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From the Sacred Canopy to the Civic Canopy: Social Transformation Through Dialogue, Collaboration, and Civil Society

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FROM THE SACRED CANOPY TO THE CIVIC CANOPY: SOCIAL

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH DIALOGUE, COLLABORATION, AND CIVIL

SOCIETY

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by

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Abstract

The American creed of *e pluribus unum*—out of many, one—has proven to be an elusive aspiration for societies throughout history. Research suggests that as the diversity of a community increases, its stores of social capital decline. Yet, there exists a growing body of evidence that suggests under certain conditions, patterns of inclusion and collaboration are not only possible but predictable. This project explores theory on effective communication practices, grounded in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, as well as research on effective group interaction to suggest that certain communicative capacities and collaborative processes that successfully face the challenge of *e pluribus unum* at the level of groups and organizations might also apply to broader communities. After reviewing a series of case studies, a community learning model is offered as a way to promote those conditions more intentionally under a broader "civic canopy" as a way to help establish a new set of community norms—or a new civic operating system—that regards civil society as a type of associational ecosystem that can enable communities to better learn and adapt to the challenges they face.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Challenge of Difference and Unity

In early July, 1776, when the members of the committee tasked with creating the

first "Great Seal" for the newborn United States of America convened to determine the

proper motto to capture the spirit of the nation, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and

Thomas Jefferson narrowly chose "*E Pluribus Unum*" over Jefferson's suggestion of

"Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God." While both mottos might have spoken to

the challenge of their age, *e pluribus unum* has spoken to a challenge of all ages.   Nearly

250 years later, we still struggle to live up to, and at times even understand, the full

meaning of the creed: *out of many, one*. In his 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture entitled

"*E Pluribus Unum*: Community and Diversity in the 21st Century," Robert Putnam

captured the tensions inherent in the challenge of creating one from many. After

reviewing the data on social capital—"the norms and networks that enable communities

to act collectively" (Woolcock and Narayan 2000)—from over 30 communities around

the country, Putnam found that as the level of diversity in a community increases, the

level of social capital in the community declines (Putnam 2007). In fact, in diverse

communities people tend to withdraw not only from those different from themselves, but

even from their own kind. As Putnam puts it:

> Inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to
> distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin, to withdraw even
> from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to

volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform more, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television. Note that this pattern encompasses attitudes and behavior, bridging and bonding social capital, public and private connections. Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us. (Putnam 2007, 151)

When one considers the fact that diversity in neighborhoods and workplaces is

rising with the trends in international migration patterns (Judy and D'Amico 1997),

Putnam's findings suggest a significant unraveling of the social fabric on a broad scale.

While some take issue with Putnam's particular conception of social capital and its

decline, even his detractors acknowledge the trends of fragmentation in our communities

in recent decades and agree that the realities of pluralism—the differing and sometimes

incompatible worldviews that have come into increasing contact as populations become

more diverse—pose challenges for our neighborhoods and our nation (Edwards and

Foley 2001a, 2001b; Sirianni and Friedland 2001; Blackshaw and Long 2005). Our

willingness and ability to gather as a public in town hall meetings, bowling leagues, or

civic associations has declined steadily over the past four decades and given way to more

individualized pursuits, and a corresponding tendency to outsource our civic

responsibilities to increasingly polarized political advocacy groups (Bellah 1985; Etzioni

1993; Dahl 1994; Snyder 1999).

But the search for unity amidst the realities of diversity is only one horn of the *e*

pluribus unum dilemma. However daunting it may be to achieve unity within the context

of diversity, respecting the diverse identities of minority cultures within a historically

dominant cultural mainstream has proven equally challenging. At the extremes, history is

replete with horrific lessons about the costs of conformity to a narrow notion of "us" that

disregards and then drives out difference. The Holocaust of Nazi Germany, the gulags of

the Soviet Union, the decimation of indigenous cultures in the Americas, and the killing

fields in Cambodia all stand as stark reminders of the cost of pursuing cultural uniformity

at the expense of honoring diversity. But even in less extreme forms, the legacy of

intolerance for difference can have deleterious effects that last generations (Takagi 1993;

Glauser 1999). The costs of this intolerance for difference are borne by both the

mainstream and the minority, for when people believe that their voice is not equally

valued, the likelihood that the group will succeed in its collective task is greatly

diminished (Hicks et al. 2008; Van Dijke, Cremer and Mayer 2010; Morrison and Von

Glinow 1990). In light of the challenges of promoting unity while still honoring

diversity, it is little wonder that history is easily characterized as a pendulum swinging

between efforts to promote unity and periods of resistance in the name of diversity

(Schlesinger 1998; Caravantes 2010; Leholm and Vlasin 2006).

Fortunately, between the rock of Putnam's "turtle effect" and the hard place of

forced conformity, a growing body of research in a wide array of fields suggests that

rather than the constant pull between opposing forces of part and whole, self and

community, a more dialectical incorporation of those forces that unites individuals within

interdependent, collaborative networks is not only possible, but quite probable, under a

set of proper conditions. Specifically, this research suggests that the quality of

communication within a group, and the corresponding coordination of actions that

communication enables between individuals, organizations, and systems, correlates

directly with the effectiveness and stability of the group. By way of example, consider

these facts: researchers can predict within a matter of minutes, and with 94% accuracy,

which marriages will remain intact and which will be headed for divorce within three

years based on the couple's perceptions of their relationship and their style of communication (Gottman 1994); researchers found that the quality of the community process that was used to adopt an evidence-based program across 16 sites was more than twice as likely to explain the variation in outcomes than any set of individual factors of the participants—*four years* after the program was selected by the communities (Hicks et al, 2008); and the degree to which communities improve their schools, address poverty, pass bonds, and resolve conflicts correlates almost directly with their levels of social capital and sense of community (Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Putnam 2000; Solow 2000; Varshney 2000). In each of these cases, the critical ingredient is the pattern of communication that enables the successful coordination of actions oriented toward collective goals. Although our current conception of human systems borrows more from industrial metaphors of mechanistic interaction, increasingly the most effective human systems appear to work more like natural systems. In natural systems, diversity is not a challenge to be solved but a source of strength and adaptability. I will argue that human systems can and do thrive when the conditions for effective communication, collaboration, and connection obtain. This project is an attempt to draw upon this research to develop a new model for engaging communities in the process of building healthier civic ecosystems that successfully overcome the challenges of *e pluribus unum* in their relationships, institutions, and systems.

Cultural Crises and Cultural Operating Systems

To understand how humans wrestle with the twin challenges of *e pluribus unum*—both conformity and fragmentation—is in many ways to understand the very process of socialization itself: how the individual comes to internalize her culture and customs as

part of becoming a full, autonomous individual, and how she in turn learns to reinforce them as a member of that group. In his foundational work *The Sacred Canopy,* Peter Berger argues that this

> Fundamental dialectical process of society consists of three moments, or steps. These are externalization, objectivation, and internalization. . .It is through externalization that society is a human product. It is through objectivation that society becomes a reality *sui generis*. It is through internalization that man is a product of society. (Berger 1990, 4)

Societies maintain cultural coherence over time through the collective construction of a meaningful cultural and social order—what sociologists refer to as *nomos*. Like tribal fires staving off the surrounding darkness of the unknown, our socially constructed systems of meaning have historically provided the warmth and light of collective psychological security and act as a defense against the existential anxiety of our precarious fate in the universe. "The socially established *nomos* may thus be understood, perhaps in its most important aspect, as a shield against terror" (Berger 1990, 22). Religious and cultural traditions ensure this *nomos* maintains integrity from generation to generation through constructing and sharing meaning. As theologian Sheila Davaney explains, "Culture is the process by which meaning is produced, contended for, and continually renegotiated and the context in which individual and communal identities are mediated and brought into being" (Davaney 2001). This continual contention and negotiation typically amounts to minor revisions to the *nomos* rather than revolutions, but over time, when the prevailing cultural assumptions are no longer adequate to the meaning-making task, a crisis erupts and the society either treats it as a learning process and adapts or as a dissolution process and collapses (Habermas 1973b). In contemporary parlance, *nomos* acts like a type of cultural operating system, or a shared platform, that

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enables members of a cultural group to coordinate their social actions in a coherent and effective manner. To extend the metaphor, when these operating systems become overtaxed by the complexity of the demands of their users, they are "upgraded" to better accommodate the particular demands of the age, or "crash" and the society dissolves into its constituent elements. Because a thorough history of western societal evolution is well beyond the scope of this project, I will overlook the more granular analysis of social epochs and simply use the convention of pre-modern, modern, and postmodern periodization in Western society to divide the phases of our cultural operating systems. Specifically, borrowing from and adapting Berger's lexicon, I will use the terms the *sacred canopy*, the *secular canopy*, and the *civic canopy* to illustrate the broad outlines of our societal evolution and to provide context for the major historical shift in how we organize ourselves today.

COS 1.0: The Sacred Canopy

Our earliest shield of meanings projected onto the universe is what Berger calls the sacred canopy—"the establishment of an integrated set of definitions of reality that could serve as a common universe of meaning for the members of a society" (Berger 1990, 134). Religion serves as the legitimating force *par excellence* because "religion implies that human order is projected into the totality of being. Put differently, religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant" (28). Given the precarious nature of all socially constructed systems of meaning, our earliest cultural ancestors survived in large part because of the unifying power of a shared system of beliefs over and against threats to that system—including nature, internal conflict, and external threats from other tribes or cultural groups with different belief

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systems (31). As these threats threatened to pull apart a given shared worldview, the

presumptive response of COS 1.0 was to opt for unity at the expense of diversity.

While COS 1.0 functioned more or less adequately through the Middle Ages as

societies maintained their organic whole even in the face of shifting empires, by the time

of the Reformation and the rise of the scientific revolution, the competing "plausibility

structures" tore at the taken-for-granted truths of the sacred canopy and produced a

"legitimation crisis" (Habermas 1973b), which forced COS 1.0 to have to compete for

legitimation in an atmosphere of increasing pluralism. No longer could the *nomos* of the

sacred canopy unconditionally bind cultures together, with a presumed unity of the

people. The tribal fires of *nomos*—delicate flickers ignited during a dangerous world of

superstition and magic—were sustained through the Middle Ages through traditions and

strong customs, but now faced forces that demanded justification and not simply faith.

Where COS 1.0 had used the strength of the *unum* to keep the *pluribus* at bay, the

demands of a more plural world would soon shift that balance forever.

COS 2.0: The Secular Canopy

While some describe the transition from pre-modern times to modernity as a

matter of "outgrowing" the belief systems of the past, that conceptualization misses the

point of the role of our cultural operating systems. Every society must construct its

collective reality in a way that has permanence, that provides meaning, and that conceals

its constructed nature by ascribing its truth to the actual nature of the universe itself. This

is no less true of the modern era than the pre-modern era. According to Berger,

> In archaic societies, nomos appears as microcosmic reflection, the world of men
> as expressing meanings inherent in the universe as such. In contemporary society,
> this archaic cosmization of the social world is likely to take the form of

'scientific' propositions about the nature of men rather than the nature of the universe. Whatever the historical variations, the tendency is for the meanings of the humanly constructed order to be projected onto the universe as such. (Berger 1990, 25)

The rise of scientific certainty in the justification of world views can be seen in story of our nation's founding period. Historian Gordon Wood's account of the birth of the United States in the period between the Revolution of 1776 to the ratification of the Constitution in 1789 provides a window into the tremendous shift that occurred in the mindset of the political age, what I would call the movement from COS 1.0 to COS 2.0 in the United States. For the Revolutionaries, society was seen as an undifferentiated, organic whole that was in the throes of resisting the tyranny of an unjust ruler. In the new republic they were about to form, that unified society would be freed to orient itself toward the collective good of the whole:

> By 1776 the Revolution came to represent a final attempt, perhaps—given the nature of American society—even a desperate attempt, by many Americans to realize the traditional Commonwealth ideal of a corporate society, in which the common good would be the only objective of government. (Wood 1972, 54)

This belief in a unified society did not mean the founders were not aware of the threats of internal rivalry and conflict; indeed, they saw their enterprise of forging a new nation as a balancing act between the twin dangers of absolute tyranny on one side and absolute anarchy on the other side. Still, argues Wood,

> Despite, or perhaps because of, the persistence of social incoherence and change in the eighteenth century, Americans creating a new society could not conceive of the state in any other terms than organic unity. . .The contracts, balancing mechanisms, and individual rights so much talked of in 1776 were generally regarded as defenses designed to protect a united people against their rulers and not as devices intended to set off parts of the people against the majority. (59-60)

However, in the mere span of a decade, the belief in the essential unity of a people freeing itself from the chains of its tyrant would change dramatically in the face of the

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complexities of actual governance. As the states framed their constitutions and found all

manners of governance to be in jeopardy, and as the Articles of Confederation quickly

proved incapable of binding the states together in a way that was adequate to the task, the

romantic notion of a unified people that characterized the Revolutionary spirit gave way

to the recognition that democracy had unleashed a new set of problems unforeseen when

constrained by tyranny. "*'We have, probably*,' wrote Washington with emphasis, '*had*

too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation'" (472). To unify the

foundering states, and to check the vices of the people—the "ambition of the poor and the

avarice of the rich"—a national constitution, based on the enlightenment science of

government derived from the likes of Locke and Montesquieu, would need to be framed

that would provide a technical solution to the social problems of the age.

> The result was an amazing display of confidence in constitutionalism, in the
> efficacy of institutional devices for solving social and political problems.
> Through the proper arrangement of new institutional structures the Federalists
> aimed to turn the political and social developments that were weakening the place
> of the 'better sort of people' in government back upon themselves and to make
> these developments the very source of the perpetuation of the natural aristocracy's
> dominance of politics. Thus the Federalists did not directly reject democratic
> politics as it had manifested itself in the 1780's; rather they attempted to adjust to
> this politics in order to control and mitigate its effects. (517)

In essence, what was needed to preserve the *res publica*, the good of the whole,

was to create a new mechanism for maintaining social order that neither relied on belief

in a common tradition nor on faith in the virtue of the people.

> The eighteenth century had sought to understand politics, as it had all of life, by
> capturing in an integrated, ordered, changeless ideal the totality and complexity of
> the world—an ideal that the concept of mixed constitution and the proportioned
> social hierarchy on which it rested perfectly expressed. . .By destroying this ideal
> Americans placed a new emphasis on the piecemeal and the concrete in politics at
> the expense of order and completeness. The Constitution represented both the
> climax and the finale of the American Enlightenment, both the fulfillment and the
> end of the belief that the endless variety and perplexity of society could be

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reduced to a simple and harmonious system. By attempting to formulate a theory of politics that would represent reality as it was, the Americans of 1787 shattered the classical Whig world of 1776. (606)

In place of the shattered assumptions of 1776, Americans built a new operating system that promised to use the power of enlightened rationality, rather than religious unity, to curb the passions of the people in service of the greater good. Just as the Copernican revolution de-centered the earth within a helio-centric universe, Enlightenment rationality displaced religion's presumptive seat at the center of society. Weber's thesis that Enlightenment rationality not only led to the "disenchantment of the world," but produced the twin titans of the bureaucratic state and market capitalism, epitomizes the new *nomos* of the Enlightenment. While some dispute Weber's particular characterization of the secular (Stout 2004), it is clear that by the beginning of the 18th century, a *secular canopy* had been established as the new COS 2.0. However, where the sacred canopy of COS 1.0 had staved off anomie by providing a shared construct of tradition for cohesive cultural groups, Enlightenment rationality broke the cultural whole into distinct parts, applying more specialized forms of rationality and validation systems to each.

COS 3.0: The Civic Canopy

While in many ways the secular canopy has served us well—COS 2.0 enabled an unprecedented expansion of individual benefit and social transformation—it has been in crisis for decades. The first signs of its impending end can be traced to Nietzsche, with his withering critique of rationality as a mere facade for the "will to power." Other postmodern theorists have followed suit, and pointed out that the formal rules and conventions of modernity are not in keeping with the complexities of our age. But the

signs of COS 2.0's decline are apparent well beyond the circles of academic critique as well. Virtually every public system—from education, to health care, to the criminal justice system to even the classic form of the corporation—that was built on the industrial model of COS 2.0 is beyond the breaking point and facing an overwhelming array of challenges. But while the signs of crisis are everywhere, few have offered a positive alternative toward which the new COS 3.0 might be oriented. That is the task of this project.

Research Design and Overview

Research Questions

This project explores the challenge of the credo *e pluribus unum* as a question of reconciling human diversity, or "the fact of reasonable pluralism" (Rawls 1996), with the human quest for a unified cultural framework that provides stability, meaning, and order. At the heart of my project lie two central questions:

- What conditions enable people to successfully integrate their sense of individual identity into a larger whole that is greater than themselves?

- How might those conditions become part of larger social systems to expand their positive impact on society?

I will explore these questions in three ways. First, will offer a critical reading of relevant theory related to communicative action. Next, I will review effective practices in existing communities which embody these theories. Finally, I will offer a design for a scenario that would manifest these conditions on a broader scale. I will argue that the solution to the challenge of *e pluribus unum* lies neither in choosing the *unum* over the *pluribus*, nor the *pluribus* over the *unum*, but in seeing them as necessary and complementary ingredients of social integration—made possible through the power of

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communicative reason expressed through interpersonal dialogue, organizational

collaboration, and systemic transformation through civil society networks. Following

Habermas and incorporating the critiques of his respondents, I will argue that when we

engage with others under the right conditions, communicative reason allows us to meet

the challenge of *e pluribus unum* by drawing upon our unique and diverse perspectives to

construct an expanded sense of mutual understanding that is larger than, but inclusive of,

its constituent elements. I will then explore the fact that despite the growing evidence of

the salutary effects of a communicative response to interpersonal, institutional, and

systemic challenges, the current structures that shape most of our daily existence—our

beliefs, institutions, and systems—are rooted in and still reinforce the instrumental

rationality that epitomized the modern paradigm. I will argue that what is needed is to

construct a new *nomos*, or in modern parlance, a new "cultural operating system" that is

better matched to the challenges of our current condition and which resets the patterns of

beliefs, behaviors, and policies by which we run our shared enterprise. I will conclude by

offering a community learning model to help launch this new operating system. This

process, supported by a virtual "platform" for community engagement, enables diverse

networks of individuals and civil society institutions to work together toward common

goals, thus more effectively fulfilling the promise of *e pluribus unum*.

<div align="center">Methodology and Overview of Argument</div>

The methodology for this project is a blend of critical essay and applied practice,

yielding what Ted Vial has called a "philosophically informed reflection." I will draw

upon the theoretical and philosophical work of foundational thinkers like Habermas,

Levinas, Bohman, and Young; refer to the evidence gleaned from fields of collaborative

practice in service delivery systems; and reference both philosophical frameworks and practical applications of complex and emergent systems theory. There are of course risks in this method—dilettantism chief amongst them—but I agree with William Galston, who, in reflecting on his approach to inquiry into public life, argued that

> Methods of inquiry must suit objects of inquiry. I have the highest regard for sustained philosophical reasoning, but often it is not enough to get us where we want to go. For those seeking to craft a three-dimensional account of the basic structures of public life, a diversity of material is essential. (Galston 2005, 6)

In Chapter Two I will take up the challenge that animated Habermas's project— namely, how to re-legitimize the social foundation of Western society after the crises of Stalinism, World War II and the Holocaust revealed the inadequacy of COS 2.0 as an integrating force for social action. I will review in general terms the outline of his Theory of Communicative Action and explore his notion of communicative reason— which is strengthened, I will argue, by improvements from his critics—through the theoretical framework of deliberative democracy. I will argue that whatever its weaknesses, Habermas's effort to complete "the unfinished project of modernity" does provide the essential foundation for the next stage of societal evolution: COS 3.0.

While a philosophical and theoretical response to the challenges of *e pluribus unum* is essential to prevent the slide toward relativism and *anomie* that more radical advocates of an "anti-foundationalist" view of postmodernity knowingly or unknowingly unleashed, the successful resolution to the crisis of COS 2.0 ultimately hinges on a practical relevance to the lives of real people struggling to solve real problems in real communities. I will therefore look to examples of practitioners in the field of dialogue and deliberative democracy to help make the case for the transformational qualities of dialogue.

In Chapter Three, I will analyze communicative reason as a practical tool for promoting collaboration among individuals, organizations, and systems. Building on the research of Chrislip, Larson, and Hicks, I will explore the conditions under which individuals and organizations effectively collaborate toward shared goals and the impact collaboration has on community outcomes. I will then draw upon effective collaborative models from other fields and synthesize their overlapping elements into a "community learning model" that can be used to help communities successfully navigate the steps of collaboration.

In Chapter Four, I will review the community learning model in more detail and explore how it acts as an entry point into the "virtuous cycle" of collaboration that applies to higher levels of organization within a community. Drawing upon Habermas and other civil society theorists, as well as research from the natural sciences and organizational development literature, I will then analyze how civil society functions as a type of emergent ecosystem of the public sphere and abides by similar principles as other self-organizing systems. I will argue that for us to change the systemic structures of COS 2.0, we must shift our conception of civil society from being a third sector alongside the market and the state to being a self-organizing, emergent system that can reorient the power of both the market and the state to function in alignment with agreed-upon outcomes of community benefit. I will then explore the implications of the community learning model through three case studies in which this model was applied to a neighborhood context, a community context, and a statewide context, generating a list of lessons learned and problems to solve. I will summarize the principles that can be

distilled from such studies to offer a set of parameters for how the model can best be applied to new and expanded contexts.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I will bring the theoretical and practical dimensions of communicative reason to bear on a regional project to design what COS 3.0 might look like with a fully developed civic canopy in place. In a type of "artist's rendering" of a proposed new design, I will argue that raising the civic canopy is best accomplished through the use of the community learning model that incorporates ongoing, face-to-face dialogue, organizational collaboration, and systemic change. In the end, I will make the case that through a new, civic canopy, we can better meet the challenge of *e pluribus unum* and acknowledge both our diversity and our unity within communities that are dedicated to working toward common goals in service of our collective well being.

Summary

In light of the many reasons to bemoan the state of our contemporary civic health, this project seeks to explore the convergence of several theoretical and practical bodies of work which suggest that the communicative capacities and collaborative processes that can adequately face the challenge of *e pluribus unum* at the local scale can in fact be brought to a much larger scale. By situating our current challenges and opportunities within the larger story of society's evolution, the current signs of societal transformation become more apparent. Through this project, the vision of a civil society functioning as a vibrant ecosystem that nurtures the healthy development of all members is approached through the intentional use of a community learning model that enables individuals and organizations to collaborate more effectively toward common indicators of civic health.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNICATIVE REASON, DIALOGUE AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Introduction

In this chapter I will review Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action in its broadest terms to build a foundation for the claim that the perennial challenge of *e pluribus unum*, and particularly the challenge of reasonable pluralism that accompanies it, is most adequately addressed through patterns of communication that are oriented toward mutual understanding and which "take the other into account." I will argue that Habermas provides the foundation of this argument, but I will draw upon some of his critics and respondents to address the shortcomings of his theory with a dialogical model of communicative reason.

Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity

Habermas's Roots in the Frankfurt School

To understand the societal transformation that has occurred in the past 50 years, or what I am calling the shift from COS 2.0 to the gradual emergence of COS 3.0, we must consider the world Habermas inherited as he entered the academy in the early 1950s. Habermas's work began amidst the discussions of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, an institute founded in the 1920s, reorganized in the 1950s, and known for its bold, interdisciplinary critique of modern society. Alongside his mentors Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Habermas worked to develop a critical theory of

society with enough intellectual power to challenge the assumptions of Western culture's reigning ideology and capitalist structure, believing that "through an examination of contemporary social and political issues they could contribute to a critique of ideology and to the development of a non-authoritarian and non-bureaucratic politics" (Held 1980, 16). The Frankfurt School's areas of inquiry ranged from the nature of capitalism and its structures within modern society, to the rise of authoritarianism and bureaucracy, to the structure and internal dynamics of the family, to the creation of mass culture and its impact on psychological development. The practical realities of Nazi Germany and World War II had a pronounced effect on the theoretical work of the Institute. After its relocation to Columbia University in New York in the 1930s and eventual return to Germany in the 1950s, the focus of the Institute's founders had changed dramatically. Several of them battled with suicidal pessimism in the aftermath of the war, and their work lost the public viability that it enjoyed in the early 1930s. Most of the pioneering members were ambivalent about their more radical roots in Marxism, and discouraged their students of the 1950s from reading the early editions of the official publication of the Institute, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (Jay 1984). What began as a bold interdisciplinary project over time devolved into a loose affiliation of disparate attempts to make sense out of the rubble of post-war European culture.

But while others followed the lead of Adorno and Horkheimer, abandoning the hope that rationality could be anything but one more manifestation of power and taking a skeptical eye at any attempt to construct new "metanarratives" to take its place (Lyotard , 1979), Habermas parted company with his former mentors and remained dedicated to the

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"unfinished project of modernity" and the promise of liberation through the power of reason. Instead of the subject-centered rationality of the Enlightenment, Habermas took "a linguistic turn," building on the work of Wittgenstein, Searle and Austin. This move allowed him to uncouple his pursuit of reason from the freight of instrumental rationality that perished in the wreckage of Nazism and fascism, and redirect his attention to an intersubjective reason embedded in the nature of language. In his *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984), Habermas argues that the problem is not with rationality per se, but the fact that instrumental rationality—with an emphasis on efficiency, control, and the logic of systems—has colonized communicative rationality, which is oriented toward mutual understanding. The other task, for Habermas, is to construct the conditions that enable communicative reason to resume its proper place in steering our social systems. Let us review how Habermas' communicative reason addresses the challenge of promoting cultural cohesion while still honoring difference.

Models of Rationality, Models of Democracy

The case can be made that the basic framework of constitutional democracy born out of the Enlightenment is itself an answer to the challenge of *e pluribus unum*, at least when compared to the long history of empires and autocratic rules that in effect sought to solve the challenge by force and violence. However, following Benhabib, I believe that "the global trend toward democratization is real, but so also are the oppositions and antagonisms asserting themselves against this trend in the name of various forms of 'difference'—ethnic, national, linguistic, religious, and cultural" (Benhabib 1996, 3). Like Benhabib and others, I contend that we can distinguish variations of democratic

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theory and practice that are more or less adequate to the task of managing these forces of

unity and difference. For reasons explored below, the most promising model is one

rooted in a communicative view of reasons, or what its proponents call deliberative

democracy.

Habermas framed the earliest conceptions of deliberative democracy by noting the

general distinctions between (1) civic republican models, which are predicated upon a

common ethical tradition that can be called upon to resolve questions of the common

good; (2) liberal models of democracy, which emphasize a constitutional arrangement of

rights and procedures that allow individuals to choose their own notions of the good; and

(3) a more deliberative model, where social behaviors are neither predicated upon

common traditions nor left up to pure procedures, but emerge through the process of

public reasoning (Habermas 1996). Since that early framework, more refined definitions

have been developed. Based on the proceedings from a 2010 symposium which included

many of the leading theorists in the field, Jane Mansbridge boils the basic notion of

deliberative democracy down to these essential elements:

> There is considerable consensus among theorists on many of the regulative ideals
> of deliberative democracy. . . The criterion that most clearly distinguishes
> deliberative from non-deliberative mechanisms within democratic decision is that
> in the regulative ideal, coercive power should be absent from the purely
> deliberative mechanisms. Participants should not try to change others' behavior
> through the threat of sanction or the use of force. (Mansbridge et al. 2010, 66)

If there is shared agreement on the basic parameters of what constitutes

deliberative democracy, there are important differences in how theorists describe the

basic mechanism within deliberation itself that accounts for its noncoercive power. Some

describe the means of bringing conflicting worldviews into accord as a process of

reaching an "overlapping consensus" (Rawls 1996); others argue that a more inclusive

definition of "reason-giving" amongst a plurality of voices is what leads to more

sophisticated articulations of justice (Young 1990); still others argue that new methods of

linguistic interaction may help us transcend these differences and reach a higher level of

moral development (Pearce and Littlejohn 1997). Speaking about deliberative

democracy as a regulative ideal, Young claims that

> In the deliberative model democracy is a form of practical reason. Participants in
> the democratic process offer proposals for how best to solve problems or meet
> legitimate needs, and so on, and they present arguments through which they aim
> to persuade others to accept their proposals. Democratic process is primarily a
> discussion of problems, conflicts, claims of need or interest. Through dialogue
> others test and challenge these proposals and arguments. Because they have not
> stood up to dialogic examination, the deliberating public rejects or refines some
> proposals. Participants arrive at a decision not by determining what preferences
> have greatest numerical support, but by determining which proposals the
> collective agrees are supported by the best reasons. (Young 2000, 22-23)

In distinguishing between decisions reached through the exchange of reasons

from those arrived at through the greatest numerical support, Young draws the same

distinction as Habermas between two types of reasoning: instrumental reason

communicative reason. Instrumental reason coordinates social behavior through the

steering mechanism of attaining intended ends. In contrast, communicative reason

requires actors to coordinate actions and resolve differences through language and the

steering mechanism of coordinating meaning. If instrumental reason is rooted in notions

of *efficiency,* according to Habermas, the rationality inherent in communication is based

on the common presupposition amongst participants to reach *understanding*. With each

speech act—be it asking someone to pass the salt shaker, verify the cause of an epidemic,

or support a program to help reduce violence—we make claims upon each other that

require the listener to make a yes/no response. If called upon, we can give reasons for

our claims, and this reasoning-for and reasoning-against is the essence of the

intersubjective rationality embedded in communication. This communicative sphere

functions because, Habermas argues, all competent users of a language tap into a

common *lifeworld*, a collection of meanings, assumptions, vocabulary, and the like that

allow us to make sense of each other's truth claims. Rather than being forced or coerced

to accept the results of an exchange, it is the force of the better argument that prevails,

with each participant drawing upon the lifeworld to find the means by which to advance

that claim (Habermas 1984, 120). This is true of our actions no less than our statements.

When there is a breakdown in this process—words are misunderstood, actions not

squared with present understandings—participants can seek to repair that breakdown by

asking the other to clarify, or to redeem the claim they are making. Through this

discursive process, the lifeworld is reinforced, and the body of unproblematic agreements

thus expands.

Central to the process of mutual understanding in Habermas' account is the

assumption that both participants in the exchange recognize each other as equals who are

free to take a yes/no position toward each other's claims. There is no effort made to

convince the other against her will, or to merely "get what one wants" from the other.

Should this occur, the exchange would cease to be rooted in communicative rationality

and would become an example of instrumental rationality aimed at achieving strategic

success. Of course, discussants often fail to suspend judgments and abide by rules of

argumentation as implied by Habermas' notion of an "ideal speech situation" (Habermas 1999, 87-89). This does not invalidate his claim, however, since:

> The ideal speech situation is neither an empirical phenomenon nor simply a construct, but a reciprocal supposition [*Unterstellung*] unavoidable in discourse. This supposition can, but need not be, counterfactual; but even when counterfactual it is a fiction that is operatively effective in communication. I would therefore prefer to speak of an anticipation of an ideal speech situation. . .This anticipation alone is the warrant that permits us to join to an actually attained consensus the claim of a rational consensus. At the same time it is a critical standard against which every actually realized consensus can be called into question and tested. (Habermas 1973, 258)

This is a critical point to consider, and one to which we will return after reviewing critiques of Habermas's position. He is essentially claiming that far from being some rarified situation that we seldom find, the ideal speech situation is a presupposed condition of our everyday speech. We would not even begin to speak to each other if we did not believe we could be understood by one another, and that our claims could in fact produce convincing reasons with which others might agree. Most importantly, this capacity is not a function of extensive training, elaborate philosophies, or political conditions. It is instead part of the everyday capacity of competent language users—a capacity that most humans develop by the age of five. Habermas further argues—and as we shall see, others will take him to task on this very point—that participants engaged in discourse can reach consensus, and thereby coordinate their differing social perspectives, in the areas of truth (objectivity), normative rightness (morality), and personal sincerity (subjectivity). These validity claims are rooted in a *postmetaphysical* definition of reason—one that need not appeal to all-encompassing metaphysical systems, philosophies of consciousness, or philosophies of history (Rehg 1998, viii). Instead,

participants make universal claims of truth and moral rightness—e.g., the earth is round not just for me but for all people—that transcend the specific context from which they were made and yet are always regarded as fallible and subject to revision at a later date. What gives them validity is the "yes" granted by other members of the discourse who are subject to the implications of the statements. In the case of empirical truth claims (objectivity), this process is familiar to most of us. Agreement upon facts is achieved through a process of scientific argumentation that tests ideas against rigorous standards of interrogation from others in the scientific community to see if the claims hold up against other evidence. In the case of personal sincerity (subjectity), the type of argumentation is much akin to a psychological analysis, where we judge the sincerity and validity of statements made by an individual as compared with his or her actions and previous statements. Are the statements consistent with what he or she has said before? Can we believe what is being said in light of what we know from previous actions? In the sphere of empirical truth claims and claims of sincerity, the secular canopy as COS 2.0 has held up admirably even into our own age.

The third sphere of normative rightness (morality), however, is where we must face the challenge of reasonable pluralism. As we have already discussed, resolving disputed claims of normative rightness poses little challenge to the world of COS 1.0, as social norms are typically well established and form an unquestioned set of parameters within which social actions are coordinated. In modern societies, however, we lack a shared sense of how we ought to live and coordinate our actions together—we have differing notions of "the good." Our differing moral claims are often the cause of

disagreements, and they must be continually redeemed within a highly pluralistic context.

Habermas argues that redeeming such claims requires people to coordinate their differing

interests into a collective will, born not simply of an aggregation of individual interests

and preferences but created from the deliberative process in which each person consents

to a larger general will:

> The public deliberation that leads to the formation of a general will has the form of a debate in which competing particular interests are given equal consideration. It requires of participants that they engage in 'ideal role-taking' to try to understand the situations and perspectives of others and give them equal weight to their own. This adoption of the standpoint of impartiality is what distinguishes an orientation toward justice from a concern merely with one's own interests or with those of one's group. (McCarthy 1992, 54)

Habermas argues that even cultural norms can be susceptible to rational

argumentation. This leaves the possibility open that one or another norm rooted in a

particular cultural tradition can indeed become a universally agreed upon norm, even for

those from other traditions. Or conversely, as in the notable cases of slavery in our own

country and more recently female genital mutilation in African countries, what was once

a shared cultural norm within a given cultural group gives way, through argumentation

and through collective action, to a new shared understanding that has normative force.

As McCarthy points out, Habermas acknowledges that this is not always possible, but he

contends that we must always enter the discussion with the presupposition that it could

indeed be possible to justify any cultural norm through reasoned deliberation (McCarthy

1973, 59). Similarly, Georgia Warnke adds that Habermas' theory allows for people to

become more skilled at the art of applying generally agreed-upon norms to contested

contexts, and that this process can, over time, become more likely to produce consensus

(Warnke 1995). In short, Habermas is advancing a claim, fallible though it might be, that we have within our general capacities an ability to reach consensus on even apparently incommensurable cultural disagreements, and that the hope of such consensus lies in the mechanisms of discursive "give and take" conducted among equal partners.

Rawls and Habermas: Two Views of Consensus

To summarize the argument thus far, Habermas claims that language holds within it the possibility of reconciling even radically divergent notions of what is true and what is good—so long as we can create the procedures for holding such conversations in a fair way. This claim is subject to numerous critiques on different grounds. According to Rawls, Habermas overreaches in seeking to make normative claims grounded in "comprehensive world views" open to public critique through reason. Any effort to adjudicate differences between fundamentally divergent worldviews goes beyond a description of the procedures we need to reach fair terms of agreement about political matters and instead smuggles in a worldview or comprehensive doctrine that, more than simply describing how competing comprehensive doctrines might be adjudicated, actually takes a stand in favor of one (Rawls 1996, 376). Rawls believes we need a more limited framework of procedures that simply leaves some discussions off the public table because they will undermine the limited but stable *overlapping consensus* that exists between opposing comprehensive doctrines. The nature of such a consensus is essentially this: given the fact of reasonable pluralism that exists in contemporary society, which admits divergent comprehensive doctrines, the most we can hope for is an agreement on a fair procedure that allows us to resolve our disputes in terms that all can

agree to. This agreement is basically a liberal, constitutional framework, the existence of

inviolable rights and protections (essentially contained in the U.S. Bill of Rights), and the

ongoing adjudication of disputes through systems of legislation and judicial review.

Rawls believes these are the kinds of "rules of the game" we would all agree to before

jumping into the particular identities we develop in our particular circumstances (397).

Rawls' view of fair terms of engagement would be upended if people were

allowed to appeal to their comprehensive doctrines during the course of deliberation.

How, asks Rawls, could policy be determined if during the course of debate the reasons a

legislator offered for a given law derived from a verse from the Bible or Koran? In this

sense, public reason is *singular,* applying to only those overlapping beliefs about fairness

to which everyone in a just society can lay claim—*not to those beliefs which are only a*

part of particular comprehensive doctrine: "If, when stand-offs occur, citizens invoke

the grounding reasons of their comprehensive views, then the principle of reciprocity is

violated" (lv). While some critics argue that this is unfair to ask of people, and that

people should not have to give up their deeply held beliefs when making public

decisions, Rawls counters that we do this all the time within our system—and rightly so.

Who would not, for instance, prefer the "partial truth" of only allowing evidence

admitted into court that has been gained through fair means, instead of allowing "the

whole truth" if it was gathered through unethical means that violated important rights and

protections—including torture or entrapment (219)? For Rawls, it is better to have a

system that all can support as fair but which requires everyone to give up a little bit of

what they would ultimately want for the greater good of political stability and continued

cooperation toward a more just social order.

For theorists like Gutmann and Thompson, however, Rawls gives up too quickly

on the possibilities of resolving the moral disagreements endemic to the reasonable

pluralism of our times. Where Rawls's definition of reciprocity involves an admission

that it is unfair to ask someone to entertain a reason that violates their deeply held

comprehensive doctrine, Gutmann and Thompson expand the possibilities of reciprocity

to include "deliberative disagreement," in which participants "continue to differ about

basic moral principles even though they seek a resolution that is mutually justifiable"

(Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 73). This allows people to shift the nature of the

preferences they bring to the table upon further reflection in the process of deliberation.

Deliberation asks people to acknowledge at times the levels of uncertainty in a situation

and the reasonableness of another's position. In other words, even people who disagree

over fundamental values—such as abortion—can come to recognize the moral worthiness

of an opponent's position, and respect the position even if they disagree with it. Such

reasoning can, at times, invoke the kinds of appeals to comprehensive doctrines that

Rawls would disallow, provided the arguer does not expect those who disagree to accept

those reasons as a condition of reaching consensus. This allows for the continued

cooperation of those who hold divergent comprehensive doctrines (77).

If, however, resolution is not reached through consensus, as it often is not,

Gutmann and Thompson argue that there is still room for accommodation and bargaining.

Accommodation involves *civic integrity* (making sure our words match our deeds, and

that we are aware of the larger implications of our moral principles); *civic magnanimity* (a willingness to acknowledge the moral status of ideas which one opposes and the presence of an open mind about one's own position*), and *the economy of moral disagreement* ("in justifying policies on moral grounds, citizens should seek the rationale that minimizes rejection of the position they oppose" (85)). These qualities expand the space within which we might find reasonable terms of continued cooperation, even if we disagree. When all else fails, there is still room for bargaining in a deliberative model, bargaining that is qualitatively different from that conducted in interest-group models of representative democracy, because it still acknowledges the legitimacy of the views of one's opponents rather than a "winner take all" mode of operation. In more common terms, reciprocity thus amounts to *mutual respect,* and encourages "citizens and public officials to appreciate the moral character of the positions of people with whom they disagree" (90).

While the case for deliberation made by Habermas and Rawls and expanded by Gutmann and Thompson offers great possibilities, many critics remain unsatisfied by these scholars' good intentions and focus instead on the ways in which the promises of deliberation remain unfulfilled. While Gutmann and Thompson expand Rawls' limits of what is fair game for deliberation to include some elements of comprehensive doctrines, critics argue that they do so without challenging the basic assumptions of deliberative interaction itself—assumptions that privilege those already in power. Darrin Hicks, for instance, wonders what, after all, does deliberation offer to someone who already feels marginalized by the systems of power in society? Deliberative democracy on the

previous account does offer even a marginalized person promise of including her voice as

being worthy of mutual respect, but if

> the ideal of public reason forces her to refrain from invoking her feelings, faiths,
> and traditions to support her political proposals or to translate them in such a way
> that they are indistinguishable from the dominant public idiom, doesn't it cancel
> out the very promise of deliberative democracy? (Hicks 2002, 247)

Iris Marion Young takes this same question as her point of departure for arguing

that the promise of public deliberation can only be redeemed through greater inclusion of

historically marginalized and "structurally differentiated" groups (Young 2000, 80). This

is in large part true because the views of those who occupy different social positions than

the presumed norm in society offer a vital resource to the political process: they reveal

the very inequities that are implicit in structural differences of income, class, gender,

race, and education. By doing so, they provide valuable insights into and knowledge of

the social realities that obtain in a given context. Without being held accountable to these

perspectives, those in power can continue to reason based on false premises and pursue

personal interests while wrapping themselves in the language of justice and the common

good. In Young's view, it is much more difficult for the corporate lawyer to deny the

presence of toxic substances, or claim that the factory is only acting in the "public good"

when there is a resident at the table who lives near a polluting factory and shares his or

her medical history. Young argues that the emphasis placed on espousing a common

good by those in the majority is often simply a reflection of their privileged position,

which mistakenly assumes that their own invisible assumptions and values are held in

common by all members of society. This tendency to advocate for a normative common

good benefits those who have the most to gain from the status quo, because it can quickly

become a means of disallowing any positions that seek to challenge the status quo by

attacking them as appearing disorderly, disruptive, or uncivil. The antidote to this vicious

cycle is neither to promote the private interests of marginalized groups nor to continue to

bracket social differences while aiming at the common good, but the "third way" of

greater inclusion of social perspectives:

> On this account, the only way to expose that such claims to the common good
> serve certain particular interests or reflect the experience and perspective of
> particular social segments primarily is publicly to assert the interests not served
> by the allegedly common policies, and publicly to articulate the specificity of the
> experiences and perspectives they exclude. (109)

One important step in accomplishing this is to expand the terms of deliberation to

include not just rational, dispassionate speech, but also the more culture-laden forms of

greeting, testimony, and narrative. These forms allow people in different social positions

and from different backgrounds to draw upon different communicative "virtues" to

express their reasons and their perspectives in a public context (80). Far from being

simply an accommodation to the process to prevent those who feel excluded from

disengaging from the process of public deliberation, and potentially undermining its

effort, expanding the forms of communicative participation increases the actual process

of deliberation and the quality of its outcomes:

> Inclusion of differentiated groups is important not only as a means of
> demonstrating equal respect and to ensure that all legitimate interests in the polity
> receive expression, though these are fundamental reasons for democratic
> inclusion. Inclusion has two additional functions. First, it motivates participants
> in political debate to transform their claims from mere expressions of self-
> regarding interest to appeals to justice. Secondly, it maximizes the social
> knowledge available to a democratic public, such that citizens are more likely to
> make just and wise decisions. (115)

Deliberative Democracy and the Inclusion of the Other

For deliberative democracy to reap the benefits that Young outlines, inclusion must mean far more than a superficial tokenism of diverse constituents sitting at the public table of deliberation. It must also entail a deep commitment to equality once people take their seats, which is not a simple matter. What definition of equality, for instance, must be in place for citizens who enjoy very different social privileges to truly be equal in a given process of deliberation? Recalling Habermas's notion of the ideal speech situation, such equality means that nothing but the force of the better argument should hold sway—not one's social status, political connections, or other indicators of instrumental influence. For James Bohman, equality should be considered as a function of "effective social freedom," which borrows from the "capacities approach" of Amartya Sen (Bohman 2002). In Bohman's view, we must conceive of someone's deliberative capacity as related to their ability to "initiate public deliberation about their concerns," rather than simply in terms of eloquence, command of the language of power, or familiarity with the rules and procedures governing public debate (333). Not that such attributes are not capacities themselves, but more importantly for Bohman is the ability to identify issues of public concern and to act so as to make them the topic of discussion in the public agenda. In this sense, even marginalized groups can point to a long history of raising issues for public deliberation that emerged out of non-deliberative mechanisms—community organizing, public actions, and sympathetic endorsements by allies in power. The attempt to equalize people's capacities to initiate deliberation even amidst inequitable distribution of resources is also at the heart of public efforts around campaign

finance reform and public access to the airwaves for political advertising (Knight and Johnson 2002, 304).

