Practitioner Perspective on Paradox:
A Case Study Using the Polarity Approach in Charleston, South Carolina

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"Polarity Thinking has changed the way senior leaders, police officers, and citizens approach important issues and concerns. It has provided a framework to honor differences while creating synergy toward a common purpose. The results – a deeper and richer understanding of complex issues that inform decisions at the individual, organizational and community levels, creating new potential, leading to breakthrough outcomes." Greg Mullen, Chief of Police, Charleston, South Carolina

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Introduction

This chapter chronicles the experience of citizens and public officials in Charleston, SC as they applied the polarity approach to address complex and polarizing social challenges. Core tenets of polarity theory and practice tools (the Polarity Map®, the 5-Step "SMALL" process, and the Polarity Approach for Continuity and Transformation assessment) are discussed in the context of diverse challenges including a devastating community tragedy and its aftermath. The conclusion calls for broader leadership and organizational system competency that supplements "OR" Thinking with "AND" Thinking to increase resilience, reduce polarization, and enhance the quality of life.

Polarity Thinking and the Polarity Map®

Paradoxes are well recognized in Organizational Development and Management Literature.[1] Barry Johnson introduced polarities in his 1992 book: *Polarity Management:*

Identifying and Managing Unsolvable Problems (Johnson, 1992). The term "polarity" refers to a specific category of paradox. A polarity is an interdependent pair with an ongoing and predictable dynamic. Two questions help us identify a polarity. They are: "Are there two poles which are interdependent?" and, "Is the difficulty ongoing?" (Johnson, 1996, p. 81). Understanding polarity theory begins with recognizing the fundamental interdependent pair/polarity of "OR" Thinking *and* "AND" Thinking. This thinking competency-focused polarity distinguishes a polarity as a unique type of paradox that involves an interdependent pair, and from problems that are unsolvable using "OR" Thinking. Polarities are inherently unsolvable, but can be addressed effectively when key stakeholders recognize them.

"OR" Thinking is necessary, useful, and a requirement to solve technical problems and make "this *or* that" choices between independent alternatives. We use "OR" Thinking every day as we learn math, language, and apply technical solutions to solvable problems involving independent alternatives.

"AND" Thinking is necessary, useful to effectively address challenges that are inherently unsolvable because the inherent interdependency requires addressing two dimensions "this *and* that" in the dynamic cycle, over time. Polarities live in us as we breathe in and out with *inhale* AND *exhale*, and in the *left hemisphere* AND *right hemisphere* functions of the human brain. We also live inside polarities as we navigate the tensions between *activity* AND *rest*, and when we address challenges between *individual needs* AND *collective* needs. Effectively using both types of thinking competencies in social challenges creates the conditions necessary for generative and sustainable high-performance in life, leadership, on teams, and in organizational systems. The root cause of racism, sexism, systemic poverty and distribution issues for basic needs (e.g., water/food, healthcare, education, and the ecological sustainability of the planet) can

be traced to using "OR" Thinking to the neglect of "AND" Thinking. Our ability to survive and thrive as a species will depend upon the degree to which we are able to avoid misdiagnosing unsolvable (but leverage-able) "AND" Thinking polarities as solvable problems using "OR" Thinking. Polarity theory and practice tools were developed to support leaders, teams, and organization systems in that process.
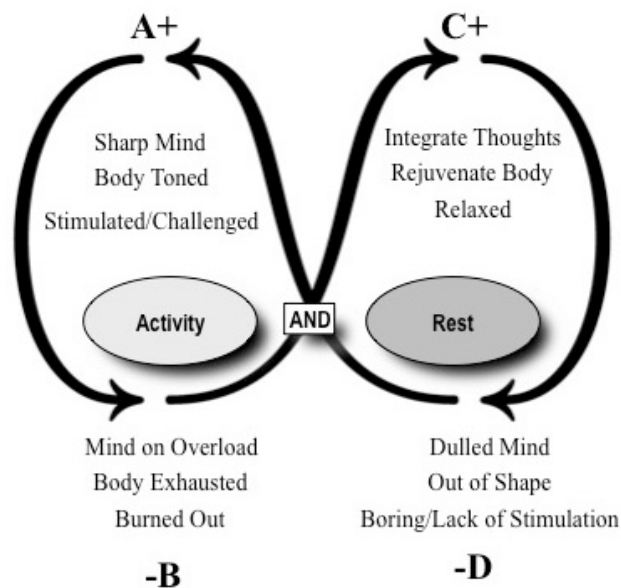
The Polarity Map®, process, and terminology are continually evolving. Recent updates to the terminology include replacing "Polarity Management" with "Polarity Thinking" or the "Polarity Approach for Continuity and Transformation" (PACT™). PACT™ expands on the Force Field concept pioneered by Kurt Lewin in his action research methodology (Lewin, 1997). Lewin describes forces in dynamic and predictable ongoing tension. Driving, or helping forces, support movement in service of a goal, and hindering forces block movement toward the goal. Recent articles on paradox theory explore how the dynamic nature of paradox allows people to realize the potential of a practical application.[2] Mapping the predictable dynamic and ongoing tension using the Polarity Map® makes implicit wisdom we all have about polarities explicit by showing how the predictable dynamics at play in the tension work over time. Engaging people impacted by polarity tensions in the process of mapping the tension organizes their individual and collective wisdom. This supports learning and identifying the best and most creative actions to achieve leverage for the ongoing tensions.

Polarity Theory Basics Principles

We all live inside of the *activity* and *rest* polarity. There is nowhere we can go to avoid or escape the tension between the two poles. We cannot "solve" the interdependency between *activity* and *rest* by applying "OR" Thinking (i.e., by choosing *activity* or *rest* as a solution). This

makes activity *and* rest an "AND" Thinking polarity, as is fairly obvious that we are required to pay attention to both poles in our daily lives. Not all polarities are this obvious, which is why mapping the energy dynamic helps us see the interdependency and ongoing energy exchange between the two poles. Seeing the predictability of polarities is another significant benefit of mapping. This dynamic is illustrated with an infinity loop, capturing the cycle in the energetic dynamic going from: (+A) to (–B); from (-B) to (+C); from (+C) to (–D); and, from (-D) back to (+A). FIGURE 1 provides an example of some content that key stakeholders might capture to describe the upsides and downside limitations in the two poles of *activity* and *rest*.

