


Community Conversations: A Case Study



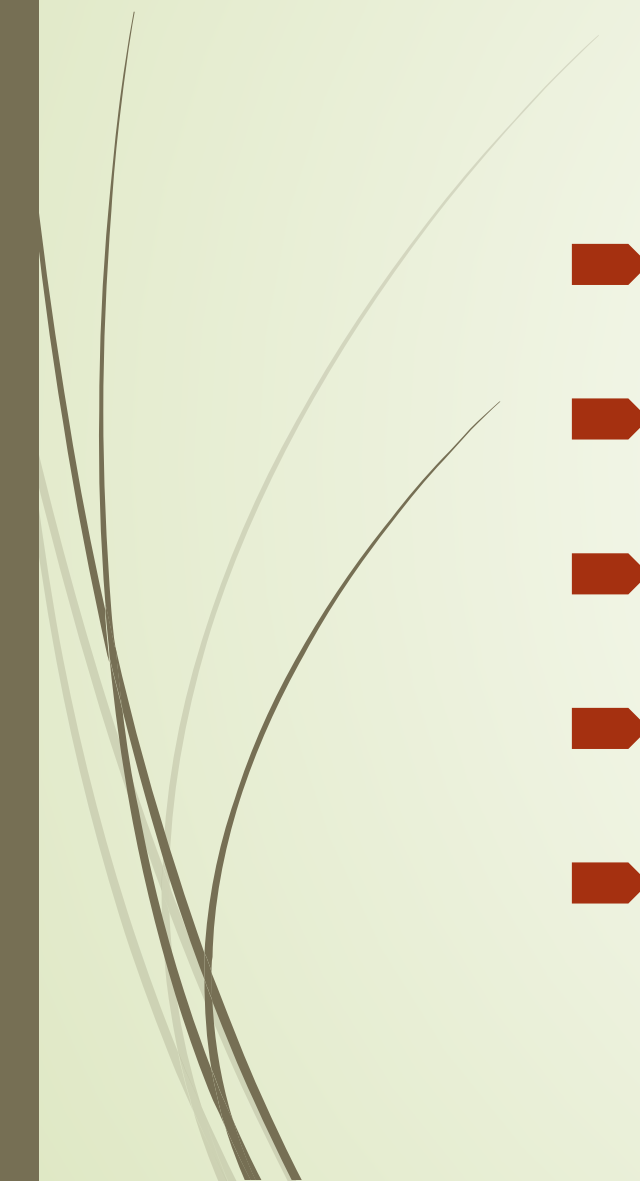
Elizabeth Dressel, Senior planner, Minneapolis Public Housing Authority

Sharon Press, Professor and Director Dispute Resolution Institute, Mitchell Hamline School of Law

John Thompson, Fight for Justice LLC



Plan for the Session

- Introductions
 - Background
 - Participant Reflections
 - Project Evaluation
 - Discussion
- 

July 6, 2016



A police dash cam video shows a Minnesota police officer firing seven shots into Philando Castile's car, killing him.







Time Line

- ▶ July 6, 2016: Philando Castille shot to death by Officer Yanez
- ▶ Summer 2016: Protests
- ▶ September 7, 2016: Work Session to discuss proposal to create Inclusion and Policing Task Force
- ▶ December 2016: Inclusion and Policing Task Force began meeting
- ▶ February 16, March 2, April 3, and May 1: Community Conversations
- ▶ May 24, 2017: Policing Recommendations adopted by the City Council
- ▶ June 14, 2017: Inclusion Recommendations and Statement of Community Values adopted by the City Council
- ▶ June 16, 2017: Yanez Acquitted
- ▶ June 19, 2017: Final Community Conversation
- ▶ July 2018: Falcon Heights received 2018 City of Excellence Award for its Policing and Inclusion Community Initiative



Community Conversations – 5 Sessions

- ▶ Personal and Community Values
- ▶ How can Falcon Heights Live Out the Community Values
 - ▶ In activities, policies, and policing policies and practices
- ▶ Review and Feedback on Draft Policing Recommendations
- ▶ What is Needed for Transformational Change and Personal Commitments
- ▶ Commemoration of Work Accomplished and Development of Next Steps