But as Knight and Johnson (2002) point out, this threshold of equality is too crude an instrument to assess the more subtle inequalities that typically impact deliberation in the public sphere. To address this, Darrin Hicks adds to the list of deliberative capacities a set of argumentative skills that strengthens each individual's deliberative capacities:

> Participants should afford a special respect to minority views that are often ignored in traditional public outlets, adjust to their interlocutor's frame of reference to establish an identification of common interests, restrain from impulses to become defensive when their positions and the ideals they are founded upon are questioned, maintain an openness to criticism and the demand for justification, and, perhaps most importantly, temper intelligence with humility and feel comfortable with letting others have the last word. (Hicks 2002, 232)

Hicks argues further that for all citizens to develop these capacities, our public education system will require a significant overhaul in terms of its ability to prepare students—all students, but especially those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds—for the full responsibilities of democratic deliberation. In the meantime, we are left to ask ourselves what steps, if any, might be taken to strengthen the powers of individuals, even on a small scale, to make deliberative spaces more equal? The same question can be asked of inclusion and public reason as well. Is it possible to envision a deliberative model in which people are capable of reconciling deep moral conflict, across differences, on equal footing?

Bohman: The Dialogical Turn

James Bohman's response to this challenge to is to take a dialogical turn. In contrast to both Rawls' procedural view, where certain topics are simply left off the table

of public deliberation, and Habermas's discursive view, where only certain types of validity claims can be redeemed through a discursive process of claims and counter claims, Bohman sees public deliberation as "a dialogical process of exchanging reasons for the purpose of resolving problematic situations that cannot be settled without interpersonal coordination and cooperation" (Bohman 2000, 27). To evaluate his project, let us return to the discussion of Habermas's approach that we left unresolved above. What is at stake here are the kind of mechanisms that Habermas and Bohman both offer as an explanation of why deliberation should be trusted to provide what seems so absent in our public life—the means of resolving contentious moral and political claims, and of including the wide spectrum of participants in society on equal footing in the conversation.

To begin with, let us be clear that much of Bohman's work is indebted to Habermas's foundational efforts to secure a normative basis for communicatively reached agreements. What is in question, then, is the most accurate explanation of why such agreements are possible, and the most practical description of how this process actually plays out in reality. To pick up where we left off with Habermas, we recall that Habermas contends that the process of redeeming claims is of a discursive nature, meaning that both the type of claim and the terms of its redemption are contained in the structure of the language itself—certain claims imply certain types of validation and presuppose certain underlying conditions. In addition, through discourse we acknowledge that there is a distinction between the claims we make about reality and reality itself. This is why discourse is a reflective form of communication, because we

not only make claims about reality, but we can reflect on the very nature of those claims, and decide which in fact are more accurate in light of what we know about the world. Stating "we catch colds from viruses, not from going outside without a coat" involves a different type of discourse than do the statements "we ought not buy products from companies that mistreat their workers" and "I am a big Red Sox fan." In the first, we presuppose an objective world order, a singular explanation that is true where competing explanations are false. In the second, we presuppose a normative universe whose rules everyone should live by, one that compels us to act in certain ways, rather than a universe where people are not subject to the same set of rules. In the third, we presuppose a world in which people are honest or not, sincere or deceptive, as determined by their subjective experiences and value systems.

By presupposing this combination of an objective world, a social world shared by members of a group, and plural subjective worlds of different participants builds a coordinate system that enables a type of shared triangulation and cooperative negotiation to reach the truth (Laftont 2002, 189). These coordinates allow us to orient our claims against a common framework, subject to "the better argument" about which claim more accurately maps the terrain. In this regard, Bohman and Habermas operate within the same coordinate system, but Bohman follows a more dialogical approach that expands both the nature of truth claims and the types of formal reasons that can redeem them:

> In specialized argumentation, speakers may develop generalized accounts of how certain claims may be warranted. In ordinary deliberation, by contrast, various claims are often mixed together so that is difficult to tell in advance what *type* of reason will be convincing in any particular situation. Public deliberation at this level is dialogical rather than discursive in the strict sense. It emerges whenever second-order communication, the exchange and testing of reasons, is needed to

resolve atypical and non-standard problematic situations or breakdowns of coordination; but usually there is no well-established means for resolving such problems, or these means themselves are called into question. The conditions for the activity of dialogue are more important than argumentation *per se* to understanding how public reasons are convincing under such circumstances. Argumentation is deliberative only when it is dialogical, in the give and take of arguments among speakers. (Bohman 2002, 42)

Bohman's model of deliberation, then, suggests that rather than looking to the adjudication process found in a court of law as our model of deliberation, that

It is better to see public deliberation as itself a joint, cooperative form of social action. This shift to cooperative action as the proper model for deliberation not only makes sense of how political problems are actually solved, if they can be; it also makes better sense of the requirements for the political agreements that emerge in complex and diverse societies. Rather than being another appeal to practices as the basis of shared agreements, deliberation depends on a different aspect of social action: the accountability of intelligible action to others and the reflexive ability of actors to continue cooperation by extending accountability to all actors and to new situations. (54)

Along with switching the context of public deliberation from a discursive to a dialogical model, Bohman also exchanges the paradigmatic metaphor from a courtroom to a jazz trio. Deliberation is a form of collective problem-solving on public matters, where each group participates in the construction of a whole that no part could construct on their own. This is a specific kind of collective action, different from more strategic or instrumental actions that have a clearly identified, easily measured goal.

Unlike a joint activity that is engaged in to achieve some collective goal, the success of a dialogue cannot always be specified in a means-end way. The outcomes of a dialogue are often unforeseeable from the perspective of any particular actor. Even if a dialogue is supposed to produce an agreement, it cannot easily be predicted how or when such an agreement will be produced. (56)

This is because the kinds of reasons that people will find compelling in the moment of dialogue cannot be determined in advance. In contrast to ethical

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"monologues," in which the making and redemption of validity claims are made philosophically outside of our lived experience, dialogue is "a once-occurrent Being-event of life" (Bakhtin 1993, 20), a point of discontinuity that disrupts any attempts to merely extrapolate from past events along a linear, predetermined equation. Though it is not entirely clear that Habermas would disagree, Bohman is making the case that we cannot "predict in advance of the dialogue the content of 'the kind of reasons we are prepared to recognize' as legitimate, other than that they are public. Public reasons simply continue the cooperative dialogue" (Bohman 2002, 57). True to form, Bohman offers reasons for his assertion as he describes in detail the kinds of conditions that allow dialogical cooperation for "restoring ongoing joint activity." These include testing and surfacing assumptions, sharing stories, moving back and forth between the general norm and the concrete specification, articulation of more abstract ideals that resolve apparent tensions, and taking the perspective of others (59-65).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

I have argued that Habermas's project of pursuing the emancipatory power of reason in the guise of a Theory of Communicative Action has proven to be both a more compelling response to the crisis of COS 2.0—the end of modernity's subject-centered rationality—than the more pessimistic strains of postmodernism found in the writings of Nietzsche and his more contemporary post-structuralist descendents. First, Habermas offers a normative basis of critique by grounding it in communicative reason and the intersubjective agreements reached through mutual understanding of competent language users. Second, he enables actors to coordinate their actions in a non-coercive manner

through the "unforced force of the better argument." Finally, his approach offers the possibility of social transformation by resisting the "colonization of the lifeworld by the systems world" through the hope of revitalized public sphere of diverse actors.

Where Habermas falls short—offering too narrow an account of reasoning that participants would find compelling and too narrowly circumscribing the terms of "consensus" as the necessary outcome of deliberation—his fellow deliberative theorists are able to augment his basic argument. In particular, Bohman's "dialogical turn" proves particularly important in reframing the social construction of meaning and continued engagement that will prove critical in a full definition of COS 3.0. Fleshing out this definition will take a deeper exploration of the meaning and power of dialogue in this equation.

Dialogue: Thinking, Speaking, and Being for the Other

Bohman's move to make deliberation more dialogical hinges on the need to expand the pool of potential reasons to which participants can appeal in their attempts to reconcile their plural worldviews within a common understanding of a given public problem and still continue to agree to work together to solve it. In doing so, Bohman formulates a view of dialogue that is more accommodating to difference than Habermas's view of deliberation, which requires participants to reach consensus based on reasons that convince the parties in the same way (Bohman 2000, 88). While Bohman does correct a weakness in Habermas's argument that stems from too narrow a view of rationality, neither Bohman nor Habermas can give us a full account of what actually transpires in the act of dialogue. Both Bohman and Habermas seem to take the challenge of pluralism

as ultimately a challenge of accommodating fixed positions, with Bohman offering more ways for them to continue to work with their differences constructively. In what follows, I will argue that rather than just being a more elastic means of accommodating difference, dialogue, as described by David Bohm, M. M. Bakhtin, and Emmanuel Levinas, is a way of thinking, speaking, and being that manifests our connection to and responsibility for the other. As such, it is the *sine qua non* of an effective integration of part and whole, and the secret to a successful resolution to the challenge of *e pluribus unum.* This view of dialogue as constituting human interconnection offers a way to both unify the participants in the discussion, and yet preserve the autonomy of a unique self and other. As such, it is the underlying platform of the emerging COS 3.0.

<center>Bohm: The Communion of Thinking Together</center>

While thinking is typically considered to be a solitary act, more monological than dialogical, the work of David Bohm challenges that assumption. For Bohm, dialogue is a matter of "thinking together." Often regarded as one of the pre-eminent physicists of the 20th Century, Bohm dedicated the latter part of his career to outlining a philosophy of dialogue. Drawing upon parallels from theoretical physics, Bohm analyzed the underlying structures of thought and concluded that our thinking—far from helping us solve the problems we face—is generally the cause of those problems. We inherit a fragmented set of understandings from the world around us, laden with conflicting assumptions that lead to unproductive patterns of behavior. Since this transmission of fragmentation is typically invisible, we are all left believing that the fragmentation exists in the world "out there," not in the thinking "in here." Blind to this trickery of thought,

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we never suspect it as a culprit: "Thought is very active, but the process of thought thinks that it is doing nothing—that it is just telling you the way things are. . . The point is: thought produces results, but thought says it didn't do it" (Bohm 1996, 10). In the face of challenges to its way of seeing the world, "Thought defends its basic assumptions against evidence that they may be wrong" (11). Examples of this have been documented for some time—from Gordon Allport's research on the nature of prejudice (Allport 1954), to Thomas Kuhn's analysis of the tendency in science to disregard discrepant data (Kuhn 1962), to Chris Argyris' studies of organizational learning (Argyris 1992; 1996). As the familiar saying goes, we do not see the world as it is, but as we are.

In Bohm's view, dialogue is the "flow of meaning" that allows us to suspend our attachment to the assumptions we hold, allowing us to be set free from the unconscious hold on our behaviors. When we suspend our assumptions and no longer hold them dearly or defend them against the perceived threats of others, we can see the fragmentations and divisions they create. In dialogue, we are not just advancing our own claims but trying to think about everyone's claims. This leads to a state of more coherent thought in which we share meaning and experience the wholeness of our differing views. We may still disagree, but we understand the nature and meaning of our disagreement and better understand the ways in which we unwittingly cause many of the very problems we are trying to solve. In dialogue, people have a way of bringing together their differing and conflicting sets of assumptions, even ones that appear mutually exclusive, and holding them in a state of creative wonder. There need be no attempt to solve them, resolve them, or force an agreement on which set of assumptions is the right one: "The

object of dialogue is not to analyze things, or to win an argument, or to exchange

opinions. Rather, it is to suspend your opinions and to look at the opinions—listen to

everybody's opinions, to suspend them, and to see what all that means" (Bohm 1996, 26).

Once liberated from having to defend our assumptions against challenges from others,

and no longer busy persuading others of the merits of our assumptions, we are free to

take in the whole scope of views and perceptions of those around us. This is what leads to

new understandings and new meanings.

If we think back to Bohman's conception of dialogue, as a force for expanding the

kinds of reasons that participants in deliberation will find compelling and that will

encourage them to remain at the table, we see that Bohm is expanding this process even

more radically. Instead of presuming that diametrically opposed positions are fixed

constructs that must be "accommodated" through deliberation, Bohm makes the

argument that the problem of fragmentation and conflicting viewpoints is a manifestation

of internalized, fragmented thinking and that such problems are often solved and

"dissolved" once people come to see the patterns and structural traps that cause the

fragmentation in the first place. This unleashes enormous potential for creative energy to

emerge and for partners to sense a new level of coherence in their thinking together. Bill

Isaacs, a student of Bohm's, explains it this way:

> Physicist David Bohm once compared conversations to the field behavior of a
> superconductor. In a superconductor, electrons moving through a wire are cooled
> to the point where they no longer collide or create heat through resistance.
> Instead, after reaching an optimally low temperature, they begin to act like parts
> of a coherent whole, moving around obstacles like ballet dancers on a stage.
> Under these conditions the electrons flow with virtually no friction. They have
> both high intensity and high 'intelligence' as they naturally align themselves with
> an invisible pattern. Similarly, when we are in dialogue and are thinking together

in a coordinated fashion, we are like the cool intensity of these fields of electrons. Rather than seeing our conversations as the crashing and careening of billiard balls, individuals may come to see and feel them as *fields* in which a sense of wholeness can appear, intensify, and diminish in intensity again. (Isaacs 1999, 235)

As Isaacs makes clear, not all thinking is dialogical, but when it is, there is a way of experiencing unity even amidst a diversity of thinkers. This unity, like the energy of a field, allows for difference and coherence within the same container. Rather than focusing on *thoughts,* which so typically divide us, Bohm encourages us to acknowledge the dialogical way of *thinking* that is rooted in a deeper wholeness.

Admittedly, at first blush Bohm's work can appear as ethereal and even romantic. However, the efforts of his many students, including Peter Senge's work on learning organizations (Senge 1990) and Isaacs' work on dialogue (Isaacs 1999) have had concrete and lasting impact in hundreds of corporate and community contexts over the past 20 years. One particularly noteworthy example is the work Isaacs and his colleagues helped launch around health care reform in Grand Junction, Colorado. In 1992, as the Clinton Administration first began its efforts to reform health care, the CEO of St. Mary's Hospital, Sister Lynne Casey, approached Bill Isaacs and his colleagues from the Dialogue Project at MIT's Organizational Learning Center to assist in their effort to solve the challenges they were experiencing in the Grand Valley. Despite previous efforts among the many players in the health care system in recent years, "many people believed that the historic competitiveness and antagonism between the institutions were intractable barriers to collaborative reform" (Weston and Saunders 1995, 3). The dialogue process that unfolded between 1992 and 1994, which was in large part based on Bohm's principles, brought together 40 leaders from various aspects of the healthcare system in

Grand Junction and had them reflect on the patterns of thinking that had created the

"intractable barriers" between them—patterns that led to judgments, mistrust, and

animosity between the players. As Barbara Sowada, a staff member at St. Mary's

Hospital and one of the participants in the early stage of the dialogues, later recounted,

> Looking back, the project's problem resided in our own thinking, steeped in
> Newtonian physics and Cartesian thought. Our conversations tacitly recapitulated
> three beliefs that society largely takes for granted: health care is an independent
> entity, money and morals are separate issues, and facts are more important than
> feelings. From my present vantage point, I see that we were not aware of our own
> ignorance regarding multiple definitions of health and care. It never occurred to
> us to question the schizophrenic beliefs inherent in the modern health care system.
> Moreover, we were very much afraid of loss of control and more attentive to the
> national political scene than we cared to admit to each other. (Sowada 2003, xiv)

As the dialogues progressed, gradually these patterns of thought and the

destructive patterns they had created became clearer to the group. One doctor shared his

insights in this regard with the group:

> 'I am struck by the last couple of comments, how absolutely schizophrenic my
> behavior is—when it comes to care of a patient and my care for you. When I deal
> with patients, there's a [belief] that's hammered into you, that you never resolve a
> set of symptoms on the level of the diagnosis. To jump to a diagnosis is a
> disaster. A chest pain can be a spider bite, an ulcer, pneumonia, or a heart attack.
> The minute I call it one or the other, I ignore the other possibilities. I don't deal
> with patients and medicine that way, yet I do deal with all of you that way.'
> (Isaacs 1999, 104)

Isaacs explains this process of jumping to inferences and never even knowing we

do it as part of the basic structure of the human brain on which we rely to filter out the

overwhelming amount of information that bombards us constantly. As a result, we

operate with what he calls "theories in use," or patterns of thought that govern our actions

in ways we are largely unaware of. In fact, not only are we unaware of these theories in

use, but they often contradict our espoused beliefs. According to Isaacs,

There is a gap or a contrast between their espoused belief and what they do in real life. So many people say 'be open, act transparently, be collaborative' but when you watch them, they are dictatorial, they are defensive, officious, etc. They don't do any of those things they said. And they are unaware of doing that. We say they act with a certain design, and they also design an awareness about that design. (Isaacs 2010)

When people surface these theories in use, they see the basic structures of thought that are producing the patterned behavior in the systems around them, and in so doing, become more open to building new patterns of thinking and patterns of acting. As a result, problems that once seemed insurmountable sometimes give way, and new possibilities emerge that were not there before.

In the Grand Junction case, such transformations set in motion a series of agreements and dramatic changes that helped contribute to the fact that Grand Junction is looked to as a national model for collaborative, affordable health care (Gawande 2009; Riccardi 2009). There are of course a number of reasons why Grand Junction has achieved the success it has (Nichols, Weinberg and Barnes 2009) so we ought not draw too close of a connection between these early steps of dialogue and their current success as a system. Still, Isaacs notes that the depth of the conversation within the group did reach levels that produced significant shifts in people's understandings and behaviors:

The big challenge at the time was how in the world will you ever produce some kind of common sense of purpose among all of these completely disparate elements. That was the focus of the work, and it did come together very deeply in many ways. . .We don't really have the data to say definitely what causes what, but my experience is that when you get to the deep layers of purpose, the impacts of the change are relatively stable over time. We have seen that in any number of contexts. (Isaacs 2010)

I reference Bohm's ideas, and Isaac's reflection on these ideas in practice, not to suggest that all differences in worldview will, through dialogue, give way to spontaneous

acts of convergent agreement. Substantive differences of opinion will remain, and people

will maintain their different comprehensive doctrines (Rawls 1996). What can change,

however, through dialogue as an act of learning to think together, is that the assumptions

we hold about those differences—e.g., that they make conflict inevitable, or that our

behaviors must be defensive because of them, or that "they" are wrong and "we" are

right—are ultimately more likely to be the root of the challenges we face than the actual

differences themselves. In this sense, we might say that Bohm's notion of dialogue as

"thinking together" both presumes and expands Habermas's original conception of the

lifeworld as a pool of shared meanings that people draw upon to construct mutual

understanding. Bohm suggests that the lifeworld is a source of meaning that flows

through us in ways we are not always conscious of, but once we suspend the assumptions

that fragment our thinking and our actions, we can reach greater coherence in our

thoughts and actions.

<p style="text-align:center">Bakhtin: The Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces of Language</p>

Just as Bohm deepens our understanding of dialogue by revealing the

fragmentation of thought, Bakhtin expands the meaning and role of dialogue by revealing

how fragmented the language itself is that we use when we try to reach mutual

understanding. Where Habermas focuses on the initial *claim* in a discourse oriented to

validation, Bakhtin places the primacy on the *response* as the pivotal move of dialogue,

and in so doing begins to de-center the self as the critical agent in the act of dialogue and

makes space for the presence of the other. For Bakhtin, language comes to us with a

socially determined framework:

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (Bakhtin 1981, 294)

This process is complicated because it means mastering forces that compete with each other as we communicate. On the one hand are the centripetal or unifying forces of language:

The firm, stable linguistic nucleus of an officially recognized literary language…We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life. (271)

This unified language, or the pull toward it, reduces the degree of difference in our interpretations, meanings, and understandings exchanged in communication. We rely on this common framework to make everyday exchanges of familiar linguistic interactions possible and routine.

On the other hand, language also exists amidst the realities of *heteroglossia* (428), the disunifying or centrifugal force of differing meanings, uses, social groups, generations, and the like. Each word carries with it divergent meanings depending on the variety of contexts and multiple interpretations it evokes in a particular instance. The interplay of these two forces makes the act of communicating a dynamic and active process. Each utterance invites a response, calling each speaker to create a way of understanding and being present to the meaning that is at play in the moment of communication:

In the actual life of speech, every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is indissolubly merged with the

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response, with a motivated agreement or disagreement. To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. (282)

This "primacy of response" requires a self and other to be truly present in the moment of acting and responding. There can be no response without the ability to take the other's perspective into account, and in that dialogical act of understanding, the first challenge of pluralism is addressed: the fusion of self and other in an act of understanding that does not require either party to relinquish his or her unique perspective. Drawing on Bakhtin, Baxter and Montgomery (1999) explain that

> The essence of dialogue is its simultaneous differentiation from yet fusion with another. To enact dialogue, the parties need to fuse their perspectives while maintaining the uniqueness of individual perspectives; the parties form a unity in conversation but only through two clearly differentiated voices. Dialogue, unlike monologue, is multivocal, that is, it is characterized by the presence of at least two distinct voices. (24-25)

In contrast to battlefields of warring perspectives that so often characterize pluralism in the public sphere, Bakhtin argues that in dialogue we experience this connection of individual perspectives as a "once-occurrent event of Being" (Bakhtin 1993) that happens in the moment of encounter and response between self and other. Because of the inescapable present-ness of the encounter in dialogue, Bakhtin argues that each of us is "answerable" for the construction of our lives as a series of once-occurrent acts. We are there, inescapably present.

In asserting that communication is a concrete act that constructs understanding between the self and the other, and that this act entails that one take the other into account, Bakhtin points to critical dimension of dialogue: ethics. But while Bakhtin points down this the road, his notion of answerability still focuses on the self in the

dialogical relationship, because while the other calls us forth in response, one could argue

that the myriad shortcomings in Western philosophy that privilege the self over the other

are not fully addressed. Jeffrey Murray argues that if Bakhtin describes the self-Other

relationship from the perspective of the self, it is Levinas who declares the "ethical

imperative" of concern for the Other and that dialogic ethics is the ground of human

existence and "first philosophy" (Murray 2000).

<center>Levinas: Ethics and Responding to the Call of the Other</center>

For Levinas, the call to be ethical—to take responsibility for the Other—emanates

not from the self but from the Other. It is not left up to the self to remember to give the

Other his proper due, or to follow an abstract ethical mandate to do so. Levinas argues

that the concrete presence of the Other—what he terms "the face"—in all of its exposure

and defenselessness is what issues the ethical summons to care and respond. According

to Jovanovic and Wood, "the face, then, is the injunction issued by the other to the self,

insisting and inviting response. This presentation conditions the possibility of discourse"

(Jovanovic and Wood 2004, 319). This sense of responsibility of self for Other is not so

much a response to the *content* of the call of the Other, or what Levinas calls "the said,"

but is a response to the *saying*. "The saying, then, is a greeting made before the utterance

of any content, the said. The first move in communication for Levinas is in the approach

to and contact with another, before themes are established, identities confirmed, and

ideologies discovered" (319). Levinas puts it this way:

> Saying states and thematizes the said, but signifies it to the other, a neighbor, with
> a signification that has to be distinguished from that borne by words in the said.
> This signification to the other occurs in proximity. Proximity is quite distinct
> from every other relationship, and has to be conceived as a responsibility for the

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other; . . . Nothing is more grave, more august, than responsibility for the other, and saying, in which there is no play, has a gravity more grave than its own being or not being (Levinas 1981, 46).

