as they are focused on their individual goals and processes, and their objectives don't coincide. The members of the two groups interact and sometimes clash, but it appears the symptoms are being treated with no definitive answer to the underlying problem, racism. The CRT seems to believe the issue is being well served by the proactive outreach programs; however, BLM and the Black

community believe the issue needs to be addressed directly to combat racism and achieve racial equality.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I discuss the major issues unearthed by the interviews, my recommendations for modeling effective dialogues about racial conflict, limitations of the thesis, and suggestions for further research.

Key Results

The interviews uncovered a few key issues that have critical ramifications. First, the issue of racism is much larger than Black Lives Matter, the Black community, and the police. Jonathan made reference to calling police racists, but it's just a symptom of the bigger issue. That issue is racism. Improving dialogues between BLM and police would be helpful, but the dialogues need to engage everyone. Racism is a pervasive issue--everyone has a role in it--therefore everyone needs to be a part of the solution.

Yet racism means different things to Blacks and Whites. Blacks see it as a much deeper issue interwoven throughout the social structure in our country. Whites see it as individual acts. Therefore, our reactions to racism mirrors our perceptions—if it's seen as a single occurrence, White people believe they can afford to look the other way. However, it weighs heavily on Blacks throughout their daily lives, while Whites have the luxury to overlook it. These different perceptions have caused friction, pain, and conflict throughout history. While race is a social construction, racism is an actual reality. Whites have a consistent advantage in this country. The privileged racial group (White) has relatively more social power and often ignores that advantage with regard to Blacks, citing programs such as affirmative action as remedies.

Second, this thesis pointed out that Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication and deliberative dialogue have agency. Previous research has shown that racial dialogues need to lead to concrete action in order to have lasting positive effect. While invitational rhetoric is an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination, it has been criticized for lacking agency. Both NVC and deliberative dialogue proclaim to be more than just talk. They are processes designed to do something about the issue and create opportunities to make a difference.

Recommendations

My recommendations as a result of these interviews are as follows. Whereas the elements of Rosenberg's NVC would be effective in racial dialogues, the dialogues need to include diverse participants and need to be ongoing. Therefore, deliberative dialogue appears to be the most effective method and the use of Rosenberg's NVC elements such as listening, observing, identifying needs, making a request would be well used within the deliberative dialogue study circles.

The interviews pointed out a glaring difference between how the Black Lives Matter and Black community representatives versus the law enforcement officers viewed racial relations. Jonathan referred to how "the cops appeared to be fulfilling a quota." In fact, he said that BLM probably wouldn't want to participate in dialogues with police officers. Jonathan was clear in recommending that dialogues include diverse groups of Blacks and Whites from varied socioeconomic backgrounds.

The police, on the other hand, didn't perceive a problem in South Florida. The West Palm Beach Police Department Community Response Team often mentioned that

there is not a significant problem in their community due to their community outreach programs. Florida Atlantic University Captain Ervin did speak of perceptions of police (i.e. “all cops are bad”) being a problem, mentioning how citizens often ask if a cop is going to shoot them, and automatically videotaping and posting any altercations on the internet. However, Captain Ervin spoke of ongoing panels at the university that included BLM, Black Student Union, attorneys, university leaders, and police.

A question arises from these polarized perceptions: Will these significant differences in perception affect the direction and outcome of the dialogue? Actually, these viewpoints are a microcosm of the overall perceptions of Blacks and Whites in the United States today. Considering that Blacks and Whites view racism differently, a more comprehensive approach is needed to address the challenges of racism and race relations.

The primary goal in this thesis was to evaluate Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication--specifically engaging in absolute listening, creating a dialogue, and understanding each other to the point that one would want to contribute to the other’s well-being by promoting harmonious rather than divisive race relations. More specifically, the thesis addressed the question would Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication theory be effective in the current racial climate and in South Florida?

It was during Jonathan’s interview that the concept of interjecting Rosenberg’s NVC with deliberative dialogue came about. Jonathan made several comments that led to the consideration of deliberative dialogue as an effective model for racial dialogues. Jonathan emphasized that he didn’t think police and BLM members were the ideal participants for the racial dialogues. He mentioned that police often get the blame, but there is a larger systemic problem regarding race relations. When asked for ideal race

dialogue participants, Jonathan stressed that a diverse group of people were needed, specifying everyday people, local officials, impoverished community members, etc. He stressed it must be people from the community “who want to make the world better.”

Deliberative dialogue study circles consist of small, diverse groups that meet across the community and address issues of common concern. The groups consist of people from all racial, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, gender identities, public officials and citizens. This describes what Jonathan was recommending.

