Dynamic Facilitation:
An Exploration of Deliberative Democracy,
Organization Development,
and Educational Theory
As Tools For Social Change

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Abstract

Dynamic Facilitation is a non-linear, self-organizing approach for transforming passionate conflict into creative and practical breakthroughs. Deliberative democracy utilizes facilitated groups reflecting the community's larger diversity. Burbules' critical theory in education helps clarify the role of empathy and inquiry in Dynamic Facilitation, as does Rogers' work in facilitating learning. I interviewed nine professional facilitators and explore their narratives to expand current theory of dialogue. Findings support the relevance of Dynamic Facilitation for highly polarized situations, including public policy, public participation, and moral and ethical divides. However, given larger system constraints, other organization development tools are also needed to create an effective democracy.

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Part I: Setting the Stage

I. A. Introduction and Overview

This study focuses on Dynamic Facilitation, a distinctive approach to facilitating dialogue developed by Jim Rough (1997; 1991). This approach was designed specifically for emotionally charged situations where creative and practical outcomes are sought. This paper is addressed to anyone interested in approaches to facilitation and conflict resolution, including practitioners of organization development and communication studies. At the same time, because Dynamic Facilitation appears to be particularly useful for facilitating dialogue on polarized social issues, it may be of particular interest to those in the growing field of public participation and deliberative democracy. Many deliberative democracy projects use facilitated small groups, whether to increase deliberation among the public at large, to generate dialogue between polarized social groups, or to modify and reform our formal structures of governance (Gastil 2000).

Dialogue is also a key aspect of educational practice (Freire, 1970; Burbules, 1993; Brookfield and Preskill, 1999) and educational reform (Beane, 1990). At the same time, there is still much to learn within all of these fields – organization development, deliberative democracy, and education -- about how to create the conditions for fruitful dialogue and deliberation. My hope is that this research will contribute to this ongoing process by describing both a new approach to dialogue and its theoretical implications.

For this qualitative study, I interviewed nine professional facilitators, all of whom have studied Dynamic Facilitation with Jim Rough and incorporated this approach into their practice in their own ways. In the interviews, I sought to elicit facilitators' experience and understanding of their role and of the elements that make their work successful. I also asked facilitators about their experience with facilitating in the public arena, and their perspective on the possibilities and challenges of applying their work in this sector.

I.   B. The role of facilitated groups in deliberative democracy
and in educational reform

Facilitated small groups, designed to reflect the diversity of the larger society, play a key role in many of the existing and proposed projects in deliberative democracy. One carefully crafted proposal is the work of John Gastil (2000), who has designed a process for electoral reform using small facilitated groups of randomly selected citizens to create powerful feedback loops in the larger electoral system. Gastil frames his work using the "exit" and "voice" model of Albert Hirshman (1973). This model was originally designed to show how organizations become dysfunctional in situations where their clients have neither "exit," the option to leave the system, nor "voice," a way of giving feedback to the larger system (Hirshman in Gastil, 2000, pp. 14-31).

Gastil's proposal builds upon the success of a number of existing projects involving facilitated, randomly-selected small groups, including the Citizen's Juries that have been carried out by Ned Crosby over the last 20 years (Crosby, 1996; Gastil, 2000). In Europe, Danish consensus panels have been used as a way of creating an informed and deliberative public "voice" with regard to controversial social issues, such as policy on biotechnology (Atlee, 2002). Both Citizen's Juries and consensus panels help small, randomly selected groups make an informed decision by first receiving testimony from a variety of experts, and then engaging in facilitated deliberation. The experts are also cross-examined as part of the process.

Other deliberative democracy projects focus on increasing deliberation among the public at large, or increasing dialogue among social movements in conflict with one another. For example, the Public Conversations project, which recently made headlines when it announced the results of a five-year project to facilitate conversations between community leaders in the pro-life and pro-choice movements (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). In the larger public arena, the Kettering Foundation has sponsored the National

Issues Forums, where citizens come together in facilitated groups to explore issues of public policy (Gastil 2000; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

In describing deliberative democracy to those working primarily with business organizations, Tom Atlee says: "I am a member of a meta-organization called democracy, and I'd like that organization to be as effective as possible in meeting its purpose" (personal communication, April 2002). One way of viewing the common ground between deliberative democracy, organization development, and education is to see that all of these are focused on increasing the learning that takes place *within* a system (among its various members), as well on increasing the system's own ability to learn *as a system*.[1]

Although not generally acknowledged, facilitated groups are also essential for the success of educational reform. For example, "site-based management" is an innovation designed to create a "management team" at the school level, that is inclusive of teachers, parents, and administrative staff, in addition to the principal. Yet in my own experience, too many "management teams" are such only in name, and could benefit greatly from third-party facilitation.

On a larger level, the kinds of educational reform advocated by Beane and others include a deep revisioning of the purpose of schooling leading to changes in both curriculum and practice. Beane acknowledges that the success of these efforts depend upon the establishment of community support, and recommends dialogue as a way of building a shared understanding around the need for reform. At the same time, he acknowledges that dialogue is made difficult by the imbalance of power between school staff and community members (1990). Again, in my own experience, skillful facilitation can make

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[1] Deliberative democracy can also be seen as a particular response to a broader call for participatory democracy. Barber (1984) and others have called for the collaborative creation of a shared future as a necessary and viable alternative to the prevailing free-market model of liberal democracy. The danger with the current model is not only that it pits Davids against Goliaths, as interest-groups are pitted against each other in a dangerous win-lose, zero-sum game, but that the long-term sustainability needs of the larger human system remaining largely unaddressed (Barber, 1984) .

a significant contribution toward equalizing that imbalance and creating a fruitful dialogue.

One of the premises of this paper, then, is that a deeper understanding of good facilitation can be useful to both deliberative democracy and education reform. At the same time, it is also true that smaller groups operate within larger systems, much as the culture of individual classrooms is often constrained by the larger culture of the school and district. The exploration of how to work with small and large groups in a way that affects whole-system change within an organization is a key aspect of organization development. In turn, the key principles involved in this work can be applied to larger systems levels beyond individual organizations, as suggested by Eisen in his work on Human Systems Redesign (1985).

Group facilitation, then, is clearly not the sole element determining the success of large-scale change, whether in deliberative democracy, organization development, or educational reform. Still, the question of how to effectively facilitate dialogue as a way to foster learning, especially in difficult situations, remains a central shared inquiry.

I. C. Dynamic Facilitation

Jim Rough has been teaching his facilitation seminar for the last 12 years, mostly to corporate clients and government employees. More recently, a sizable number of social change and community activists have also started attending. While the seminars offer a distinctive approach to facilitation and offer the opportunity for hands-on practice, their main purpose is transformational. The workshop is designed as an opportunity for participants re-examine their basic assumptions about the need for a control orientation, and gain a deeper understanding of the power of self-organization (Zubizarreta, 2002).

During my first seminar with Jim, I was powerfully moved by witnessing the emergence of a natural and genuine appreciation for the value of difference among the seminar participants. This was particularly remarkable since, in addition to the corporate folks

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who are Jim's usual clientele, the attendees included a sizable contingent of anti-globalization activists. Also noteworthy was the fact that this appreciation was NOT based upon an elaborate set of "ground rules" nor initial discussions of safety, as is often the case with other facilitation approaches. Instead, it appeared to emerge from the facilitator's modeling a very active empathy for all participants, and giving participants the opportunity to "overhear" each other in depth. This seemed to result, in fairly short order, in a direct experience for many participants of the value to be gained from listening deeply to divergent perspectives.

The kinds of topics explored during the seminar also lent themselves particularly well to eliciting diverse perspectives. Jim explained that the Dynamic Facilitation approach works through evoking genuine openings in people's hearts and minds. Therefore, it does not lend itself to role-playing or simulations, but instead requires topics to which people can respond authentically. Since participants in the seminar generally have no shared history, the only real problems we shared in common were larger, human problems: What shall we do about homelessness? The current health-care system? How should we as a society deal with drug abuse? Teen pregnancy? These were the kinds of topics that we were asked to choose for our small-group facilitation practice.

Two other additional features of this work stood out. Emotions are welcome, and participants are not asked to censor themselves. Instead, the facilitator works actively to create an inclusive space where divergent views can be explored. As people feel fully heard by the facilitator, the energy of conflict shifts naturally to one of curiosity and creativity. Also, the non-linear nature of the method appears to enhance the energy and involvement of participants. Instead of working at keeping the group "on task," the facilitator's efforts are directed at holding open the creative space. The "agenda" is seen as the real concerns of the group as they unfold throughout the process.

While practicing their facilitation skills as they work on real issues, participants experience significant breakthroughs in their small groups. These breakthroughs can differ in both kind and degree. At times, they take the form of the group discovering a

deeper, underlying question. At other times, they take the form of actual solutions. In all cases, breakthroughs are distinguished by the quality of group energy and felt coherence that accompanies the shift. Additionally, Jim shares stories about his consulting work to help illuminate how the perspectives and skills learned in the context of the seminar can be applied in the business world.

While there are some definite similarities between Dynamic Facilitation and other approaches to facilitation, there are also significant differences (Zubizarreta, 2001). [2] For instance, both interest-based negotiation and Dynamic Facilitation are effective in situations of high conflict, and involve active facilitation. Yet interest-based negotiation appears to be a much more structured process, where the conversation is contained within a much more narrow, goal-oriented framework (Fisher and Ury, 1981).