Given this gravity, it appears at first puzzling that Levinas also describes the relationship of the self and the other as "disinterested." At first blush, it makes little sense that we are responsible for, yet disinterested in, the Other. But this is the radical shift that Levinas proposes, for it is the very "interestedness" of the rational self that leads to the "me first" attitudes that is at the root of so many of society's ills:

> Being's interest takes dramatic form in egoisms struggling with one another, each against all, in the multiplicity of allergic egoisms which are at war with one another and are thus together. War is the deed or the drama of the essence's interest. (4)

In contrast, the disinterested self seeks no space in this struggle of egos, and is not seeking reward nor is it interested in winning this war. In effect, Levinas is suggesting that the self we suppose we gain in the "each against all" of egos is, in fact, no self at all. If the *saying,* the act of being one for the other, is signification, then for my *self* to mean anything at all it must come to mean "me" in the act of being for the other. The call of the Other gives occasion for me to become the singular, unique self inescapably called forth from all other selves to be for the Other:

> Substitution is signification. Not a reference from one term to another, as it appears thematized in the said, but substitution as the very subjectivity of a subject, interruption of the irreversible identity of the essence. It occurs in the taking charge of, which is incumbent on me without any escape possible. Here the unicity of the ego first acquires a meaning – where it is no longer a question of the ego, but of me. The subject which is not an ego, but which I am, cannot be generalized, is not a subject in general; we have moved from the ego to me who am me and no one else. There the identity of the subject comes from the impossibility of escaping responsibility, from the taking charge of the other. (13-14)

Levinas' conception of the generalized ego being called to a full, unique self through responsibility to the Other stands in sharp contrast to the solitary individual ego of COS 2.0. If the secular canopy is captured by Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, then, as we will see, the civic canopy might be epitomized by Levinas's *après vous*.

Admittedly, upon reading Levinas's unrelenting call to care for the Other, one is tempted to dismiss his appeal as too extreme, or as one more abstracted ethical imperative like the daily flood of exhortations in one's mailbox to give, donate, join. Levinas is clear that this responsibility does not stem from some abstract moral imperative that we are obliged out of guilt or fear of retribution to obey, but instead,

> My responsibility for the other man, the paradoxical, contradictory responsibility for a foreign liberty. . .does not originate in a vow to respect the universality of a principle, nor in a moral imperative. It is the exceptional relation in which the Same can be concerned with the Other, without the Other's being assimilated into the Same, the relation in which one can recognize the inspiration, in the strict sense of the term, to bestow spirit upon man. (Levinas 2000, 245)

Here Levinas lays out the ground of ethics in dialogue, and how it reframes the challenge of pluralism we have been addressing throughout. To be responsible for the Other, not because one wishes to remake the Other in one's own image but because the Other calls us to be our full selves, is to transform pluralism from an obstacle to an invitation; from a lack of sameness to a source of authenticity. For Levinas, plurality is irreducible, and ethics is manifest in the very relationship of Being and that which is "otherwise than Being" (Levinas 1981).

Summary

To retrace the steps of this chapter, we began by confronting the challenge that came with the crisis of COS 2.0—namely, how to respond to a world in which rationality

had been the cause of such systemic failure rather than a source of liberation from it. We reviewed Habermas's attempt to stand in the breach and reclaim reason as a communicative act that gains its normative and legitimating force by giving all participants in a discourse the ability to raise and defend validity claims, and to take a yes/no position toward the claims of others in a non-coercive process oriented toward mutual understanding. While the "ideal speech situation" that makes it possible for the unforced force of the better argument to prevail over more instrumental attempts to influence outcomes is admittedly often counterfactual, Habermas argues that it is nonetheless presupposed by anyone who seeks to engage others in communication rather than simply resorting to coercive or even violent means of "getting one's way."

The importance of this reformulation of reason cannot be overstated, as it provides a legitimizing rationale for not only the nonviolent coordination of actions amongst individuals, but serves as the presumptive rationale for the social "fact" that one must obey the law and the state—and thus the legitimate use of collective force to ensure the general welfare—as well as the "norm" that one ought to abide by collectively reached public decisions because they are ultimately based on reasons that are found to be compelling by the larger community affected by those decisions. While Habermas makes no claims that grounding the legitimating force of democracy in a communicative view of reason will solve all problems, he does at least give us the ability to solve those problems on fair and legitimate terms and through publically defensible mechanisms.

I then argued that while Habermas staves off the full collapse of COS 2.0 into a neo-Hobbesian morass of "all against all," the work of other theorists—namely Bohman,

Bohm, Bakhtin, and Levinas—fill out a dialogical view of communication that better explains how it is that people are able, under the right conditions, to not only "remain at the table" in the face of radically plural notions of the good, true, and beautiful, but even learn to transcend those differences to construct solutions to problems and new possibilities for being together that are creative, generative, and transformational. Bohm helps us see that dialogue is in part a matter of *thought*, and that our thinking is complicit in generating the crisis of radical pluralism and our inability to see beyond our fragmented perceptions. He also opens the door to the possibility that we can transform our world by reframing our assumptions and learning to see "reality" in new ways by "thinking with" others in dialogue. Bakhtin makes clear we are dialogically constituted in language and the once-occurrent act of our Being plays out in communication. That is, communication is not merely an exchange of "truth claims" about what we take to be true, but actually helps constitute our construction of what is true, and binds us in a fusion of meaning with the Other. From Bakhtin we see the possibility that a new, shared understanding can emerge through dialogue that takes both participants up into a greater whole that includes the parts they both contributed to its construction. Levinas takes this relationship with the Other one step farther, and casts dialogue as *being* One for the Other, an ethical act that radically reframes the challenge of *e pluribus unum* from the possibility of irreducible conflict to an invitation to respond, to care, to be-for-the-Other**.**

CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNICATIVE REASON IN COLLABORATION,

COMMUNITY LEARNING, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Overview

In the previous chapter, I argued that COS 2.0 proved to be too fragmented to address the societal need for integration and too rigid to handle the increasing complexity of problems and systems throughout the 20th century, and that a more adequate cultural operating system would be based in communicative reason, rather than instrumental reason. To make this case, I relied heavily on theoretical and philosophical justifications. But since social structures are ultimately borne out in practice, we must now turn our attention to the literature on practical attempts to solve the challenges of *e pluribus unum*.

In this chapter, I will explore the conditions under which diverse groups and organizations have found ways to work effectively as a collective while still honoring the diversity of their members. Thanks in large part to the important work of researchers such as Carl Larson, David Chrislip, Darrin Hicks, and others who have studied the variations in implementation quality of evidence-based, community-level services, we can say that these favorable conditions comprise an "open and credible process" that has a strong and direct correlation with the level of impact on community outcomes. I will then review a number of process models that have proven to be effective at yielding results in other fields and synthesize their common features into a new community learning model that enables diverse stakeholder groups to work effectively together,

irrespective of the particular issue area or context they face. While I believe the model I

introduce here can be justified in part on the merits of the supporting research that

undergirds it, I will also ground the rationale for the model in research from Hicks and

Larson (Hicks et al. 2008). They theorize that the mechanism that explains the

effectiveness of certain groups over time, at least in terms of enabling their faithful

implementation of evidence-based practices, is that the groups ensure the "transfer of

commitment" from initial leaders of the process to those who carry out the actual work

on the ground. While the conditions Hicks and Larson have investigated to develop this

theory are circumscribed and they caution against overgeneralizing from their findings, I

will argue that their findings are in keeping with the general body of both theory and

practical research on the nature of complex adaptive systems. While a full exploration of

complex adaptive systems is beyond both my expertise and the focus of this project, I

will suggest that the broad outlines of effective collaborative groups are at least

consistent with the basic elements of complex adaptive systems theory, and that both

stand in contrast to the closed, formal, rule-based logic of COS 2.0. In the following

chapters, I will then argue that open, network-based models of engagement not only yield

more practical results, but also appear to be the foundation of an emerging COS 3.0 that

is slowly being "installed" through civil society structures and platforms.

E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Unity Within Collaboration

Despite the dour analysis by Putnam and others cited at the outset of this paper in

terms of America's civic health, especially in our most diverse communities, much has

changed in America over the past four decades that can be considered positive in terms of

grappling with the challenges of bringing together people with differing worldviews and interests and finding ways to work together for the good of the community. "Indeed," argue Sirianni and Friedland, "over the past several decades [Americans] have created forms of civic practice that are far more sophisticated in grappling with complex public problems and collaborating with highly diversified social actors than have ever existed in American History" (Sirianni and Friedland 2001, 1).

<div align="center">High Quality Processes</div>

Trying to assess the nature and impact of collaborative practices does pose challenges, since much of the research on collaborative practices remains anecdotal and inconclusive (Jones, Crook and Webb 2007; Leighninger 2006; Hicks et al. 2008). This is likely more of a commentary on the early stages of the field's formation, and thus on the design of the studies, than on the impact of collaboration itself. According to Glasby and Dickinson, "most studies focus on issues of process (how well are we working together?) rather than on outcomes (does it make any difference for people who use services?)" (Glasby and Dickinson 2008, 1). This is consistent with Ansell and Gash (2008) who found that most of the 137 cases in their review of collaborative governance focused on process outcomes as well. This is not surprising, given the various ways researchers are still coming to conceptualize the actual nature of collaboration. For instance, in Jones, Crook and Webb's review of 71 studies related to collaboration, most of the studies were classified as commentary or conceptualization, with only 22 (30%) classified as empirical using Klein and Bloom's (1994) taxonomy, and of those 22, only 8 stated explicit research questions, leading the authors to conclude "the empirical literature

presented here is largely anecdotal and at the weaker end of a methodological hierarchy," making it difficult to draw firm conclusions (Jones, Crook, and Webb 2007, 65). Some of the studies that have found positive outcomes associated with collaboration attribute those outcomes to the instrumental benefits of expanded service coverage (Selden, Sowa, and Sandfort 2006; Der 2009), while others focus on the impact collaboration has on the quality of relationships and communication amongst participants (Faria et el. 2007; Walter and Petr 2000; Zwarenstein and Reeves 2006). It is this group of studies that are most germane to my overall argument and to which we shall turn our attention.

Among the studies that focus on communicative aspects of collaboration, the work of Carl Larson, David Chrislip and Darrin Hicks shines the brightest light. Chrislip and Larson (1994) conducted perhaps the first foundational study into the nature and effects of collaboration on public processes. Commissioned by the American Leadership Forum to investigate what constituted effective civic leadership, they evaluated over 52 collaborative projects around the country that had successfully addressed complex situations in their communities. They distilled the essential elements that lay at the heart of those efforts. From this research emerged what they called "the collaborative premise:"

> If you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization and community. (Chrislip and Larson 1994, 14)

Their study was the first of its kind, providing a broad scan of public processes from around the country and laid the foundation for much of what would follow in the field of researching effective practices in collaboration. In their study, Chrislip and

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Larson offered some preliminary conclusions about what it takes to make collaboration succeed. These include:

- Good timing and a clear need

- Strong stakeholder groups

- Broad-based involvement

- Credibility and openness of process

- Commitment and/or involvement of high-level, visible leaders

- Support or acquiescence of "established" authorities or powers

- Overcoming mistrust and skepticism

- Strong leadership of the process

- Interim successes

- A shift to broader concerns (Chrislip and Larson 1994, 52-54)

From this list, two qualities that all 52 sites had in common were *strong process leadership*, and an *open, credible process* (Hicks et al. 2008). Based on this framework, Larson, Hicks and their colleagues began to evaluate the correlations between the level of process quality and the outcomes that similarly situated projects achieved. In a study of Colorado Healthy Communities Initiative ten years after the program was initiated, they explored how the 26 original sites rated in terms of both their process quality and outcomes. They found that 19 of the original 26 sites involved with the project were still in operation. For process quality, they used interviews with original participants to determine an aggregate score for each site in terms of how well it demonstrated an open and credible process, defined operationally in the following manner:

- The process was free of favoritism

- The people were focused on broad goals, rather than individual agendas

- Decisions made in the process were based on fair criteria

- Everyone had an equal opportunity to influence decisions

- There was sufficient opportunity to challenge decisions (Larson et al. 2002)

They then assessed each site in terms of how the outcomes it produced, with each site getting a score of 1-6 depending on how it was rated by participants and interviewers on the following scale:

1. The project accomplished its specific objectives.

2. The project achieved more than its original goals.

3. The project had a concrete impact on the root problem it targeted.

4. The project led to other projects or efforts.

5. The project helped change the way the community works together on public issues.

6. The project led to some individuals becoming new leaders or to more engaged community members (Larson et al. 2002, 5-6).

The overall correlation between process quality and success was +.71 based on participant ratings and +.81 based on interviewer rating, demonstrating a strong correlation between the two. Even more dramatic are the findings summarized in Table 1 that show the relationship between process quality and success when comparing the active and inactive groups. As the authors note, "the correlations between sustainability and success are sufficiently strong that they may be, for all practical purposes, the same thing" (24). The high levels of statistical significance in these findings suggest that at

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least in this instance, process quality relates strongly and directly to success and

sustainability of a collaborative effort—even 10 years after its inception.

Table 1: Significance Test of Comparison of Active and Inactive CHCI Sites (Larson et al. 2002, 24)

Rating (Scale = 1-6)	Active Sites (n=19)	Inactive Sites (n=7)	p Value
Mean process Quality rating	5.05	3.43	p<.000003
Overall success rating	5.21	2.57	p<.000002
Participant's success score	5.16	2.29	p<.000001

A second study that links process quality and community impact was based on the

16 sites in Colorado that implemented the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) home

visitation model between 1999 and 2003. The NFP is an evidence-based model that has a

nurse visit an expecting mother weekly during pregnancy and then up to the child's

second birthday. With over 20 years of longitudinal research the demonstrate the

program's effectiveness for children whose mothers complete the program, the key

variable then becomes completion rates for mothers. To determine the possible causes

for the variance in attrition rates of mothers across sites, Hicks and Larson looked at a

number of individual level variables (Level 1) that seemed likely correlates: the level of

education of the mother (education), the mother's mastery score taken upon entry into the

program (mastery), number of visits completed during pregnancy (nurse visits), and the

attrition rates of nurses (attrition). In addition, they looked at one site level (Level 2)

variable: process quality (authenticity), as measured by survey questions related to

credible and open the community process was that was used to adopt the program. Using

a hierarchical generalized linear model (HGLM) to analyze the results, they could explain

10.2% of the variation in the mothers' attrition rates based on Level 1 variables, and an

additional 12.6% of the variation when they looked at the Level 2 variable of process

quality. In commenting on their findings, the authors noted that

> The most striking thing about the results is not simply that the hypothesis [that process quality would account for a significant proportion of the variance in attrition] is supported but rather it is the strength of the association found between process quality and participant attrition. . . One additional fact makes the finding in the present research even more surprising: Site-level data on process quality was collected approximately 4 years before the programmatic data on attrition were collected. (Hicks et al. 2008, 469-70)

These finds are supported in other studies. Gomez, Greenberg and Feinberg

(2005) concur that the internal functioning of the community coalition board—e.g.

quality of communication, level of support, and level of motivation—in the early stages

of the coalition work played a significant role in determining the sustainability of the

Communities that Care coalitions in Pennsylvania three years after inception.

Transfer of Commitment

From this research we see that the importance of the early stages of a

collaborative process cannot be overstated. As we have seen, establishing what

researchers call the "virtuous cycle" of trust and commitment early on greatly affects the

likelihood of long-term success and sustainability (Ring and Van de Ven 1994). But

understanding *that* it is critical is one thing; understanding *how* it is established is another

thing altogether. For this, lessons learned from game theory as it is modeled in computer

generated simulations of complex network interactions proves particularly helpful.

Johnston et al. explain (2010) this in terms of the "minimum effort game," which, like the

Prisoners Dilemma, simulates the basic risk and reward structure of situations where

multiple actors must work together. In this game, the theoretical group is building a

chain, and each person can either contribute a strong or weak link to the chain. They can

spend $1 to contribute a weak link, or $10 to contribute a strong link. If all contribute a

strong chain, the payoff is $30 for everyone; if anyone contributes a weak link, the payoff

is $4. Played amongst random strangers where there is no established pattern of others

contributing a strong link, the game defaults to an equilibrium of each person

contributing a weak link. However,

> when entering into a situation where everyone is contributing a strong link, there
> is no incentive to 'game the system' and not cooperate. Articulation of
> collaborative governance in a game theoretic framework provides some
> understanding about the robustness of early interactions to outcomes found years
> later in the [Nurse Family Partnership research (Hicks et al. 2008)] (Johnston et
> al. 2010, 11).

Hicks et al. (2008) call this "fundamental pattern of a learned level of cooperation

among people the 'transfer of commitment'" (472). On this account, the commitment of

the initial members of a group to work for the good of the group, rather than just for their

own individual gain, overcomes the initial risk of collaboration and infuses the process

with new type of energy that not only reinforces their own virtuous cycle of trust and

further commitment, but is passed down through successive interactions with others who

join the process at later stages. This hinges in part on the importance of attracting others

who are committed to the process, "providing a proactive response to emerging

problems," and "making concerted efforts to retain key individuals who are deeply

committed to the program" and keep them engaged (472). This passing on of

commitment is not just "strategic" in the sense that it is an intention played out over time;

it is palpably present, and sends signals to others present in a group in a concrete,

experiential manner. This is consistent with LaFasto and Larson's (2001) research on

effective teams, and how they create and sustain mental, physical, and emotional energies

that "spread through teams to produce outcomes which go beyond performance

expectations one would have of individual team members" (Hicks et al. 2008, 472). It

also reinforces the notion proposed by Bohm (1996) and explained by Isaacs (1999)

referenced earlier that groups form "fields" as they work together in which energy

actually changes states and has demonstrable effects. The implications of this finding,

while admittedly at odds with the subjected-centered, individualistic assumptions of

COS 2.0, will prove critical to explaining and understanding the emerging structure of

COS 3.0. If we take these implications seriously, the whole challenge of *e pluribus unum*

that we have been taking as a given—of balancing part and whole, individual and

collective—begins to reveal itself as an example of Bohm's "fragmented thought" that

causes negative patterns of behavior and then pretends "it didn't do it." If individuals

give and take energy within groups, as this research suggests, then the models of effective

group interaction begin to look more like the natural systems we mentioned at the outset,

where the part and whole do not constitute a problem to be solved so much as an

irreducible element of the ecosystem itself. Everything is at once both part and whole, or

what Arthur Koestler termed a "holon" (Koestler 1967). A cell is a *whole* in that it is

made up of molecules, and yet it is a *part* of an organism. The same relationship abides

between the molecule and atoms, atoms and subatomic particles, and all the way down to

the quantum level, and all the way up to from organisms to ecosystems and on up to solar

systems, galaxies, and beyond. Koestler called the organization of holons into successive

levels of increasing complexity and order "holarchy." We will return to this concept in a

moment when we look to the question of the social organization at the level of civil

society, but for now, it is important to note that the more one peers into the research on

the effective interaction amongst diverse groups of people, the more the patterns

highlight a shift away from the foundations of COS 2.0 and begin to reveal the

architecture of COS 3.0.

<p style="text-align: center;">Cautions and Limitations of Research on Collaboration</p>

While the research I have cited here is both solid and encouraging, it is admittedly

limited in many ways. First, the sample sizes are small and not particularly generalizable

given the nature of their designs. Second, I have focused on a narrow slice of an already

small body of research, and have left unexplored the more subtle distinctions between

collaborative work, and its close cousins of cooperation and coordination (Mattessich and

Monsey 1992). Nor have we looked at examples where collaboration has proven to be

ineffective, or misapplied to the situation (Larson and Hicks 2004). These are important

issues and provide a necessary caution against the temptation to extrapolate from the

findings cited here to reach the unwarranted conclusion that collaboration is a cure all for

any situation in which diverse actors find themselves in joint activity. That is certainly

not the case. What I have tried to do is inquire into those situations in which, despite the

prevailing wisdom of COS 2.0, which places an emphasis on the rational individual

maximizing his or her choices within a set of systems that encourage and protect

individuals to pursue their individual goods, we have found not only successful examples

where collaborative activity demonstrates the theoretical model of communicative reason

outlined in Chapter 2, but even more, the lessons gleaned from such examples generate a

<p style="text-align: center;">62</p>

useful model for explaining how it is that such behavior sets in motion the conditions for ripples of impact that produce positive effects years into the future.

Summary

Though the research cited here is admittedly in the nascent stages of mapping the true contours of the landscape of collaboration, the evidence is strong enough to suggest that the quality of the communicative processes involved in collaborative work have an important and lasting effect on outcomes of collective work. Further, based on the work of Larson, Hicks, and Chrislip, we can say with increasing confidence what the specific elements of high quality processes are and how they can be accurately assessed by participants in those processes.   These findings, while limited in scope, lend credible, empirical evidence to the theoretical claims we explored in Chapter Two. First, communicative reason, as outlined by Habermas and refined by a number of respondents, suggests that all competent language users possess the ability to draw upon communicative reason as a non-coercive means of coordinating joint activity through mutual understanding and the "unforced force of the better argument," rather than presuming that such coordination of joint activity is only brought about through steering mechanisms rooted in instrumental rationality. That outcomes varied in the examples studied in direct relation to the degree participants believed they could fairly influence the outcomes of process through their input, which is a hallmark of communicative reason, suggests collaboration depends on the exercise of communicative reason rather than on more instrumental means of influence. Further, the findings we reviewed suggest that our more "dialogical correction" of Habermas's original theory is warranted to the

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degree the researchers' explanation of the effects suggests that the process of collaboration hinges on more than simply joint decision-making and "the exchange of reasons," but also includes the relational quality of the group and the commitment to others in the group. Such findings are in keeping with Bakhtin's emphasis that communication is "once-occurrent" and experiential, and while the research we have reviewed thus far does not speak to the actual nature of the group's discourse, the effects of their communication are consistent with Bohm's notion that in dialogue, groups learn to "think together" as they form more coherent "fields" of communication that resemble phase shifts in nature. Finally, Levinas' emphasis on the ethical dimension of communication as "being for the Other" is a plausible description of how the "virtuous cycle" of collaboration and trust is at least partially set in motion through the cues that members send to each other that they are concerned about more than simply securing their own gain or advancing vested interests.