FIGURE 1, Sample content of the activity *and* rest polarity dynamic
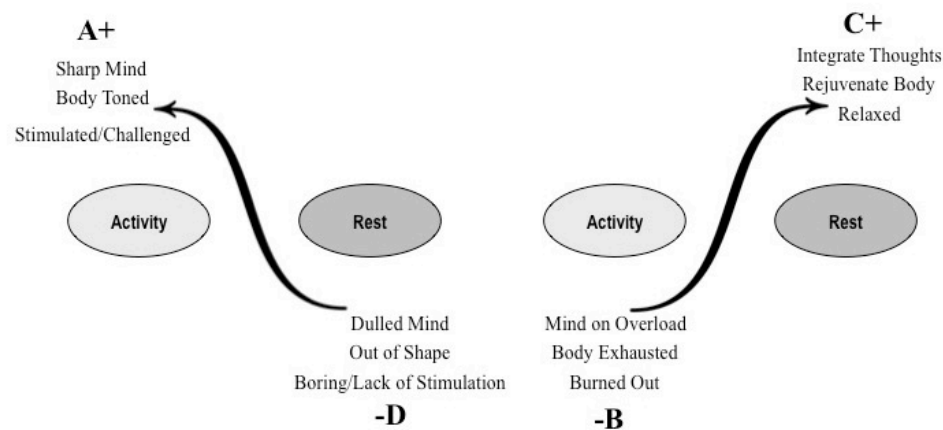

Activity (+A) provides benefits of a sharp mind, body toned, and keeps us stimulated/challenged. However, too much *activity* without adequate *rest* results in the mind being on overload, an exhausted body, and being burned out (-B). The natural self-correction to avoid burn out is to get some of the upside benefits of *rest* (+C), to integrate thoughts, rejuvenate

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the body, and relax. However, this is not sustainable as a solution. Over time, too much focus on *rest* to the neglect of *activity* results in (-D), a dulled mind, out of shape body, and is boring/lacks stimulation. The natural self-correction for the downside limitations of (-D) are the upside benefits of Activity (+A), which is where the process began.

When a polarity is misdiagnosed as a solvable problem and using "OR" Thinking (i.e., choosing *activity or rest* as a solution), the normal flow of energy in the predictable dynamic becomes interrupted. Figure 2 shows how "OR" Thinking alone might describe the tension in the conflict. The two diagonal points of view are treated as independent choices between two alternative points of view.

Activity (+A) is a solution to the problem of the limitations of *rest* (–D). Or, *Rest,* (C+) is a solution to the limitations of activity (-B). Each of the two points of view has accuracy, but each is incomplete. Each of the diagonal points of view falls short not in what is seen, but in what it fails to see.

FIGURE 2, Two Diagonal Points-of-View of activity *and* rest

Individual and collective awareness increases when key stakeholders who are impacted by the
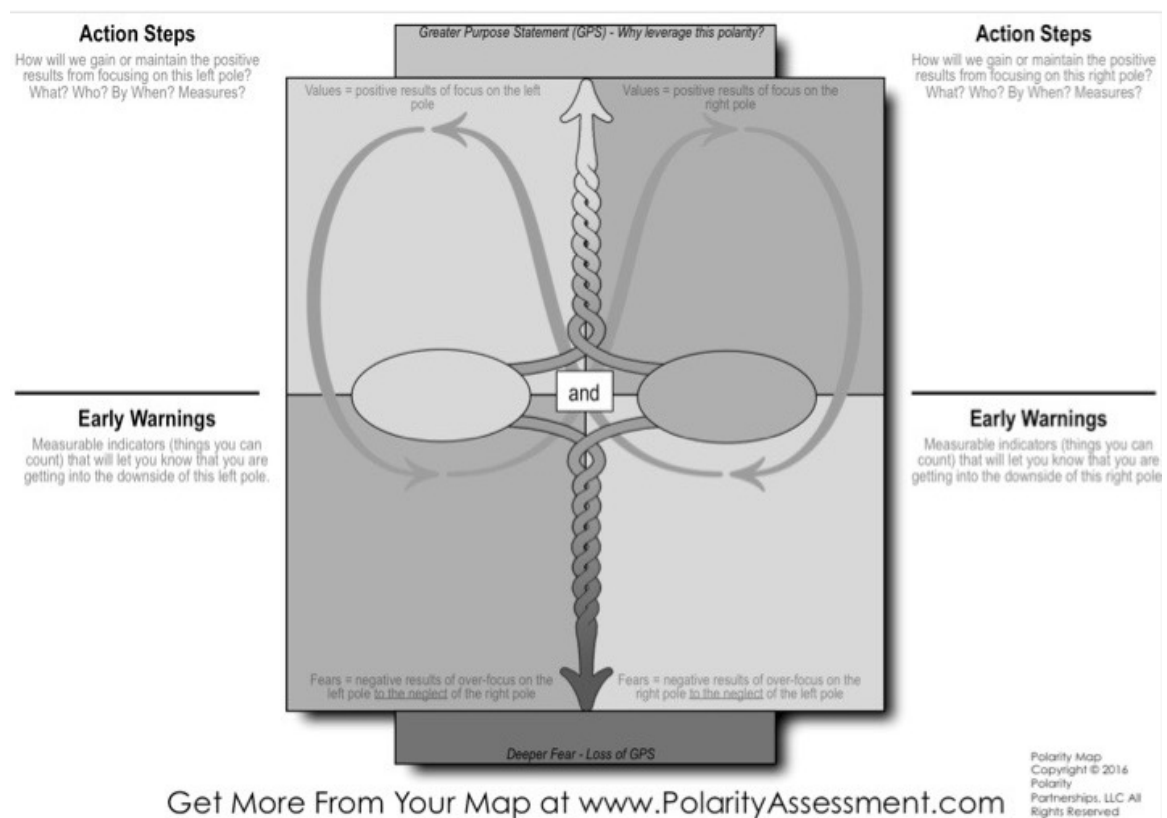
opportunities and tensions in polarities see and map the energy system at play between the interdependent poles using the Polarity Map®. Because "OR" Thinking is so powerful and works efficiently and effectively for solvable problems, it tends to be overvalued, and misapplied to polarities. Power struggles between two diagonal point-of-view truths can go beyond the waste of time and resources. In extreme cases polarization can lead to vicious cycles and dysfunction that becomes destructive. The result is a loss of the upside benefits of both poles and experience of the downside limitations of both poles simultaneously. Supplementing "OR" Thinking with "AND" Thinking helps people avoid becoming stuck in arguments and debates between the two diagonal points-of-view. As the need for high-performance increases, so does the requirement for intensifying the focus on key polarities.