Jonathan also commented that most racial dialogues he’d participated in felt like they were just surface level. This is not an issue with a quick fix, due to the effects of the long history of colonization, as Jonathan discussed. The history of injustice is firmly entrenched. In light of this, deliberative dialogue would be a compelling method as it’s a form of discussion aimed at finding the best course of action. The study circle meetings are ongoing over the course of a few weeks. This would give participants the opportunity to discuss, reflect, confer with family members and associates, and explore the most promising avenues for action.

A matter of concern with Jonathan was the question of who would facilitate the dialogues. As Miller and Donner (2000) mentioned in their paper on racial dialogues, the choice of facilitators is of utmost importance. Jonathan mentioned that a facilitator from outside the United States would be preferable, because such a person would provide an outside observation and would not tend to be invested in the outcome. Jonathan said he would prefer that such facilitator be Black. This again would fit effectively into the deliberative dialogue study circle model.

Jonathan's interview brought to the forefront that this is a much bigger issue than BLM talking to law enforcement. The issue concerns all of us, and all must participate in its ultimate resolution. This weighed heavily in the choice of using both NVC and deliberative dialogue.

FAU Captain Ervin's interview also played a role in the decision to blend NVC with deliberative dialogue. When asked about how to mend racial relations after incidents like the Michael Brown, Freddy Gray, etc. deaths, Captain Ervin stressed that it had to be a constant, ongoing discussion. He also said that those participating in dialogues need to be people who can make a decision and be a part of change rather than "just sitting in a chair." Based on Captain Ervin's comments, deliberative dialogue would be the optimal vehicle for consistent, ongoing conversations. One of the principles of successful public engagement in deliberative dialogue is that it creates ongoing processes, not isolated events. It's not probable that ambitious goals of mending race relations through racial dialogues would be accomplished in a single session. A more extensive approach is needed to address the challenges of racism and race relations.

Accordingly, the panels that Captain Ervin engages in are a form of deliberative dialogue. He describes them as ongoing panels including BLM members, ACLU, university leaders, and FAU police. They discuss the issues of the participants and address questions of what to do about them. The process revolves around the question that needs to be addressed, and over time and ongoing meetings, they work toward solutions to benefit all involved. The benefits are indicative of study circle programs in that leaders and members gain new insights that lead to mutually beneficial changes

within the institution and in the larger community. Captain Ervin described the FAU panels as having fruitful results.

Additionally, Captain Ervin stressed the importance of the particular people who attend the dialogues saying they needed to be people who want find a solution, along with people who can make decisions. McCoy and Skully (2002) stress in their paper that participants reporting results of deliberation to elected officials can be a time-consuming situation. The preferred method is to involve policymakers as participants on an equal basis in the dialogue. Public officials can participate in dialogue and gain insights that impact their policy making. Also, they can work with citizens to implement ideas.

The West Palm Beach CRT claims that their community outreach programs are effective at avoiding such incidents as what happened in Ferguson. They claim to take a proactive approach by educating kids while they're young to avoid instances of racial conflict. Lieutenant Distefano said, "Racial conflicts aren't such an issue here due to our community outreach programs." This is the common belief among members of the Community Response Team, although it's a sentiment that is probably not shared by Black members of the community.

The Community Response Team stresses training and implementation as ways to have effective community relations with the police department. Sargent Graves said, "It boils down to a lack of training often times. A lack of understanding of the culture you're dealing with—not knowing how to communicate with them, perceiving them the wrong way. Coming with your own opinions of people rather than taking the time to understand what you're dealing with...A lot of it has to do

with lack of training...but some departments probably don't spend enough time on training in areas like cultural diversity. That can become a problem.

Many of the outreach programs the CRT participates in have elements of deliberative dialogue. Specifically, programs such as Kids and Cops Dialogue is a six-week program between police officers and students. It is a discussion aimed at finding how each other is perceived when cops and black juveniles meet. They discuss their first impressions when encountering each other and how to see each other's "human side." As the purpose of deliberative dialogue is to form a discussion aimed at finding the best course of action, the goal here is get to know each other, develop relationships, and proactively avoid conflicts in the future.

Summing it up, my central recommendation as a result of this study is that deliberative dialogue using the elements of NVC would be the best approach in South Florida. The sessions would employ the 10 principles of talk, dialogue, and deliberation as outlined in chapter 1 of this thesis. After meeting several times (approximately 4-6) over a few weeks, the goal is to find ways to address important issues. During the deliberative dialogue sessions, I also recommend using the components of NVC training--observation, feeling, expressing needs, and making a request--outlined in Chapter 1 as well.

Additionally, participants would be led by facilitators to engage in absolute listening which evolves into understanding and empathizing. Absolute listening is an element embraced by both NVC and deliberative dialogue.

