

EXTENDING THE THEORY OF THE COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF
MEANING ("CMM") THROUGH A COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

CMM informed the work of the Public Dialogue Consortium in a multi-year, citywide collaborative community action project. This was the first time CMM had been applied as a practical theory in the context of public communication. This essay describes some of the effects of the Project on the theory that guided it. The usefulness of several central tenets of CMM was confirmed, including foregrounding communication, attending to the forms of communication, and defining communication as "coordination." Several other concepts were significantly extended, including the idea of logical force, the person position of facilitator, and the importance of creating contexts. Three new models were developed, including the Community Dialogue Process Model, the LUUUTT model, and the Daisy model. Reflecting on the effects of the Project on the theory raises provocative questions for further exploration.

EXTENDING THE THEORY OF THE COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF MEANING ("CMM") THROUGH A COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROCESS

The "Cupertino Community Project: Voices and Visions" is a continuing process through which the city is dealing constructively with its rapidly changing ethnic composition (see Spano, in press). When the Project began in 1996, many residents described ethnic diversity as "a powder keg, waiting to go off" (Krey, 1999, p. 4). Although several events and issues that could have ignited ethnic conflict have occurred during the Project, the city has increased its capacity to handle this and other sensitive issues and has improved inter-ethnic relations. One marker of the success of the Project is the League of California Cities' 1999 Managers Award for the Advancement of Diversity presented to Cupertino's City Manager Don Brown (Krey, 1999, p. 8).

Although dealing with substantive social issues is its primary reason for being, the Cupertino Project was also the site of the application of the theory of the coordinated management of meaning (CMM) to a new context. CMM was originally developed as an interpretive theory applied in interpersonal communication (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). It has evolved in several ways. One trajectory retains its interpretive nature and applies it to new contexts, including public communication (Branham & Pearce, 1985; Narula & Pearce, 1987; Pearce, Littlejohn & Alexander, 1987; Weiler & Pearce, 1991; Pearce, Johnson & Branham, 1991). CMM has also evolved into a practical theory (Cronen, 1995), guiding practitioners as they act into specific situations and providing a grammar that makes coherent a tradition of practice. Interpersonal contexts, including mediation (Shailor, 1994) and therapy (Cronen & Pearce, 1985; Cronen, Pearce & Tomm, 1985),

were its first context of application as a practical theory. Although the Kaleidoscope Project (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, pp. 197-208) was an important precursor, the Cupertino Project is the first application of CMM as a practical theory to public communication.

We reviewed our work in the Project at least once every year. During the fourth year, we added an additional level of reflexivity to our review, and focused on the effects of the Project on the theory that informed it. We found that we had "confirmed" some of the central tenets of CMM, extended some of its basic concepts, developed three new models, and raised some provocative questions. This essay describes the effect of the Cupertino Project on CMM.

THE CONTEXT: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In early 1996, members of the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) approached the City Manager and proposed a collaborative project. After extensive discussions with the Mayor, City Council, and other civic leaders, the City and PDC agreed to initiate the project with a combination of high hopes and serious reservations. Some of the challenges we faced were translating theory into forms of practice, adapting CMM to fit a new context, working with a volatile public issue, and entering a context that is both crowded by competing models and often poisoned by unfortunate precedents.

City Manger Brown (in press) reported that his "initial reaction to this project was guarded. My ... reservations were based on two general concerns: First, does a communication theory developed in an academic setting by communications professors work in a real-world setting? Second, since discussions about race and diversity are fairly risky topics, do I want to put my own career at risk by pursuing this untested approach?"

Although members of the Public Dialogue Consortium shared some of Brown's apprehensions, we were heartened by our assessment that some features of the Kaleidoscope Project had enabled spokespersons for opposite sides of "undiscussable issues" to engage in productive public communication. However, we knew that the Kaleidoscope Project was limited by its format (a one-shot intervention), location (exclusively on college campuses), framing (as two sides of an undiscussable conflict), and structure (we took the role of "experts" who intervened). We wondered how we would work in a longer, larger Project in which our role would be as collaborators and in which we could only influence the framing of issues.

The popularity of public participation or civic engagement has fluctuated considerably in recent years. On one hand, it is a crowded field with many practitioners (e.g., those affiliated with the International Association of Public Practitioners), scholarly assessments (Yankelovich, 1999; Barber, 1998), and traditions of practice (cf. Bunker & Alban, 1997). Many believe that the characteristics of contemporary society require more and better civic engagement (Mathews, 1994; Yankelovich, 1991; Lappé & Du Bois, 1994). On the other, its history has often been disappointing, prejudicing public and officials alike against new initiatives. Many government officials have been offended by the poor quality and strident nature of involvement by members of the public and seek to limit (without appearing to do so) civic engagement. They perceive the public as demanding, fickle, ignorant, selfish, and obstructive (cf. Thomas, 1995; Heifetz, 1994). At the same time, many members of the public perceive government officials as greedy, lazy, indebted to special interest groups, incompetent and/or manipulative. We found them deeply suspicious of our invitations to become involved in a public dialogue

process. Many told us of meetings advertised as focus groups that were actually thinly disguised persuasive efforts, of town hall meetings that degenerated into shouting matches, and civic engagement processes in which their donations of time and energy disappeared without producing any effects.