For example, a decision to run a marathon would intensify the need to focus on *activity* and *rest.* More is required than a daily routine of waking up, going to work, going back home, and going to sleep. More *activity* to run greater distances each workout day would increase aerobic capability. Quality *rest* would ensure the upside benefits of rest for adequate muscle recovery and strengthening. Focusing too much on *activity* to the neglect of *rest* or the reverse might undermine performance and decrease the possibility of reaching the new high-performance goal. Excessive focus on *activity* (+A) could result in a sports injury like shin fractures (-B). Paradoxically, this would also lead to the downside limitations of the *rest* pole as the injury and inability to train would stall conditioning and lead to muscle atrophy (-D). This is an example of a vicious cycle, which leads to the experience of both downside limitations (-B and -D). Leveraging a polarity dynamic effectively utilizes this energy exchange to create a virtuous cycle that maximizes both upside pole benefits (+A and +C) and minimizes both downside pole limitations (-B and –D). Seeing a more complete picture for the way the dynamic

works over time by mapping the tension increases the likelihood that the value of both poles in the tension are respected. This improves the probability of gaining and sustaining high-performance.

The Polarity Map® provides a tool and process to organize the polarity wisdom that individuals, teams, organizations, and communities possess. Shared understanding among key stakeholders supports reaching goals with increased speed and sustainability.

FIGURE 3, The Polarity Map®

Get More From Your Map at www.PolarityAssessment.com

At the very top of the Polarity Map® in Figure 3 is a space to capture the "Greater Purpose Statement" (GPS). This statement answers the question, "Why Leverage this Polarity?" Because polarities are ongoing and unsolvable, the GPS also serves as a goal to unify key stakeholders. At the bottom of the Polarity Map® is a space to capture the "Deeper Fear," which

is the result of a loss of the GPS. Acknowledging the potential for the Deeper Fear and the GPS are powerful reminders that motivate key stakeholders about the importance of working together. Leveraging polarities involves key stakeholders identifying Action Steps that reinforce the upsides of each pole and Early Warnings for minimizing the downsides of each pole. The process supports increasing agency for dealing with the complexity and realities inherent to the tension. A more detailed list of terms and elements of the Polarity Map® described in this chapter may be found on the Polarity Partnerships resource website: www.PolarityResources.com.

The SMALL Process

The 5-Step SMALL process of PACT™ provides structure to see and effectively leverage the power available to us in polarities. The critical element to begin the process is engaging key stakeholders who have an interest in the effective leveraging of the polarity or polarities. The 5-Steps are:

1. Seeing the polarities

2. Mapping the polarities

3. Assessing the polarities

4. Learning from the data

5. Leveraging the polarities

The PACT™ 5-Step SMALL process and its relationship to Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1997) and John Dewey's Learning Theory (Dewey, 1998) are shown in the Table.

The PACT™ 5-Step "SMALL" Process		
Step	Description	Significant Considerations and Relationship to Lewin's Action Research
1. Seeing -- See the Polarity	Understand the interdependent pairs, and distinguish them from solvable problems.	Analogous to Lewin's "Plan" step in Action Research. Help people understand the benefits of "OR" Thinking and "AND" Thinking. Apply "AND" Thinking to polarities.
2. Mapping -- Map the Polarity	Completing the Polarity Map™ for the most important and strategic polarities. This individual or collective experience helps those involved to see a more complete picture containing two points of view. Both points of view get affirmed helping address the natural tension between them.	Analogous to Lewin's "Involve Others" step in Action Research. This step makes collective understanding possible to better see emotional tensions associated with polarities, increase empathy, and build support. The greater purpose statement (GPS) can provide common ground for individual and collective action.
3. Assessing -- Assess how well we're doing	Intentional measurement for how frequently the experiences in each quadrant are taking place. The PACT™ (Polarity Approach for Continuity and Transformation) assessment can make assessing multiple polarities for large systems more efficient. Assessing can also be accomplished using an Assessing guide or dialogue while "walking the loop" in dialogue for the four quadrants.	Analogous to Lewin's "Observe" step in Action Research. Promotes understanding for how well or poorly polarity tensions are being leveraged by maximizing the upside benefits and minimizing the downside limitations.
4. Learning -- Learn from the assessment	Participants bring their own meaning to the assessment results and work toward shared understanding.	Analogous to Lewin's "Reflect" step in Action Research. This step is essential to deepening understanding amount key stakeholders and getting traction to take the best and most effective actions in Step 5, Leveraging.
5. Leveraging -- Leverage the system energy	Action Steps maximize the upside benefits for each pole. Early Warnings minimize downside limitations of each pole by identifying measurable indicators to ensure course correction takes place before limitations escalate.	Analogous to Lewin's "Plan New Action" step in Action Research. Action Steps and Early Warnings combine in a strategy plan for leverage, creating virtuous cycles leading to the GPS.

The SMALL process also has roots in Robert Jacobs' large-scale change principles (Jacobs, *Real Time Strategic Change*, 1992). Jacobs has identified polarities (and corresponding GPS's) that are critical to the success of large-scale change efforts. They are organized by his principles of Real Time Strategic Change (RTSC), and are fundamental to any change process.[3]

The Charleston Story

Background and Context

Margaret Seidler is a fifth generation Charlestonian who was introduced to Barry Johnson in 2001. Seidler developed a deep appreciation for the power of the PACT™ and PACT™ assessment and created opportunities to support Charlestonians to supplement "I'm right; you're wrong" philosophy rooted in an overemphasis on "OR" Thinking without "AND" Thinking.

An active neighborhood and community advocate, Seidler led a large committee for several of Charleston's single-family residential neighborhoods. In the spring of 2010, high profile crimes in nearby apartment communities led Seidler to call the police requesting they fix this problem. She noticed her own default to "OR" Thinking--blaming "others" who were the "problem" needing "fixing" and demanding "others" (the police) do the fixing. While there was a truth in that point of view, she also knew that to "walk her talk" she needed to model "AND" Thinking. She applied the PACT™ to herself in the context of this challenge. Reflecting on that period, she said, "The Polarity Approach to Continuity and Transformation had to start with me recognizing that I was ***both*** part of the problem ***and*** part of the solution."[4] Her involvement and influence as part of the neighborhood committee provided the opportunity to walk her talk. Her first task was to expand the committee to include the owners and managers of the apartments. Next, she held a dinner where leadership within the single family and apartments got to know

each other better. As part of the meeting agenda, they explored looking at community tensions through the lens of polarities, focusing first on learning about the predictable way polarities work. By the conclusion of the meeting, they had created a first-cut of a Polarity Map® exploring the polarity tension between single-family residents and multi-family residents. The GPS the group identified was "safe community." This GPS was a starting point to establishing the solid ground to begin building relationships and creating partnerships for a larger collaborative effort. In attendance was Charleston's new Police Chief, Greg Mullen. After the session, he handed Seidler his business card and requested they meet at 9 am the following day at his office. Seidler sees that dinner meeting and Chief Mullen's invitation as pivotal in the work of applying Polarity Thinking in Charleston, saying, "Excitement does not begin to describe the feeling of having a police Chief engaged as a key stakeholder to create a safer community."