Final Thoughts

The hypothesis that I evaluated in this thesis is that the components of Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication theory would be effective in dialogues about racism in South Florida. That alone is not enough. Deliberative dialogue study circles would be an optimal setting for racial dialogues discussing the goal of equality. The following are deductions that were made from the study and interviews.

The ultimate goal of Black Lives Matter is liberation. In order for dialogues about racism to be effective, participants must first consider what liberation means specifically. What does the liberation that you strive for look like? What can we do to achieve it? Exactly what can Whites do to move racial equality and liberation for Blacks forward? What can Blacks do? This must be determined by participants for the dialogue to be effective. And, as Rosenberg recommended, it's best to use positive language describing what you *do* want rather than what you *don't* want.

The goal of the conversation in deliberative dialogue must be established before it begins. Facilitators need to be outsiders with no vested interest. In dialogues on racism, it would be best to have one Black and one White facilitator, and as Jonathan recommended in his interview, they could possibly be from outside the United States.

People want to be a part of a community, they want to make a difference. This is clear throughout the interviews with the West Palm Beach Police Department Community Response Team where they referred repeatedly to wanting to make a difference in the community. Deliberative dialogue stresses in its second step listening and empathy. These are critical elements of NVC as well.

In deliberative dialogue a sense of agency is created by leading participants in a natural progression from analysis of an issue to specific action steps. If conversation ends without action, it reinforces the idea that possibilities for addressing the issue are entirely outside their realm. It is critically important that participation in racial dialogue leads to concrete action.

It is recommended that policy makers be included as participants on an equal basis in the dialogue. As Jonathan recommended in the interview, legislators should be involved in the dialogue process. It is a way for lawmakers to implement action ideas, and it also helps them gain new insights that have impact on their policymaking. The full engagement of citizens goes beyond problem solving and input to shared government. Deliberative dialogue provides a way for citizens and officials to work together on activities and decisions, not just when there is a crisis. This proactive action mirrors the West Palm Beach Police Department CRT implementing their community outreach programs and educating children to reduce the possibility of future conflicts or violence.

People are hesitant to participate in a process they see as taking a great deal of time. The recommendation is four to six separate meetings over several weeks. This gives time for reflection. The interview with Captain Ervin referred to useful panels that spanned a few weeks. Additionally, Officer Treu of the West Palm Beach Police Department CRT referred to the Kids and Cops Dialogue which is a nation-wide program which spans six weeks, quarterly throughout the year. Therefore, the recommended timing for the racial dialogues would prove to be effective. Between weekly sessions, the participants would be encouraged to talk about issues with friends, family, co-workers,

etc. but keep the identity of who said what confidential. Also, it's recommended to watch closely how the issue is playing out in the news in the community.

The recommendation of who is to participate would include small diverse groups including people of varied races, income levels, and public officials.

Lastly, people will participate because they are interested in their community and want to solve or address particular issues. However, people will only engage if they believe efforts will lead to concrete results.

This thesis was limited by meeting with only two groups who engage in dialogues about race relations--law enforcement and BLM/the Black community. The study encompassed only a portion of South Florida--citizens from Boca Raton, Broward County, Miami and West Palm Beach. Only a limited number of people were interviewed and were asked to evaluate only the models of NVC and deliberative dialogue. They were asked about the efficacy of these strategies and no further theories were discussed. Further research on how citizens think Blacks could achieve equality is recommended. Data collected from focus groups, additional interviews, and surveys would be useful in further developing this model. Also, organizing, conducting, and evaluating deliberative dialogue study circles infused with NVC would be another option for testing this model.

It is vitally important to pursue the best approach to handling racial conflict, because racism damages everyone. It not only takes a toll on those directly affected by it every day, but those privileged as well. Continuing to keep quiet and turn a blind eye to the issue only allows the problem to persist and grow.

APPENDIX



Institutional Review Board
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Charles Dukes, Ed.D., Chair

DATE: January 22, 2019

TO: Becky Mulvaney
FROM: Florida Atlantic University Social, Behavioral and Educational Research IRB

IRBNET ID #: 1378501-1
PROTOCOL TITLE: [1378501-1] Nonviolent Communication

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF NOT HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 22, 2019

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The Florida Atlantic University Social, Behavioral and Educational Research IRB has determined this project does not meet the definition of human subjects research according to federal regulations. Therefore, it is not under the purview of the IRB.

We will keep a copy of this correspondence on file in our office.

If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact Donna Simonovitch at:

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Phone: 561.297.1383
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* Please include your protocol number and title in all correspondence with this office.

**This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations,
and a copy is retained within our records.**

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