Bohmian dialogue, a form of dialogue familiar to many of those working within organization development, shares an emphasis on non-linearity and emergent process with Dynamic Facilitation. These two approaches also share the larger purpose of helping people talk together about subjects that matter deeply. Yet to reach this end, Bohmian dialogue seeks to involve a group in "understanding how thought functions," and sees dialogue as inconsistent with the accomplishment of a practical task. A central aspect of Bohmian dialogue is the process of learning to "suspend" one's thoughts and feelings (Bohm, Factor and Garrett, 1991). By contrast, in Dynamic Faciliation, participants are encouraged to simply "be themselves." Inquiry is not positioned as an explicit goal, but instead appears to emerge as a reliable by-product.

I. D. Organization Development

After taking Jim's workshop twice, I decided to enroll in a master's program in Organization Development. My interests in diversity work, conflict resolution, and social

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[2] Appendix A lists a summary of key similarities and differences between Dynamic Facilitation and the Interaction Approach, a traditional method often used as an introductory text in facilitation (Doyle and Straus, 1976).

change had already pointed me in this direction. Now, I wanted to learn more about working with groups and understanding systems, in part to better understand Jim's work and apply it in a variety of contexts.

Earlier, I had been introduced to the challenges of large-scale system change through four years as a staff member with the Developmental Studies Center, an educational reform non-profit that sought to help schools shift their culture, climate, and pedagogy. This reform effort was based on using inquiry and dialogue as cornerstone of both intellectual and moral development, and was informed by the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Nel Noddings (1984) among others.

The experiential approach of the Sonoma State M.A. program in Organization Development is designed to integrate intellectual theory with personal growth, field internships, and group reflection on practice. The various internships I undertook allowed me to learn more about facilitation in general, as well as Dynamic Facilitation in particular. And now, this culminating research project on Dynamic Facilitation and deliberative democracy provides the opportunity to bring together my long-standing interests in dialogue, education, political theory, and social change, with more recent learnings from the field of organization development.

I. E Purpose and Limitations of Study

As a facilitator and student of organization development, my own experience has been that the use of facilitation in general can help groups handle diversity more effectively and reach agreements more efficiently than they would otherwise. In that regard, I am certainly favorably predisposed with regard to facilitation. Furthermore, my experience of the power of Dynamic Facilitation in particular has led me to be positively biased with regard to this approach.

However, as a practitioner and student I found that the existing theory on dialogue did not provide a sufficiently coherent framework for understanding the power and effectiveness of the Dynamic Facilitation approach. To derive a clearer understanding of the phenomena involved in this practice, I interviewed facilitators who have studied with Jim Rough. I asked them about how they see their work, and the factors that support and limit its success. In the process, I have expanded existing theories of dialogue in light of my research findings, in order to develop a coherent body of theory that reflects, grounds and supports the practice of this particular approach to dialogue.

As my purpose was not to validate the legitimacy of facilitation per se, this study does *not* include participants' perspectives on the group experiences that the facilitators in the study are describing. Therefore, this study may not be very helpful to those who doubt the effectiveness of any kind of facilitation to create a truly satisfactory outcome for all participants. Nonetheless, it may be useful for those who are already familiar with a variety of approaches to facilitation, have experienced its effectiveness, and are searching for even more effective approaches. It may also be useful to those with an interest in the theory of self-organizing systems and emergent process, and its applications.

Along similar lines, another limitation of this study may be the particular paradigm from which it originates, which is not necessarily widely shared. Much of the conventional literature on facilitation describes the role of the facilitator in mechanistic, linear, and control-oriented terms, and appears unaware of the existence of other approaches. Many of the critiques of deliberative democracy (as well as some of its proponents) utilize the language of argument and battle when describing inquiry, and give the impression that these are the only ways in which critical inquiry can proceed. Even more fundamentally, many people seem to have little hope in the possibility that, even in difficult situations, new and creative solutions can be collaboratively created to meet the needs of all participants without compromise.

Given my own bias toward experiential learning, I am not at all sure that any written work can bridge across different paradigms in more than a superficial way. Therefore,

one of the limitations of this study is that it may not make much sense to those who have not had sufficient experiential grounding in other perspectives. Still, I hope that this qualitative study of the actual practice of facilitators might encourage others to look into alternative possibilities more deeply.

My larger hope is that this research will contribute towards effective social change. If we wish to succeed at large-scale, meaningful educational reform in our society along the lines proposed by Beane (1990) and others, both the vision of deliberative democracy and the tools of organization development will need to be applied to this effort. Of course, this is also true of any other significant social reform we may wish to undertake.

Toward this end, it seems necessary to build a stronger bridge between the fields of deliberative democracy and organization development. Most practitioners in organization development have strong values around inclusion and participation. I believe a greater awareness of the existence of the deliberative democracy movement might encourage more organization development practitioners to consider how to apply the values of inclusion and participation beyond the workplace to the larger public sphere. This could be helpful, as many of the tools and insights from organization development could assist the deliberative democracy movement to reach its goals of a participatory and inclusive governance and collective decision-making process.

I. F Methodology

As stated above, my purpose in selecting participants for this study was to find practitioners who had been influenced by Dynamic Facilitation's dialogue-based, high-empathy, self-organizing approach, and were incorporating it in their work. I sought to interview these practitioners in two general areas: 1) what they identified as the key elements that made their work with groups successful, and how they understood these

elements; and 2) their thoughts on the applicability and challenges of using facilitation in the sphere of public deliberation. [3]

I found these practitioners by asking Jim Rough for a list of facilitators who had participated in his seminar, who had seemed particularly inspired by his work, and who had an active facilitation practice of their own. All of the facilitators who participated in this research project have taken, at one time or another, a seminar with Jim. At the same time, these facilitators do not constitute a "school" in any narrow sense. Most of them have had other kinds of facilitation training before and/or after having taken Jim's seminar, and have integrated their learnings from Jim's workshop with their own particular style and previous training.

Once I had obtained a list from Jim, I chose nine prospective participants with an eye to obtaining as much diversity as possible in terms of gender and kinds of work experience.[4] I then called prospective participants to describe the project to them and ask if they would be willing to be interviewed about their work. All of the facilitators I called agreed to participate, and proceeded to schedule an appointment for a telephone interview.

I did not record the interviews, but took notes instead. Once I finished typing the notes from a given interview, I e-mailed the notes to the participant so that they could verify the authenticity of their statements. However, participants have not reviewed and thus do

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[3] For a list of questions, see Appendix B. While the questions provided a loose, overall structure, for a large portion of each interview I followed the participants' lead and pursued their unique experiences in some depth.

[4] The final selection included three men and six women. Of the nine participants, three are independent consultants. One of the independent consultants has an extensive background in community work, while another has a background in industry. Three participants work in government positions, including County government, State government, and the Navy. The last three participants are more closely related to the business world: one teaches in the business college at a University, another works for a business with many government contracts, and the third works at a government-sponsored resource center for local businesses.

not necessarily endorse any of the larger implications I have drawn from their quotes. Names have been modified to protect the identity of participants.

My methodology also included personal inquiry into my own relationship with this research, as well as attention to the unfolding process of the research itself. From the descriptions given of various approaches in Braud and Anderson (1998), it appears that my methodology bears resemblances to intuitive inquiry, organic inquiry, and heuristics.

I. G. Evolution of this study

Part of my research approach was one of "taking difficulties as the path." This is only another way of saying that some of the more unexpected and ultimately significant gifts came out of what initially appeared as difficulties.

For example, at one point I felt overwhelmed by some of the more critical responses to the proposals of deliberative democracy, which question the very possibility of consensus (for example, Sanders, 1997). The facilitators I had interviewed speak about groups reaching shared understandings. However, others might claim that the consensus was only apparent, and that facilitators' perspectives have no correlation with the real experiences of the group members.

Since I had not designed my study to interview group participants, I did not have any "evidence" to offer in response to these challenges. As I struggled with how to continue to give voice to the narratives of the facilitators I had interviewed, I realized that what was at issue was the larger question of how we arrive at truth. I began to deepen my relationship to the research process by writing about the personal history of my relationship to this subject. As I did so, my commitment to the project deepened in unforeseen ways, and I was able to continue with the research.

I. H Personal context of the study

In her book "The Culture of Argument," Deborah Tannen (1998) details the destructive effects of the adversarial approach that pervades our culture. A number of experiences in my own life, some of them taking place long before the immediate circumstances of this study, have been significant for my understanding and insight into this phenomenon.

I am 20 years old, sitting across the table from my father who has come to visit me at Oberlin College. It is 1982, and I am trying to explain the concept of "listening to understand," some time before it was popularized by Stephen Covey (1989). I am not only asking my father to consider such an approach in the abstract. I am also asking, as clearly and directly as I can, for just a few minutes of that kind of listening from him in the present moment. Angered by what he perceives as a dangerous request for complicity in faulty thinking and eroding values, he crosses his arms over his chest, takes his watch off, sets it on the table between us where he can see it, starts tapping his foot, and says, "I'm listening…"

That same year, I am introduced to George Lakoff's work on metaphor (1980), and his brilliant deconstruction of our cultural framing of "argument as battle." I now have words to describe, not only the larger social mileu, but also the boot camp in which I've been raised. My father, with the best of intentions, has always seen his role as preparing me as best he could to defend myself against the world. I am aware that in many ways, the training I have received has been a gift. Yet the wounds I carry as part of this gift tell me insistently that there is another way, a way of being for which there is a profound need, both in my personal self and in the larger world…

In any search for alternatives to adversarial forms of discourse, one will frequently encounter the term "dialogue." Of course, this term has been used to describe a variety of approaches that sometimes differ significantly between them. Yet one thing upon which the various definitions might agree is that the practice of dialogue can be much more challenging than the idea of it.