The first thing Chief Mullen said at the 9 am meeting was, *"I believe we have these things you call 'polarities' in law enforcement."* Intuitively, Chief Mullen knew this was going to be a collective learning endeavor and not exclusively "top-down." He recognized Step One of the SMALL process, which is seeing the distinction between "OR" Thinking and "AND" Thinking with the acknowledgement – these "polarities" exist.

The Charleston Police Department Work

The Charleston Police Department was involved in revising a strategic plan, which was a logical entry point for the discussion. As a new Chief, the strategic plan was something that represented a big challenge for Mullen. While he was pressing hard to formalize it, the process was not welcomed by everyone. As with any new process, he encountered resistance. The plan provided five key strategic directions:

1)   Enhancing Community Safety
2)   Creating an Exceptional Workforce
3)   Creating Community Partnerships
4)   Effective Resource Management
5)   Advancing Technological Efficiencies

Seidler and Chief Mullen approached Step 1 of Seeing what polarities might be at play through dialogue, looking initially for what was most important to pay attention to.[5] Seidler asked,

*"What would you like to be **moving from**, and what would you like to be **moving toward** that would help you enhance the greater purpose of enhancing community safety?"*

Chief Mullen identified that the department wanted to move from an *"us VS them"* relationship between the community and police, and move toward more of a partnership with *"open communication and trust."* They chose *"community support"* as a "place holder" for the pole that would contribute to open communication and trust. Then the question was, *"What was the neutral or positively named pole that would be interdependent to "community support" and that would also contribute to the greater purpose statement of **Enhancing Community Safety**?"* They chose *"enforcement"* as a "place holder" for that interdependent pole to *community support*. One of the upside benefits of *enforcement* was a "decrease in crime" and enforcing laws is a key role of police officers. If *enforcement* was done to the neglect of *community support*, it could lead to an *"us VS them"* result.

Enforcement AND community support fit the criteria for a polarity. That is: both poles were neutral or positive and the two poles have an interdependent relationship to each other. They moved to Step 2, *Mapping* with Chief Mullen's knowledge and expertise of policing, and Seidler representing community interests based on her knowledge to the greatest degree she

could. Supplementing additional upsides and downsides went quickly. When *enforcement* is overemphasized to the neglect of *community support*, "*us VS them*" is a result. When *community support* is overemphasized to the neglect of *enforcement*, "*increased crime*" is a result.

The next challenge was to expand the discussion by engaging key stakeholders, which is useful in addressing complex challenges. Robert Jacobs (Axelrod et al., 2004, 19-20), compares the challenges and complexities of involvement to planning a wedding. It is impossible to do alone and the decisions whom to include is "a big, big deal." Who to invite depends on the kind of wedding. With a Las Vegas option, fewer people are involved than in a royal scale wedding, which involves many people and many decisions.

In their planning about whom should be engaged in the PACT™ process, Seidler and Chief Mullen included those who might naturally hold onto the way things had been done in the past (to preserve the core -- *continuity*) as well as others who might naturally prefer going after new ways of doing things (to stimulate change -- *transformation*). Seidler and Chief Mullen invited a highly diverse group of thirty-five police department employees -- including sworn and civilian, young and old -- to learn about polarities and to strengthen the strategic plan. All of them were first given an overview about what polarities are, how they work, and why they are important for them as leaders, in their teams/departments, and in the community.

When introducing people to polarities, the police department team members gained an appreciation for how strengths can become weaknesses when the benefits from both poles are not present and honored over time. Beginning with leadership principles, the stakeholders looked at polarities such as *confidence* AND *humility*, *freedom* AND *responsibility*, and *logic* AND *emotion* (Seidler, 2008). Each person declared a preference for a particular value on the left or its related item on the right (the word "AND" was omitted). The exercise was conducted this way

to reveal how "OR" Thinking when applied to a polarity creates false choices that can lead to unintended consequences, often referred to as "fixes that fail" (Senge, 1992, pp. 388-9). This foundational insight of moving from "either/or" alone to "either/or" AND "and".
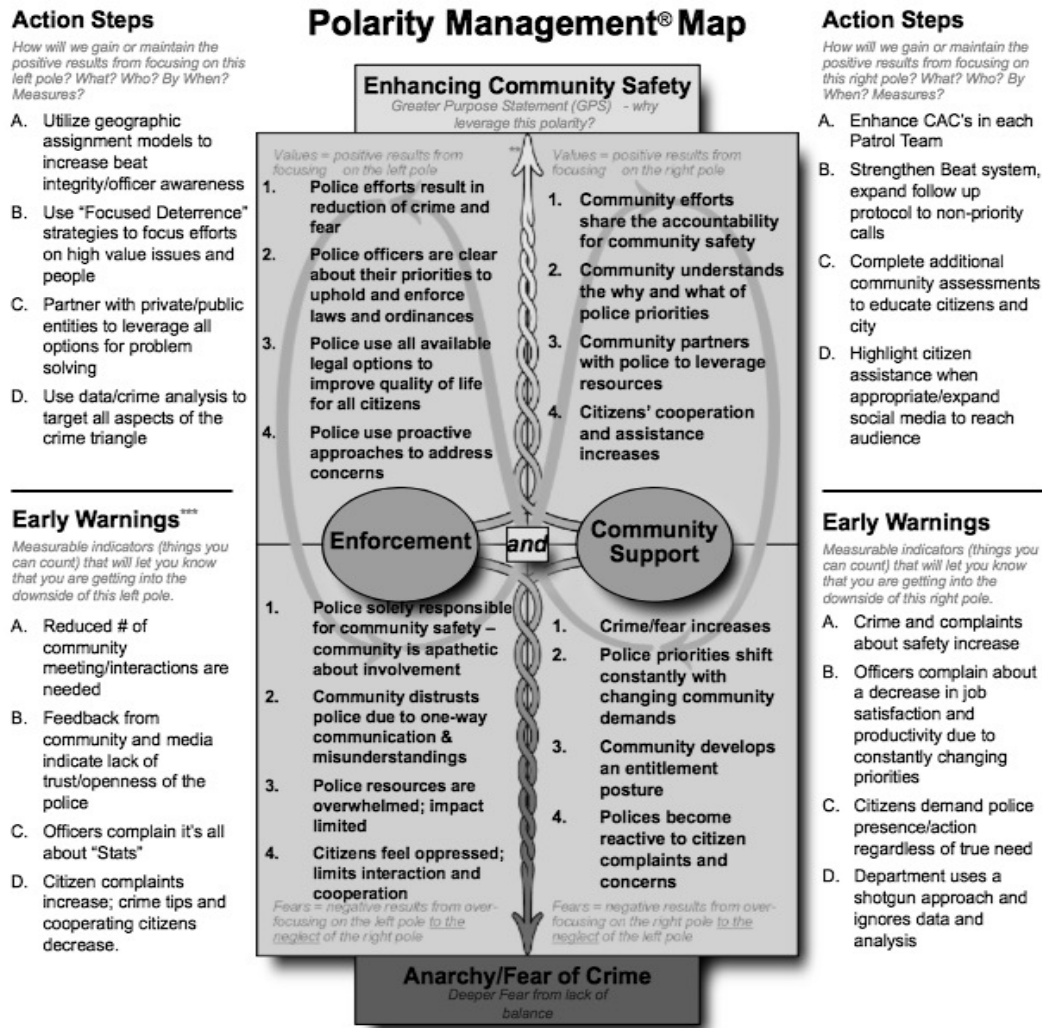
Next, the tensions were revealed as interdependencies. Often this insight is something people were aware of at a gut level, but have been unable to see. Seeing a more complete picture of a polarity makes more rapid progress possible, which is exactly what these key stakeholders did. They eagerly jumped into the process of mapping *enforcement* AND *community support*, as well as other system-level polarities. Bringing hearts and heads to the table, the group implemented Step 2 of the SMALL process by creating high quality, initial drafts of five Polarity Maps® in just a few hours! Seidler edited the maps using some more advanced systems thinking guidelines for Step 2, Mapping a polarity, and presented the edits a few weeks later to the entire group for their consent. "When people who are actually living in the system start to see themselves as the source of their problems, they invariably discover a new capacity to create results they truly desire." (Senge et al, p. 45)