Community Conversations - Structure

- ▶ Community facilitators (training provided) – 2 per circle
- ▶ Participants could come to as many (or as few) conversations
- ▶ Group assignments made at check-in
- ▶ Structured questions answered in circles of approximately 8 people
- ▶ Joint sessions at the start and end of each conversation
- ▶ Childcare provided
- ▶ Snacks and Drinks



John Thompson Transformation From Trauma to Action

TRAUMA



THERE IS A REASON WE ARE ANGRY



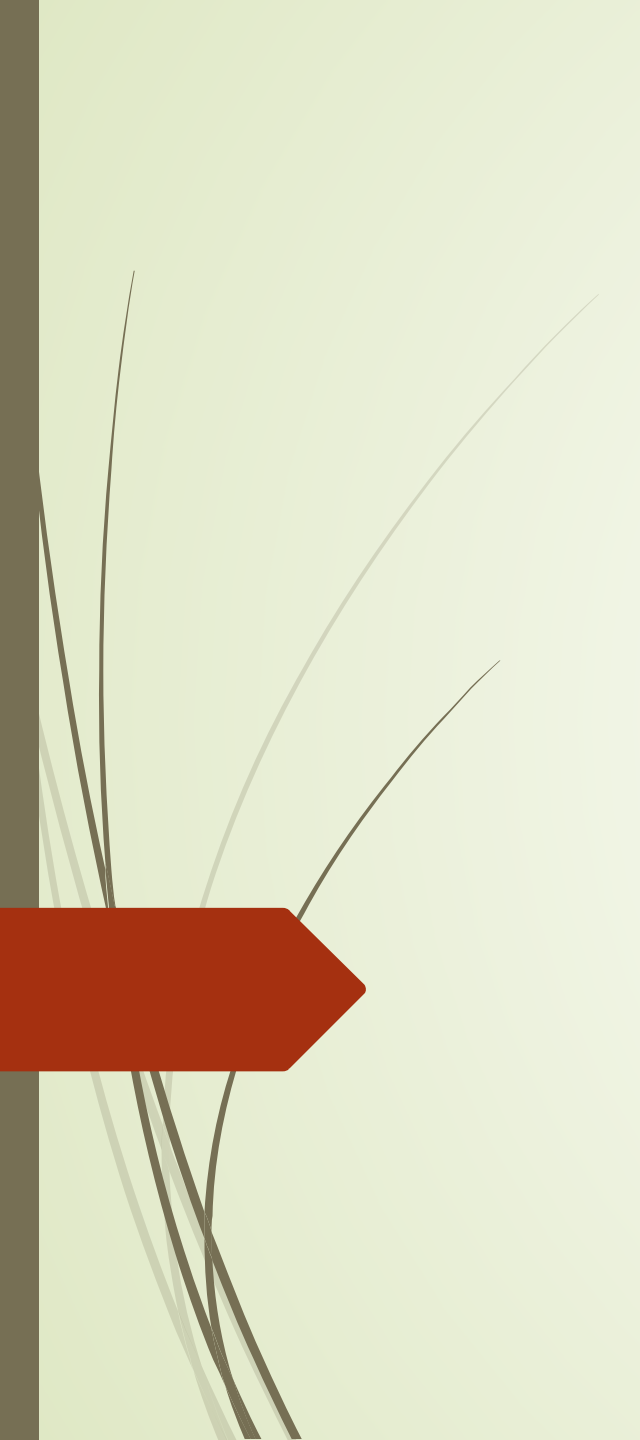
PHILANDO WOULD BE SO PROUD OF ME

THE
VICTORY
WILL BE
WON





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Elizabeth Dressel Community Conversation Evaluation

University of Minnesota
Center for Integrative Leadership



Evaluation Methodology

- Survey emailed to 158 participants of the community conversations who provided emails
- 57 people completed the survey (39% completion rate)
- Conducted four focus groups
 - 23 people attended a focus group
 - 13 conversation participants
 - 10 conversation facilitators