Learning From and In Other Fields

While the research on collaboration reviewed above provides a powerful model that confirms that the quality of a group's efforts has a lot to do with the quality of its process, a review of different models for creating those conditions reveals a wealth of effective strategies for ensuring the success of groups working in a range of contexts toward a variety of goals. By looking to a number of successful models for engaging citizens in improving the quality of their communities, we can see the "family resemblance" between a number of these models. In what follows, I will briefly summarize five different examples from the literature on group effectiveness that meet

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criteria that are relevant for our overall project, including a) applying to diverse sets of

stakeholders, b) showing evidence of effectiveness in terms of process and outcomes, and

c) applying to public problems of general concern. After reviewing these examples, I

will then offer a synthesis of their most salient qualities to form what we might call a

"community learning model." This model is designed to help diverse members of a

community intentionally create the conditions for defining common outcomes, working

effectively towards them, and adapting and sustaining their efforts over time.

Learning Organizations

Any survey of models for improving the collective performance of groups should

rightfully include at least some reference to notions of continuous improvement models

given the widespread and international interest in the topic. The challenge is deciding on

what to call them. "Quality circles" were among the earliest ancestors of this family,

popularized in large part through the example of Japan's rise on the global stage after

WWII and the celebrity W. Edwards Deming earned with the successful turnaround of

Ford Motor Company (Deming 1986). Quality circles were applied primarily to industry

but to other fields as well in the 1970s and 80s, and then blurred into other forms of

quality improvement—Total Quality Management (TQM), Six Sigma methods, Malcolm

Baldridge Excellence Awards, EFQM, and other models (Dahlgaard 1999). While some

research on the effectiveness of the early quality circle movement cites solid support for

the effectiveness of quality circles (Barrick and Alexander 1986), other reviews have

found the increasingly faddish nature of the phenomenon has dissipated its effects (Hill

1991). Still, the basic features of the quality circles, or quality control circles (QCC) as

they were originally called in Japan (Lillrank and Kano 1989), are consistent with the

features of other small group, quality improvement models in other fields and disciplines,

sometimes called "learning communities" or "communities of practice," that have proven

effective at generating results in education, health care, and other service industries

(Schmoker, 2002; McLaughlin and Talbert 2001; Wenger 1996; Hemmasi and Csanda

2009). Though not an exact match, and derived from different theoretical models, these

variants can to a certain degree be classified under what has come to be known as

"learning organizations" (Senge 1990; Garvin, Edmondson and Gino 2008). In general

terms these models share some basic elements:

- They include a structured learning cycle (e.g. Plan→Act→Study→Do) that is iterative and continuous

- They use data on important outcomes as an important feedback loop to inform decisions

- They frequently consist of small, voluntary groups of practitioners committed to learning from each other and improving practice

- They place an emphasis on the relationships and culture among members as well as on results of their work

- They emphasize process improvement as a key mechanism for quality improvement

Civic Innovation and Civic Renewal

In the late 1990s, Sirianni and Friedland began writing a book about participation

and democracy from a cross-cultural, primarily European perspective but were so taken

by the recent civic innovations in the United States that they jettisoned their initial project

and focused entirely on gathering the lessons learned by activists, theorists, professional

practitioners in nonprofits and government agencies, and even some corporate

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organizations eager to find new ways to engage and develop partnerships with citizens

(Sirianni and Friedland 2001, ix). They frame the notion of civic innovation not just as a

list of best practices; rather, they frame the concept as a type of *social learning,* where

practices that have been effective at producing social change are adapted over time to

expand their effectiveness. For instance, in their interviews with hundreds of civic

innovators, Sirianni and Friedland spoke with many of the leaders of social movements

and civic engagement efforts from the 1960s who have remained engaged in work of

participatory processes. Among the changes that these innovators identified is that they

"place much greater emphasis upon building relationships of trust with diverse

stakeholders and adversaries and much less upon personalized fulfillment or intense and

ideologically pure identity-forming activities" (27). The continual refinement and

application of core principles to actual practice is at the heart of effective civic

involvement. Civic innovation also strengthens the ties that bind us to one another,

heightening the stores of social capital in the process:

> [Civic innovation] mobilizes social capital in ways that promote broad democratic
> norms, enhance responsible and inclusive citizenship, and build the civic
> capacities of communities and institutions to solve problems through the public
> work of citizens themselves, often in collaboration with various market, state, and
> professional actors and through policy designs that foster self-government. (14)

Sirianni and Friedland look at a number of examples of how this is being

accomplished, from stories of community organizers, to civic environmentalists, to

community health advocates, and finally public journalists. Rather than approaching

their task as a matter of analyzing specific "civic methods" and evaluating their impact to

see which were more effective, they approached their work through a participatory

research model of documenting and encouraging innovation in each field (30). In the

essence, they were tracing the particular ways civic innovation occurred in different

fields since the birth of more participatory forms of democracy in the 1960s.

While their work is more narrative than analytical, it is possible to distill from

their stories a handful of principles that will serve our current project's goals of

understanding the best lessons from the field of civic engagement. The short version of

that distillation is that civic innovation involves:

- Connecting citizens to public life

- Mobilizing social capital to generate new institutional forms, supported by
  public policy, that solves community problems

- Social learning through policy, organizational development and regulatory
  culture, and participatory democratic theory

It is important to note that one of the other conclusions that Sirianni and Friedland

offered at the time of their writing was that with all of the momentum around civic

innovation, a new movement was building across the country—the civic renewal

movement. They imagined the many forces they described in the book as about to

converge to create a new social movement that would usher in a substantial reframing of

the role of citizen from passive consumer to active problem solver, and the role of

government from dispenser of services to "'catalyst' for citizen problem solving and a

'partner' in multi-sided collaborative efforts" (242). Central to this movement would be

a rebirth of civil society—a notion we will pick up in a moment.

Democratic Governance

In *The Next Form of Democracy*, Leighninger outlines the lessons learned from

the public sector's attempts to engage citizens more directly in governance. Distilling the

principles at play in successful efforts across the country, he summarizes their

commonalities:

> First, they recruit people by reaching out through the various groups and organizations to which they belong, in order to assemble a large and diverse 'critical mass' of citizens. Second, they involve those citizens in combination of small- and large-group meetings; structured, facilitated small groups for informed, deliberative dialogue, and large forums for amplifying shared conclusions and moving from talk to action. Third, they give the participants in these meetings the opportunity to compare values and experiences, and to consider a range of views and policy options. Finally, they effect change in a number of ways: by applying citizen input to policy and planning decisions, by encouraging change within organizations and institutions, by creating teams to work on particular action ideas, by inspiring and connecting individual ideas, or all of the above (Leighninger 2006, 3)

We might summarize Leighninger's principles this way:

- Recruit a diverse critical mass

- Facilitate small and large group dialogue

- Compare values, consider options

- Take action by changing policies, organizations, and communities.

Among the examples Leighninger cites are communities who faced the challenge

of declining tax revenues and increased demand for services, dealing with racial strife in

public affairs, and revitalizing decaying neighborhoods. In all of these examples,

communities successfully relied upon the same basic principles of engagement,

deliberation, shared decision making, and action planning to more effectively address

perennial problems.

Civic Engagement

In *New Laboratories for Democracy: How Local Government is Reinventing*

Civic Engagement, Mike McGrath from the National Civic League recounts four specific

innovations that local governments are using to inspire and empower citizens to better

solve their own problems and act as partners with, rather than consumers of, local

government services (McGrath 2010). McGrath identifies the following practices as

central to reinventing civic engagement:

- Experiments that equalize engagement across the citizenry as part of ensuring that diverse voices are heard, rather than providing a platform for "professional citizens" alone;

- New programs that resolve long-standing problems and address pressing neighborhood needs by leveraging community assets and knowledge;

- Temporary planning and decision-making forums that go beyond community meetings and public hearings, as part of building support for difficult decisions; and

- Government-citizen efforts that harness technology for gathering real-time data for program decision making and day-to-day program management.

Effective Teams

LaFasto and Larson (2001) have spent nearly 30 years tracking the performance

of 6,000 team members and leaders representing some of the highest performing teams in

the world from across a wide range of industries. Using observations, interviews and

survey data, they developed a model to explain and assess what differentiates high-

performing from lower-performing teams. Their model is a set of nested relationships

that are distinct but interdependent, with each having a set of core components that are

pivotal in discriminating between levels of performance. These include:

- Team Members: Core competency, supportiveness, an action orientation, and a positive personal style

- Team Relationships: The ability to give and receive feedback

- Team Problem Solving: Focus, positive climate, open communication

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- Team Leadership: Focus on the goal, ensure collaborative climate, build confidence, demonstrate sufficient technical know-how, set priorities, manage performance

- Team Environment: Effective management practices, decision-making structures and processes, and information systems that drive results

Synthesis

When one seeks to compare these different research findings using the lexicon of features, steps, and elements unique to each model, only a handful of features stand out as applying to a wide cross-section of models (see Appendix A for a detailed comparison). However, if we attempt to not just distill a list based on the self-description of each approach, but to divide these features into "process" and "content" dimensions, then the features across models can be nested more easily within common themes. For instance, if we take the general process features from the research on collaboration (Chrislip and Larson 1994; Ansell and Gash 2008) and learning organizations research (Schmoker, 2002; McLaughlin and Talbert 2001; Wenger 1996; Lillbank and Kano 1989), what emerges is a basic framework of an ongoing cycle of "plan, act, reflect" that is a source of learning and adaptation, as well as necessary for building trust and collaboration amongst participants. Reviewing the content themes, the most common features of all models are the importance of including diverse participants and the need for a goal/problem focus. The other element found across multiple models is dialogue and deliberation, which are referenced as explicit elements of several models and as key ingredients of others (e.g weighing of options, influencing decisions, etc.).

This analysis, plus the experiences of actually using various process models in the field with my colleague Drew O'Connor, leads me to offer the following model as an

attempt to synthesize both the processes and content components of these various bodies

of evidence:

- **Include**: make sure a diverse and representative set of stakeholders is involved in the discussion and decision-making process.

- **Dialogue**: create space for the exchange of perspectives and reasons among equals in the process and for developing decisions and plans for action.

- **Results**: develop shared goals and ways to measure impact.

- **Act**: make sure that conversations are translated into meaningful action steps that encourage collaboration and show participants that they can meaningfully impact outcomes.

- **Learn**: revise the process in a transparent manner based on lessons learned, and adapt strategies to better reach the goals.

- **Create a culture of ongoing trust and collaboration**: keep the diverse partners at the table for the long-haul to continue to work through differences and monitor progress.

Summary

In this chapter I have tried to make the case that a review of the literature on

effective collaborative processes that have shown evidence of producing high levels of

impact at the community level, and which are manifestations of the communicative

reason we explored in Chapter Two, leads to the development of a "community learning

model" that is applicable to diverse groups working across issues areas and at various

levels of engagement in the community.   I have argued further that this model functions

as a vehicle to inspire an ongoing, adaptive learning process within a community that

serves as an "upward spiral" of engagement that manifests the properties of what I am

calling COS 3.0—a new cultural operating system that more adequately addresses the

challenges of *e pluribus unum* that ultimately render COS 2.0 ineffective—namely, the

challenges of fragmentation and rigidity in the face of increasing societal complexity.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL IN PRACTICE

Introduction

The community learning model proposed in the previous chapter is a concrete response to the practical challenge of helping groups of diverse partners overcome the challenges of *e pluribus unum* to collaborate toward greater collective impact. In what follows, I will explore the model in greater detail and unpack its various stages and dimensions to explain the rationale behind each. In addition, I will attempt to link to specific methods and practices to each stage to highlight what it looks like in practice. Then I will explore this community learning model through the lens of case studies at the neighborhood, community, and statewide level, and use the lessons gleaned from these experiences to posit the "design specifications" for building a community-level version of COS 3.0. These design specifications set the parameters that such an approach must work within in order to successfully support a new way for community partners to work together to address complex social problems on community-wide scale.

Unpacking the Community Learning Model

When taking a closer look at the elements of the community learning model, we see that it is built from not only the broad elements of effective practice, but it also includes a more refined set of specific strategies and mechanisms associated with the improved results. Further, these elements are practical manifestations of the theory of communicative action explored in Chapter Two. Taken together as a whole, these elements can be fruitfully considered steps in a continuous process of adaptive learning as depicted in Figure 2. In

Figure 2: Community Learning Model

addition, each element can also be seen as permeating the others. For instance, while inclusion is a critical step in the initial establishment of a process, it is also an element of each meeting of a group and a tone set throughout an entire process. Similarly, the culture of collaboration is not simply a final stage in a collaborative process, but something that builds throughout and in turn "holds" the rest of the elements together with greater intensity and integrity as the culture grows stronger. Figure 3 summarizes a brief outline of elements within each component. In explaining them, I will use each element as a type of "regulating ideal," rather than trying to address all the obstacles and barriers that might arise as one moves through the process. We will visit the challenges to each stage when we explore the cases studies later in the chapter.

Critical Outcome	Key Theory/Strategy
Establishing a Collaborative Process	
o Assessing and addressing the context for collaboration	o Ansell and Gash; Chrislip o Chrislip

o	Ensure facilitative leadership	o	Chrislip and Larson; Ansell and Gash
o	Establish the credibility to convene	o	Chrislip
Inclusion			
o	Establish trust and conditions for effective communication	o	Chrislip and Larson; Levinas, Habermas
o	Build commitment	o	Johnston et al.
o	Establish legitimacy	o	Chrislip and Larson; Habermas
Dialogue			
o	Establish the primacy of mutual understanding	o	Bakhtin; Habermas
o	Utilize the give and take of reasons	o	Bohman; Habermas
o	Reach reasoned decisions and agreements	o	Bohman; Habermas; LaFasto and Larson
Results			
o	Establish clear and elevating goals	o	LaFasto and Larson
o	Use data and feedback loops to inform decisions	o	LaFasto and Larson
Act			
o	Develop an action orientation	o	LaFasto and Larson
o	Institute effective problem solving processes	o	LaFasto and Larson
o	Maximize innovation, reinforce what works	o	Chrislip and Larson
o	Establish interim successes	o	LaFasto and Larson
Learn			
o	Establish concrete learning processes	o	Garvin; Senge
o	Establish a safe climate for learning	o	Garvin; Senge; LaFasto and Larson
o	Review and adapt performance	o	LaFasto and Larson
Culture of Collaboration			
o	Reinforce climate of trust	o	LaFasto and Larson; Hicks and Larson
o	Communicate results to include others	o	Johnston et al.

Figure 3: Elements of the Community Learning Model

Establishing a Collaborative Process

Though not technically a part of the model proper, the stage of establishing and designing the collaborative process is of critical importance to the model's success (Ansell and Gash 2008; Chrislip 2002). Given the link we have already explored between the early stages of the collaborative process and the long term success, starting a process off on the right foot is paramount. According to Ansell and Gash (2008), the critical components of this stage are assessing and addressing the starting conditions of collaboration: potential asymmetries in power, resources, and knowledge among participants; the incentives for and constraints on participation, and the prehistory of collaboration or conflict in the group—that is, their baseline level of trust. They also acknowledge the key role of facilitative leadership, both within the process and in support of its outcomes. Finally, the highlight the clarifying what they call the "institutional design" that will determine a number of key features: who should take part, what the ground rules are, how decisions will be made, and how information will be shared internally and externally. In his *Collaborative Leadership Fieldbook*, Chrislip (2002) reinforces these same elements as a process of "getting started" and "setting up for success" (94). One minor difference between their two models is that while both emphasize the need for legitimacy, which is largely a function of the next stage of Inclusion, Ansell and Gash's model of collaborative governance gives a central role of state actors and agencies, which bring with them a presumptive "credibility to convene" (Chrislip 2002, 76), whereas Chrislip makes that a more formal step for multi-stakeholder

processes that might need to be more explicit in order to ensure that their work will be

perceived as legitimate by important players potentially affected by the effort.

<div align="center">Include</div>

The importance of legitimacy in a process—that is, those affected by decisions

should have a say in those decisions—runs through both the theoretical arguments

explored here (Habermas 1973b, 1987, 1996) as well as the practical examples (Chrislip

and Larson 1994; Martin, Tett, and Kay 1999; Reilly 1998). A chief strategy for ensuring

legitimacy is including a credible set of stakeholders that "reflects the diversity of the

broader community or region" (Chrislip 2002, 77). These stakeholders should possesses

both a diverse enough set of perspectives to generate novel solutions as well as the

potential to hold public officials and decision-making bodies to account for implementing

the recommendations of the process. While this would appear to suggest that "more

inclusion is better, " as Johnston et al. (2010) point out, there are often costs associated

with seeking to include too many people too fast in a collaborative process. "How to

thoughtfully navigate the competing tension between inclusion speed and process

commitment, particularly in the early stages of collaboration, is a choice with serious

consequences" (3). Johnston el al. suggest two approaches to inclusion that help address

the tension between speed and process commitment. These approaches are derived from

an analysis of the effective community processes used by Invest in Kids, a Denver-based

nonprofit, to engage stakeholders in decision-making around the selection of the Nurse

Family Partnership model—a nationally recognized "blueprint" prevention model

(Mihalic and Irwin 2003). The first practice associated with successfully balancing these

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tensions is what they call a *deliberative planning* process, in which the process of developing consensus and support for the program before moving from the planning stage to the implementation stage was given the time it needed to develop, rather than proceeding according to an externally driven schedule. This second practice identified as effective was what they called the *thoughtful inclusion* approach. Here, instead of just having new members show up to a meeting confused about the purpose of the group and their role in it, new members are given a thoughtful orientation and provided background in advance. Additionally, new participants are identified in part because of their past commitment to collaborations, which "added new perspectives and energy to the group" (8). Both strategies illustrate the importance in the Inclusion stage of intentionally building strategies that promote legitimacy and the inclusion of diverse partners, but in a way that builds on, rather than reduces, the overall level of commitment that a core group might have established.

Dialogue

As we explored in detail in Chapter Two, dialogue is way of thinking, communicating, and relating with others that enables the open exchange of ideas oriented toward mutual understanding and which is rooted in an ethical response to the Other. As participants engage in the initial stages of dialogue, they surface their current assumptions and the "mental models" (Senge 1990) they hold about the topic at hand, which allows them to both share their perspectives and to allow those perspectives to be transformed by the responses of others. As people develop the skills of listening, speaking, surfacing assumptions, and respecting the ideas of others (Isaacs 1999), they

create the creative space for a deeper understanding of the issues at hand and of the other

people in the process. Once people learn that mutual understanding is the goal of the

exchanges, rather than needing to convince or convert someone or to fend off others'

attempts at the same, the tone of a group can shift dramatically and people become less

defensive and more open to new ideas. When ideas differ, and compete for the more

accurate account or the more persuasive presentation, the experience of "the unforced

force of the better argument" described by Habermas is palpable—no coercion, just the

exchange of reasons. Admittedly, this is a rare experience for most groups, but Bohman

(2000) lists a number of important mechanisms that promote the give and take of reasons

in dialogue that are familiar to most people and which can provide a useful set of "tools"

for people to draw upon. In addition to the testing and surfacing of assumptions, he

emphasizes the importance of sharing stories and biographical information; moving back

and forth from the specific to the general in one's argument; articulating from the vague

to the specific; and perspective taking, or seeking to take the position of one's fellow

discussants and vice versa to better appreciate the nature of their positions. Drawing

upon these dialogical mechanisms in both small and large group settings is critical to

balance the need for individuals to "find their voice" in safety, but also for "amplifying

shared conclusions and moving from talk to action" (Leighninger 2006, 3). With

practice, it becomes easier for groups to reach agreement on their common goals, on the

nature of the problems they face, and on the best path to get there. A key element of the

dialogue stage of the process is to agree upon where the group is headed, and how it will

get there. Making those decisions within the context of respectful dialogue, rather than within a polarized atmosphere, is often the difference between success and failure.

Results

At the center of any successful collective endeavor resides a clear articulation of the results the group seeks—the goal or goals it has in mind and towards which it is working. While these are not always known in detail at the outset, they must at least emerge with increasing clarity and power over time. Those desired results and the re-assessment of them drive the planning process, the feedback loops of improvement, and provide the shared "currency" to keep the flow of understanding and shared commitment alive. In their work tracking 6,000 team members and leaders over time, LaFasto and Larson (2001) discovered that

> The single most important determinant of a team's success is a 'clear and elevating goal.' We came to this conclusion after talking to members and leaders of some of the most successful teams in recent history—heart transplant teams, mountaineering teams, space exploration teams, new product development teams. Others who have studied groups and teams have reached the same conclusion with a consistency that approximates consensus. The goal is what it's all about; it is the reason the team exists. (72)

Equally important is some way to know, without ambiguity, if the goal is being reached or not at any given moment. Often this involves determining indicators of success that are quantifiable, that provide telling pieces of information about the issues that matter most to the group, but they need not always be quantitative. As Jim Collins (2005) points out, work that benefits the public good sometimes involves goals that are initially seem intangible, or which might not show signs of progress for years. So as a result, measuring progress is more about finding clear "evidence of success" than just relying on the more obvious numbers and statistics. For a symphony, that may come as

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much from the number of standing ovations as it is from ticket sales; for a community tackling crime, it may be an increase in the number of first names neighbors know on their block before it turns into a reduction of burglary. The key is meaning and clarity—goals have to be compelling, and indicators of progress have to clear so they can set in motion the feedback loops people need to improve their efforts.

Act

As Chrislip and Larson (1994) point out, "getting results is too often where collaborative efforts fail. Agreements reached about vision, problem definition, and solutions are not followed by well-organized, well-managed approaches to implementation and action" (121). Sometimes this occurs because the problems appear too complex, and the decision about what to do first feels overwhelming. Effective teams counter this tendency by developing an "action orientation" (LaFasto and Larson 2001) that promotes the habit of taking action, even in small ways. As they quip, "the fundamental law of success is this: *Action is more likely to succeed than inaction"* (22, emphasis in the original). Action keeps the ongoing learning cycle in motion, which can bring with it its own momentum. Communities that have successfully solved problems over time often need to break well-established patterns and habits, and develop the capacity for social innovation by paying attention to what has not been working in the past in order to adapt and try new possibilities (Sirianni and Friedland 2001). At other times, moving to action does not entail an entirely new effort, but as McGrath points out, it can be a matter of reinforcing efforts already under way, and finding ways to leverage existing assets more effectively (McGrath 2010). In addition, Leighninger (2006)

recommends that groups be mindful of the many arenas for action they have, including

policy change, changing institutions, taking direct action in small groups, or even just

inspiring new ideas and new ways of seeing the world around them. When new actions

must be taken, it is critical that the group has clear decision-making roles and processes,

and can reach agreement on the best action even where there is not unanimity.