By the second meeting, seasoned officers were speaking up about how they liked the PACT™ because it valued their more traditional views as well as the Chief's new directions.

The Polarity Map® and process provides a "container" and contextual space that is safe-enough to share differing views and hard questions that can only be dealt with effectively and sustainably by going beyond a strictly "OR" Thinking mindset. While this process may sound or appear simple, it should not be understood as being easy. Most groups don't shrink from advocating for points of views and debating the tensions inherent to the polarities, and the police department was no exception. When the discourse got difficult, Seidler and Mullen slowed

down, listened, learned, and honored the wisdom in the different perspectives. Often in traditional change processes, this type of dialogue is considered "resistance" that must be overcome. For those who practice PACT™, this resistance is, instead, a useful resource for both *continuity* AND *transformation*. Arnold Beisser (Fagan, 1933, 1970) states, "*Change does not take place through a coercive attempt by the individual or by another person to change him, but it does take place if one takes the time and effort to be what he is — to be fully invested in his current positions.*" It is in the sharing of the values and fears in the legitimate and accurate points of view that values and language is clarified. Key stakeholders see themselves, others, and their mutual challenges more completely. In that space, greater wisdom emerges, and there is a place to record and organize this iterative wisdom on the Polarity Map®. Figure 4 represents the Polarity Map®, which was finalized by the diverse stakeholder group.

FIGURE 4, Completed Polarity Map® for enforcement *and* community support

Polarity Management® Map

Action Steps

How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this left pole? What? Who? By When? Measures?

A. Utilize geographic assignment models to increase beat integrity/officer awareness

B. Use "Focused Deterrence" strategies to focus efforts on high value issues and people

C. Partner with private/public entities to leverage all options for problem solving

D. Use data/crime analysis to target all aspects of the crime triangle

Early Warnings*

Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this left pole.

A. Reduced # of community meeting/interactions are needed

B. Feedback from community and media indicate lack of trust/openness of the police

C. Officers complain it's all about "Stats"

D. Citizen complaints increase; crime tips and cooperating citizens decrease.

Enhancing Community Safety
Greater Purpose Statement (GPS) - why leverage this polarity?

Values = positive results from focusing on the left pole

1. Police efforts result in reduction of crime and fear

2. Police officers are clear about their priorities to uphold and enforce laws and ordinances

3. Police use all available legal options to improve quality of life for all citizens

4. Police use proactive approaches to address concerns

Values = positive results from focusing on the right pole

1. Community efforts share the accountability for community safety

2. Community understands the why and what of police priorities

3. Community partners with police to leverage resources

4. Citizens' cooperation and assistance increases

Enforcement and **Community Support**

1. Police solely responsible for community safety – community is apathetic about involvement

2. Community distrusts police due to one-way communication & misunderstandings

3. Police resources are overwhelmed; impact limited

4. Citizens feel oppressed; limits interaction and cooperation

Fears = negative results from over-focusing on the left pole to the neglect of the right pole

1. Crime/fear increases

2. Police priorities shift constantly with changing community demands

3. Community develops an entitlement posture

4. Polices become reactive to citizen complaints and concerns

Fears = negative results from over-focusing on the right pole to the neglect of the left pole

Anarchy/Fear of Crime
Deeper Fear from lack of balance

Action Steps

How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this right pole? What? Who? By When? Measures?

A. Enhance CAC's in each Patrol Team

B. Strengthen Beat system, expand follow up protocol to non-priority calls

C. Complete additional community assessments to educate citizens and city

D. Highlight citizen assistance when appropriate/expand social media to reach audience

Early Warnings

Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this right pole.

A. Crime and complaints about safety increase

B. Officers complain about a decrease in job satisfaction and productivity due to constantly changing priorities

C. Citizens demand police presence/action regardless of true need

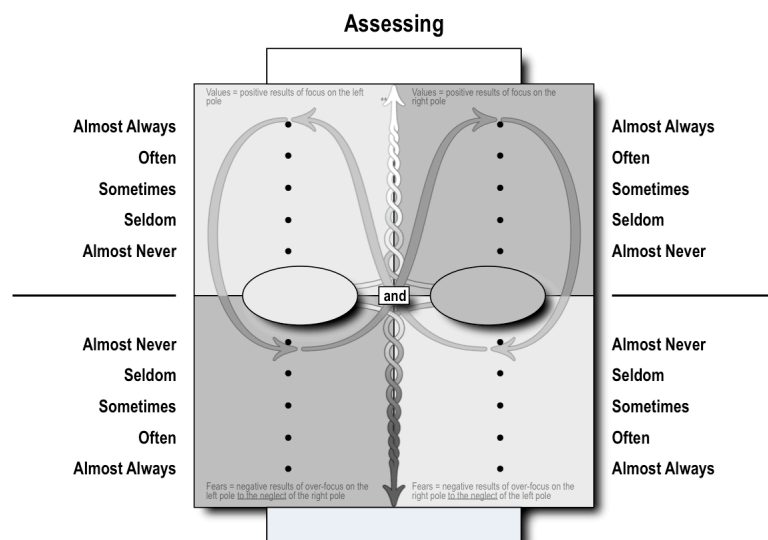D. Department uses a shotgun approach and ignores data and analysis

The Greater Purpose Statement (GPS) strategic goal of Enhancing Community Safety

GPS on this Map required embracing both *enforcement* AND *community support*. This was an

important shift that would be necessary to shape the work culture in a way that recognized how

both were needed and how both reinforced one another. Additionally, there was increased

appreciation for the two "rights" in the two sets of diagonal quadrants in the map, as described

previously in FIGURE 2. Many who had seen *community support* as something soft, frivolous,

and something that would impede reducing crime, began to appreciate its role as a crucial

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element to effective law enforcement over time. Many who had seen *enforcement* as overly harsh, punitive, and impeding open communication and trust came to see its role as a crucial element to effective law enforcement. The key takeaway in the polarity is that both are essential over time.