Five years after the conversation with my father, I am attending a lecture in the Bay Area by a writer popularizing a 'new' paradigm of partnership. I have previously encountered this paradigm in college within radical feminism, and my humanistic self is deeply excited to see it being taken to a broader audience. At the end of the lecture, someone in the audience asks a challenging question. The speaker responds in what appears to be a highly defensive manner, and continues in that vein for the rest of the question-and-answer session. Meanwhile, the cognitive dissonance between the content of the presentation and what I am witnessing afterwards becomes physically unbearable. I am swept away by tides of pain, confusion, and shame. I recognize all too well the wounds that I still carry within me, regardless of the beliefs I may hold in my mind. The personal challenge of unlearning a lifetime of conditioning feels overwhelming to me.

Around that same time, I happen to turn on the radio as I am driving down the freeway. It is Hiroshima Day, and someone is speaking about what they perceive to be as the root essence of war and violence. When that first speaker finishes, another speaker on the panel begins to speak, offering a different and complementary perspective, building upon what the first speaker has said, converging in some aspects and diverging in others. I have never heard someone "disagree" with another person so comfortably, respectfully and appreciatively before, and I am moved to tears. The conversation continues in the same vein, a richly textured and nuanced collaborative weaving of meaning…

This last experience, and others like it, confirmed my sense of the real possibility of having "critical" yet non-combative conversations, and kept me engaged on the search to learn how one might do so. By "critical" conversations, I mean a deep questioning, an exploration of divergence, contradiction, and concurrent search for meaning.

Of course, my father's fears reflected a larger social misunderstanding, one that mischaracterizes anything non-combative as "soft". In the course of this research project, I have realized more clearly both the progress we have made as a culture in the last twenty years, as well as the extent to which we are still struggling with the legacy of this

misunderstanding. Some of the more recent writing about dialogue as a tool for learning recognizes explicitly the value of both "empathy" and "inquiry" (for example, Burbules, 1993; Brookfield and Preskill, 1999). Yet, these same writers also underscore over and over the difficulty of balancing those two. As they do so, they reveal how as a culture, we are still struggling with how to balance "inclusive and empathic" discourse with "critical and analytical" discourse. It seems that the relationship between these two elements, a sense of how they might easily co-exist, is still not well understood.

During all this time, my own drive toward the integration of head and heart has kept alive my search for a "third way." While my own experiences informed me that it was indeed possible for empathic conversations to have real depth and strength, I initially knew very little about how to evoke such conversations. Still, it was clear that people could disagree on substantive points, yet take the time to listen and attempt to understand in a way that communicated a sense of basic trust in one another. Divergent viewpoints could be offered without minimizing the divergence, respecting it fully, yet also respecting the humanity of all participants in the conversation. Instead of a facile "agreeing to disagree," empathic conversations could include a serious effort to explore and reconcile differences, or at least to gain a deeper understanding of why that may not be possible.

On a professional level, my collaborations with my mother confirmed the social power that empathic inquiry can create. My mother's work has been deeply shaped by Paulo Freire's work on dialogue (1970), which has informed her work in family literacy with Latino parents, including migrant farmworker families (Ada & Zubizarreta, 2001). While on a personal level we have had our share of difficulties with dialogue, her professional work has been a continual source of learning and inspiration for me.

In the process of unlearning my own "lifetime of conditioning" with regard to adversarial discourse, I explored a variety of tools. These included Re-evaluation Counseling (Jackins, 1994), the work of the National Coalition Building Institute (Brown, 1998), Circle and Council Circle practices (Baldwin, 1998; Zimmerman and Coyle, 1996), Non-

Violent Communication (Rosenberg, 1999), and Focusing (Gendlin, 1991; Cornell, 1996).

While each of these disciplines is unique and distinct, one of the areas they share in common is the practice of empathic listening. As a result of this work, I have experienced at times how helpful it can be to listen to others and to refrain from my own advocacy until the conditions are present for mutual understanding. The practice of deep listening has been useful for promoting dialogue, whenever I have been able to do so. Yet there have also been, and continue to be, many conversations where my own passion for a given perspective and my own need to be heard have made it difficult to listen well to others.

Obviously, the greatest need for dialogue arises in precisely those situations where it can be the most challenging. Yet if the process of dialogue is something that requires significant amounts of self-discipline from everyone involved, how practical can it be for addressing difficult situations? After all, we face pressing social problems, whose timing may not allow us the luxury of waiting until we have all become saints or Zen masters in order to engage in productive conversations with one another on controversial issues. What can we do to help create these kinds of conversations in situations where there is the greatest need, i.e., those situations with the greatest potential for conflict and misunderstanding?

These are the kinds of concerns that are often encountered with regard to dialogue, especially in situations of intense polarization. My interest in studying Dynamic Facilitation is centered around its potential to address these concerns.

Part II: Analyzing the Data
II. A. Facilitation and the Public Sphere: Introduction

Several of the facilitators I interviewed for this project had extensive experience using facilitation in a public context. Others offered perspectives informed by their experiences

as community members who had experienced the presence or absence of facilitation in public participation processes.

Obviously, facilitating in the public sphere can be more challenging than other kinds of facilitation, as suggested by Margaret Suet, an employee of Bastion Corporation working in the Quality Department as an internal facilitator. Margaret described a situation where she had recently attended a public meeting as a community member:

"The issue was rezoning part of the area of the local school. One of the things I noticed was the contrast with the groups I facilitate at work. At work, where I facilitate, people are often emotionally invested in their careers. But in the public sector, people can be even more emotionally invested. Also, there can be a much greater diversity with regards to people's backgrounds."

Nora Delaney is a manager of organization development and training for Peters County in Washington. She facilitates strategic planning sessions, department mergers, advisory boards, as well as teaching classes on facilitation and cultural diversity for government employees. In the following vignette, Nancy describes a particularly successful example of public participation:

"There is a local watershed council here composed primarily of citizens. It is a county practice, to have the citizens come together and write the management plan. This group includes a few staff from the planning department, who help with the technical end of writing a plan. The lead planner also served as the main facilitator. At other times, when they have needed someone external, I have come in to facilitate."

"This group has not only built a plan for the county, but has become such a solid group that they want to form a private non-profit, in order to continue to work for the good of the community on watershed issues."

At the same time, Nora acknowledges that not all groups in the county have been so successful:

"There are two other watershed planning groups in the county, who have also wanted to form a non-profit group, but those other groups wanted to form a non-profit *to protect themselves from* the county. This group wanted to form a non-profit *to work with* the

county. The other groups became polarized, but this group has deeply appreciated the partnership relationship that they have with the county."

What made the difference? When asked, Nora attributed a great deal of the divergent results of these three citizen's groups to the fact that the successful group was led by a trained and highly-skilled facilitator, who was also willing to call in an external facilitator on a regular basis.

Margaret and Nora's stories, as well as the stories of other facilitators I interviewed, highlight the importance of good facilitation in ensuring an effective outcome. Next, we will look at what it is that makes facilitation effective, from the perspective of facilitators who resonate with the Dynamic Facilitation approach.

II. B. What Makes Facilitation Effective
II. B. 1. Listening as if our life depended on it

It will not be a surprise to anyone that listening deeply and well was high on the list of factors that facilitators described as essential to good facilitation. Here is the response given by Maureen Richards, a professional facilitator for 20 years, to the first question I asked: "What do you enjoy the most about your work as a facilitator?"

"I enjoy the secrets. When I stand up in front of a room, if people have not seen me before, I know that they will expect traditional facilitation. I know that what I will do is to really, really hear everyone in the room, but they don't know that yet."

"When my secrets come out, my "Jim phrases" that I take into every session, when I use them and watch people open up, I love that. Even in focused groups that are highly structured, "tell me more!" works like magic. The look on people's faces when I say that, **and they realize I mean it,** is a joy." (emphasis in the original).

"When I facilitate, I go for quality of participation. Usually most facilitation is more about quantity of participation than quality. To watch people's faces when I ask them to tell me more – it might be the first time all week that they've been really heard."

In response to the question, "What do you see as your purpose as a facilitator?" Maureen offered the following:

"My purpose is to hear people. To REALLY hear people. Knowing that the first statement that they say is usually not what it's totally about. Often it's just a knock on the door. My purpose is to open the door…"

Paul Fanit is a consultant in Edmonton, Canada. In addition to facilitation, he conducts program evaluations, policy reviews, and policy analysis, and has worked widely with non-profits and community development. In the following quotes, he emphasizes the importance of authenticity in the listening process:

"One of the most important things is that the process needs to be genuine. The empathy needs to be there. When I have worked with low-income people, I have found them to be very observant in this regard. They will come up to some people and say, "I can look into your eyes and tell that you are not really sincere." They will come up to others and give them a hug, and say, "your questions showed that you really understood."

"One of the things that's critical is that if you allow your thinking ahead to distract you from genuinely listening, then you are in trouble. Facilitating can look easy, but it is an incredibly exhausting thing. Ten minutes after it is over, I am a wreck!

Several participants mentioned how listening is exhausting work. Margaret Suet from Bastion describes how she applies facilitation to help audiences get the most from technical presentations:

"I often facilitate 2-day conferences where people are giving presentations before the discussion. Part of my work involves facilitating the informational part of the meeting as well, to help summarize and clarify what the presenters are saying. While they are talking, I am listening in a very intent and focused way for the key points that each speaker is trying to make, and that correspond to the overall goal of the meeting. Then I'll check back with them, to make sure I've got it. "So, out of all of what you just said, the key point is x, y, and z?"

"Often times, the presenters are giving the group much more information than the group really needs. So when you listen, truly listen, to sort through the verbiage and get to the core of their message, it's very helpful to both the speaker and the group. And, it's very exhausting work!"