CONFIRMING THREE BASIC TENETS OF CMM

Three basic tenets of CMM include foregrounding communication, focusing on forms of communication, and thinking of communication as "coordination." Because these concepts provided important guidance as we worked in the Project, we describe them as "confirmed" as useful parts of CMM.

FOREGROUNDING COMMUNICATION

Treating communication as the primary social process is one of the distinctive features of CMM (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). We take a "communication perspective" (Pearce, 1989, pp. 23-31) that sees the events and objects of the social world as co-constructed by the coordinated actions of people communicating. Translated into practice, this resulted in a principled commitment to "process" in the Cupertino Project rather than to specific "outcomes" or the more traditional political commodities such as support for positions or coalitions. We focused efforts to create conversations where they otherwise would not have existed, and to shape these conversations in specific ways. Conspicuously absent were such familiar procedures as identifying "supporters" or "opponents" on the basis of the position they affirmed, taking polls to assess the support or opposition of specific decisions, "counting the votes," persuasive speeches, rallying supporters, targeting the uncommitted, and disempowering those who disagreed.

The major models of interaction between government and the public all treat communication as secondary to something else, whether roles, relationships, or expertise. The four major models (the first three described by Lappé and Du Bois, 1994; the fourth by Osborne and Gaebler, 1993) are: 1) the conservative "bootstrap" model in which the government should allow individuals to accept responsibility for their own condition; 2) the liberal "social service" view in which government professionals should diagnose and prescribe solutions; 3) the "living democracy" view in which government functions as facilitators for community self-help activities; and 4) the "customer service" model in which government is hired by the public to provide certain services and should do so in a business-like manner.

The distinctiveness of our perspective was illuminated in our interactions with those who did not share it. Many well-intentioned, competent people in the city differentiated between "mere talk" and "action" (a distinction foreign to the grammar of CMM) and valued the latter. After a Town Hall meeting in 1996, one participant expressed amazement that so many people would talk for so long without taking any action. We were pleased with the meeting, because it gave residents both a model of and experience in talking productively about a previously undiscussable topic (the effects of the changing ethnic composition of the city). Where we -- looking at communication -- saw this as an essential early step in a process, this participant -- looking through communication to (other forms of) action -- saw it as wasted time and effort. Later in the Project, some residents wanted to go "beyond" talking about the issue and "do" something about it. We were impressed by just how much had been accomplished in a collaborative style (see Spano, in press); what seemed to be missing were the more

familiar communication patterns of confrontation and denunciation, and the sense of victory over enemies.

The city was willing to participate in a process that foregrounded communication because key leaders recognized that the familiar forms of political process and public participation were insufficient. The City Manager (Brown, in press) asked, "How do political leaders deal with an issue that is generating strong community feeling but is not being openly talked about? How do professional managers tackle an issue that cannot be defined and any potential solution involves risks that it could blow up in your face?" He noted that most communities have taken "the traditional approach of responding to problems after the fact with proposed actions. Examples include establishing human relations commissions that receive complaints and develop responses. These responses range from some form of mediation to legal prosecution of illegal discrimination or hate crimes." These traditional practices are usually reactive, occurring after unpleasant or tragic events; are remedial rather than preventative; and are divisive because they perpetuate discursive structures of blame and victimage. We found that our foregrounding communication enabled us to create something different.

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

CMM's emphasis of foregrounding communication is based on the claim that the form of communication that occurs is "consequential" (Sigman, 1995). The commitment to "process" is grounded in the belief that the outcomes of the Project would be better if we adhered to productive forms of communication than if we used whatever form of communication seemed most favorable to our predetermined ideas of what the outcomes should be.

The Community Dialogue Process was strategically guided by a specific idea of the desired form of communication, described in other contexts as cosmopolitan (Pearce, 1989; 1993; Oliver, 1996) and public dialogue (Pearce & Pearce, in press). We were challenged to think of what this form of communication would look like in a city-wide scale and how to bring it into being.

City Manager Brown (in press) eloquently expressed the core concept of the Community Dialogue Process when he said, "The 'light bulb' moment for me came when I realized that this project was not about changing people's minds, but that it was about giving people a way to talk about tough issues. I also realized that people's fears and concerns are real and legitimate and that they need a way of talking about them without the fear of being branded a racist...One of the most rewarding concepts...is that people are allowed to 'stand their ground.' We are not in the business of getting everyone to think the same way. Our aim is to provide a place where strongly held views can be given and received in a respectful manner. At the least, this will improve the clarity of our respective views. At the best, through this increased clarity, we may find that we share more common values about our community than we thought."