Then the group moved to Step 3 of the 5-Step SMALL process. Assessing performance is not new to teams and organizations. However, when key stakeholders do a self-assessment of their own performance, ownership for both the process and the outcomes increases. Conducting a polarity assessment can be done in a variety of ways: formal use of PACT™ assessment technology, conducting a manual assessment, or simply through dialogue using experiential exercises. In this meeting, the group used a manual assessment to rate the frequency they believed they were currently experiencing the results in each quadrant. Using the Assessing guide, pictured in Figure 5, they rated themselves on each quadrant.

FIGURE 5, Assessing guide

Notice how the scale differs between the top and bottom quadrants. The goal is to maximize the upside benefits and minimize the downside limitations. The default infinity loop pictured within the Assessing guide shows what is possible in a fully leveraged polarity -- "Almost Always" in both upside quadrants and "Almost Never" in the downside quadrants.

For each of the Polarity Maps®, the subgroup conducted a qualitative/subjective assessment using the guide in FIGURE 5 to rate frequency in each of the four quadrants. This was to gain a general sense of how frequently they thought/felt these results were being experienced. They started with the upper left quadrant rating all the items as a composite. First, each person made a silent decision on a rating for that quadrant. Next, each person revealed his/her rating. The subgroups then explored any broad differences. Finally, the subgroup was asked to reach consensus on that quadrant's rating. This process was then repeated for the remaining three quadrants, which provided for powerful learning – Step 4.

The Learning Step 4 brings meaning to the assessment results and informs the planning for Step 5 of Leveraging. To achieve the GPS of Enhance Community Safety, it became clear that there was a need to place a greater strategic focus on *community support*. And*, at the same time, *enforcement* was needed and would always be needed. It required "AND" Thinking. This notion of holding onto something that people are comfortable with while being able to embrace the new and unsettling is one important way the PACT™ helps create opportunities for collaboration. With their experience of seeing, mapping and assessing the complex issue in a way that included accuracy and completeness, people became more willing to accept the need for both viewpoints within the map. With this groundwork in place, they were able to support the development and implementation of meaningful actions in support of the department's strategic plan. Step 4, Learning, also ushered in ideas about how they would know if their future plans

were effective or not. All of this was fertile ground to move forward with increased clarity and conviction, together.

Leveraging, Step 5 of the SMALL Process, created two separate assignments for the subgroups: 1) creating Action Steps to maximize the upside benefits of each pole, and 2) identifying Early Warnings that would let people know, as early as possible, when they were over-focusing on one pole, so that self-correction can minimize the time in either downside. Examples of Leveraging, which became elements of the Police Department's Strategic Actions for 2011-2015 Plan to gain greater Community Support, include**:**

Enhance cooperation between citizens and department in solving crimes
Measurements: Number of crimes solved based on citizen tips; increase in Crime Stopper tips.

Create mailers for stakeholders advising them of events, police programs, safety tips, and community information.
Measurements: Use of mailers; feedback.

Continue and expand police/youth programs (Scout camps).
Measurement: Number of kids enrolled in programs.

Gain information from the community to measure satisfaction and support using comment cards.
Measurement: Survey results; letters to the editor; number of citizen complaints.

Following the initial assessment, the Department's Command Staff institutionalized a practice of conducting quarterly review of the Strategic Plan and assessing the measures and results for each Polarity Map®. From these reviews, they have learned and made adjustments to their strategies and Action Steps for the Department's policing services.

The five Polarity Maps® developed in this process may be viewed in the Charleston Police Department 2011-2015 Strategic Plan at:

http://www.charlestonsc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/579

An updated Strategic Plan for 2015-2019 is also available (with two detailed Polarity Maps®) at http://www.charleston-sc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9636

Building on Success: Cultivating Polarity Thinking in Support of Effective City Operations

As Chief Mullen's experience with the PACT™ in the police department grew, he engaged other leaders, such as the city's Chief Financial Officer, Steve Bedard. Accomplished in the public sector, Bedard appreciated how this framework could support operations across the city's more than thirty departments. The process of "engaging key stakeholders" began by assembling the city's Executive Steering Group, which represented all city departments. From that, a city leadership plan was developed and implemented based on six strategic goals with its associated key polarity for the entire city staff.

Robust Service Delivery (GPS):
Quality of Service *AND* Cost of Service

Sustainable Community (GPS):
Thriving Economy *AND* Beautiful Environment

Effective Public Engagement (GPS):
Needs of the Community *AND* Needs of the City

Effective Inter-governmental Relations (GPS):
Local Focus *AND* Regional Focus

Exceptional Workforce (GPS):
Operational Requirements *AND* Organizational Development Needs

Effective Resource Management (GPS):
Take Care of What We Have *AND* Get What We Need

**Building on Success: Going into the Community to address
the Polarity of *Business Development* AND *Quality of Life* Issues:
Bar Moratorium and Escalating Contention**

With a burgeoning nightlife economy in Upper King Street in Charleston's Central Business District, crowding, public safety, and quality of life issues for adjacent neighbors became contentious and polarizing. As those interests took sides in a public debate about who was right and who was wrong, Charleston Mayor Joe Riley decided it was a worthwhile endeavor to use the Polarity Approach to address this complex problem.

A 21-member Steering Group called the *Late Night Activity Review Committee* was formed with an overriding goal to ensure that those working on this nightlife activity initiative were not overly confrontational. Throughout the process, the committee and the public were engaged in a process that allowed points of view to be expressed and validated. With each step in the process, they built greater understanding and common ground for agreement. This highly diverse group of neighborhood leaders, nightlife business owners, daytime business owners, real estate developers, and zoning board members came together because there was a greater purpose each agreed they wanted, which was for *Charleston to Remain a Vibrant, Relevant Forward-looking City*, their defined GPS on the Polarity Map®.