Key Evaluation Findings

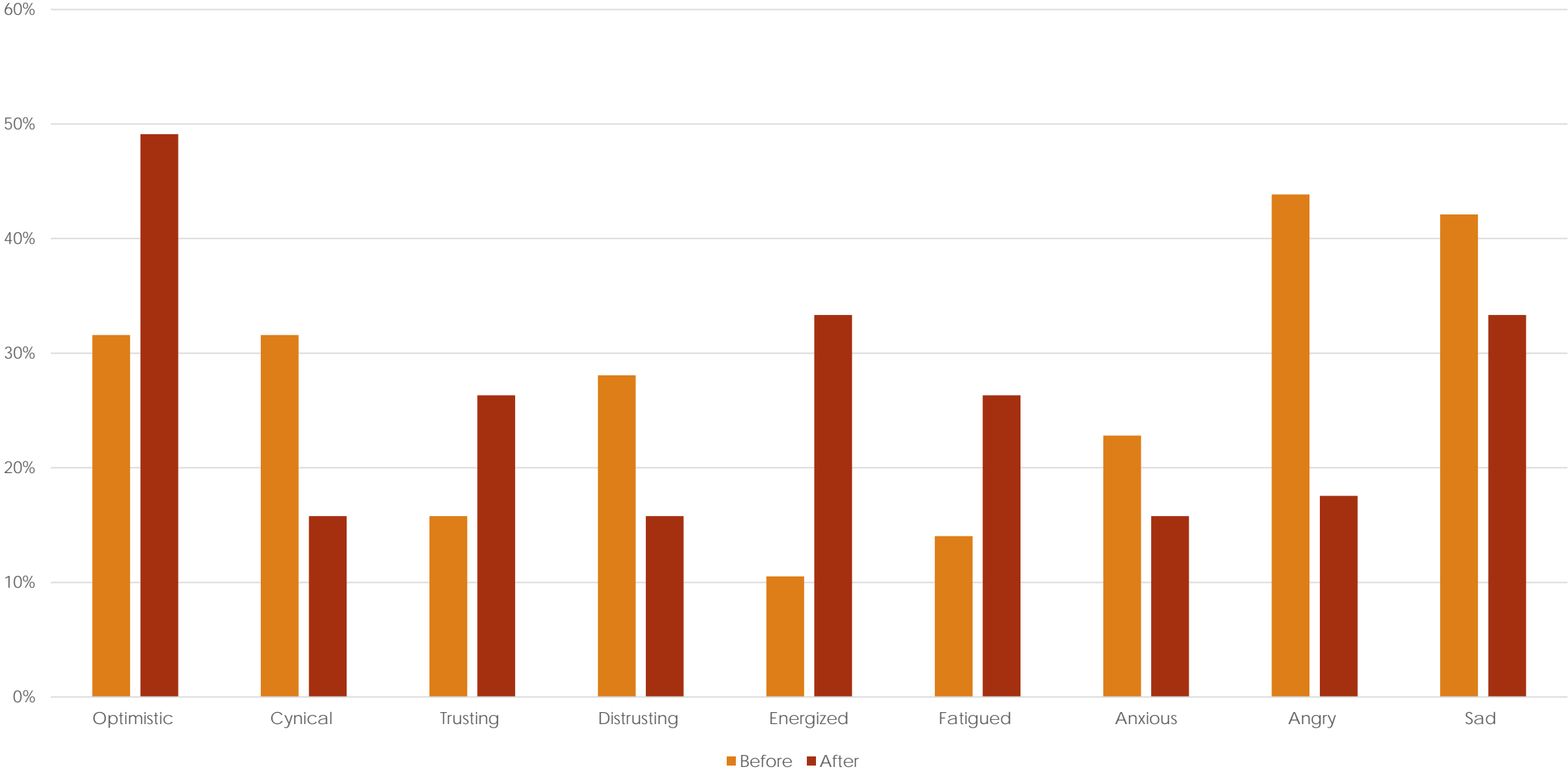
- **Divergent and Changing Concerns:** Participants arrived and left with divergent concerns and many changed their priorities over the course of the process.
- **Interface with City Council and Task Force:** Participants wanted more action, accountability, and interaction with these bodies.
- **Impacts of a Resource-Constrained Process:** Participants observed and bemoaned that limited resources had negative impacts on communication, childcare, and food.
- **Lack of Diversity:** Participants explored multiple concerns with turnout and diversity of perspectives.
- **Circle Format and General Process:** Participants articulated feedback on the benefits and limitations of the circle format and its implementation in this setting.
- **Facilitation Role:** Facilitators reflected on the distinctions between a circle process and other types of facilitation, and the ambiguity and tension they felt in this setting.