At any number of points in the Project, we had to decide whether to act and, if so, how. Our conceptualization of cosmopolitan communication as the desired form of interaction was the highest context for these decisions. Some of the features of the emerging deep grammar of cosmopolitan communication in the Project were to include everyone as much as possible, to value listening at least as much as speaking, a commitment to help others -- particularly those with whom we disagree and find disagreeable -- to be heard and understood, to incorporate appreciative and inclusive

language rather than deficit and exclusive language in our meetings; to construct alternatives to the "problem-solution" pattern that is the default option in dealing with public issues; and to treat disagreements as welcome sites for exploration rather than obstacles for progress.

COORDINATION

The CMM concept of coordination differentiates it from many other theories of communication. Rather using "understanding" or "effect" as the criterion for successful communication, CMM envisions persons as engaging in proactive and reactive actions intended to call into being conjoint performances of patterns of communication that they want and precluding the performance of that which they dislike or fear. That is, the clarifying question is: what forms of communication are we, collectively, making and thus living in? The Cupertino Project was designed to "make" community dialogue.

This emphasis on what is made by how we talk with each other provided a distinctive flavor to the Project. As a way of clarifying our own thinking and inviting our collaborators to think with us, we expanded the contrasts between a coordination-based social constructionist model of communication and the transmission model found in Pearce (1994, p. 19). The resulting matrix is shown as Figure 1. Among the contrasts embedded in the Figure are shifts from focusing on individuals to what Harré (1984) called "persons in conversation;" from single messages to what Shotter (1993) called the "rhetorical-responsive" process; and from individual intentional or interpretive "meaning" to what is conjointly "made" in the process of communication.

Figure 1 about here

Focusing on what is collectively made enabled us to give distinctive and useful interpretations to events that occurred during the Project. For example, while deliberately disregarding the other's intention, we interpreted "disagreements" as welcome identifications of sites for exploration and understanding. When others acted in a way that might have been understood as "insulting," we responded as if they were welcome offers to be engaged with the Project. As social constructionists (Pearce, 1994, pp. 102-145), we saw our responses as part of the process that defined the meaning of what others said and did, and thus found unexpected openings for making Community Dialogue.

The orientation toward coordination also helped us avoid being trapped within the limits of the conventional understanding of power. We realized that the deep grammar of public dialogue goes against the grain of "politics as usual." As Kingston (1999, p. 3) warned, "Politics and dialogue are not at all the same thing; and politics has to do with the exercise of power, a contest in which there are winners and losers -- who are powerless. And there is no dialogue between the powerful and those without power." It was necessary for us to act outside this concept of power without being naïve about the existence of power differences and the importance placed on power by some of the stakeholders.

Rather than defining power as something possessed by individuals or groups, we thought of it as co-constructed in the coordinated actions of those "with" and those "without" power. CMM's "serpentine model" depicts each act as coming from the social world of the actor and into the social worlds of all those others with whom s/he is in conversation; the meaning of any act is moved toward completion by its relation to

preceding and subsequent acts, each of which is surrounded by multiple interpretations. Acting on this conceptualization, we worked at several levels to create patterns of social interactions that transformed power relations into collaborative participation in dialogue. For example, in addition to being careful to invite all stakeholders to our meetings, we used "table facilitators" in most of our events, one of whose purposes was to ensure that the most powerful, extreme or simply talkative participant did not dominate the group discussions.

THREE NEW CONCEPTS/MODELS IN CMM

While the basic tenets of CMM provided useful guidance in the Cupertino Project, working in this context required the development of some new ideas. Among these are the concepts of the Community Dialogue Process, the LUUUTT model, and the Daisy model.

THE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROCESS

In CMM, "episodes" are thought of as bounded sequences of acts, with a beginning, middle, and end. They have a coherent narrative structure; communicators usually can name the episodes that comprise their lives (e.g., "having an argument," "dinner with friends," "performance evaluation interview") and ensconce them in stories. In early CMM work, episodes were usually defined as relatively short, uninterrupted patterns of interaction between persons, such as the phases of mediation or therapy sessions. The Cupertino Project required us to think in a very different scale, both in terms of the temporal extension and number of people and groups involved.

As shown in Figure 2, we developed a three-level model of the Community Dialogue Process. The upper level of the model, "Strategic Process Design," describes

the sequence of events that, as a whole, comprise the Community Dialogue. The middle level identifies the repertoire of "Event Designs" that might be used in the strategic process, and the lower level names "event facilitation skills" and "communication facilitation skills."