<div align="center">Learn</div>

As critical as every element of this learning model may be, perhaps the most

decisive feature that differentiates ongoing action from actual improvement is the degree

to which the actions combine to produce learning and change of practice. As Edmondson

(2008) notes,

> Having studied knowledge organizations – hospitals, in particular – for nearly
> 20 years, I'd like to offer a new definition of what successful execution looks like
> in the knowledge economy: The best organizations have figured out how to learn
> quickly while maintaining high quality standards. (62)

According to Garvin, Edmondson and Gino (2008), the building blocks of

learning organization include a supportive learning environment, concrete learning

processes and practices, and leadership that supports learning. This is consistent with

LaFasto and Larson's (2001) findings on the importance of establishing a supportive

climate, the giving and receiving of feedback, and aligning systems to support results.

When groups have both a climate that is supportive and trusting, and the structures to

support learning—e.g. clear and measurable goals with information about progress and

concrete ways to review their performance toward their goals—they can not only better

address the problems they face, but they are also inoculated against the "blame game"

when things do not go right. Rather than seeing different people as scapegoats, groups

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and communities that focus on learning adapt, respond, and improve. This has proven to

be critical in the Grand Junction healthcare success store cited earlier.

> The need for having a reliable information system in the community that allows physicians to actually see their cost and quality data cannot be overstated. In Grand Junction, the local health plan helped pay for the cost of setting up disease registries in our practices. These systems allow us to track key indicators for conditions such as diabetes and asthma and help us better manage the care of patients with these conditions, which in turn reduces unnecessary hospital admissions. The data also allow our physicians to see how their performance compares with that of their peers, which is a powerful motivator. The IPA [Independent Physicians Association] has also used an incentive pool of funds provided by the health plan to reward different physician behaviors, depending on clinical priorities. We have never known for sure whether the money or the desire to not be at the bottom of the list is the more effective incentive. (Shenkel and West 2010, 19)

<div align="center">Culture of Collaboration</div>

As we saw in reviewing the research on collaboration above, and as most of our

process models point out (LaFasto and Larson 2001; Garvin, Edmondson and Gino 2008;

Johnston et al. 2010; McGrath 2010; Isaacs 1999; Bohm 1996), building an atmosphere

or "container" of trust and commitment is an imperative for the success and sustainability

of collaborative groups.   Such a culture changes the calculus of collaboration (Johnston

et al. 2010) such that new members see it as a "new normal" rather than a high risk

proposition, and the virtuous cycle of trust begetting commitment begetting results

begetting more trust is set in motion. As Isaacs (2010) puts it, once a culture is

established that supports collaborative work, it is as if the group has transcended the

particular individuals involved and created a new identity that pulls additional energy

towards it:

> It's an energetic space, that holds factors of cultural identity in a stable pattern. It emanates a certain magnetic quality that draws and repels substance. It's got its own magnetic center. It's quite over and above just the relationships themselves.

We always emphasize that one has to think far beyond relational models. Relationships are carrier waves for that energy. People of course take these things quite personally, but it's not really personal or even about them in particular. (Isaacs 2010)

E Pluribus Unum Revisited: Social Capital or Social Learning?

This magnetic quality that effective groups have, that draws or "pulls" people in stands in sharp contrast to the communities we considered at the beginning of this paper. Indeed, we have come full circle in our exploration of the challenge of *e pluribus unum*. Where Putnam observed diverse communities characterized by individuals withdrawing from the bonds of public life and having lower levels of social capital, here we see diverse groups of people creating the conditions that actually pull others into them. What explains this difference? In her analysis of the role of social capital in explaining individual and group success, fittingly titled *Pull*, Laird reframes the concept of social capital in a way that provides some possible solutions (Laird 2006). Her central argument is that contrary to the myth of the rugged individual pulling himself up by the bootstraps, our success as individuals is more a function of our connections to others:

In expanding my project to tie the past to the present, I realized that we needed the words of the social capital lexicon—mentoring, networking, role models, gatekeeping—to understand how and why some people succeed and others do not. These words recently came into our everyday language, and they make it possible to explain how individual merits balance against social assets. (xii)

From this starting point, she then makes three key points: 1) we are parts of social networks, 2) those networks currently have inequitable distributions of social capital, and 3) that social justice involves finding ways to change the institutions that push some people out and pull others in to ensure that everyone has a fair shot at success. While I agree with the larger points, I believe her turn to the conceptual framework of social

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capital is ultimately a decision to be trapped in the lexicon and assumptions of COS 2.0.

The very notion of capital, in all of its forms, trades on industrial metaphors and

smuggles in the fragmentation of humans as isolated, rational entities navigating the

marketplace of society in a quest to maximize individual gain. As I have argued

elsewhere (Fulton and Jordan 2010), I propose that we begin to think less about *social*

capital found in social networks and more about the *social learning* that they make

possible in order to truly understand what is happening in situations like those we have

observed above. In these instances, where we see diverse groups thrive in an upward

spiral of trust, commitment, innovation, and progress towards shared goals, we need a

new lexicon to describe the new operating system that appears to be at work here, one

that *presumes* that society, indeed life in general, is not a struggle between the *pluribus*

and the *unum*, but is rather an interconnected, elegant order whose simple patterns yield

surprising, even miraculous, results once we understand them and work with them rather

than against them. The cynic—perhaps the realist—in all of us has been duped so many

times by such propositions that they appear naïve at best and more likely delusional in the

face of the depressing realities of so many of our neighborhoods, cities and even nations

around the world. Still, as I will attempt to argue in what follows, ideas that were taken

as romantic fantasy a mere decade ago are taken as givens in our changing world. The

emerging infrastructures of new systems that presume collaboration, openness, and

shared purpose are the rule, not the exception. These patterns of dialogical, collaborative,

and open systems are creating a new cultural operating system that allows the individual

applications of these principles to connect, combine, and amplify the impact of isolated

efforts in exciting new ways and are changing how theorists and practitioners alike are coming to understand the nature of social systems.

Civil Society as a Complex Adaptive System

At first blush, Isaacs' claim above that a process so connected to personal relationships is in the end "not really personal" is perplexing to say the least. But this makes sense if one considers that groups do maintain a certain form or "identity" over time that transcends the individual people who might come and go as group membership changes. The paradoxical mix of permanent wholes made from ephemeral parts is of course familiar in the natural world, and a particular hallmark of our popular understandings of "quantum reality," (Herbert 1985), but is less of a given in human systems. Most people accept the enduring permanence of bureaucracies as impersonal, and less dependent on the attributes of particular people, but we tend to think of high functioning organizations and groups as more reliant on the unique qualities of their leaders, founders, and star players. But this may be changing. The more we learn about how systems come to "self-organize," the more intriguing the parallels become between natural systems and effective human systems. While few people would be flattered in knowing this, even slime mold, that familiar and furry collection of cells found growing in damp places, appears to have the ability to self-organize to find not only the shortest distance through a maze to find food (Johnson 2001), but it won international notoriety for being able to solve a simulated "shortest distance" challenge of calculating rail line routes between cities in Japan (BBC, January 22, 2010; Sanders 2010). As Johnson (2001) puts it,

While slime mold cells are relatively simple, they have attracted a disproportionate amount of attention from a number of different disciplines—embryology, mathematics, computer science—because they display such an intriguing example of coordinated group behavior. Anyone who has ever contemplated the great mystery of human physiology—how do all my cells manage to work so well together?—will find something resonant in the slime mold's swarm. If we could only figure out how the *Dictyostelium* pull it off, maybe we could gain some insight on our own baffling togetherness. (13)

If we refer back to Koestler's notion of holons, this "baffling togetherness" applies to not only our human body, but the body politic as well—the way we organize ourselves into groups, communities, cities, etc. As important as I believe this community learning model is to helping communities better address the complex problems they face, it is unlikely that even the most effective processes run with expert skill and with sustainable resources would be sufficient to provide the kind of broader change needed to "reset" our current patterns. Our patterns for addressing the challenges of *e pluribus unum* have worn ruts in the public square that keep us retreating into polarized camps, separated silos, and fragmented institutions. However, if we look to civil society as the space in which such a transformation were to occur—a space outside the classic architecture of COS 2.0, the market and the state—then we might begin to imagine how such new ways of operating could look. In his review of the historical conceptions of civil society, Michael Edwards (2004) provides a useful framework for understanding and acting upon civil society. He reviews the different conceptions of civil society that have evolved over time, and explores the implications of each of them for our approach to solving the challenges of our age. He lists these three models:

- Civil Society as Associational Life: in this model, civil society is the space within which we build free, associational relationships with our fellow citizens. Also the sector of nonprofits and NGOs.

- Civil Society as the Good Society: "civil society represents the institutionalization of 'civility' as a different way of being and living in the world, or a different kind of society in which all institutions operate in ways that reinforce these positive social norms—in short, 'a society that is civil.'" (39)

- Civil Society as Public Sphere: "an arena for argument and deliberation as well as for association and institutional collaboration: a 'non-legislative, extra-judicial, public space in which societal differences, social problems, public policy, government action and matters of community and cultural identity are developed and debated." (55)

Edwards goes on to argue that there are elements in each of these models that are applicable and worth preserving, and that their overlap works to produce "an inclusive associational ecosystem matched by a strong and democratic state, in which a multiplicity of independent public spheres enable equal participation in setting the rules of the game" (94). This "associational ecosystem" is in many ways coming to pass all around us, and is enabling extraordinary acts of collective action for the good. Daniel Pink (2009) opens his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* with an illustrative example. He asks the reader to imagine having a conversation 15 years ago where someone asks you to guess which encyclopedia would likely be the world leader in 2010—one that would be created by tens of thousands of volunteers and which is available for free online, or one created by the top software firm in the world who was hiring top scholars and top managers to oversee its development. It might have appeared to be a trick question. Today, thanks to examples like Wikipedia, and the open source Linux software that runs 60% of the world's servers, we now take for granted and rely upon such extraordinary examples of collaboration. When disaster struck in Haiti in January 2010, tens of millions of dollars were sent by cell phone from millions of individual donors within a matter of days. All of these are civil society mechanisms, all

embody a type of self-organizing behavior in which no one person, group, or nation is in charge, and all of them have self-organized together to build networks of influence and impact. This is the world of COS 3.0.

<div align="center">Conclusions and Connections</div>

In reviewing the basic elements of the community learning model in greater detail, I have made the case that not only does it incorporate the lessons learned from a variety of other models that describe the conditions within which effective groups come to function, but that it *presumes* those conditions are accessible to any group that develops patterns for interacting not just as a set of isolated particles but as a whole system. That is, as a community focused on *learning*. We reviewed each of the elements of the model in terms of the challenge of each stage and the outcomes that describe its successful resolution. We then reviewed the research that suggests how to best solve these challenges. We concluded the section with the observation that once a culture of collaboration is in place, collaborative groups begin to share similar qualities with complex adaptive systems in nature. In the following section, we will explore this idea in more detail in order to present the community learning model not so much as a facilitative method used with "closed systems" and groups in the spirit of COS 2.0, but a process that catalyzes groups to function as complex adaptive systems connected to a larger platform of civil society.

<div align="center">**Case Studies**</div>

The community learning model outlined above provides a way for communities to enter in to a learning process at any number of places in a continuous cycle. For some,

that means starting from scratch and deciding on which stakeholders to include in an intentional process. For others, who already have a history of working together, and who might have well-developed action plans, the model might apply more as a tool for getting clearer on their results and gathering data on their progress. In each of the following case studies, the community learning model plays out slightly differently, but each case reveals deeper insights into the specific elements of the model as well as overall lessons on this approach. The first case study plays out at the neighborhood level on the border between Denver and Aurora, Colorado in an area that participants came to name the "Yosemite Corridor." The second case study involves work with rural counties in Colorado around mental health concerns at a regional level. The third case study involves a network of people from state agencies, larger nonprofits, and local community organizations that work across the different domains of early childhood services. I should note that while I have presented the community learning model in a finalized state, in truth each of these case studies marks a stage of its evolution. The following cases are presented in order of their unit of analysis—neighborhood, community, state—not their chronological evolution. The first was conducted during the years 2005-2007; the second began in May 2009 and is ongoing; and the third began in August 2009 and is near completion. I became a part of the first case study wearing the twin hats of both neighbor and researcher, and that experience helped refine the need for something like the community learning model. In the second and third case studies, which I took part in as a contracted facilitator, the model had just been developed and served as a guide for the design of those projects. Most of the description in these cases comes from personal

recollection backed up by minutes and other public documents from the meetings, and in the case of the first case study, from interviews with participants. They are not presented as in-depth ethnographic studies, but as "thick descriptions" of what transpired in each situation in the hopes of providing an authentic practical contrast to what I have so far presented in an idealized manner. In what follows, I will present an overview of the project in some detail but without commentary, and then review its challenges and lessons as a way to both bring the community learning model to life as well as to establish the parameters for what an even broader community learning process would need to entail. These parameters will set the stage for the design of the process presented in Chapter Five.

The Neighborhood Level: The Yosemite Corridor

Project Description

Historically, Yosemite Street was seen as the "edge of the map" for Denver and Aurora, Colorado, and as a result, according to residents in the area, the crime, prostitution, and drug dealing that animate this economically depressed part of town were swept back forth between the two cities under the illusion that they would simply fall off the map. They didn't, of course, and by 2005, this area appeared as a "hotspot" for police and other service providers tracking trends of crime, poverty, and migration. Beginning in 2005, a group of service providers, residents, and city officials gathered to change these patterns and unite across city boundaries to redefine their community not as simply the tattered edges of both municipalities, but as a community in its own right, and to make their neighborhood a safer and a more welcoming place. Over the next 18 months,

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what would become the Yosemite Corridor Coalition formed in an effort to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods on both sides of Yosemite Street.

The catalyst for the initial convening of partners was a conference call on November 15, 2005, from Washington, D. C. as part of the Department of Justice's "Outreach to New Americans" program—an attempt, at least in part, to better address the rising crime rates in areas with high immigrant and refugee populations. The call succeeded in bringing together 20 people from a range of organizations and agencies representing housing providers, refugee service organization, community organizing groups, residents, the local city councilwoman's office, and business associations. Though the purpose of the call was ostensibly to help arrange a one day "technical assistance training workshop" for refugees and for the service providers who work with them, the group quickly decided that they should continue to meet together apart from just planning the workshop and by March of 2006, the Yosemite Corridor Safety Action Committee (YCSAC) had its first purpose statement and first set of tentative goals:

> Purpose: To develop and implement both short- and long-term action plans to increase community safety, inspire economic vitality and improve quality of life in the Yosemite Corridor neighborhoods.
>
> Possible Goals and Outcomes: With the input from a diverse group of stakeholders, the development of a long-term, collaborative action plan for the neighborhood may aim toward the following outcomes:
>
> - Reduce crime
>
> - Improve and sustain quality of life
>
> - Increase coordination of services to residents in the Corridor
>
> - Increase personal, family and community empowerment

- Increase the number and diversity of businesses operating along the Colfax Corridor

In the early stages of the project, the steering committee for the group consisted of approximately 10 core members and was led by a facilitator working in the community through a cross-cultural training program who was known and well respected by a number of the steering committee members. She helped the group develop a basic process design of conducting outreach to the broader community to engage partners, especially residents, in joining a Summit planned for later in the spring. At the Summit, the community—which at that point had been defined as comprising the residents and organizations within a 20 x 20 block area extending on both sides of Yosemite Street—would gather for dinner, develop a joint vision for what they would like their community to be like, finalize its set of goals, and establish action teams to carry out plans to achieve it. In preparation for the Summit, each member of the steering committee had defined roles and action plans related to outreach, logistics, materials, communications, gathering data, or meeting planning. In addition to the planning of the Summit, the group served as a way to promote the individual efforts of its members—e.g. promoting community events, attending each other's meetings, connecting resources between clients and providers, etc.

In advance of the Summit, but connected to it, I began facilitating a series of small dialogues designed as part of my doctoral research. The purpose of the dialogues was twofold. First, as part of the Yosemite Corridor work, they served as a kind of focus group in advance of the summit, providing an insight into at least one small group of people's views on some of the central questions. Second, as part of my own research,

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they served as a means of exploring some of the central ideas outlined in this project;

namely, to what degree do dialogues convened in an environment like the Yosemite

Corridor display qualities suggested by theorists like Habermas, Bakhtin, and Levinas?

In a description of the dialogue project written at the time, I designed the dialogues as a

way to test the following hypotheses:

- Divergent truth claims can be reconciled under nearly-ideal speech conditions;

- Ethical relationships are built through the direct presence of the Other, and are
  hindered if we create structures that prevent people from being fully present,
  or addressing one another as individuals

- Conversation exposes the once-occurrentness of life, rather than obscuring it
  in theoretical constructs or abstractions.

The format was simple—provide a meal and a space for conversation, inquire into

the issues of concern in the community and the visions participants had for the

community, and to let the conversation evolve where the participants were interested in

taking it. Participants were recruited to attend through fliers and by word of mouth and

offered a meal and a $5 gift card to a local store as an incentive to remain engaged in the

entire sequence of conversations. Approximately 20 different people took in the

dialogues over three different gatherings. After three meetings in the restaurant, the

group wanted to continue to meet and decided to hold the gatherings as pot lucks in each

other's homes. The dialogues continued on for another nine months in that format and

then blended into the larger Yosemite Corridor process. A second round of dialogues

was launched in March and was held in the community room of one of the affordable

housing units in the area. This round was jointly convened with a partner agency

interested in better understanding the service needs of the community and was willing to

cover the costs of food and outreach as their contribution to the dialogues. The second round was intended to last for 4-6 sessions but ended after three.

The Summit, although initially conceived as an all-day Saturday event, ended up being held as series of four, 2-hour forums held monthly beginning in May and extended through August. Twenty nine people attended the May forum, where the facilitator led the group through small group discussions culminated in a large-group brainstorm in response to the question "What would you like to see in your community in the next 10 years?" The answers were clustered and categorized into the following themes: recreational facilities and events that bring people together; a clean, safe and secure community; a unified, stable, welcoming, integrated community; a proud, thriving, beautiful community; strong commerce for local prosperity; "It takes a corridor" (strong networks of caretakers and families supporting children); community supported life-long learning; and a healthy community. At the June and July forums, the group mapped the various assets in the community that related to each of these themes within the vision statements, and then began to meet in action teams around each theme to take on projects related to that theme. The August forum was attended by 37 people, including one Aurora City Councilwoman, a Denver Councilwoman, a Police Commander and four officers from Aurora, a Police Commander and five Denver officers, and a wide range of service providers in the area. The agenda focused on discussions of police collaboration between Denver and Aurora, and presentations from nonprofit groups serving the community in ways that related to the vision themes.

Based on the energy and interest level, the group decided to continue on with the monthly forum format past the original four meeting format. The original facilitator, who had provided leadership in the early stages of the project, was unable to continue due to a change in job status, which caused uncertainty and even tension around how to fill that role. I ended up stepping in to help, as well as several other steering committee members. By November, the attendance at monthly forums had waned and the steering committee agreed to hold fewer forums and work in small committees through the winter, and then regroup in the spring with a "Walk the Block" project suggested by a local neighborhood leader based on a similar project she had organized in the years before. Attendance at meetings remained low through the winter, with a slight increase in attendance and engagement as preparations were made for the Yosemite Corridor Walk the Block Day, which was held on April 21, 2007. Approximately 15 people attended and walked through the neighborhood door-to-door in teams of two, asking residents about issues of concern, whether they would be willing to be a block captain for the Neighborhood Watch program, and if they had ideas for how to improve the neighborhood. Response to the effort was largely positive, although because of turnover in the leadership of the steering committee, the event essentially marked the last significant effort of the Yosemite Corridor Coalition. There were a few more meetings over the summer, and an attempt to revive it in the fall of 2007, but by November, the meetings had ended.

Participant Reflections on the Process

I conducted six interviews with participants afterwards to assess their view of the dialogues as well as the larger summits and action plans. Five of the six interviewees had taken part in both, and one took part only in the larger forums and steering committee meetings. From the dialogues, a number of common themes emerged:

- People appreciated the *tone and informal nature* of the dialogues, and how the group developed strong relationships and genuinely liked being together. As one person said, "The energy in the room was so much more captive, so much more engaged when we were here in the dialogues compared to the bigger meetings."

- They particularly liked the stage of the dialogues that were potlucks, since it involved both the chance to socialize in other people's homes and the chance to "*do something*" together by making a meal.

- Three of the participants commented that they liked the feeling that it was "*community*," rather than "*resource*"—meaning that the dialogues were attended by actual residents of the community who wanted to stay and get to know each other, rather than "resource providers" who attend to share information.

The reflections on the forums and ongoing Yosemite Corridor meetings revealed far more divergent experiences. Although almost all of the interviewees noted the same pivotal stages in the process, they all had different experiences of each event, and reached different conclusions about the meaning and significance of each. The pivotal stages and a sample of responses include the following:

- The manner in which the forums were facilitated

    o Two participants noted this as a highpoint of the process, four felt they were too much process and could tell that people were losing interest throughout

- The transition of leadership in the fall when the initial facilitator was unable to continue on due to a change in job status and the conflicts that surrounded it

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- For one of the participants, the facilitator was perceived to have been "shown the door" in the process; for the facilitator, she was both relieved that I was willing to help step in as she was unable to continue and at the same time felt that there was tension over the leadership transition; one interviewee didn't understand what transpired during that section of the process, but sensed conflicts; and three of the interviewees felt it was a necessary change that improved the process.

- Internal conflicts among steering committee members that stalled the process.

  - Five of the six interviewees noted that the planning process over the winter was marked by tensions and conflicts, sometimes overt and sometimes subtle, amongst members. Each seemed to have a different idea for how to manage the different committees, the true focus of the effort in general, and how to share leadership of the process.

  - As one interviewee said about this stage, "We focused too much on growing the group, and not enough on the relationships in the group that came."

- A second transition of leadership with my departure in June 2007 and my successor's departure two months after that.

  - One participant felt "betrayed and hurt" by my departure, feeling that my motivation was just related to my research not the community. The other five participants commented on this transition as a function of not having enough resident leadership in the first place to sustain the project, and that when outside leaders came and went there was nothing to sustain it.

<div align="center">Findings and Lessons Learned</div>

In terms of my inquiry into the nature of dialogue through this project, a number of findings stand out. First, while it is difficult to cite specific examples of moments that spoke to "Habermas in action" as I might have naively imagined at the outset, there was clear evidence from the interviews, and my own experience of the project, that there was indeed a qualitative difference in the group that took part in the dialogues and the group that met in the larger forums. And given the fact that five of the six people were in both, it is clear to me that the depiction of dialogue as a relational space, and a place where

people care for the Other, and where people learn to think together is borne out here.