As mentioned earlier, one of the distinctive elements of Dynamic Facilitation is how emotions are welcomed as part of the process of working on a practical task. Ben Woods is part of the U.S. Navy, and works at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Brementon,

Washington. His facilitation assignments have included process improvement, change

management, and teamwork development. Here is his perspective on facilitation:

"Everyone on the group has their special interest, and our work is to draw each person out, help the group as a whole see the different perspectives. One of the things that we as facilitators bring to meetings is our ability to empathize. If someone is speaking out about an issue, and they are repeating their point, it is an indication that they aren't feeling heard. We can help them feel recognized and understood."

In other approaches, such a participant might be identified as a "difficult person." In

Dynamic Facilitation, the facilitator sees it as an indication that the person has not felt

heard. Ben continues describing the importance of listening:

"The focus of this work is about communication, listening to and understanding people […] I've been to three other training sessions on facilitation. One was good, two were marginal, in part because the approach they took was that the facilitator's role is to SEPARATE people's emotions from the issue. Yes, it's true that emotions can cause problems, but you can't separate people from their emotions. Instead, you need to face the emotions directly: "I see you're really excited (or mad). Can you tell me why?" It's only when you address these things, that people are then able to set the emotions aside on their own. You can tell people to set their emotions aside, but if you shut them down, then they often won't say anything else for the rest of the meeting. Yet that person may have a key element to solving the problem at hand, and you've just lost their participation in the effort."

Sarah Holstein is a consultant in Bothell, Washington specializing in whole systems

design. In response to the question, "What are some of the more 'subtle' things you might

do as a facilitator?" she shared the following story about 'holding the space' for a group

member who was experiencing intense emotion.

"If someone is very emotional, or having a hard time talking about what they are trying to convey, I hold the space for that person. For example, in one group I facilitated recently, there was a union person who was very upset at the fact that she was not able to live on the income she was receiving. I stayed with her process, and helped the group stay with her process, for twenty minutes while she regained her composure.

I asked her what the group could do to help. She explained that part of her despair was that she couldn't see any possible way that the situation could change. What happened during that 20 minutes of the people in the room witnessing her emotion and her pain, is that the rest of the group was able to see the humanity in another person's plight. This

raised her concerns to the level of strategic importance for the group, and they went on to take this issue up with the legislature and the state. There was a fundamental shift in their approach that took place as a result of this process […] They were seeing an aspect of their reality in a different way. As a result of that, transformation and commitment occurred."

Another aspect of listening deeply involves eliciting a diversity of opinions, as well as "protecting" the contributions of each participant. Here is Ben again, speaking about diversity and protection:

"As facilitators, part of our role is to moderate the strong personalities and help level the playing field for all participants. This in turn fosters a wider spectrum of ideas and perspectives to be heard, discussed, and evaluated […] seeing the positive results of this approach has reinforced my confidence. I can more easily step up in front of a group with big managers, and say, 'Yes, that's your idea, and that's great! And now, let's also hear what these other people think. Let's see if there are other effective solutions to the problem.' People are not used to encouraging and embracing ideas, from the perspective of 'where is the gem here?' Instead, if a facilitator is not present, what usually happens is that the creative ideas will never be identified or, worse, will be squelched."

The following anecdote by Maureen Richards shows some of these various elements in action in a public participation context. Maureen was hired by the public library in her area, which extends over several counties, to facilitate a number of meetings on the contentious issue of whether to put filters on the computers in the library. Each meeting was held in a different county, and involved a different group of people.

In the following section, Maureen describes the difficulties she encountered, especially the first time when she was still becoming familiar with the various constituencies. As is often the case with public policy issues, the high level of emotion and diversity of opinions created a challenging situation:

"…I was SO exhausted by the time this work was done. There were people with bibles, people concerned about pornography, and people with concerns about the first amendment…"

"…when I first said, "how do you want to go about doing this?" every hand went up, and everyone started talking at once. There were three different principal factions, and it took an enormous amount of effort on my part. I was working with the flip charts, and finally

after about 40 minutes, people SAW what was happening, they SAW that there was order in the chaos. They saw that solutions were actually coming out, that they WERE there, and it was no longer just yelling and screaming. Yet the first 40 minutes were overwhelming. It was overwhelming attempting to protect all of the participants, as there was so much animosity that protection was exhausting. At the end, we had 5 pages of solutions."

As a result of her first experience, Maureen modified her technique somewhat for the next two events, which she felt went much more smoothly:

"By the second meeting, I had figured out that I needed to introduce the process more than I usually do when I'm working with other groups. So I told them at the beginning what I was going to do. I said, "I want to hear from every one of you. Whoever is talking, I will stick with that person for a while, because I want to hear them completely." Only then did I ask the group, "How should we do this? How do you want to choose whose turn it is?" They came up with a number of different ways, and then they chose to raise their hands. So I explained to them that my rule was, "I will protect the person who is talking." If someone started to interrupt, I would walk right between the two people and continue listening to the first person. As a result, the second and third meeting were much easier. It was a different approach for me, to tell them what I was going to do ahead of time."

As mentioned earlier, Dynamic Facilitation does not use elaborate ground rules. Instead, the usual way Jim begins a session in a corporate context is simply by asking, "What do you all want to do today?" As described above, Maureen discovered that she needed to modify that approach slightly in order to be more effective in a public participation context. Maureen goes on to describe the response to her work by the library staff who had hired her:

"The library staff had never seen anything like this before. They had never seen people be so calm at the conclusion of a meeting. They had only seen screaming people before….By the time I was done, the library people were completely flabbergasted that we had come up with so many solutions….When someone calls me, I guarantee my work. I guarantee that they will get to their bottom line. I tell them, 'I will get it for you, but I need for you to be clear on what that bottom line is.' The library's bottom line was to get solutions. But they ended up with more than they had asked for, because they also ended up with customers that felt heard.

In my review of the existing theory of dialogue, I was struck by how these descriptions echoed Burbules' perspectives on dialogue. As a student of Noddings, Burbules'

postmodern and feminist perspective on dialogue is informed by a sensibility that recognizes the central role played by human relationship in the learning process. The primacy of persons means that dialogue is not a disembodied process but instead a kind of relationship that needs to be nurtured:

"A successful dialogue involves a willing partnership and cooperation in the face of likely disagreements, confusions, failures, and misunderstandings. Persistence in this process requires a relation of mutual respect, trust, and concern– and part of the dialogical interchange often must relate to the establishment and maintenance of these bonds." (1993, p.19)

Burbules' theory seems particularly helpful in understanding the emphasis that my interviewees placed upon the establishment of genuine relationship with participants in a facilitated meeting. These quotes from his theory sound very much like some of the facilitator's statements:

"We are involved with our partners in dialogue, interested in them as well as in what they have to say, to a degree that goes beyond the casual level of commitment we have in conversation generally […] we follow what our partners in dialogue are trying to say, we think along with them, we try to imagine matters from their point of view, to a degree that we do not bother with in ordinary speech encounters. We could not, in fact, be this involved in every conversation; it would exhaust us and dissipate our best efforts […] but in dialogue we endeavor to be fully with our partner, and to engage him or her with us, because we recognize that something more is at stake than simply the topic at hand […] (1993, p.36)

"A degree of effort usually needs to be made early on, particularly when we are engaged with someone new, to create a context of feeling and commitment in which both participants feel safe to offer up their beliefs, and the experiences or feelings that accompany them, even when they know that they may be disagreed with." (1993, p. 37)

Of course, Burbules also emphasizes other aspects of dialogue. Following Freire, Burbules views dialogue as a conversation designed to facilitate learning. He describes it as "an activity directed toward discovery and new understanding, which stands to improve the knowledge, insight, or sensitivity of its participants" (1993, p.8). Burbules describes dialogue as a profound and far-reaching phenomenon, whose deep structure is central to the processes of language, reasoning, morality, and social organization. Yet all

of this takes place *within* the fundamentally relational quality of dialogue. Citing Heidegger, Burbules sees meaning and truth as situated "not in transcendent criteria, but in the practical attainment of understanding and agreement between persons – an endeavor that can, of course, fail." (1993, p.15)

How then, do we help increase the likelihood of success in dialogue? Different traditions have different answers to this question. Perhaps this is a good place to reiterate that I am using "dialogue" here NOT as an equivalent to "Bohmian dialogue," but instead in the broader sense referred to by Juanita Brown, who collaborated with Peter Senge and Bill Isaacs in the MIT Dialogue Project:

 "For me, Dialogue is like entering this central courtyard in the spacious home of our common human experience. There are many doorways into this central courtyard, just as there are many points of entry to the experience of Dialogue. Indigenous councils, salons, study circles, women's circles, farm worker house meetings, wisdom circles, non-traditional diplomatic efforts and other conversational modalities from many cultures and historical periods had both contributed to and drawn from the generative space that we were calling dialogue."(2000, p. 82)

From the perspective of the facilitators I interviewed, the main categories that emerged with regard to what makes for effective facilitation were as follows: 1) listening deeply, including listening to emotions, welcoming diversity, and "protecting" each participant's contribution; 2) earning and keeping the trust of the group, including doing one's own personal work; and 3) trusting the group and the process. Since we have already addressed the first, we shall proceed to the next two.

II. B. 2. Earning the Trust of the Group

The second theme that emerged in the narratives is the need for the facilitator to earn and keep the group's trust. This theme emerged both in the positive sense, of the work that needs to be done to establish trust, as well as in the cautionary sense of how damaging it can be when trust has been destroyed through manipulation.

Stephen Nichols is a consultant who does facilitation and mediation. Before starting his own consulting practice, he worked at United Airlines, first as a machinist, then as an internal facilitator. When asked, "What kind of a relationship do you try to create with a group?" he offered the following responses:

"I want to build trust, by being as transparent as I can about who I am, and how I work. Also by letting them know that I will not betray their confidence. They can sit and talk to me about whatever they want, and they will not hear it somewhere else."