In this instance, Mayor Riley wanted to use the PACT™, but not go into the details of the polarity theory explicitly. The two poles selected were *nightlife business* AND *diverse business/neighborhoods*. The Steering Group, key stakeholders, answered four questions (one for each quadrant) of the Polarity Map®:

1. For the upside of Nightlife Business: "What are the positive results from doing a good job in supporting Nightlife Business?"
2. For the upside of Diverse Business & Neighborhoods: "What are the positive results from doing a good job in supporting Diverse Business & Neighborhoods?"
3. For the downside of Nightlife Business: "What are the negative results from too much focus on Nightlife Business **to the neglect of** Diverse Business & Neighborhoods?"
4. For the downside of Diverse Business & Neighborhoods: "What are the negative results from too much focus on Diverse Business & Neighborhoods **to the neglect of** Nightlife Business?"

Once the committee had created the map, the next question was, "How are we doing, performance-wise, with this polarity?" Step 3, Assessing, used Polarity Partnerships' online PACT™ assessment between the first committee meeting and the second. A survey containing 12 questions (3 for each of the four quadrants of the Polarity Map®) related to 3 key themes: Safety/Economics, Demographics, and Role of Government. It was at this point in the process that the group received an overview of how polarities work (Steps 1 and 2, Seeing and Mapping), which made the theory base more explicit, and helped them understand how to decipher the data in the assessment report. From there, they dove into Step 4, Learning to make sense of the results. Figure 6 shows a one piece of the PACT™ assessment results.

FIGURE 6, PACT™ assessment results

Polarity Map ®, Polarity Partnerships, LLC (www.PolarityPartnerships.com)

A key factor to the committee's success was that all involved believed their voices, points of view and concerns were heard. This inclusion honored the key role that two distinct types of businesses (the day-time and nightlife and neighborhoods) play in Charleston's continued success.

With a more complete picture of the tension providing legitimacy for the two points of view in each polarity, the committee conducted public listening sessions and had more than 120 citizens repeat the process of answering four key questions in support of this common Greater Purpose and then suggest Action Steps for how to attain the upside benefits of both poles.

The results were stunning. The citizens' ideas were focused on the positives of both poles in pursuit of the GPS. With their own ideas and recommendations supplemented by the public for maximizing the upside benefits while minimizing the downside limitations, the Committee crafted a set of integrated recommendations, which ended with a broad base of support from all stakeholders. Every recommendation from these historically polarized groups of stakeholders

received unanimous City Council support. Mayor Joseph P. Riley's comments to the City

Council on the night of the final report were:

> *"Before we begin, let's just thank them. This has been a community civic engagement/elected legislative body partnership in action. What seemed a year ago to be an intractable challenge, a group of citizens, well-led and well-facilitated, came together in a series of meetings over a period of time for this amazing American city that presents marvelous opportunities as well as challenges for this very special place we have. They have worked hard, listened and came together with amazing unanimity and recommendations. There really is no college course in civic engagement that could top this as an example of a best practice. It converted "either/or thinking" to "and"; the result is just extraordinary."*

A Defining Moment for the Community and the Police:
June 17, 2015, Shootings at Mother Emanuel AME Church

On June 17, 2015, there was a terrible shooting in Charleston, SC. A young white man

who was a stranger to a group of worshipers, was welcomed to join a Bible study at Mother

Emanuel AME Church. After an hour of praying with the members, he opened fire, killing nine

of the parishioners including their pastor. It was a horrible and chaotic event with a motive to

start a race war. South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley described Charleston's response in a

national address as the Republican Rebuttal to the 2016 State of the Union Address. She said:

> *"... Our state was struck with shock, pain, and fear. But our people would not allow hate to win ...*
>
> *There's an important lesson in this. In many parts of society today, whether in popular culture, academia, the media, or politics, there's a tendency to falsely equate noise with results. Some people think that you have to be the loudest voice in the room to make a difference. That is just not true. Often, the best thing we can do is turn down the volume. When the sound is quieter, you can actually hear what someone else is saying. And that can make a world of difference..."*

Late in the summer of 2015, Chief Mullen looked for an opportunity to promote dialogue

and to support growth and healing in the wake of the tragedy. The region had tensions related to

preserving public safety AND *safeguarding individual rights* and those tensions mirrored those

in discussions nationwide. He wondered how police and the community might address those tensions at a deeper level using PACT™. The GPS for this polarity seemed to be: "To further strengthen relationships between the police and the citizens they serve grounded in trust & legitimacy." In August 2015, the *Charleston Illumination Project* was born. It was one important and lasting way to appreciate the gifts of grace and forgiveness shown by the community after the shooting at the Mother Emanuel AME Church and to honor the victims, survivors, and their families. It provided an avenue for Charlestonians to do something positive, and to move forward together. With the entire Charleston community named as the key stakeholder, dozens of public listening sessions engaged more than 850 citizens in dialogue with explicit use of the PACT™. The process promoted offering ideas for improvements that police and citizens can make together. The public was given a general introduction to basic polarity concepts, while a diverse core group of ninety-seven community influencers received more in-depth training in polarity theory and principles. The largest public conversation ever assembled in Charleston was due to the efforts of this visible and respected core group, who helped recruit citizens. External resources from the polarity practitioner community, Robert Jacobs and Chandra Irvin, brought unique expertise in large-scale engagement and change and work in faith communities. Engaging the community in places of worship broadened participation and provided an additional way for Charlestonians to: make new friends; explore the polarity of commonalties *and* differences; learn; share; and pray for success of the *Illumination Project*. The South's oldest daily newspaper, *The Post and Courier*, honored the one year anniversary of the Mother Emanuel AME shootings by producing its first ever feature video documentary entitled, "*From Tragedy to Trust,*" with a sole focus on the *Illumination Project as the greatest accomplishment of the*

community. This short documentary can be found here:

http://data.postandcourier.com/saga/oneyearlater/page/6

Significant support for learning was provided by a community of practice now called the "Polarity Learning Community," a group that has met regularly since the mid 1990s. Practitioners who use PACT™ and Real-time Strategic Change principles come together to learn and lend support to one another, sharing application experiences from many sectors and professional focus areas, such as: coaching (Anderson, 2010), public sector emergency response (Seidler, 2008), family business (Schuman, et all, 2010), health care (Wesorick, 2015), education (Kise, 2013) and large-scale systems change (Jacobs, 1994). Many in the Polarity Learning Community are graduates of the 2-year Mastery Program, and are involved in advancing the theory and practice. Several Mastery graduates are Co-authors with Johnson for his recent book (Johnson, et al. 2016). Since 2011, the Polarity Learning Community has provided ideas, resources, and support in large and small ways to the Charleston story and Chief Mullen presented to the group on a number of occasions. The Center for Creative Leadership hosted the annual conference of the Polarity Learning Community in August of 2016. At that gathering, Chief Mullen was presented with the first award created to honor a "Master of Polarities-in-Practice" – in homage to his many accomplishments and capability providing leadership in the application PACT™. Chief Mullen and the community of Charleston have generated great interest in ways to apply this approach in cities nationwide. The Polarity Learning Community is actively pursuing avenues to replicate and scale this success. The public report on the Illumination Project, including the history, community engagement, strategic planning and implementation report, is available online at:

http://www.charleston-sc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12061.