Even more, not a single person commented on the actual content of the dialogues—the

ideas that emerged, the insights they gained—but all commented on the tone and the feel

of being in the conversations. While not the full meaning of Levinas' distinction between

the *saying* and the *said*, these reflections confirm that distinction in the actual experience

of dialogue in community. Their comments also attest to the "once-occurrent act of

Being," in contrast to the tendency to hide behind abstractions in meetings. The other

people—the Other—is *there,* immediate, and demanding a direct response. There is no

generic audience in dialogue, just the fellow members in the circle. The interviewees did

not make any comments on, nor did I observe, any examples where the group had to

work through conflicting views to reach consensus or make a decision, so it was more

difficult to observe the notion of "the unforced force of the better argument," or how

people made and responded to validity claims in more than a passing manner. However,

when considering the high degree of frustration and conflict experienced by the

interviewees in other aspects of the project, the quality of their experience and sense of

solidarity with each other and the project was demonstrably higher in the dialogues when

compared to the more formal structures. Even more, considering the example of the

potluck gatherings in comparison the general challenge of promoting resident leadership,

dialogue appears to have aided in the deepening of both process commitment and

leadership for participants. In summary, the following lessons from the dialogues stand

out:

- The space of dialogue is experienced as categorically different from what most community members experience in "community meetings," and

embodies to a high degree the principles laid out by Bohm, Bakhtin and Levinas.

- In comparison to more formal meeting structures and communication patterns, dialogue proved to be much more effective at building relationships, trust, commitment, and understanding amongst group members.

- While there were fewer tangible work products generated during the dialogues that aided the overall project, it is possible, although untested here, that once the relationships and commitment were established, the participants could have focused their energies on other specific aspects of the project as long as it did not jeopardize the overall tone of the dialogue.

In terms of the broader overall Yosemite Corridor project, this case study raised a number of important and admittedly difficult issues for me as my role involved being a participant, facilitator, and researcher. First, the lack of clarity around my own status—neighbor, researcher, facilitator, outsider—seemed to mirror the general lack of clarity of roles and leadership in the project and contributed to the overall instability of the project. This point underscores the need to establish strong facilitative leadership roles in advance of the process (Ansell and Gash 2008; Chrislip and Larson 1994). Second, in light of the persistent emotional turmoil experienced by the group, we never established a container strong enough to hold the process and allow for the honest and open communication needed to resolve tensions (Isaacs 1999). Third, when those forums are specifically aimed at defining a set of goals for the group to work toward they give the individual members a much more powerful and legitimated road map to work from and mandate. Fourth, the group definitely was at its best with tangible products to engage in that set an "action orientation" and generated what participants described as engagement, buzz and energy in the group (LaFasto and Larson 2001). Fifth, resources must be in place to maintain the ongoing communication and follow up to the work. Several interviewees

noted the critical importance of follow through on the basic tasks of the project. With such shifting and distributed leadership, it was difficult to maintain accountability. Lastly, and perhaps most unfortunately, the clear and negative impact of my own departure from the project, and the short tenure of the woman who stepped in to help take over in a facilitative role, was of pivotal importance in the final analysis. Five of the participants regarded my departure as unfortunate, although they seemed to understand the financial challenges of my spending 18 months as a volunteer. Three noted that they ultimately considered the connection between my departure and the ensuing end of the project related larger issue of needing to more intentionally foster leadership amongst residents. Still, the fact that one of the participants perceived it as a betrayal was sobering to say the least. How much of that was due to my dual role as researcher and participant is unclear, but at the very least, it reveals the importance of both role clarity and leadership succession planning. As one interviewee noted, "this was never really owned by the community."

Community Level: Mental Health Project in Rural Colorado

Project Description

In the fall of 2009, a community in rural Colorado began the implementation of a pilot program to bring community members together to better support the mental health needs of the community. While the pilot project was not able to provide new funding to communities, technical assistance in the form of facilitation and project design was provided to the community. The presenting issue for this group was the challenge of providing acute crisis care in such a remote region. Participants spoke of both the human

cost and the financial cost of having to transport people experiencing mental health crises in the back of a police car, in handcuffs, for the 2-3 hour ride to the nearest crisis facility. In their application to take part in the project, the group suggested that the need to build a new crisis center was high on the list of intended outcomes from the project.

We engaged them in a four step process, covering the elements of the community learning model. The outreach was intentionally inclusive, beyond just mental health workers. Participants included staff from the local mental health center, the local sheriff, representatives from local nonprofits, county commissioners, community college professors, and others. In the first meeting, the group identified common outcomes and potential indicators to assess progress. In the next meeting, they assessed the available assets and other partners in the community who might be willing to assist with the effort, and then invited them to the next meeting. In the third meeting, they experienced a breakthrough when crafting action plans to better address their most central acute care needs. Though they originally considered their challenge to be the lack of an acute crisis care center, when they looked more deeply into the nature of the challenge, it revealed itself to be the inability to match available resources in real-time with the specific needs of a client. They estimated that 80% of the people who experience acute crisis really don't need to be taken into police care or driven to a crisis center; they simply need someone who can accurately assess their situation, provide a safe bed, and someone to sit with them until the crisis passes. Once the crisis is passed, other community partners could then be tapped to provide the additional care and support often associated with the times of crisis, such as food, shelter, clothing, and counseling.

What became clear was the fact that although there was no *centralized* source of those resources, they were in fact distributed within the network of partners. The assisted living center had beds, as did the hospital. The local community college had psychology students who would be good candidates to be trained as "sitters" while the crisis passed. The mental health center already had a triage unit on-call full time, so they simply needed to become a hub and connecter of resources to help match the person to the appropriate level of care. In some instances, that would continue to be police escort and major intervention. But in the vast majority of cases, it would mean providing linkages to the right combination of services. In the final meeting, we stepped out of the facilitation role and helped the chairs of the subcommittees run the meeting and lead the group forward into its next steps.

<div align="center">Findings and Lessons Learned</div>

While no interviews were conducted with participants after the series of meeting to gather data on their experience, the informal feedback on end-of-meeting comment cards was consistently high. In contrast to the Yosemite Corridor case study, the mental health project was explicitly guided by the community learning model. The intention behind each stage yielded, for the most part, the key intended outcomes. We entered with a clear collaborative process that established facilitative leadership and a strong local partner to ensure follow up and local ownership. We included anyone interested in taking part, but kept the group size manageable and ensured each meeting had a tangible outcome to keep interest and the "action orientation" high. While there was no use of informal settings to foster dialogue, the general tone of the discussion was dialogical in

quality, with an emphasis on listening, responding, and people thinking together about the nature of the problems they face. This helped them explore the underlying nature of the challenges and yielded new insights and a sense of openness that no doubt contributed to the eventual breakthrough. These conversations also produced a short list of outcomes that were validated by the participants, real-time, through remote "clickers," which yielded demonstrably high levels of consensus. The asset mapping conversation helped to identify available resources in the community, which proved pivotal in creating the breakthrough at the next meeting.

A second lesson was how important it was to foster a shared, and concrete, understanding of both the problem, and need to find a solution. When someone mentioned the example of the client who had cost the system at least $300,000 that year, but who was still essentially homeless and unstable, it was clear that there were real benefits to moving toward a more coordinated effort, and potentially direct cost savings. It was easy to see inefficiencies and costs of not coordinating their efforts around real results. The fact that this person was known to most people in the room immediately humanized the issue in a palpable way. For the sheriff, who originally referenced the clients as essentially not his problem, and a burden on the system, the care and concern for them changed throughout the process as well. Also, there were efficiencies discovered by confronting the assumptions around liability insurance and cost of care that are likely to provide future benefits in terms of better trust and coordination of efforts between the hospital and the mental health center. The power of results-based thinking also proved

useful, as it took everyone outside of their usual sphere of influence and activity into a more purposeful focus on the real underlying issues.

Systems Level: Early Childhood "Framework in Action" Project

Project Description

In May 2009, I began working with a state-level team to develop an implementation plan for the Early Childhood Colorado Framework—a one page summary that literally brought the disparate network of organizations and systems serving children between birth and age eight "onto the same page." The Framework contains goals, outcomes, strategies, and principles for serving children and families in Colorado, toward the goal of ensuring that "all children are valued, healthy, and thriving." Though the Framework was completed in 2008, previous attempts to develop an action plan around it had proven elusive. The Implementation Plan was a necessary part of complying with a federal grant that funded the state systems building work in Colorado, with a report due by the end of the year.

A small leadership team was formed to develop the basic outline of an approach to the planning process. Deciding what it meant to "implement" a framework that covers the entire spectrum of early childhood outcomes and service delivery posed some immediate challenges. First, because the outcomes and strategies cut across the four domains of early learning, family support and parent education, social emotional and mental health, and health, they are monitored by a number of departments within state government and state-level nonprofit organizations with different funding and accountability requirements. In addition, much of the coordinating work of early

childhood service delivery happens through the 31 county-level Early Childhood

Councils across the state. These Councils coordinate services and technical assistance

amongst providers, agencies and other institutions at the local level. As a result, unlike

most strategic plans that can be implemented within a common administrative

framework, implementing the Framework would require a more collaborative approach—

not just between government agencies at the state level, but between local providers and

state level actors. This had proven difficult at times in the past because of overlapping

lines of authority and accountability, leading to understandable tensions and even

confusion over who had the legitimate "credibility to convene" any given initiative

(Chrislip 2002). Mindful of these dynamics, and the need to establish legitimacy and buy

in from stakeholders through a general commitment to common outcomes rather than

through administrative authority, the planning team opted to use the general framework

of the community learning model as an approach for the implementation plan. A similar

approach had been used with success in Connecticut (Connecticut Early Childhood

Education Cabinet 2006) and was consistent with established results-based frameworks

(Friedman 2000).

The planning team—a group of six early childhood experts with expertise

spanning across state departments and nonprofits and at both local and state levels—met

in June and July to develop the plan for walking through the basic steps of the learning

model: include a diverse group of participants from across the different domains,

departments, and state/local contexts; engage in dialogue around which of the outcomes

were most important in terms of being signs of progress at the systems level across all

four domains (outcomes we labeled metaphorically as the "vital signs" of the system), reach consensus on those high level outcomes and a handful of measurable indicators for each one to track progress; scan the existing efforts that were already making progress toward these outcomes and tap into local leadership to help coordinate efforts; convene partners regularly to promote network-wide communication and to learn from each other's efforts; gather data on the current status of the outcomes and indicators and then reassess progress on a regular basis; and continue the cycle of learning to build a culture of collaboration across the state and local systems and networks. The planning team felt this was a prudent model, but wanted to be sure to balance the need for buy in from all stakeholders—legitimacy was paramount in their minds—but also to recognize that many had developed "process fatigue" after so many years of "systems building." This overall plan was to be initiated in August and would need to be concluded by the end of the year, so the process would need to be quick but not come across as rushed, lest it set off alarm bells of resistance and suspicion that this input process was not in fact authentic. We agreed on a strategy of having the planning team take each of the steps in the planning process in advance of a larger network-wide meeting to develop a rough draft or "starter dough" of each particular deliverable along the way, to present that draft for feedback at the network meeting, and to finalize that feedback in an iterative process. They argued that this would help strike the right balance between being inclusive and open to input while still getting to action fast enough so people could see progress between meetings.

The first meeting of network partners on August 17 was designed to explain the overall approach and to seek feedback and agreement on the first set of high level

outcomes for the implementation plan. The group of approximately 40 partners offered mostly minor suggestions on the proposed outcomes and general endorsement, but suggested adding an additional outcome on family engagement to the four that were presented. The planning team then took the group's feedback and used these outcomes to form small working groups assigned to identify the best set of measurable indicators to track them, and to bring them back to the full network in October for review and approval. The process of defining the key outcomes and indicators raised some of the predictable challenges. Since the field is divided into four distinct domains—early learning, health, social emotional health, and family engagement and parent education—and the possible set of indicators were identified with only one of these domains in the actual Framework, there was tremendous unspoken pressure early on to make sure each domain was equally represented. However, relying on the explicit interest in the group—and in most fields—to avoid "silos" and "turf issues," the planning team agreed upon criteria in advance of the selection: the indicators needed to be population-based, shared, simple, solution-building, silo-busting, and based on data that was cross-domain and readily available. Based on those criteria, they reviewed the extensive list of potential indicators that had been developed over the years through various commissions and reports, and selected another "starter dough" set of indicators to bring to the small groups working on each outcome. In the end, the outcomes selected and indicators associated with them were presented with the rationale of how they cut across all domains, even if they resided in just one on the Framework. When the small groups presented their work in October, it was generally well received, with minor changes made and presented at a

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network meeting on December 1, where the full set were finalized as "wet cement"—that is, there was still time for small tweaks before the implementation plan, or "Framework in Action," was finalized, but it was assumed that they were pretty well set. At that meeting, 81% of the 36 attendees either strongly agreed (39%) or agreed (42%) that the outcomes and indicators selected provided a solid foundation for working together to implement the Framework in Action.

The next steps were to capture the stories behind each of the outcome areas to add context to the work—what does that outcome look like at the community level, what are the challenges, how are people approaching it—as well as to capture the wide array of efforts already underway to achieve that outcome. At the January meeting of the network, different network partners, most of whom were not on the core planning team, began to play a leadership role in explaining the Framework in Action plan, presenting the work they were doing to achieve results, and to help convene conversations with other partners around the different outcome areas. The results of these conversations were included into the updated draft of the Framework in Action document, which was then finalized and shared at the April meeting of partners. The April meeting thus marked an important turning point in the process, since it shifted from a network convened by a planning team to complete a particular task with an external locus of accountability (the federal grant report) to a network of partners meeting to communicate, learn, and make progress towards the goals they had selected. Accordingly, the agenda transitioned from being planned in advance by the core planning team to a more open model to be filled in by the needs of the network. To mark that transition, the first half of

the meeting would be planned in advance to give people a chance to work in outcome areas again and review their progress from the January meeting, and the second half of the agenda would be dedicated to the needs of the network using a facilitation technique called "open space technology"—a technique developed by Harrison Owen (Owen 1997) he developed upon realizing that the best conversations at conferences actually happened amidst the buzz of the "open spaces" in between the sessions, like coffee breaks and lunch, rather than in the sessions themselves. The feedback on this approach was positive, and it was therefore used as the foundation for subsequent network meetings. Participants noted that they wanted to continue to meet by result areas as well to connect and learn from each other, so beginning at the June meeting, these conversations were structured using a "consultancy protocol," adapted from the work of Steve Seidel at Harvard's Project ZERO (Hatch and Seidel 1997), that helps groups discuss their practice in non-defensive ways that contribute to the development of learning communities. The results of this approach were also favorably received and the two part agenda of open space and consultancy protocol were again used at the August meeting of partners, and now form the basic pattern for the continual cycle of quarterly network meetings.

Findings and Lessons Learned

This planning process proved to be very successful at not only producing a specific work product—the grant report—but also in building a collaborative network of partners that is now, to a large degree, "self-organizing" and functioning as a learning community. Again, the basic strengths of the community learning model were validated in this approach, although a few friction points emerged that are noted below. But while

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the community learning model approach explains to some degree the successful

outcomes, equally salient were the particular skills, decisions, and credibility of the core

planning team themselves. Some of these are unique to the individuals involved, and

therefore not able to be generalized across contexts, but some of their approaches help

identify more general techniques that can be incorporated into the overall model to

resolve some of the tensions identified previously and discussed in prior sections (Ansell

and Gash 2008; Johnston et al. 2010). In terms of the model itself, the focus on results

proved critical as a way to not only provide a general goal orientation but as means of

coordinating otherwise fragmented efforts. This illustrated Bohman's (2000) point that

deliberation is dialogical to the extent that even though there was a *de facto* presumption

that the group held the same goals because they were all united under the broad banner of

the Framework, the actual *reasons* that proved compelling for their shared support of the

Framework in Action could not be specified in advance and emerged in the dialogical

give and take in the moment. That is, consensus was achieved only in response to the

particular concerns raised by particular participants, not just based on generalized

arguments about notions of "shared accountability" or other abstract agreements.

Because of that, the group was expanding the lifeworld of its shared meaning (Habermas

1987) and was then better able to be persuaded by the unforced force of the better

argument. One could not simply be opposed, and claim a different set of principles as the

justification; they were all circulating a common currency of meaning. This did not

means conflicts and tensions did not arise—they did—and likely still linger, but as

Bohman (2000) argues, the goal of deliberating over joint action is not necessarily

uniform consensus but an agreement to keep working together in good faith in constructive ways, which appears to be the case. Second, the presumption within the model that "taking action" is often more a matter of incorporating existing efforts than needing to take on new projects proved helpful in both conveying an action orientation— e.g. "look at all that is already happening to achieve these goals"—but also in spreading the commitment to the process by honoring the leadership of a broader range of partners than just those on the official leadership team. This is a novel application of the concept of transfer of commitment, because the process traded on the commitment that these partners already had to their own work, and transferred that to the broader, collective process. This does not remove the challenge of actually ensuring that complex, dispersed activities do in fact follow through and make a difference, but it at least increases the odds that such will be the case. Finally, the identification of results within an iterative learning process potentially helps resolve a challenge identified early on in the planning process. When I had asked early on how data was used within the network, most agreed that the typical process is for a report to be released, a press conference is called, concerns are expressed and captured in headlines, and then everyone goes back to their already overwhelming responsibilities until the next report comes out citing a new set of troubling data and the cycle continues. The hope in the case of the Framework-in-Action is that since the network helped adopt these measures of progress as meaningful to them, and since they are the primary actors in ensuring progress, that the yearly review of progress—based on the routine habits of non-defensive inquiry into improving their practice—will help change the culture of using and learning from data as a network, and

that over time, meaningful progress will be in fact demonstrated. Finally, a key validation of the model is the degree to which it has moved from a facilitative technique and process design through an upward spiral of increased trust and ownership to become the basis of complex, adaptive learning network of partners. It is still too early in its history to consider it a full success, but the early signs are encouraging.

As for the specific skills and decisions of the planning team that were fortuitous to this case but not generalizable across all process, I will name two. Much of their success can be attributed to the lead staff member who was exceptional in her ability to plan backwards from the due date, synthesize feedback into new drafts, and to ensure nothing was lost in the follow up and execution of the process. In addition, her technical process skills were matched with a broad base of trust and credibility amongst partners that helped ensure buy in. While such a combination of skills is hard to count on in all processes, this case points out the benefits of skill process management and execution. Similarly, members of the planning team possessed a broad base of expertise and a genuine dedication to the common effort and not only to their particular institution. Their internal commitment to each other and to the process undoubtedly carried forward in the network meetings, and served as key form of facilitative, distributed leadership throughout the process.

Fortunately, much of their skill translated into specific moves that are more generalizable. The technique of balancing momentum and inclusion through the metaphors of "starter dough" and "wet cement" made the approach transparent and well received by the group, who felt both their time and their input was being respected. The

fact that initial drafts were substantively changed—and I would argue improved—by the broader group reinforced this belief. Additionally, the notion of a Framework in Action accomplished two important objectives that have broader application. It built on the existing commitment to the Early Childhood Colorado Framework rather than introducing the effort as a new entity such as strategic plan or state plan, which can easily be dismissed as something no one in particular has responsibility for. Second, the notion of a Framework in Action conveys an approach that is ongoing and immediate, rather than a plan with a particular shelf life that expires and grows stale. This framing is more consistent with the themes of being attentive to energy states of actors, once-occurrentness of communication, and the organic and adaptive nature of process.

Conclusions and Connections

From the review of the community learning model set within the context of these concrete case studies, we see a number of challenges that the model faces as well as a number of assets it brings to communities. As we turn now to the question of how we might apply the lessons gleaned so far to a more robust attempt to install a new COS 3.0 operating system within a broader community context, let us review the parameters and challenges that such an effort must adequately address.

- Set a dialogical tone—informal, welcoming, listening, respecting

- Give people the chance to build relationships of trust, especially early on with a core group

- Balance a dialogical tone with the need to take action and get "quick wins" early in the process

- Ensure that the community, especially local residents, take leadership and ownership

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- Ensure mutual understand as a hallmark of process throughout

- Focus early on setting clear, elevating goals with ways to measure progress

- Ensure adequate resources from the start—dollars and human capacity—so the process is not overly burdened by questions of sustainability

- Ensure shared leadership structures that can overcome turnover of participants

CHAPTER FIVE: RAISING THE CIVIC CANOPY

Creating the Canopy: From Theory to Practice

In this final chapter, I will combine the building blocks from the previous chapters into a more coherent whole and attempt to create a blue print for creating a new community "platform" based on the principles of COS 3.0 in an area of Denver and Aurora known as the "Children's Corridor" (Piton Foundation 2010). Since this is a concept in formation that draws from similar theory and has an overlapping base of practice with the examples reviewed here, the Children's Corridor provides an ideal context for helping raise the civic canopy brought about by COS 3.0. I will begin with a description of the context of the communities that are incorporated within the larger Corridor, including demographic descriptions and a broad scan of historical and contemporary efforts to improve the quality of community life in the Corridor. In many ways, this description highlights the challenges of a COS 2.0 approach to community development and is characterized by patterns and systems that reinforce fragmentation, duplication, and disengagement despite the best attempts of partners working to improve the life of residents in the area. I will then walk through the stages of the community learning model as it might be introduced into the Corridor, paying specific attention to the parameters and "design specifications" gleaned from the case studies in the last chapter. Finally, I will offer final reflections on the nature of this project and potential implications for future research and for future community engagement activities.

Context of the Children's Corridor

Demographic Profile

The Children's Corridor is a concept being developed by the Piton Foundation, a private, Denver-based operating foundation that has a long history of local funding in the areas of education, health, and community development (Piton Foundation 2010). As currently conceived, the Children's Corridor comprises a 14 mile-long corridor extending from downtown Denver along the I-70 corridor to the areas of Montbello and Green Valley Ranch, the eastern-most neighborhoods in Denver located near the Denver International Airport. The area is home to over 48,000 children, two thirds of whom live in poverty, and who live in neighborhoods with some of the highest rates of foreclosure, vulnerable births, and dropout rates in the city (5). The proximity to the I-70 corridor, and a history of segregation in the neighborhoods, has made the gang problem a general concern with periods of acute crisis. However, the Corridor does have a number of important assets, including strong, diverse neighbors that provide a number of distinct and unique "nodes" across the Corridor. These include: the Far Northeast (Montbello and Green Valley Ranch); Stapleton; Original Aurora; Northeast Park Hill; Northeast Denver (Clayton, Cole, Whittier, Skyland); and Five Points.