"Also, I don't get pulled into conflict. I can sit in the fire with it. "Neutral" is not really a good word for it, as I of course have my own feelings and perspectives. It's more that I don't take sides, I don't react nor get defensive at whatever they might say. For example, when I was doing a mediation recently, someone took offense at something I asked, and said that they felt that it wasn't an appropriate question. I responded by inviting them to tell me more, and asking them sincerely what it was about my question that they found inappropriate. It would be easy to allow myself to get pulled in to justifying my question, explaining why it is a perfectly good question. Yet that is where it's valuable to do the inner work, seeing where I have a tendency to get defensive, what pushes my buttons, so that I don't have to inject myself into the situation but can instead be there for the client."

"You really have to respect people for coming in front of you and being themselves. If you can hold that love and respect for them, it makes a real difference. After all, people come to us when they are upset, not their best selves. If we can view them with love and respect, regardless of what they say or do, they get that on some level."

Elise Wagoner is the academic director for the small business minor at Colorado State College, and uses facilitation in her classroom teaching. Previously, she and her husband had a consulting business in the state of Washington, where they did facilitation for small businesses. She also spoke about the issue of trust:

"…integrity is key to facilitation: not betraying that trust that we are given. Part of that is being completely honest. There are times in working with a group, when I need to say, 'Let's stop. You know, right at this moment, I'm not exactly sure what to do. So let's just stop, and reflect for a moment, and then we'll know what to do.' That is when people will trust you, if you make yourself very vulnerable, just as they are."

The issue of trust also came up in the negative sense. Nora Delaney, from Peters County, offered this caution early in her interview:

"One of the problems is that sometimes "facilitator" can mean "manipulator spelled backwards. [….] When a process takes place that is not carried out with integrity, it can backfire for years. It sets a negative precedent, and it breaks trust."

Elise Wagoner also spoke the challenges of re-building trust.:

"Trust is key, and as a facilitator, you have to demonstrate that. In a situation where people have been burned in the past, it is something that has to be built, and it may not happen in the first or second session. Trust is such a huge issue… in one of the classes I was teaching, one of the students said to me in the fourth week of class: "Here is my biggest fear: I'm going to tell you all of these things about myself, and you are going to take them and use them against me."

One of the principal factors mentioned with regard to maintaining trust was the need to not have any hidden agendas. Two facilitators spoke explicitly about how they would refuse jobs that did not fit their ethical standards. Tammy Nestor has been working since 1994 as a Quality Coordinator for the State of Oregon, facilitating groups that are working on process improvement and organization development. This is her response to the question, "Why do you think that sometimes people have a negative attitude toward facilitation?"

"Well, there are some facilitators who will run an agenda. Someone says, here is the answer I want, so conduct the meeting to get this answer. That is unethical, and I won't do it. If someone asks me to do that, I tell them that they need to talk to the group directly, and not expect me to do this manipulative thing. So there are people who have had experiences like this, who legitimately look at facilitation from a jaundiced view, and well they should."

Ben Woods made a very similar statement when speaking about the difficulties he encounters with managers who may not be very familiar with the purpose of facilitation:

"In some cases, they [the managers] just want the meeting to provide validation for their predetermined solution. We run into that quite a bit, especially with people who don't understand facilitation. In those cases, we ask them, "Are you looking for everyone to say, OK, this is the right answer? Are you looking to get your answer validated by the group? Because if that's the case, you don't need us, and you don't need to have a meeting. If that's what you want, just do the research to back up your solution, and go for it. That way we won't waste any time."

Through skillful contracting with the manager, a facilitator can sometimes find a way to work honestly with the group, even when the manager has a pre-existing agenda. Ben shared the following experience:

"Sometimes what I try to do is to subtly work the process to see if we can come up with some alternatives. For example, if the manager is set on this solution, I might suggest that a good strategist will always have one or two back-up plans. That gives me the wiggle room to have a productive meeting with the group, who is now tasked with creating that back-up plan."

It's also important to note that it is not always the manager's agenda that is the problem, but that the facilitator's own agenda can create problems as well. Elise Wagoner offered the following:

"The difference is that good facilitators put their egos aside. They are not there to be right, or to boost their egos. Instead, they have to totally let go of their egos. Often bad facilitation experiences are the result of someone coming in with a huge ego, and communicating to the group that "you're all going to come along with me." The message is, "you're not doing that right. I am in charge here. I will show you the way."

"There is an old saying in education, that a great teacher is the guide on the side, not the sage on the stage. And I think that is true for facilitation as well. A great facilitator is one whose ego is invisible. They need to approach a group with tremendous humility: I'm here for YOUR process; I'm here for you, to help you in the best way that I can."

Part of the reason why earning the trust in the group was so highly emphasized in the interviews, may be due to the nature of Dynamic Facilitation. Since this is not a linear, step-by-step, highly structured process, the group needs to trust the facilitator sufficiently to embark upon uncharted territory. Paul Fanit points out the challenges of obtaining consent from clients to engage in an emergent, non-linear process:

"I get so excited by the opportunities for of creative thinking, and applying creativity to solving the problems we face. Yet I sometimes have trouble convincing my clients to relax. They are concerned that, if we move into an open-ended, creative process, how will we make sure that their issues come up? I reassure them that, since they will be part of the group, if they think something is important, they will bring it up."

II. B. 3. The facilitator's trust in the group and trust in the process

In addition to the importance of earning the trust *of* the group, many of the responses had to do with the facilitator's trust *in* the group. Other related comments indicated the need for the facilitator to trust the process, as shown by flexibility, openness, and a willingness to be surprised. In fact, it is the facilitator's trust in the process that allows them to drop any agendas of their own.

In Nora Delaney's case, trust came up in response to the very first question, "What do you enjoy the most about facilitation?"

"The dynamics of what happens with a group. It's always a surprise what the group comes up with in the end. I have a deep belief and trust in the collective wisdom of the group, and it is exciting to be a part of watching it unfold, and building the safety so that it *can* unfold."

The following anecdote highlights that sense of surprise mentioned in the quote. Nora offered it as an example of what she termed "metalogue," or what happens when a group enters a deep transformational state through the process of dialogue. I had been intrigued by Nora's description of metalogue, and asked her what allowed metalogue to emerge:

""Safety… and a willingness to see something, and then see it differently. The group is no longer talking about the thing, it's as if they have become the thing --- there is an openness to exploring the many facets of that subject, there is no rush to quickly come to a decision.. instead, there is almost a sense of awe about what they are discovering together."

"An example of this was when I was working with a very diverse group, that was tasked with developing a new performance review system. The participants in this group ranged from the "hard hat, steel-toed boots" folks to the "suits." Initially, there was a high level of distrust, as well as widely different perspectives. At one point in the process, the group members began to value each others' perspectives equally. I remember one point where I had an idea about what the solution would be that the group was working towards. And, talking later with one of the "suits," he had had an idea at that point about where the group was going, that was of course different than my idea."

"Yet, during the process, the group started looking differently at the subject, looking openly at it, seeing possibilities that weren't there before. As they explored the issue

more deeply, what they finally arrived at and walked out with was different than what anyone would have anticipated. As a facilitator, I needed to step back, let it happen, not interfere with it, especially since I had a preconceived idea about where the group might end up."

"One of the things that happened at that meeting is that initially, there was a hook for me. My boss, and my boss' boss, were part of this group. So I noticed at the beginning that as conflict arose, it was difficult for me to allow it to happen. I was interfering to stop the conflict, because the conflict was unsafe for me. But once I realized that and stopped interfering, allowed the conflict to surface, the group was able to handle it. So, as a facilitator, it's important to know where one's own hooks are."

The above anecdote highlights the interactive nature of trust. To the degree that the facilitator trusts the group and the process, he or she is able to refrain from "leading" the group and imposing her own agenda and sense of direction on the process. Of course, this in turn is critical to helping maintain the group's trust in the facilitator. Nora's story also highlights the importance of self-understanding to good facilitation: to the extent that the facilitator is comfortable with conflict, he or she will be able to allow a full diversity of views to emerge.

Margaret Suet also spoke about the importance of trusting the group, as exemplified by her willingness to be surprised. In her case, the conversation unfolded in response to the question, "What are some of the more subtle things you do as a facilitator to help the group?

"Well, people need to discover the answer for themselves. There are questions that you can ask that will help them discover their own answers, but I never tell the group what I think the answer is. They need to discover it for themselves. And, I have seen it not work very well when a facilitator thinks that they know what the answer is, and shares it with the group before they are ready to arrive at it themselves."

Intrigued, I asked a follow-up question: "Have you ever had the experience where you thought you knew what the answer would be, and in fact the group came up with something quite different?" Her response was immediate.

"Yes! And in those situations, I've been especially thankful that I held back and did not say anything. It can happen that it seems that the group is going in a certain direction, and

then one person comes up with one fact that changes the whole landscape of the problem, and leads to an entirely different solution. It's quite fun when that happens!"

For clarification, I asked about the opposite situation: "Have you ever had the opposite experience, where you thought you knew where the group would end up, and they did get there on their own, eventually?" In response, Margaret offered the following anecdote:

"Yes, I often have that experience as well. There was one particular situation recently where a group was working on a particular issue […] It's an intangible thing that happens to the whole group, kind of like seeing the momentum change in a basketball game. Say a team has been losing for a while. Then one team member makes a good shot, a little while later another team member makes another good shot, and then, at some point, the whole team is energized and working together."

"There are times when one person may have assimilated all of the information that has been presented in the room. He or she has come up with something that you as the facilitator may feel is right, but you can't put your weight behind it until the whole group is there. So instead, you may say something like, 'what does everyone else think about that?'"

