

**Center for Technology in Government
MIII Justice Modeling Project**

Focus Group Meeting Minutes

Date: November 26, 2003
Place: CTG Meeting Room
Time: 9:00
By: Roderick MacDonald and
 Luis Luna

List of Attendees:

David Andersen	(DA)
Donna Canestraro	(DC)
Brian Burke	(BB)
Fikret Demircivi	(FD)
Tamas Bodor	(TB)
Yi-Jung Wu	(YW)
Anthony Cresswell	(AC)
Mohammad Mojtahedzadeh	(MM)
Theresa Pardo	(TP)
George Richardson	(GR)
Fiona Thompson	(FT)
Roderick MacDonald	(RM)
Luis Luna	(LL)

DA Asked everyone to introduce himself or herself and we went around the room one at a time.

DA Stated the particular situation of the project and the composition of the modeling group. The group is composed by people who facilitated an integration effort with a group of people from the Department of Justice (clients were not present), and a group of people observing this facilitation process. This group is now engaged in a facilitated model building effort.

DA Went over the Focus Group Agenda Handed Out, explaining the activities for the next two hours.

DA Explained that GR had built a small model and that this was an example to anchor folks to a theoretical model. What this type of model looks like. The icons used and

what a simulation looks. He stated that we were going to model what was in the archives. “We are modeling what exists in the archives.”

DA Explained that after looking at GR model, we would work in pairs to develop graphs over time.

DC Explained the contents of the handouts provided by her and Brian. There are three documents included in the handouts: A summary of the facilitated interactions of the group, including the dates of meetings, the configuration of the room, and some topics and key moments of the meetings; a timeline of the integration project; and a table with brief descriptions of the activities in the project, dates, and participating agencies.

DC Explained that before each meeting the CTG team dedicated some time to plan the meeting, and that usually during the next day they had a debriefing meeting.

DA Asked about the kind of data existent for each of those meetings. DC commented that there are notes, tape records, and some transcripts for the facilitated interactions, and notes and tapes for the debriefing meetings. DA asked if the table could be considered as an index for the archives. DC commented that although it was not yet cross-referenced, it could be. DA commented that the focus up to this point was that the model should be based on real data that could be tracked back to the records.

FT Commented that besides that data, and also very important for the project was the data in their heads, some of which will not appear in the tapes or the transcripts. This is data about impressions of people attitudes that they got from “body language, people discussing issues on breaks.”

DA Agreed on the importance and legitimacy of drawing from that database, comparing the different kinds of databases for the project as a funnel, a large amount of data in the mental database, and less data in the audio taped or written database. He pointed out the opportunity in the project to go back to the data to verify our ideas. He also said that these sessions are about connecting the dots of those observations and build patterns, move to the idea that we want to look at things from the perspective of 30,000 feet and take in the big picture.

DA Asked GR to show the model he had built.

GR Asked if folks had seen a system dynamics model and then went up to the board and drew two stocks with one flow between them (from the model he was going to show). The group commented that MM gave an introduction to the group, and all of them had seen a system dynamics model before.

GR Briefly explained the basic idea of stock and flow comparing it to a bathtub in the whiteboard. He went then to the formal model in Vensim. He stated that this was the most complicated model he had ever used. He stated that this represented his point of

view that came from listening to their last conversation, but explained that we wanted to model CTG's view, and the need for everyone to stick to their point of view.

GR Explained the main feedback processes in the model.

FT Asked what the B in the loop meant. GR explained balancing and reinforcing loops.

GR then revealed the variables representing the parameters of the model. He said his numbers came out of the air that his numbers should not be trusted. He ran the model and told some stories about the behaviors in it. At the end, he stated that you "want to start fresh with your model."

DA Commented that during the meetings the group will be working with two kind of pictures, pictures about structure and behavior. To have structure you need key variables. Stocks, flows, and information feedback. David went over what these were in GR's model. He explained then that the group would not be dealing with structure today. Structure causes behavior, and could show different behaviors.

DA Explained that the session will continue by talking about key variables and how they act out over time. He asked to consider by the moment the group's mental model without worrying about data.

TP commented that the model works perfectly for information integration such as the one in HIMS. She stated that the problem to model here is different. We have to go way up or way down. This project is not about integrating information or matching data. The project is about integrating processes or creating a governance mechanism to facilitate the integration of data.