Past Efforts and Current Opportunity

The corridor is rich in social resources as well, including hundreds of nonprofits, dozens of churches and faith-based organizations, schools, libraries, community centers, and well-established neighborhood organizations that dot the landscape and are active in the area. The development of the Stapleton neighborhood from the former airport has

brought an influx of shops, restaurants, and businesses, and with them new jobs, new schools, and new services. In addition, there are a variety of community-building initiatives that have invested for years in the civic infrastructure of the area, including the Strengthening Neighborhoods program from the Denver Foundation which fosters resident-driven change; the Stapleton Foundation's "be well" zone that promotes active and healthy living; Oakwood Homes' Foundation for Educational Excellence and a newly opened Dr. Evie Dennis Campus of schools; Park Hill Thriving Communities grant-funded community organizing effort; and dozens of local community and school organizing projects. While these are important resources for the community, part of the motivation for the Children's Corridor initiative is the belief that these assets are somehow less than the sum of their parts. Isolated efforts come and go, new projects arrive without knowledge of past work, and the residents of the area often experience these services not as a supportive web but as a fragmented field of disconnected programs. As a reflection of the crisis of COS 2.0, organizations tend to perceive themselves as under-resourced and constrained by the bureaucracies of school systems and city agencies, and residents see themselves as clients and customers of these systems rather than agents of change. According to staff members who have spent decades working in these communities, after years of meetings and change efforts that promised much but delivered little, many residents have grown skeptical that the situation in these neighborhoods is likely to change for the better anytime soon.

A New Vision

To counteract these trends, and "consolidate its investments in a single geographic area," the Piton Foundation aims to "elevate the success of all children and families to promote integrated and connected high quality systems of health, wellness, and education that produce lifelong results." They envision the Children's Corridor not as a separate new initiative, but as a "platform for collaboration and innovation" needed to truly support all children (Piton 2010, 3). Using the successful Harlem Children's Zone created by Geoffrey Canada as an example, the Piton Foundation envisions a pipeline of high-quality health educational services readily available to each family that ensures a continuous source of support for children as they transition the critical stages of their development. Rather than simply funding more services or introducing specific programs, Piton explains its role as catalyst for change, using a number of key tools and strategies, including:

- Visibility—making the problem and the solutions visible
- Connectivity—linking and integrating elements of the solution in space and time
- Leverage—bringing multiple forces to bear
- Innovation—tapping and nurturing the best new ideas
- Amplification—taking success to scale

Constructing the Platform through the Community Learning Process

Overview

Based on the theory and the research base we have reviewed thus far, it is my contention that the success of the Children's Corridor vision is dependent on its ability to

invent a new way of engaging community in the process of growth and development.

The assumptions of COS 2.0—of client/provider relationships, competition amongst

providers, of isolated initiatives, and of town-down funding mandates and accountability

mechanisms—cannot produce an integrated, seamless pipeline of services, nor can it

inspire the kind of engagement from residents themselves that will lead them to do so

either. As we have seen, the secret of collaborative success lies in generating the

conditions for the community to function as an "inclusive associational ecosystem" with

a common focus on the most important outcomes, webs of reciprocal relationships

amongst all partners, and networks of collaborative actors working with each other rather

than against each other. To truly bring the vision of the Children's Corridor to life, and

to provide a new "platform for collaboration and innovation," will take a three stage

process of 1) using the community learning model with a diverse group of core leaders in

the community to 2) help the neighborhoods function as a complex adaptive learning

system to 3) build on the in-person and on-line "civic network" platform.

<div align="center">Establishing a Collaborative Process</div>

A critical first step in establishing the community learning process will be to

establish the core leadership team (Chrislip 2002) and the facilitative leadership (Ansell

and Gash 2008) needed to both establish the credibility to convene as well as to

accurately assess the context within the Corridor as it applies to this efforts. Because of

the history of large scale initiatives in the area that have seldom produced lasting impact,

it is imperative that a core group of leaders with demonstrated commitment to the quality

of life in the corridor have a chance to sift through the concepts underlying the Children's

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Corridor approach in a dialogical, informal way to begin with, both as a way to disrupt the patterns of foundation-initiated efforts and to develop the kinds of trusting and committed relationships noted in the successful collaborative examples. Given Piton's commitment to building a lasting foundation for collaboration, it makes sense to use the *deliberative planning* with the core leadership team and to get their help with their guidance in developing a *thoughtful inclusion* approach to involve others in the subsequent stages of the community learning model (Johnston et al. 2008). However, given the scope and scale of the Corridor concept, it is likely that the process will also need to establish in the very early stages a way for anyone who is interested in the idea to have a place at the table and have meaningful ways to share their input throughout the process. Here we face a dilemma. Involve too many too soon and the process of building and transferring commitment is jeopardized; remain insular too long and people feel mistrustful and suspicious. As word spreads about the effort, it is essential to provide people with an immediate way to plug into the effort—via a website I will describe in detail below—that does not risk losing or diluting the initial stores of trust and commitment that the planning group will be developing. Surveys, interviews, and environmental scans can also serve this purpose. Given the percentage of Spanish speaking families in the Corridor, this will of course need to be done in both Spanish and English. As that group understands, adapts, and grows more comfortable with the approach of the Children's Corridor, they will be ready to move from constructing the collaborative process design to beginning to implement it, beginning with thoughtful community dialogue.

Inclusion and Dialogue

As a result of both the environmental scans of the existing efforts in the area, as well as through the recommendations of the core leadership team, a growing network of people who will likely be interested in the Children's Corridor concept will be developed. Because there is no specific initiative to "launch" or "kick off," there is no need for a series of high profile meetings or gatherings that can, as was the case of the Yosemite Corridor Summits, become breeding grounds for heightened expectations of what the project will do *for* the community, followed by disappointment at what was not accomplished. This model presumes the need to create spaces for people to be welcomed into an expanding network of *members of a shared community* involved in a shared enterprise—as opposed to the relationship of clients and customers that COS 2.0 institutions typically develop with people. This is not an initiative with a solution in search of a problem, nor does it presume the community's challenges define its identity. Rather, as Peter Block (2008) notes,

> The essential challenge is to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole. The key is to identify how this transformation occurs. We begin by shifting our attention from the problems of community to the possibility of community. (1)

For Block, as for the community learning model, community is ultimately the "structure of belonging," the way people come to include others in and feel included by the broader whole. For that reason, the inclusion stage of the process is essentially blended with the dialogue stage, where individual conversations and small, informal groups will gather, hosted by members of the core leadership team and supported by staff as needed, and reach out to include the broader networks of participants in the overall

process. As was the case in the Yosemite Corridor dialogues, there is less an "agenda" in the early stages than an opportunity for people to share stories, raise questions, and imagine together the kind of community they hope to see. In these early stages, a key objective is establish the norms and values of this new operating system as being inclusive of different "comprehensive doctrines" (Rawls 1996) and plural notions of what is best for the community. When handled in the safe setting of a dialogue, these norms are easier to impart and reinforce, than they are in the contested ground of large, impersonal public meetings. The content or the "said" of these conversations will be worth tracking and noting but is ultimately less critical early on than the "saying." While some information will need to be shared about the Children's Corridor concept and approach, people in general will learn more about what it means from the way they are welcomed into conversation, the way their questions and stories are responded to and honored, and the way they see others demonstrate their commitment to the effort than they will from a brochure or program description.

Having touted the virtues of dialogue as a means of inclusion in this process, it should be noted that is not always effective, and nor is it the only way. Dialogue is no cure-all for the need some people have to vent a grievance in any form possible, or to co-opt a well intentioned forum in service of a cause with decidedly different underlying values. This effort will be particularly prone to this in the early stages, when the shared values are less established, and the early gatherings will likely need the sure hands of skilled facilitative leaders from the community whose conversational skills and general credibility will act as a deterrent to such dynamics. In addition, it is important to expand

the inclusion efforts beyond just dialogues, and to engage people through celebrations and communal activities that enable informal interaction as well as dancing, music, food, pictures, and recognition of things people love. Similarly, honoring of history and of people's efforts that have come before is critical to the building of community of establishing a new way of operating in the Corridor.

Results

As the outreach continues, and the container for dialogue is increasingly stabile and ready to shift to the next stage, it will be important to test out the community's level of support for common goals and measurable objectives. Keeping in mind the lessons from the Early Childhood Network case study, we should strive for an approach that respects both the members' time and their input, so having a draft set of possible outcomes and indicators in hand will likely be the prudent approach. By presenting a "starter dough" set of overarching outcomes for the Corridor—ones that will likely ring true for everyone (e.g. beginning with a healthy birth, all children ready for school, all children graduate college and work-force ready) to larger forums and gatherings, people will begin to experience both the opportunity to help "set the agenda" but also to experience the feeling of a broader community coming together around a shared set of goals for the children and families in the neighborhood. In this process, it will be important that indicators possess a blend of social science validity and *de facto* legitimacy on the part of residents. People need to see in the outcomes an expression of what they care about, what they aspire to, what would define in concrete terms what they mean by "community." We will aim to develop a Corridor-wide set of indicators, and

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allow each community to adapt and personalize additional outcomes that reflect their unique needs. This is increasingly important in the path to results, since too many nonprofits do not know if they are making an impact (Wallace 2008).

While the residents and service partners in the Corridor are of course a primary focus of these conversations, it becomes increasingly important at this stage to build relationships with foundations, individual donors, and city agencies—all of whom are not only the source of potential resources, but who also influence the outcomes to which organizations and institutions are held accountable. The highly fragmented funding patterns within the philanthropic sector, plus their frequent disconnection from actual results, is a significant reason there is so little return on our civic investments (Goldberg 2009). Dialogues among small groups of funders to discuss such questions as "What outcomes are we expecting of the groups we fund? How were those determined and how are they conveyed?   Can we align our various expectations and initiatives to dovetail with the community's own vision and goals?" will be critical if a new, shared platform is to be built in the community. Although there is reason to build trust by starting small in safe environments among funders themselves, as the trust level grows, it will be important to make sure these conversations are not separate from the community discussion of its vision.

Act

As we have seen in the research and in the case studies, if people do not quickly see themselves acting in ways that produce results, they quickly lose faith and interest in projects and processes. Given the admittedly unconventional and abstract nature of a

"Children's Corridor," that threat is particularly high here. Even more, since much of the focus, in the end, will be on promoting the importance of shared outcomes for children and families, the timeline of celebrating "all children graduating ready for college and the work force" will feel impossibly distant to capture most people's attention. For this reason, establishing an action orientation toward not only intermediate outcomes for children and families (e.g. increases in the number of students reading on grade level is more immediate than graduation rates) but also toward more immediate, tangible activities that provide benefit to the community and help model the scale and depth of commitment to the Corridor approach (e.g. Walk the Block activities, community clean ups, etc) will pay dividends in both the groups sense of efficacy and the energy and connection amongst people. And as we learned in all three case studies, creating space for people to simply become more aware of the many resources in their community already—through presentations at meetings or through resource fairs and showcases—is both a way to focus on the assets of the community and to provide more opportunities for connections amongst resources. As the partners in the rural mental project learned, they had what they needed all along.

Remembering the challenge of follow through and sustainability that was clear from the Yosemite Corridor in its absence, and so present in the Early Childhood network, it is critical to identify, early on and throughout the early stages, the talents and skills of people in the community who just "get things done." While they sometimes come in the form of well-established leaders who everyone relies on, more often they are the ones behind the scenes making the casseroles, cleaning up after the party, and typing

up the attendance lists rather than out in front getting noticed. Finding ways to enlist their natural staying power is of critical importance. The first key is to make sure they are not driven away in the early stages—there is a likely mismatch between the more abstract, lofty vision of the Children's Corridor and the personality styles that are excellent foot soldiers who follow through on details. Making sure that in the early stages, they see ways to take on concrete elements of the projects and see to the details will be a necessary art in the project. The second key will be to identify the kind of infrastructure and logistics that are necessary but not obvious for the success of the initiative. In the Yosemite Corridor dialogues, one of the participants was a recent immigrant who spoke little English but who was eager to get involved. After we held one of the potlucks at his home, it became quite clear that it was no longer necessary to order food for the forums from stores or restaurants—he was an excellent cook and very eager to contribute. We saved 80% on the food bills and increased his buy in to the project and people's appreciation for him ten-fold.

While these efforts to achieve interim successes and "quick wins" to keep people engaged are critical, they do not replace the need for innovations and actions on a much larger scale to create higher leverage impact. The tools in the Piton's Children's Corridor "tool kit"—visibility, connectivity, leverage, innovation, amplification—are by their nature self-organizing concepts and patterns found in nature, and therefore excellent examples of what a COS 3.0 in operation looks like. Just as the brain reinforces successful connections between neurons in the act of learning, communities can "learn" by making successful achievements more visible and by amplifying those

accomplishments as a way to encourage more successful ventures. Leveraging its

previous investments in schools and other institutions will also be key for Piton. As a

case in point, its previous investment in high performing charter schools has helped to

launch a positive climate for innovation within the realm of school reform. Still, these

success stories are often trapped within bureaucratic structures and out of date policies

that are not conducive to innovation. As the community is stymied by such limitations,

Piton can draw upon its previous investments in organizations like the Children's

Campaign, an effective children's advocacy organization, to assist in changing the

policies that are preventing the community from achieving its goals. While the

foundation is understandably hesitant to "throw its weight around" for fear of returning to

COS 2.0 where large institutions exercise undue influence, in this example, when the

change is in service of the outcomes identified by the community, then their efforts are

still a form of "bottom up" change in so far as they are assets put in use on behalf of the

community.

<div align="center">Learn</div>

As we saw in the both the research on collaboration and effective organizational

processes (Senge 1990; Garvin, Edmondson and Gino 2008) as well as in the Early

Childhood network, fostering a climate of learning is not only critical for ensuring that

one's efforts are hitting their mark, it is also essential for ensuring that when external

forces of accountability and threats to the system arise—e.g. reports, press conferences,

crises—that the network is practiced in inquiring into the data rather than running for

cover and blaming others. This means, in part, having good systems for tracking data,

which we will discuss in a moment, but most of all it means clear processes for learning

and an atmosphere where learning is encouraged. Assuming that the early stages of

inclusion and dialogue will help build that foundation, a critical part of a community's

embrace of learning is the ritual of public accountability for its shared goals. As an

example, the Jacksonville Community Council Incorporated has been annually reviewing

its set of "civic indicators" for over 25 years to track its progress towards goals, and using

the annual data to help launch the next round of action items and volunteer committees in

the community (Jacksonville Community Council 2009).

<div align="center">Culture of Collaboration: The Civic Network</div>

What I have described so far is an attempt to paint a picture of how the

community learning model might play out on a broad scale throughout the corridor and

help establish the virtuous cycle of inclusion, dialogue, trust, shared commitment,

effective action, and learning over time. But in many ways, it is still heavily dependent

on the inputs of a small group of "early adopters" who bear much of the responsibility for

carrying it forward. What will truly tip the scales, and shift it from an "application" to a

"platform" is to embed these practices both into the norms and practices of the

community as well as into online tools and technology that enable much more rapid

deployment and expansion of ideas and connections. Virtually every member of the

network has both needs and resources that would benefit from deeper connections with

others in the network, but we seldom know how to make those connections happen at the

right scale when we need them. The interaction of people on a social scale helps a great

deal, but is often localized. The web can open up an infinite array of possible

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connections, but is often overwhelming and impersonal. By creating what we are

envisioning as the "civic network," we would ideally combine the best of both worlds.

The runaway success of platforms like Facebook , You Tube, Google, and Wikipedia are

not just industry leaders in the same way Standard Oil, Chrysler, Mountain Bell, and US

Steel were. The latter were giants in the closed systems of COS 2.0; the former are

platforms in the open world of COS 3.0. They provide a common platform that is

trusted by members and viewed as worthy of their investment of time and resources.

They also provide an open architecture that support the interactions of one's choosing

and amplify the reach of any one person and enable the interactions to scale up

exponentially. This viral quality is not just useful for sharing funny video clips, but for

alerting neighbors to safety risks, spreading word of upcoming events, and connecting

resources to needs in a much more efficient manner. On top of the basic elements of

connectivity, the civic network would embed the learning community model into a shared

site for the community, enabling all members to find ways to include new members in the

effort, carry on conversations online, spread word of events and activities happening in

the area, share data to monitor progress, and spread the news about lessons learned. It

can serve as a community hub and source of open, scalable connections.

A second feature of online communities that is proving to be extremely helpful in

the way communities learn is the tool of feedback loops. Ratings of resources, services,

even feedback on the quality of commentary of online postings helps regulate the

interactions of community members and establish meaning and order from the chaos of

and noise of the often impersonal internet. Alternative currencies can help build the

viability of local economies, and networks of volunteerism and exchange of services.

This can be of tremendous advantage in low-income communities and high

unemployment areas. These can also be an example of what Chrislip (2002) speaks of in

terms of building "networks of responsibility" as important aspects of channeling civil

society's power to promote a stronger democracy and better communities. In the

Children's Corridor, the civic network would be an ideal way to channel the energy of

existing civic leadership programs, volunteer networks, etc. to help leverage the interest

in serving, with defined community needs, toward agreed upon community outcomes.

By creating the infrastructure to connect, learn, and adapt, the civic network could

assist the Corridor in becoming what researchers are beginning to identify as an "adaptive

learning system:"

> These systems engage a large number of organizations working on different
> aspects of a single complex issue in an ongoing, facilitated process that
> establishes comparative performance metrics, coordinates their efforts, and
> enables them to learn from each other. Benefits include improved alignment of
> goals among the different organizations, more collaborative problem solving, and
> the formation of an ongoing learning community that gradually increases all
> participants' effectiveness. As an example: The Strive initiative includes 300
> diverse education-related organizations in the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky
> region. These organizations work together across fifteen networks that are
> organized by type of intervention, from early childhood education to career
> counseling. Each network meets bi-weekly to share information, develop common
> outcome measures, and coordinate efforts, creating a comprehensive and systemic
> approach to tracking and improving educational outcomes throughout the region.
> (Kramer, Parkhurst and Vaidyanathan 2009, 2)

When the Children's Corridor has this type of infrastructure in place, the capacity

for the community to not only learn as individuals, but truly learn as a community will be

multiplied enormously. In contrast to the view many people have of communities in

decline, such an internal capacity, both in its human relations and in its technological

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connections, would be capable of extraordinary things. If slime mold can self organize to solve the challenges of rail lines in Japan, the possibilities for what communities of thoughtful, committed people can do are endless.

Summary

In this chapter I have tried to pull the various threads of the project together and offer a proposal for the design of a new way to engage communities by raising the civic canopy and installing a new COS 3.0 that builds on the best of what we know about effective communication and collaboration, and operates in line with the principles that undergird the upward spirals of collaborative action that are becoming an alternative model to our assumptions of conflict and competition within the world of COS 2.0. It is not intended as a cure all for any conceivable problem, but as a platform on which commutates can more effectively solve those that do arise.

Concluding Thoughts

In 2000, when the journey of this dissertation began, I sat down with my group of advisors and explained that I had come to the program to explore in more detail a dream I had developed while living for a year in what was at the time East and West Germany. While studying on both sides of the Berlin Wall, I had been confronted in a visceral way with the collective dysfunction of our larger political systems, how they had divided us in half, and how, ironically, both sides had discovered certain elements of a solution while being overwhelmed by different aspects of the problem. On the very soil where Marx proclaimed the power of the dialectic, it was as if we had drawn the evolution of political thought to a painful halt, erecting a concrete structure between thesis and antithesis, while

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the world languished in the frigid decades of our halted political discourse. The Wall seemed to embody in physical form a type of schizophrenia in our underlying collective patterns of thought.

But if my time on both sides of the Wall drove home the insanity of the world we lived in at the time, it also revealed the constructed nature of our cultural operating systems, and that although they seem to be fixed patterns embedded in the natural order of things, they are ultimately the reflection and consequence of human decisions. It was there that I was also introduced to Habermas's "unfinished project of modernity," and first developed the hope that if we could reclaim the dialectical spirit of reason—not in the Marxian form of teleological determinism toward the dictatorship of the proletariat, but in the name of a more authentic, ongoing dialogue around the problems that confront our neighborhoods and our nations—then maybe, just maybe, we could combine the lessons from both sides into a more robust and effective democracy going forward.

The Berlin Wall did of course come down shortly after I left East Germany in 1989—only my mother draws any connection between those two events of course—and I returned for final year of college, where I first sketched out the idea that I would present to my advisors at DU and Iliff a decade later when I began the long journey of this dissertation. In the ten years that elapsed since I first began coursework, the Civic Canopy came to life in ways I had not expected, with hundreds of different partners joining together in the exploration of the possibility of what the world might look like if we intentionally applied some of the principles and practices explored in this paper. While I had conceived of it in more abstract terms initially, as a way to describe the kind

of overarching "container" that would stand as a metaphor for an age in which civil society began to function more like an ecosystem, we ended up adopting at the name of the non-profit organization which I currently co-direct along with Drew O'Connor. While there are no doubt some delusions of grandeur in the conception of the civic canopy writ large, and even more in naming an organization after those visions, should we prove successful in pursuing some of the plans outlined here, we envision the day when the members of the civic network would comprise the actual canopy itself. In a very real way, people comprise and reinforce the systems in which we live, and as Berger's points reinforced at the outset, we both shape the systems within which we live and they in turn shape us. It is our hope that in claiming this audacious space that we might more intentionally bring this new way of being together into existence, and in so doing, benefit from the new climate and culture that is brought to life within the collaborative networks of a new civic canopy.

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APPENDIX A

Comparison of Models Leading to Collective Results

	Collaborative Leadership	Learning Organizations	Civic Innovation & Civic Renewal	Democratic Governance	Civic Engagement	Effective Teams
Contextual factors such as good timing and a clear need	x					
Inclusiveness	x		x	x	x	x
Credibility and openness of process	x	x				x
Commitment and/or involvement of high level, visible leaders	x					x
Support or acquiescence of "established" authorities or powers	x					x
Overcoming mistrust and skepticism	x	x				x
Strong leadership of the process	x	x				x
Interim successes (results)	x	x				x
A shift to broader concerns	x					
Connect citizens to public life			x			
Mobilize social capital to solve community problems			x			
Facilitate small and large group dialogue		x	x			x
Compare values, consider options			x			x
Take action by changing policies, organizations, and communities	x	x	x	x	x	x
Equalize engagement across all citizens (treat stakeholders equally)		x	x	x	x	x
New programs to address longstanding neighborhood needs				x		
Temporary planning and decision-making forums				x		
Projects that harness technology				x		
Authenticity—belief that participants can influence outcomes		x				x
Focuses on the problem/clear goal	x	x				x
Process is revisable		x				x
Utilizes data to inform decisions	x	x				x
Ongoing cycle of learning	x	x	x			x