This document details how the process unfolded and contains supporting materials, photographs, and documentation of what was learned. A degree of pride and appreciation for the work and for what is possible comes through in the public report. At the same time, it provides a sobering recognition of the magnitude of the task and humility needed for what was accomplished. The overriding message is that the work is never done. Table 2 provides a summary of a few key lessons learned, from that report.

Table 2

Lessons Learned	Commentary
Diversity of leaders/leadership.	Informal leaders in the neighborhoods, on street corners and in community centers were important to success.
Persevere.	The number of stakeholders and complexity of the work continued to grow throughout the project.
Vision and leadership.	Chief Mullen saw the power and possibilities in asking police and citizens to improve their own relationships. The polarity of Direction AND Participation was well leveraged throughout the process. Clear boundaries, processes and roles were defined early in the project.
Prepare to be changed emotionally by the process.	There are the conversations related to fears and stories repeated and heard many times over, which can be motivating and debilitating at the same time. This is the most important work, aside from the challenges of logistics of meeting designs and rooms, flyers and tasks.
Make some new friends.	You'll realize there are more connections to people than you could have ever realized. New friends await you in the process.
Build a great team.	The foundation of trust building was to a large degree in trained facilitator team conducting the Listening Sessions. They had each other's back and worked to support each other another in the overall goals of the work.
Mix some fun with the seriousness of the work.	A healthy helping of positive energy went a long way toward making the difficult work better. Seizing upon unique opportunities to offset the intensity of the work made a big difference.
Learn, apply, repeat – and leave a trail for others to follow.	Doing community work through police relationships is an effective entry point for addressing other issues as police have a reach into a community under the mission

	of safety. To realize its full potential there must be a regular ongoing process for citizens and police to build trust and legitimacy. The process should be never ending. Information = commitment. The more people know about the process in which they are engaged, the more informed their decisions are within that process.

Conclusion

"Breakthroughs come when people learn how to take the time to stop and examine their assumptions." –Peter Senge

The city of Charleston demonstrated how stellar police department leadership together with skilled community facilitation supported leveraging "AND" Thinking challenges to strengthen relationships between police and citizens. Community competency in applying polarity practices extended to other community challenges between daytime/nighttime businesses and residents, and in response to a tragic mass shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church. Charleston's example of community engagement and resilience stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration for cities that face similar challenges, nationally and globally.

Essential to understanding the practice of polarity/paradox is appreciating the immense power of "OR" Thinking. However, when "OR" Thinking is misapplied to chronic, ongoing, and unsolvable challenges that require "AND" Thinking, the ability to see and leverage polarity dynamics is severely undermined. Acute and complex realities of our interdependent and interconnected 21st century world require us to leverage both thinking competencies to thrive sustainably. It is therefore crucial that we rapidly accelerate competency that supplements "OR" Thinking with "AND" Thinking for leaders and organizational systems if we are to increase resilience, reduce polarization, and enhance our quality of life. Innovations in technology tools and approaches (such as the PACT™ assessment) that provide explicit performance measurement for the broad array of polarities/paradoxes will support efforts to scale competency systemically.

Charleston's practice story is one of many within our broad, diverse, and talented worldwide community of polarity practitioners. We are honored to contribute to this critical topic

area for this esteemed publication, which supports our mission/GPS to: *supplement thinking and enhance the quality of life for each of us and for all of us, on the planet.*

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ENDNOTES:

[1] Many authors over many years, including Kim Cameron, James Collins and Jerry Porras, Bob deWitt and Ron Meyer, Jerry Fletcher and Kelle Olwyler, Charles Hampden Turner, Charles Handy, Geert Hofstede, Charles Johnson, Richard Pascale and Robert Quinn address the role of paradox thinking (and polarity awareness) in effective leadership and organizational development. These books are listed in the bibliography.

[2] "Paradox in Everyday Practice: Applying Practice Theoretical Principles to Paradox" talks of four organizing principles: (Social Construction, Everyday Activity, Consequentiality, and Relationality) which are explored in our case study of the work done in Charleston (Author?, XXXX). "A Paradox Lens on Creativity: Deeper Understanding and New Insights" by Ella Miron-Spektor offers insight into how novelty and usefulness and convergent and divergent thinking are necessary to work through in order to have a truly creative result (Ella Miron-Spektor, XXXX).

[3] **Real Time:** In order to accelerate the pace of change (the guiding purpose statement), you need to both see "The future is tomorrow, plan for it today" AND see "The future is today, be there now.
Preferred Future: For energizing and guiding plans, and actions (GPS) you need to BOTH "Recognize the best from the past and present" AND "Recognize or create compelling possibilities for the future."
Creating Community: For learning, growth and spirit (GPS), support BOTH "Strong individuals" AND a "Strong collective."
Common Understanding: For informed decisions (GPS), seek BOTH "Diverse perspectives" AND "Shared Meaning."
Reality is a Key Driver: For rigorous information base (GPS), there are 3 important polarities to leverage: BOTH "Internal realities" AND "External realities"; BOTH "Known current" AND Unknown future"; and, BOTH "Seeking out" AND "Focusing in."
Empowerment and Inclusion: For "Optimal performance" (GPS), engage people in ways that BOTH "They value" AND "The larger system values"

[4] In Systems Thinking, thought leader Peter Senge discusses how well-intentioned people "shift the burden" of their problem to easy fix solutions which seem extremely efficient." (Peter M. Senge, The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization: First edition)

[5] Step 1 of Seeing the Polarities can happen through question and dialogue or by sharing polarity tensions that show up in the business literature. For example, Bob DeWitt and Ron Meyer (*Strategy Synthesis*), highlight key polarity tensions in strategy planning, noting, "If your strategy does not account for polarity, then it's not strategic." Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn list a set of "competing values," and Collins and Porras identify organization "tensions" such as preserve core and stimulate change. By reviewing lists of interdependent pairs in the literature, those knowledgeable about the system challenges can identify those which most resonate. Another method is to review the public library of Polarity Maps® in the PACT™ resource website (www.PolarityResources.com). These approaches provide a starting point to use the client's knowledge to identify the competing values/tensions/polarities that are most relevant.