We are both satisfied with and a bit cautious about the term "dialogue" in the Community Dialogue Process. "Dialogue" has recently become an important keyword for both scholars and practitioners, but not because of its unequivocal meaning (Pearce & Pearce, in press). For Cissna and Anderson (1998), dialogue is something that happens in special, unpredictable moments; for Isaacs (1999), it is an episodic component of a longer process; and for those who skeptically deny its possibility (cf. Cissna & Anderson, 1998, p. 67), it is an enduring state of being. We found ourselves using "community dialogue" and "public dialogue" in a way somewhat different from all of these to describe a process in which many participants may not experience any moments that Cissna and Anderson would call dialogic, and in which many of the events are better described as deliberation, discussion, or decision-making. However, the process as a whole has at least some of the characteristics of dialogue, and thus is the infrastructure enabling persons who, as Yankelovich (1999) puts it, may lack the will and/or skill to engage in dialogue to enjoy its effects, such as understanding each other better, making better collective decisions, and develop a sense of community.

Figure 2 about here

Mayor Michael Chang (quoted in Spano, in press) was asked about the effects of the Project on long term residents of Cupertino, those most likely to resent the influx of new residents, particularly residents of another ethnicity. He captured the spirit of public dialogue when he said, "we were encouraged by the PDC not to isolate or exclude from the dialogue those people who have the most problems with cultural change. If anything, they know they have a place to talk about their concerns, and we've learned how important it is to keep them included in the process. One of the things we've realized is that they're not the majority. We have found that we have a very strong center in the city in terms of these issues. Those people who feel the most uncomfortable about it are probably a small segment, but we've also made it important to give them a chance to voice their perspectives and their anxieties. And I think some people might have even changed their opinions to a certain degree. Even the ones who haven't we still keep them in the loop and I think they appreciate it. At the last Town Hall Meeting, there were a lot of people there who saw diversity as a problem, and afterwards they came to me and said 'we are glad we were able to get that off our chests and talk about it and not feel you guys in government are just trying to silence us. That you trust us enough to allow us to go ahead and say what is on our minds.' And some people actually changed their opinion. They said, 'hey, for the first time I talked face to face with that person and understood the reasons for that issue from a different perspective. I never thought about it like that before, and I'm going to give it some more thought.'"

The Community Dialogue Model has been helpful in several ways. First, our planning has been clarified by distinguishing among the three levels and by calling attention to the importance of strategic planning for dialogue. Second, the model helps us

compare "community dialogue" with other forms of civic engagement. For example, community dialogue may be differentiated from the more familiar DAD (Decide - Advocate - Defend) process, in which the predominant form of communication is advocacy and debate. Finally, separating event/communication facilitation skills from process/event design has clarified both. We have found that in-the-moment facilitation skills are very different from the abilities called on to design innovative and effective processes and events. We say more about our explorations of the person position of the facilitator in a later section of this essay. One of our current projects consists of identifying, acquiring, and learning to teach these different abilities.

THE LUUUTT MODEL

CMM's concept of logical force (Cronen and Pearce, 1981; Pearce, 1994, p. 29) describes persons as enmeshed in complex, often paradoxical webs of oughtness, resulting in their feeling that they must/may/may not act in certain ways in specific contexts. Common features of public discourse, such as misunderstanding and feeling mistrusted or disrespected attract forms of communication less desirable than cosmopolitan. Sometimes people become "stuck" in particular configurations of logical force such that they feel that they "must" act in ways that are harmful to themselves or others, and sometimes groups co-construct patterns of communication preclude them from going on together in productive ways.

As described in a following section, our conceptualization of logical force has developed during this project. Here, we present the LUUUTT model (Pearce & Pearce, 1998) and describe its use in intervening in undesirable communication patterns.

We start with the premise that any community contains sufficient resources for making necessary changes, and that the role of the facilitator is to bring members of the community together and help them discover and apply these resources. This assumption may even be true. As Shultz (1990, pp. 34-35) noted, "speakers have far more resources at their disposal than the single set of forms and stylistic conventions of a single 'language.' In fact, every national language is teeming with sublanguages, each with its own conventions. Wherever significant social differentiation occurs in life, there too will such sublanguages always coexist, challenge one another, and become grist for the verbal mill of those who master their conventions. What we are describing, of course, is the state of heteroglossia, which Bakhtin takes to be the primordial linguistic state for human beings in society." More important than its veracity, however, this assumption shapes the work of the facilitator, stressing the function of enriching conversations by bringing into them aspects of the natural heteroglossia that have been excluded.

In mediation and therapeutic contexts, CMM practitioners have looked at the inherently unstable relationship between "stories told" and "stories lived" as a place where clients can find resources to reconfigure the deontic logic of a particular situation. The LUUUTT model directs attention to several additional sites as well. In any social setting, particularly one as complex as a city, there are untold, unheard, and unknown stories, and a variety of ways of storytelling, each of which emphasizes some aspects and not others. Taking a few liberties, we call the new model by the acronym LUUUTT, or stories Lived, Untold stories, Unheard stories, Unknown stories, stories Told, and storyTelling (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 about here

Social worlds, and the logical force that traps us into unproductive patterns, are changed if any element in the LUUUTT model is altered. The factors designated by "U's" in the model are perhaps the easiest to change. Simply bringing together people who usually avoid each other often results in something being heard that previously was not. If a facilitator can create a climate of trust and respect, previously untold stories may be told; and when unheard and untold stories are heard and told, previously unknown stories become known. In addition, a facilitator can design a meeting that enables people to "live" or "tell" their stories in a different way, thus changing the architecture of their social worlds.