However, trusting the process enough to refrain from "steering" is not always easy for the facilitator. Here is Stephen speaking about a successful experience with a United Airlines team, shortly after he returned from Jim's seminar:

"You have to be fearless about it. It can be scary sometimes. How will I look as a facilitator, if by the end of this meeting, they don't have what they said they wanted as an outcome? You need to trust that, if that's what they need to have, they will have it. If they really need what they say they need, you'll get it, if you get out of the way."

Yet as Stephen found, the results can be very worthwhile:

"When I finished working with the team at United Airlines, they had accomplished all of their objectives, and more. To begin with, they had re-vitalized their mission: they knew what their mission was. They ended up with almost the same mission as the original group years ago, but now they felt enormous energy around it, and it was theirs."

"Secondly, they had winnowed through the list of hundreds of things that had been thrown at them, that they had felt unable to prioritize, and had come up with three specific projects to put at the top of their list. The way that they chose these projects was to leverage specific successes they had had in the past, and use them to influence other teams."

"Thirdly, they had dealt with the issue of the turnover in the membership of the team. New people had been brought in, in a good way. And new leadership had emerged in the team."

Of course, these facilitators have been chosen for their confidence in the Dynamic Facilitation approach. Still, their testimonies are often quite eloquent. Here is Ben Woods speaking about the reasons he has for trusting the process:

"As a facilitator, I'm looking for clues, pulling on threads. I know that when there is energy, thoughts, ideas present, there's a solution in there somewhere. I don't need to be an expert to pull it out. I only need to apply the process and encourage people. This has been a constant and consistent experience for me, ever since the training. My enthusiasm for this approach has not dwindled, and I see that as directly attributable to seeing the process be useful, effective, and valuable."

"I am continually amazed by the gold and diamonds that are in these groups. The first couple of times I tried this approach, I thought we got lucky. Eventually I said, this is not a matter of luck. This can happen almost every time."

One of the conventional beliefs about dialogue is that it is has limited use in situations where a practical outcome is needed. So it may be important to clarify here that the trust we are speaking of is one not only in the *value* of the process itself, but also in the practical outcomes that it can generate. And different kinds of outcomes present different levels of difficulty.

In the story Maureen Richards shared earlier about her work with the county library, the three events she had facilitated were one-time, ad-hoc "advisory" groups, tasked only with giving input to the librarians. This is different from the watershed council in Nora Delaney's story, which was a "task group" that met over time, and was responsible for a finished product. Aware of this difference, I asked Maureen a follow-up question designed as a thought-experiment:

"Let's assume for a second that the library called and said that they wanted to form a task group, composed of people from all three constituencies – the mothers, the first-amendment people, the bible-carrying folks – as well as some library staff, to actually work together and come up with a finished plan. Do you think that a facilitated process

only works for giving input, or do you think it could help a diverse team actually come up with a finished product?"

Maureen's response was unambiguous:

"I feel quite sure that it could work, if it were *facilitated*. If the group were *chaired*, it would <u>not</u> work."

I pursued the issue further:

"How long do you think that it would take? What kind of contract would you negotiate, if the library called and asked you if you'd be willing to do this other job?"

"If the library were to call and ask me to facilitate that, I'd tell them that it would take 6 to 8 weeks, of meeting 3 hours once a week. I have no doubt at all that it could be done."

Given Nora's experience with the watershed council, along with all of the other success stories in the narratives that I had gathered, I did not have any doubts either. However, when I turned to the literature on dialogue and began to compare it to the facilitator narratives, a different kind of puzzlement arose.

II. C. The Puzzle: What was NOT seen in the interviews

As we have seen above, the interviews echoed the emphasis that Burbules' theory of dialogue places on empathic listening and relationship-building. The following quote by Noddings, as cited in Burbules, encapsulates the kind of relationship between feeling and thinking that can be evoked through dialogue:

"What I am advocating is a form of dialectic between feeling and thinking that will lead in a continuing spiral to the basic feeling of genuine caring and the generous thinking that develops in its service. Through such a dialectic, we are led beyond the intense and particular feelings accompanying our own deeply held values, and beyond the particular beliefs to which these feelings are attached, to a realization that the other—who feels intensely about that which I do not believe – is still one to be received… [such] dialogue… is vital in every aspect of education. (p.186)" (p. 20 in Burbules)

One might add that this kind of dialogue between thinking and feeling is vital in every aspect of facilitation as well.

At the same time, there are ways in which my data does not quite conform to Burbules' model. Burbules sees empathic relationship ("an inclusive orientation") and divergence ("a critical orientation") as one of the polarities that generate the creative tension of dialogue. He sees maintaining the balance between these two orientations as one of the central challenges of dialogue:

"Unless dialogue is to become the mere exchange of sedimented and complacent beliefs and casual first impressions, at some point the relation must be able to tolerate a dynamic in which interlocutors can pose skeptical questions and be willing to be questioned themselves, in turn. Working to create and maintain a relation in which such questions can be asked and answered undefensively, without jeopardizing the fabric of the relation itself, is one of the central challenges of dialogue." (p. 89)

Burbules is of course not alone in this: while Brookfield and Preskill do not use the same terminology, this tension is present throughout their work as well (1999).

Yet what is a central challenge for Burbules and others, simply did not appear as such in the interviews I conducted. While the use of questions is mentioned a few times by the facilitators in the interviews, it was not a prominent theme. More significantly, whenever facilitators speak of questioning participants, the questions seem designated to "draw out" participants further, rather than to challenge them in any way. Most importantly, the facilitators I interviewed did not mention any tension, struggle, or challenge in terms of their own role, with regard to balancing empathy and inquiry.

 I am not questioning here Burbules' description of the creative tension between the "inclusive" and "critical" orientations as key to dialogue. My own experience would lead me to both agree with and go beyond Burbules, with regard to the importance of both the "inclusive" and the "critical" orientations. I would posit that, for dialogue to be such, both orientations need to be present at all times, though one may be "figure" and the other "ground" at any particular moment.

 Furthermore, it seems to me that whenever the natural wholeness that includes *both* inclusiveness and critical inquiry is severed, so that one is present without the other, a

significant shift takes place. The isolated half of the polarity is no longer itself, but becomes its shadow instead: "enabling" instead of "inclusive," "combative" instead of "critical."[5] I have created the following diagram to illustrate this:

enabling ◄——— (inclusive │ critical) ———► combative
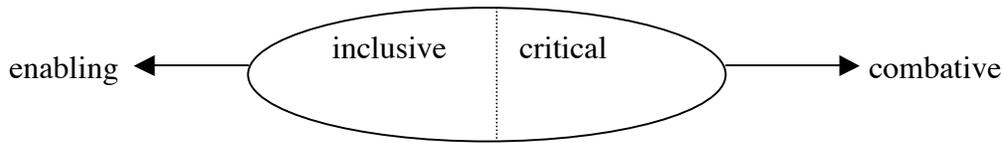
The question for me, then, is not whether both elements are present in dialogue, but instead, HOW that balance may be achieved, and what is the role of the facilitator in achieving that balance. To begin sketching an answer to this question, we shall first explore a related, though different, challenge that is posed by "skillful discussion," an offspring of Bohmian dialogue.

As mentioned earlier, Bohmian dialogue is very similar in some ways to Dynamic Facilitation, in that there is no external "agenda," and the process is a self-organizing, non-linear one. Yet in other ways, it is very different. Some of the key differences might originate in the influence of de Maré, a Freudian psychoanalyst whose thought influenced Bohm in significant ways and shaped many of the methodological assumptions of

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[5] In some sense, this may be already implicit in Burbules' four-quadrant model, which he creates by using two dimensions: the "inclusive / critical" spectrum and the "convergent / divergent" spectrum. This creates four types of dialogue: inclusive-divergent, or dialogue as conversation; inclusive-convergent, or dialogue as inquiry; critical-divergent, or dialogue as debate; and critical-convergent, or dialogue as instruction. Burbules sees dialogue as moving in phases through all four quadrants. By means of this sequential (albeit non-linear) movement, the larger dialogue contains the full spectrum of orientations. While finding this model helpful, I believe it might benefit from the recognition that all of the orientations are simultaneously present within *each* quadrant. Of course, each quadrant's defining characteristics (inclusive-convergent, inclusive-divergent, critical-convergent, critical-divergent) will be the "foreground" characteristics, with the other pair present as "background." I would hold this as true, however, only for the "functional" forms of dialogue. Burbules states that each quadrant also contains "dysfunctional" forms of dialogue, and I would propose that the dysfunctional forms are such precisely because they do not contain the full spectrum within themselves.

Bohmian dialogue (Brown, 2001). For example, the role of the facilitator in Bohm's model is quite ambiguous and reserved, reminiscent in some ways to that of a classical psychoanalyst. As mentioned earlier, the originators of Bohmian dialogue did not envision it as a tool to be used for addressing practical problems, but instead as an exploration into the nature of thought itself. In order to do so, participants are encouraged to learn and practice difficult skills such as suspending judgement, listening internally to your own listening, and observing the thought process in yourself and others (Brown, 2001).

While Bohmian dialogue is by definition not interested in practical outcomes, some of its practitioners have developed a related form, "skillful discussion," as an approach for situations that call for practical solutions. In "skillful discussion," the role of the facilitator is de-emphasized even further. Instead, the members of the team are trained in a variety of communication tools and protocols. One of the main tools is seen as "balancing inquiry and advocacy." In order to help participants do this, protocols have been created to help them learn to explain their assumptions, make their reasoning explicit, and lead each other through the ladder of inference (Ross and Roberts, 1994).