Outcome Highlight

- ▶ One of the most interesting findings is a **positive change in the emotional state of the participants**. Participants felt more optimistic and trusting and less cynical, sad and angry after participating in the conversations. In addition, participants expressed feeling both more energized and more fatigued after the community conversations.

Most dominant emotions (aggregated for all survey respondents)

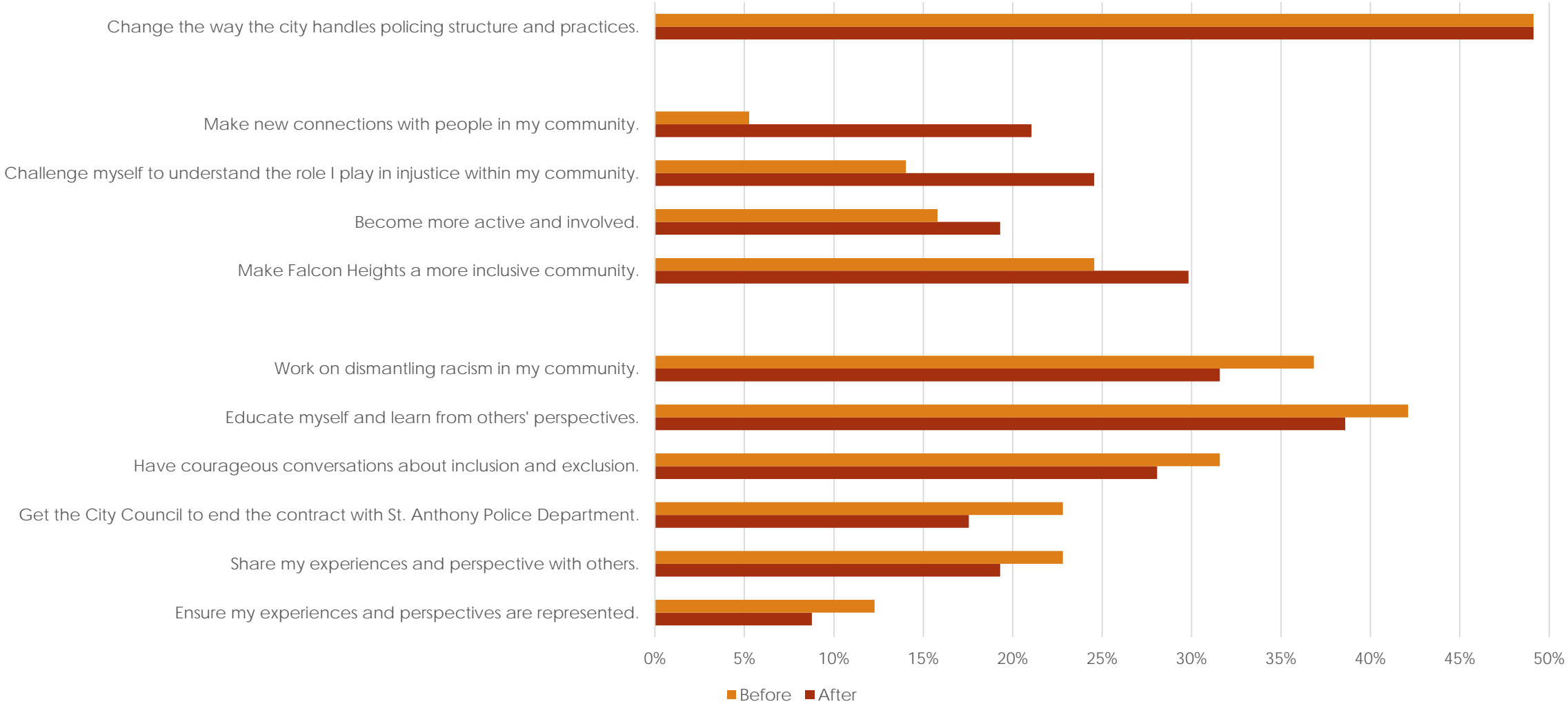




Outcome Highlight

- ▶ Another noteworthy finding is **changes to what participants hoped to accomplish through the community conversations**. Following the conversations, participants prioritized higher:
 - Understanding the role I play in injustices within my community.
 - Making new connections with people in my community
- ▶ The conversations did not make any difference in one prominent area of concern: both before and after, the number one priority was changing the way the city handles policing practices.

Top Priorities To Accomplish





Discussion