THE DAISY MODEL

CMM envisions each communicative act as multiply contexted, and offers a hierarchy model that names such things as "self concept," "relationship," and "episode." When this idea was reconfigured into the "atomic" model (Pearce, 1994, pp. 33-34, 144), the difference was mostly graphic. But as we began to work with the larger, more complex social entity of a city, we needed a new model. We borrowed the graphic structure of the "atomic" model, renamed it the "daisy" model, and used overlapping ellipses to identify the multiple conversations that comprise any given act.

Figure 4 about here

The model is best used in a group setting. Placing an issue or event in the center of the model, a facilitator asks the group a series of questions, starting with "who is involved with this?" A shape looking a bit like the petals of a daisy identifies each person or group. This process usually suffices to display the complexity of the topic. Additional questions might include: "of these individuals and groups, who is most/least involved?" "of these individuals and groups, who is most/least like each other?" "which groups 'speak the same language' and which do not?" "which groups are being sufficiently well-heard, and which are not?" "which are the most/least powerful?" This model functions well to identify groups who should be included in the Community Dialogue Process and to plan event designs that result in the telling and hearing of previously untold and unheard stories.

CMM CONCEPTS SIGNIFICANTLY EXTENDED

Many people have noted that things often get "lost" in the translation from one language or context to another, but Geertz (1983, p. 36) noted that things are also "found" in translation. In addition to the new models developed in the Cupertino Project, several basic CMM concepts have been significantly extended.

LOGICAL FORCE

Logical force is a distinctive concept of the "necessity" in social theory (Cronen and Pearce, 1981). As described in CMM, it is both complex and mutable; it describes persons in webs of perceived oughtness or, technically, a deontic logic implicating what they should, must, may, or cannot do in specific situations. As we reflected on our work in the Cupertino Project, we were struck by how far this concept had migrated in our practices.

We originally thought of logical force in terms of the dichotomy between "causal" and "intentional" attributions of motives. Contextual and prefigurative forces described what a person "had" to do because of the context out of which she acted and the preceding act by another person, respectively. Practical and implicative forces described what a person "intended" to be the consequent of her act. Our conceptualization followed the common distinction between "because of" and "in order to" motives and was expressed using the operators of deontic logic, such as "must," "should," "must not."

However, these operators and this distinction were less useful in the Cupertino Project than elsewhere. We found ourselves describing logical force in terms of temporal orientation (explaining the past vs. envisioning the future) and appreciation (describing what is missing vs. identifying and building on what is there). The terms used or implied in a client's description of a state of affairs are a useful site for facilitative intervention. During the Project, we facilitated descriptions of situations that omitted blaming others or identifying problems and emphasized visioning the future and assessing resources in the present. These changes in the way we thought about logical force brought us closer to the organizational development practices of "appreciative inquiry" (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1990; Hammond, 1996) than to sociological accounts of attributions or philosophical explorations of modal logics.

THE PERSON-POSITION OF THE FACILITATOR

Like Wittgenstein (1967) and Harré and Grillett (1994), we observed that first and third person positions have different sets of rights, duties, and privileges. In the Cupertino Project, however, we often found ourselves in the role of facilitator or teaching others to facilitate, and this role does not quite fit either first or second person. It is somewhat like

a first person position in that the facilitator is "in" the conversation but also somewhat like a third-person position because the facilitator maintains a heightened sense of awareness of the episode being co-constructed and accepts the role of guiding it.

Event facilitation skills are indicated in the lower row of the Community Dialogue Process model shown in Figure 2. These skills are relatively straightforward: remaining neutral (not taking or revealing one's own position); keeping time; providing materials; and summarizing. In addition, however, the same level of the model indicates "communication facilitation skills." These are more complex, including: 1) helping the group follow a useful episodic sequence; 2) remaining neutral (actively aligning one's self with all of the participants, creating a climate of reciprocated trust and respect); 3) listening actively (and helping participants hear listen to each other); 4) helping participants tell their own stories (taking a not-knowing stance, expressing curiosity, asking systemic questions); and 5) helping participants tell better stories (introducing appreciative and systemic perspectives through questions and reframing, weaving participants' stories together).

Some public practitioners, eschewing a therapeutic or mediation model, take a principled position that facilitators should not engage in what we call communication facilitation. To the contrary, we believe that everything in a Community Dialogue Process should be designed to intervene in just this way. The strategic process design and event designs are just other ways of accomplishing what the communication facilitator does in specific moments of face-to-face interaction.