DA Explained that the model will have a different set of variables and behavior. He suggested to blow up the model on the board. We want a new picture. It will have stocks, flows, feedback and we will be able to simulate that model.

DA asked the group to draw graphs over time in pairs. He asked also for captions telling a story associated with those graphs. He encouraged divergent thinking, stating that we were not looking for the right answer. (GR suggested that people might want to work alone to get more graphs and stories. People ended up working in pairs.)

Break into pairs to do this exercise.

After the work in pairs, the group continued the conversation about project boundaries.

TP commented that the model will be about a chapter in the integration process among these agencies. She suggested that this is an eight-month chapter starting in May 2003. She also commented that part of the motivation for the intervention is associated to a new legislation about information integration. People suggested that although CTG

involvement will end soon, the data can expand into the future through continued observations of the process similar to the ones that took place in the KDI project.

MM commented about three possible ideas to model:

1. Intervention of CTG in the project
2. Interaction among organizations engaged in the integration process
3. Outcome of the interactions or information integration.

TP and AC commented that the project is about the second option. It is not about information integration, but about the integration of processes or ideas to facilitate information sharing and integration. How people in organizations work at information integration.

DC Brought the point of involving the clients in the conversation. GR commented that we could involve them by asking them to criticize the theory once it is finished.

The conversation also included some aspects about the available data. It was pointed out that there exists data of what happens among the agencies without CTG and with CTG.

AC Described the focus of the model with an example of a study about the way a family function when the family is under the intervention of a therapist. Although there is an intervention from the therapist, the focus of the study is the family and how it functions. FT commented that most of the data is from interactions with the therapist present.

GR and DA wrote down some important points of the conversation in the whiteboard (figure 1).

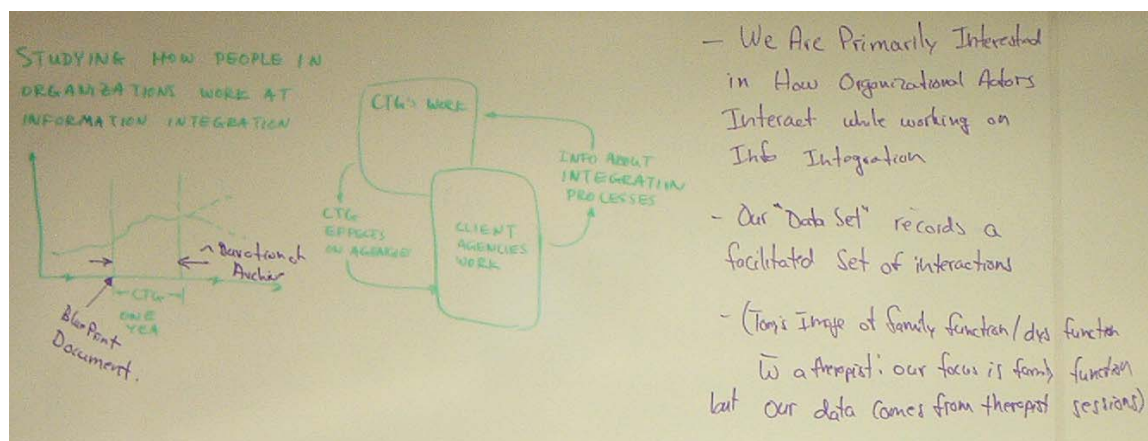


Figure 1. Summary of boundary conversation from the whiteboard.

The last part of the meeting was about the behaviors over time that the group created in the exercise. The graphs were pasted in a wall, and each group described their graphs while DA was asking for clarifications about them. Some important ideas that emerged during the conversation were:

1. The stories associated with the behaviors are pieces of the causal relations in the theory.
2. An important element in the process is to think in terms of accumulations and continuous processes as opposed to single events. Conversations need to move from events (e.g. meeting with a key participant) to the underlying causes that had been gradually building to generate the low point (the underlying accumulations).

The following are the graphs over time with some notes from DA (need to get some of the stories around them from the tape).

[Click here to see the graphs over time]

[SD workshop I-11-26-03.vsd](#)

Homework –

Think about stuff. The model should show how integration succeeds. Models should also be capable of showing failure.

Homework explicitly stated

Stories – people should be able to tell stories about what happened

Policies – identify policies that would lead to success or failure

Efforts – graphs

Theresa – have people think about paper topics from this project.