In order to better understand what it is that happens in Dynamic Facilitation, I experimented with what might happen if I juxtaposed elements from these two models-- Burbules' and the skillful discussion. There is a slight initial difficulty, as Burbules uses the term "inquiry" somewhat differently than it is used in "skillful discussion." Burbules uses the term "inquiry" to describe a specific kind of dialogue that lives within one of the quadrants of his four-quadrant model. His use of the word "inquiry" is therefore different than Ross and Roberts'.[6]

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[6] While Burbules places "dialogue as inquiry" in the convergent-inclusive category, his discussion of it acknowledges that there is a questioning aspect to it. This is one of the ways in which his model does not work quite as neatly as it might, and thus might bear some modification.

 For my present purposes, I will simply suggest that Burbules' "critical" dimension is similar in substantial ways to the "inquiry" dimension of "skillful discussion," as both involve a "questioning" attitude. If we allow ourselves to make a rough equation between Burbules' "critical" dimension and skillful discussion's "inquiry" dimension, we could include both within a larger category termed "critical inquiry." Then we would arrive at one possible depiction of dialogue (in the larger sense) as including the following *three* elements:

Inclusiveness /// critical inquiry /// advocacy
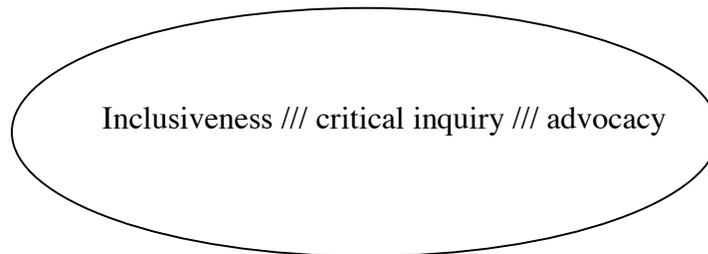
From the vantage point of this new synthesis, the role of the facilitator in Dynamic Facilitation becomes clear: it is to stand in the place of inclusiveness, welcoming fully and listening deeply and empathically to participants' advocacy. [7]

facilitator ⟶ participants

inclusiveness /// critical inquiry /// advocacy

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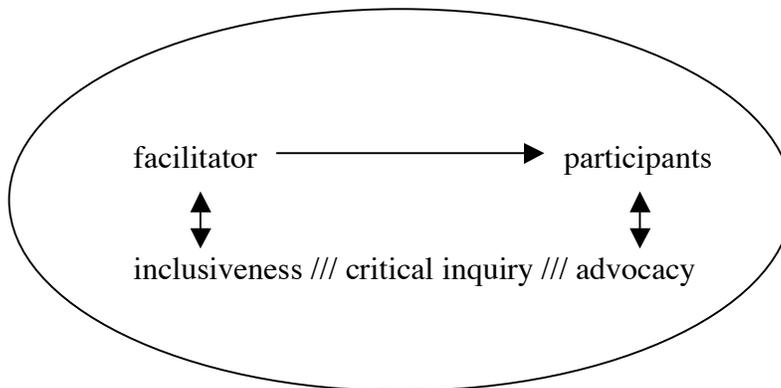
[7] To briefly address Burbules' second polarity, the facilitator's role in Dynamic Facilitation also includes allowing the natural flow of divergence and convergence to emerge.

Of course, I still have not addressed the initial question about how critical inquiry happens within Dynamic Facilitation. In Bohmian dialogue, participants are encouraged to suspend judgement and observe their own thought processes. In skillful discussion, protocols help participants explain their assumptions and use ladders of inference to make their reasoning explicit. For Burbules, the solution to the challenge of balancing the critical and inclusive orientations seems to be a sequential approach. He appears to recommend that teachers focus more on inclusiveness at the beginning in order to ensure that the relationship will subsequently be able to bear the weight of a "critical lens." He emphasizes how the teacher as facilitator needs to sense when the timing is right to shift from an inclusive approach to one of questioning that skillfully challenges participants without destroying the context of the relationship.

Any such comments on the part of the facilitators that I interviewed are notable only by their absence. This is, in fact, no accident. Dynamic Facilitation does not encourage facilitators to shift from a position of radical inclusiveness at any point in the process. Nor, does it ask participants at any point to do anything other than "be themselves." How, then, does the process of critical inquiry happen?

The next step toward answering the question involves a few more parallels between Burbules' theory and the facilitator narratives. Burbules explores extensively the question of difference, and the concern that some critics have raised as to whether dialogue is even possible given the kinds of power relationships that exist between people (racism, classism, sexism, etc.) Burbules emphasizes the importance of actively soliciting a diversity of perspectives, as well as of remaining open to the possibility that consensus may not be achieved in any given instance. He says,

"The key criterion to be applied here is whether understanding or agreement is achieved in ways that allow participants a full range of opportunities to question, challenge, or demur from each other's views. […] It is a mistake to assume that understanding or agreement must follow from such an endeavor, and it is a mistake to assume that it must fail." (p. 26)

Both of these points – the commitment to eliciting the full diversity of perspectives and the willingness to remain open with regards to outcome – emerged in the facilitator interviews. The importance of soliciting and welcoming a diversity of opinions was explored earlier, in the section on listening, though many more quotes on this topic could have been included. The need to remain open to outcome was also referred to by a number of facilitators, including Sterling, who spoke about how the facilitator must come to grips with his or her uncertainty about success or failure. He described the anxiety a facilitator can experience as a result of engaging in an open-ended, transformational approach where he or she is not "engineering" agreement in any form, but instead allowing whatever breakthrough may occur to emerge freely.

The commitment to NOT "negotiate agreement" is key element of Dynamic Facilitation, and as such it was also addressed in the other narratives where facilitators spoke about the element of surprise involved in this work. However, the interesting paradox is how often the experience of letting go, trusting the group, and being willing to forego convergence, results in the natural emergence of that convergence. This may be what leads Maureen Richards, in an earlier quote, to say "When someone calls me, I guarantee my work. I guarantee that they will get to their bottom line," and Ben Woods to speak of his "constant and consistent" experience of the power of the process, which has led to his "enthusiasm for this approach" not dwindling over time.

So, we have the facilitator actively taking an inclusive stance, empathizing with each participant, eliciting divergence by "protecting" each participant's contribution and "creating space" for each divergent perspective to receive a full hearing. We have the facilitator refraining from "engineering or negotiating agreement" in any way, and being continuously open to be surprised and even to fail. And, at the same time, we have a process that generates an incredible amount of trust on the part of the facilitator, both in the wisdom of the group and in the effectiveness of the process.[8] How is it that "inquiry"

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[8] This kind of trust has been identified by Senge (2000) as one of the marks of a masterful facilitator.

emerges, leading participants to re-examine their initial positions and arrive at greater shared understandings and practical, creative breakthroughs?

II. D. Learning a new language

The breakthrough in my own conceptual understanding came as I read W. Barnett Pearce and Stephen W. Littlejohn's work on the challenge of public discourse in situations of moral incommeasurability (1997). Peace and Littlejohn analyze the difficulties encountered when participants' world views are so different from each other that traditional forms of discourse only generate further difficulties instead of generating understanding. They point out how difficult it can be for participants to hear another person's moral language when it differs from one's own. They describe the vast difference in the quality of discourse when opposing sides are conversing with each other in public, as compared to when they are speaking among themselves or to a good listener not identified with the other side.

Pearce and Littlejohn posit the need for something called "transcendent eloquence," yet another doorway to what we are referring here as dialogue, and use the metaphor of grammar to describe both the difficulty and the needed response:

"Moral conflict occurs when disputants are acting within incommesurate grammars…. In moral conflicts, new types of abilities are required… not just the ability to act skillfully within the context of one's own grammar, but the ability to transcend one's own grammar, to join the grammars of others, and to weave these grammars together." (1997, p.55)

Pearce and Littlejohn's book (1997) describes three model projects of transcendent discourse. I have mentioned two of those projects earlier, in my discussion of deliberative democracy – the National Issues Forum, and the Public Conversations Project. The third project they describe, Kaleidoscope, utilizes a number of different techniques, including "third person listening," where each side speaks in turn to the moderator while the other side gets to "overhear." This addresses the aforementioned difference in discourse when participants are speaking to a "friendly" vs an "unfriendly" audience. It also reminded me

greatly of what happens in Dynamic Facilitation, where the facilitator "protects" participants by inviting them to direct their comments at the facilitator instead of at each other.[9] The Kaleidoscope project also is described as utilized Appreciative Inquiry, which Pearce and Littlejohn define as including an attitude of awe and wonder, an avoidance of "calling forth the pathology," and a focus on "moving forward", among other characteristics (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1977, pp. 201-203.) This bears significant similarity to the emphasis on empathy and inclusiveness that are part of Dynamic Facilitation, as well as its focus on generating potential solutions.

Yet in the discussion of Kaleidoscope, as in the other two model projects, I also encountered some familiar differences. In the methods described by Pearce and Littlejohn, the facilitator actively invites inquiry by asking participants to explore their assumptions. They also exhort participants to behave in certain ways. These two features, as mentioned earlier, are notably absent from Dynamic Facilitation.

And then I was struck by the relevance of the grammar metaphor. From my background as a bilingual teacher, I know that humans do NOT need to be "taught" a grammar in order to learn a language. Instead, it is quite possible for humans to acquire a language simply by participating in a meaningful process, where they are presented with new information in a friendly context (Krashen, 1989). From a constructivist perspective, we recognize an intrinsic forward movement in the human organism that naturally notices patterns, seeks to create meaning, to question and make sense of conflicting information (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978) While we have all been conditioned to believe that humans need to be "taught" in order to learn, many educators see their role as one of creating the conditions to support learning, and that one of these conditions includes an atmosphere of safety and trust.

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[9] While many forms of facilitation encourage participants to address each other directly, instead of addressing the facilitator, most approaches to negotiation and conflict resolution, as well as family therapy, make extensive use of "third person listening."