A specific instance clarified the delicate dance facilitators do among the rights, duties, and obligations of their position. We were coaching residents preparing to

facilitate small group discussions during a Town Hall meeting. While reflecting on a simulated facilitation, one participant asked, "when I said..., was that the right thing to do?" Had we answered the question, regardless of the informational quality of the answer, it would have created a conversation in which we were the experts on the content of the discussion. This conversational pattern is inimical with the goal of communication facilitation. Since we wanted to enrich the conversation among the members of the group and position them as "owning" their own competence, instead of answering the question, we turned to the other participants in the simulation and asked, "when she said ..., what did that elicit in you?" After hearing the responses, we turned back to the facilitator and asked, "what do you think?"

As this example shows, the voice of the facilitator is an indirect one, aimed at creating a form of communication that capacitates and empowers others. Having learned this style of facilitation, some participants in the Project declined to serve as small group facilitators during some of the crucial meetings, because they wanted to speak in their own voice with all the rights and privileges of a first person.

One of our continuing projects consists of explicating the person-position of the facilitator. On the theoretical side, this project is interesting because of the disconnection between linguistic and social grammars, which challenges some of the assumptions on which the whole concept of person position is based. Practically, we are challenged when we describe our role as facilitators and when we teach others facilitation skills. In addition, this role of the facilitator begins to explain the value of an outside "third party" when a group discusses controversial or sensitive topics.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSTRUCTING CONTEXTS

In some of the interpretive and critical work based on CMM, we noted that all actions occur in a context, and usually our rhetorical task is that of acting in such a way that what we do fits the context. However, there are times when we are committed to performing an action that does not fit the context, and we must reconstruct the context so that it fits our action. Contextual reconstruction is a particularly interesting and challenging form of communication (Branham and Pearce, 1985) and is a recurring form of life for those involved in Community Dialogue Projects. In the Cupertino Project, we were required to construct the context for Community Dialogue as a Project, and, during the Project, to construct contexts each event. In many instances, this required differentiating what we hoped to call into being from more familiar but less productive forms of communication.

Although Cupertino is unusually affluent and oriented to high technology, in other ways it is typical of what other American cities are and are likely to become: simultaneously modern and multicultural. These characteristics impel residents in opposite directions. With a more general, worldwide perspective, Barber (1995, p. 4) describes modernity as "a busy portrait of onrushing economic, technological, and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and that mesmerize peoples everywhere with fast music, fast computers, and fast food...one McWorld tied together by communications, information, entertainment, and commerce." Opposing modernity is "a retribalization of ... in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths against every kind of interdependence, every kind of artificial social cooperation and mutuality: against technology, against pop culture, and against integrated markets; against modernity itself..." (Barber, 1995, p. 4).

In Cupertino as elsewhere, modernity creates a thin public life in which the forms and practices of civic action are flat, bearing little meaning beyond themselves. They are simply ways of getting things done; compared to traditional society, the institutions and practices of modernity have only weak ties to community, identity or spirituality (Pearce, 1989, pp. 147-155). On the other hand, the multicultural nature of the city implies that at least some residents have multi-layered patterns of embedded meanings about their lives and actions, and that these differ in content from those of other residents. The combination of these two factors defines one of the challenges for any Community Dialogue Project.

We made no assumption that the meaning of anything we did would be understood, or understood similarly, by the residents. Part of our preparation for each event included thinking about the multiple, embedded contexts in which we were working, and part of our work in event design was to think about how to construct a set of contexts that would facilitate the accomplishment of our objectives (Branham and Pearce, 1985). We began almost every event with a carefully prepared description of what this event was intended to accomplish, where it fit in the larger project, the individuals and groups involved, and the values it was to serve. In addition, we were committed to total transparency. Whenever anyone expressed the slightest curiosity about what we were doing or why we worked in the way that we did, we explained ourselves fully and accurately.

CONCLUSION

The Community Dialogue Project significantly changed the city (Spano, in press). Our reflections indicate that the Project also significantly affected CMM, the theory that

guided the PDC's involvement. Since CMM is a practical theory, it is "extended" not by embracing more of the world within its truth-claims but by adding useful concepts and models, developing more precise or descriptive vocabulary, learning new ways of working in difficult or new contexts, and exchanging outworn or limiting metaphors with fresh ones. Clearly, CMM has been extended in these ways.

One way of assessing the significance of a practical theory is its ability to help practitioners discern among the events and objects of the social world. In the Cupertino Project, we were particularly well served by three aspects of CMM: foregrounding communication, attention to forms of communication with the purpose of bringing cosmopolitan communication into being, and an understanding of communication as coordination. In the press and excitement of the moment, it is easy to give a conventional response to what someone says or does. Assuming that the "normal" way of doing things is what brought us to the point of needing to do something different, to "act naturally" is practically guaranteed to reproduce the unwanted pattern. Our abilities to act "unnaturally," in this specific sense, have been guided by these concepts.

A second criterion for assessing a practical theory is its ability to enhance the prudence or social eloquence of practitioners. In this sense, "eloquence" does not mean conforming to the standards of high culture but the ability to discern and draw upon the resources of particular social settings in order to produce desired effects (Pearce, 1989; Oliver, 1996). Perhaps there are other practical theories that would have served us as well, and perhaps we might have drawn more creatively on CMM, but CMM provided the resources for whatever prudence or eloquence we found in this Project.

At the end of this reflection, we are left with an appreciation of the contributions of the Community Dialogue Project to CMM. The new models, extended concepts, and confirmed basic tenets bolster our confidence to apply the theory to yet other contexts. And we are left with several questions. What significance should we ascribe to the fact that some prominent features of CMM were not particularly useful? Are strange and charmed loops, URPs, the hierarchy model, etc., not useful in this context, or did we simply fail to take advantage of them? Finally, to what extent should and could we have invited our collaborators to learn/use CMM? Granted that its vocabulary and conceptual apparatuses are off-putting to those who do not do communication theory for fun and profit, but if the theory was so useful to us, how hard should we have worked to share it with our collaborators?

The single most striking learning for us was the importance of the first CMM tenet: foregrounding communication. As the quotations from City Manager Brown and Mayor Chang indicate, some of our collaborators grasped this and consequently understood our work and us. Those who did not foreground communication consistently had difficulty with us and found us working in ways that they did not expect. This seems to be the single most important key in developing the commitments and abilities consistent with the deep grammar of a Community Dialogue Project. We continue to explore ways of inviting people with whom we work to adopt the communication perspective.

The Project identified any number of sites for further exploration. Two of the most promising are the person position of the facilitator and the rhetoric of contextual reconstruction. Some participants rightly perceived that the "voice" of the facilitator

differed from the first-person voice of a resident, and, in specific instances, chose to speak in the latter. What are the distinctive properties of the voice of the facilitator? What characteristics of this voice are sufficiently compelling that one would use it rather than the more familiar first and third person position? Is there a linguistic parallel to this person position, or is the linkage between ordinary language and psychology less robust than discursive psychologists like Harré have imagined? On what resources can those who design Community Dialogue Processes draw when they must construct contexts? How do these resources differ from those sufficient to perform appropriate acts within existing contexts? What stories about Community Dialogue sustain and guide city officials and project consultants?

Throughout this essay, we have alluded to a deep grammar of the Project. This is consistent with Cronen's (1995, p. 231) description of practical theory as "an evolving grammar for a family of discursive and conversational practices." We have come to recognize some strategic processes, event designs, and facilitation techniques as part of our tradition of practice, while others are foreign to it. However, Cronen (1995, p. 231) continues by saying that this grammar "should be internally consistent and defensible in light of data." The extensions of CMM emerging from the Community Dialogue Project do not stand isolated from those emerging in other contexts of application. Further work should continue to explicate the deep grammar of CMM (this is a continuing process of renewal for an evolving theory), integrating these extensions and tracing the evolution of the theory.

**Figure 1:
Two Concepts of Communication:**

<i>Transmission Model</i>	<i>Social Constructionist Model</i>
<p><u>Definitions:</u> The transmission model is a very popular way of thinking about communication. It suggests that communication is a tool that we use to exchange information. "Good communication" occurs when meanings are accurately conveyed and received.</p>	<p><u>Definitions:</u> The social constructionist model suggests that the way we communicate, as well as the content of what we say, shapes how we feel about ourselves, the person speaking and even others who are not in the room. The way we talk and the people to whom we talk creates, sustains and/or destroys relationships, organizations, and communities.</p>
<p><u>How communication works:</u> What gets said? What meaning is transmitted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How clear is the information? • How accurately is it heard? • How completely is it expressed? • Was the "channel" effective? 	<p><u>How communication works:</u> What gets elicited by what is said or done?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What contexts are created for the other? • What language is elicited? • What form of speech is elicited? • What tones of voice are elicited? • Who is invited to speak and who is not? • Who is addressed and who is not?
<p><u>The work communication does:</u> What gets done?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the uncertainty reduced? • Is the question answered? • Is the issue clarified? • Is the problem resolved? 	<p><u>The work communication does:</u> What gets made?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What speech acts? (insults, compliments) • What relationships? (trust, respect) • What episodes (collaboration, conflict) • What identities? (shrill voices; reasonable persons; caring persons) <p>What cultures/worldviews? (strong democracy; weak democracy; no democracy)</p>
<p><u>The role of the facilitator:</u> Since communication works best when it is invisible, the facilitator's role is to create a context in which communication problems will not interfere with other, more important, processes of decision-making, coalition-formation, deal-making, attack and defense</p>	<p><u>The role of the facilitator:</u> Since communication works best when it creates certain kinds of social worlds), the facilitator's role is to shape emerging patterns of communication so that multiple voices and perspectives are honored and the tensions among them are maintained</p>

Figure 3
The LUUUTT Model

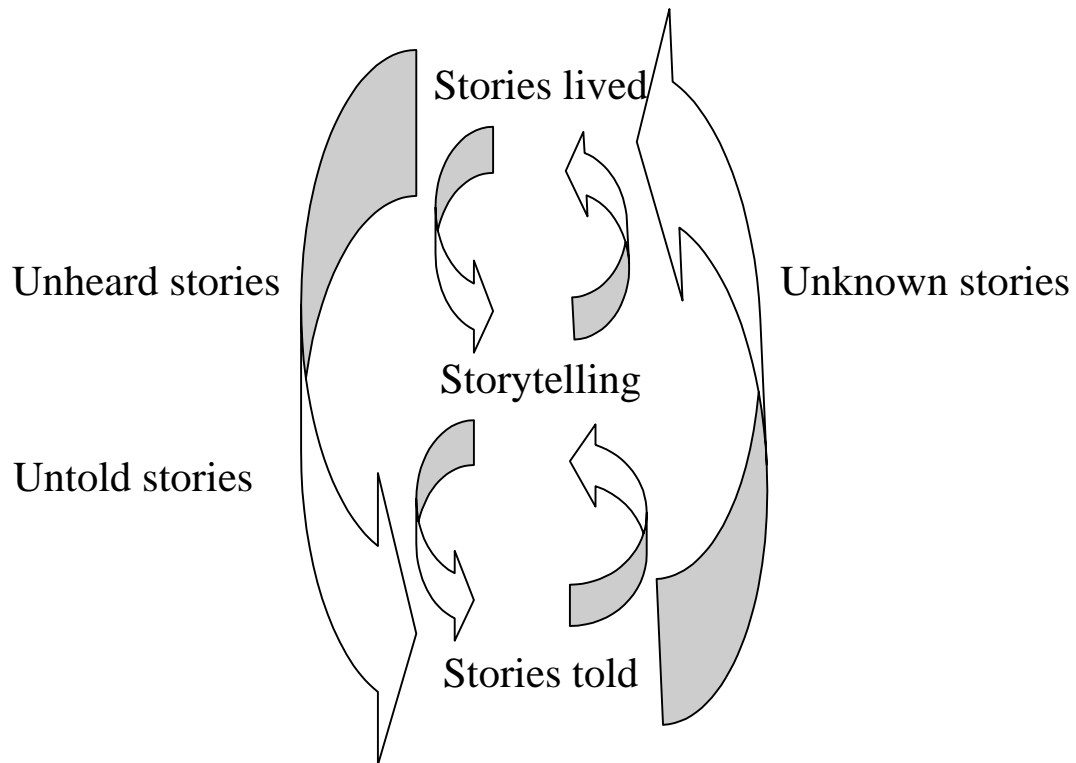
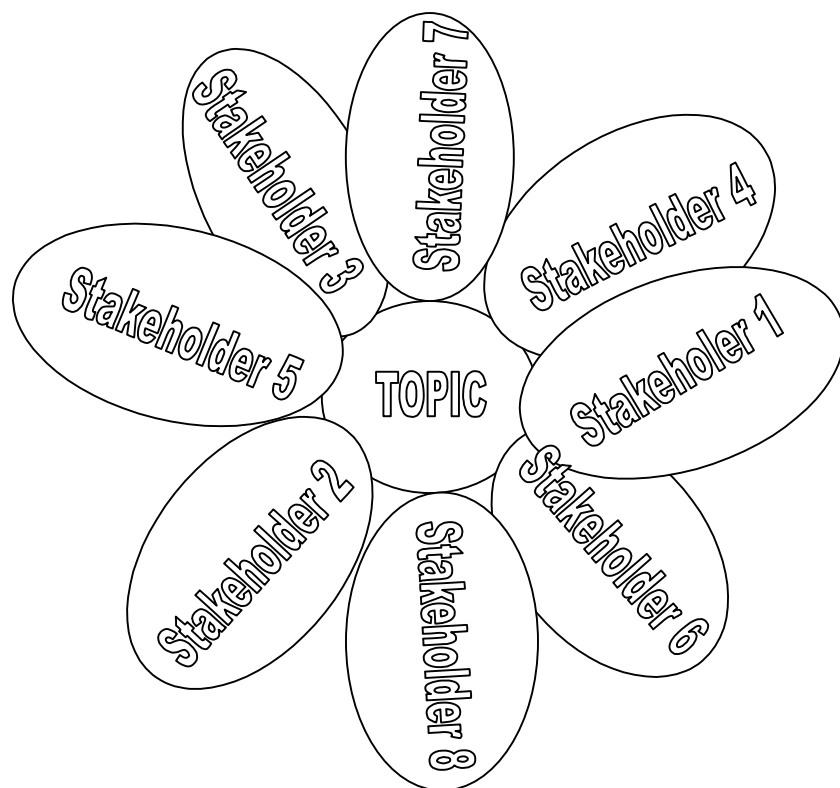


Figure 4
The Daisy Model



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