Similarly, organization development practitioners may recognize the distinction between these two distinct approaches to human learning as equivalent to the familiar "theory x" and "theory y" model of human behavior (McGregor, 1962). In turn, McGregor's theory is quite applicable to situations of teaching and learning, as shown by Eisen (1985).

It is this innate human capacity that allows the process of Dynamic Facilitation to effectively evoke insight, questioning, re-evaluation of fixed beliefs, and creativity in a group. The facilitator remains steadfast in his or her role of empathic inclusivity. He or she also welcomes and elicits divergence in the process of listening to and helping all advocates feel heard, and recording all of their contributions to create a "mind map" of the various perspectives present in the room. Most importantly, he or she is trusting the process. This not a blind trust, but a trust based on experience that, if the appropriate conditions of safety, respect, and deep listening are created, if the full diversity present in the room is unfolded, and if the facilitator stays out of the way and refrains from "steering" the process, the construction of meaning will naturally emerge in a self-organizing manner.

II. E. Revisiting our history: the work of Carl Rogers

When I initially began researching this project, I thought that there might be a strong relationship between the work of Carl Rogers and Dynamic Facilitation. After all, Rogers is renowned for his faith in the self-organizing process of the human organism (for example, 1977, 1983). Also, there seemed to be significant parallels between the theory of client-centered therapy, and the role of the facilitator in Dynamic Facilitation.

I was initially very excited when, in reviewing the literature, I encountered references to the work that Rogers did with large groups that were dealing with cross-cultural issues or seeking practical solutions to real-life problems.[10] However, as I read the accounts of

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[10] Rogers worked in Northern Ireland (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1987, pp. 440-444) and South Africa. He also facilitated a meeting of the National Health Council (Rogers, 1977, pp.110-114) and the Rust conference of the conflict in Central America (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1989, pp. 257-277).

these gatherings, I was initially confused to find that there were both similarities AND significant differences between Rogers' work and Dynamic Facilitation. Some of the differences may be due to the influences of the Tavistock and T-group traditions on Roger's work with groups, since in these traditions the facilitator's role is often quite reserved. Much like Bohmian dialogue, these approaches also assume an extended initial stage characterized by chaos and conflict. In Rogers' work with groups, it seemed to be a given that the entire first day or so might be filled with unmodulated acrimony and frustration. Of course, by the end of the three-day meeting, the results seemed well-worth it!

Yet on the basis of my own experience as well as the facilitator narratives, I found myself seriously questioning whether this initial assumption was indeed necessary. I wondered whether this long, extended period of frustration was due, at least in part, to the reserved role the facilitator generally plays in the encounter group tradition, especially in the beginning of the process. In turn, this role appears to be an expression of the assumption that anxiety needs to be generated in order for self-defeating patterns to emerge and be addressed (Shepard, 1965). [11]

It was not until I reviewed Rogers' work on facilitating learning environments that I found a closer resonance to Dynamic Facilitation. In "Freedom to Learn for the 80's" (1983), Rogers describes the role of the facilitative teacher in a way that fits both the relational emphasis of Burbules' work, as well as the narratives of the facilitators I interviewed. Rogers' discussion of how to facilitate learning includes sections on "Realness in the Facilitator of Learning"; "Prizing, Acceptance, Trust"; "Empathic

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[11] There are, of course, both similarities and differences between the T-group tradition and Dynamic Facilitation, which may become the subject of a future paper. Briefly, the goal of "task group therapy" as defined by Clark (1970 a, p. 268) is "to help groups to construct and maintain social and technical *systems* which support their members' right to express their *individual* authentic being." This goal might be seen as very similar to the goal of Dynamic Facilitation, especially when used over time with a stable group as when first developed by Rough (1992). However, the means for achieving that goal appear to

Understanding"; "A 'Puzzlement'"; "A Trust in the Human Organism"; and "Living The Uncertainty of Discovery" (pp. 121-145). The following quote from Rogers was originally intended for classroom teachers. If we read it substituting "group" instead of "classroom" and "participant" instead of "student," we can see its applicability to the experience of the facilitators whom I have interviewed:

"When a facilitator creates, to an even modest degree, a [group] climate characterized by all that she can achieve of realness, prizing, and empathy; when she trusts the constructive tendency of the individual and the group; then she discovers that she has inaugurated an educational revolution. Learning of a different quality, proceeding at a different pace, with a greater degree of pervasiveness, occurs. Feelings –positive, negative, confused--- become a part of the [group] experience. Learning becomes life, and a very vital life at that. The [participant] is on the way, sometimes excitedly, sometimes reluctantly, to becoming a learning, changing being." (1983, p. 128)

Rogers goes on to offer a quote from Sylvia Ashton Warner (Ashton-Warner, 1963, p. 93; as quoted in Rogers, 1983, p.129), which I also paraphrase here to emphasize its applicability to facilitation:

"the drive is no longer the [facilitator's], but the [participants']; the [facilitator] is at last with the stream, and not against it, the stream of [participant's] inexorable creativeness."

The narratives I have gathered appear to confirm that it is not just children in a classroom who thrive on attentive and genuine caring (empathy), radical trust (unconditional positive regard), and congruence. Indeed, members of any group may benefit from active application of these conditions, regardless of their age. Furthermore, it may well be that Rogers' classic "three conditions" for facilitating growth in the human organism (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989), are quite sufficient for the emergence of creativity, understanding, and practical outcomes in a wide variety of group situations,[12] including

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be significantly different: Dynamic Facilitation seems to utilize more of a "coaching" than a "therapy" model , although of course "coaching" does have therapeutic effects.
[12] Interestingly, Clark (1970 a) adds "confrontation" to Rogers' three system conditions, which may be representative of the larger T-group tradition. Clark's goal in task group therapy is to help a work group shift from "ineffective" and/or "routine" to "exciting and creative" (Clark 1970 b). In Dynamic Facilitation, it appears that this shift occurs as a result of the natural diversity present in a group, as surfaced through third-party listening,

task groups and public participation projects. It appears that an active effort to offer empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity from the beginning, in each interaction and with each participant, is not only doable but highly valuable, especially in situations of high conflict.

Interestingly, a few of the facilitators whom I interviewed made comments explicitly highlighting the parallels between group facilitation and the facilitation of learning. Elise Wagoner, quoted earlier, spoke extensively about using facilitation in her classroom. And, in response to "What are some of your successes as a facilitator?" Margaret Suet said:

"I feel successful when I've been able to create a backdrop that people can use to make decisions. I used to be a teacher, and a teacher is always facilitating. I feel that I use facilitation even in one-on-one meetings with people. I try to get a person to reflect on what they really want, help them to get it out, to take their own ideas and turn it into something that they can actually use. I do this just by listening and asking pertinent questions, and I find that this helps the other person think through the problem on their own."

"What I consider a success is when someone takes the conversation they've had with you, when they feel that they have arrived at a solution, and then they walk away and do it, and actually implement it. That's what I count as a success."

In a way, I am relieved that the greatest parallels between Rogers' work with groups and Dynamic Facilitation lie in the area of Rogers' work on facilitating learning. While acknowledging feelings is a significant part of learning, and of group facilitation, it is clear that Dynamic Facilitation is NOT "group therapy," but instead an effective way to help people learn how to engage creatively with difference.

II. F. Breakthroughs: The Fruit of Emergent Process

Regardless of how badly they may want results, not all groups may be ready to engage in the existential uncertainty of a non-linear, emergent process, even one that offers an

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without any "confrontation" as such on the part of the facilitator nor the complex and delicately balanced therapeutic interventions described by Clark.

unusually high degree of safety through active facilitator involvement. However, when groups are ready to engage in Dynamic Facilitation, the results can be very rewarding, as some of the earlier narratives have already shown.

I obtained the following quotes as I attempted to elicit facilitators' descriptions of the difference between approaches that are more conventional and Dynamic Facilitation. As some participants viewed themselves as having created their own synthesis, while others identified themselves explicitly as following in Jim's footsteps, I posed this question in a more general way. I asked about the differences in effectiveness between open-ended and more structured approaches, or between linear and non-linear approaches.

As evidenced below, some of the facilitators responded in general terms as well, while others instead immediately identified "non-linear" or "open-ended" with "Jim's approach" or with "Dynamic Facilitation" in their responses.

In our conversation, Stephen Nichols made the important point that he does not "push" transformation and/or transformative processes on people. Instead, he sees himself as holding the door open for those who are willing to walk through it. When asked,

"Assuming that a team is open and willing to explore a different approach, what do you see as the differences in effectiveness between a more control-oriented approach and a more transformative one?"

 Stephen had a swift reply:

"It's like night and day! One of the main differences is in people's energy level. When they are energized and in the flow, how they appear doesn't matter so much to them. Instead of asking themselves, 'What kind of impression am I making on others?', they are more concerned with, 'Have I really participated fully here? Is there something I have that I can contribute to the group?' Also, people are more willing to ask for what they need. The team begins to take on positive characteristics in an organic way, as they allow themselves to be the way their spirit wants to be."

Others also perceived strong differences between the two approaches. I asked Margaret Suet, "Is there a difference between when a group arrives at a decision on their own, and when they are asked to vote?"

"In my experience, when a group arrives at a decision on their own, when there is a sense of a mental shift taking place and the group saying YES to something before anyone has asked them to vote, those are the decisions that usually stand for a long time."

This observation was echoed by Ben Woods, in response to the following question: "Do you find that there is a difference between processes where people are led through a series of formal steps to come to a decision, and a process where the decision emerges on its own?" His response was forthright:

"Yes, of course. For one thing, the latter may take longer initially. People are so often rushed for time, they feel they can't afford to take an extra two or three sessions to get to the end result. They can't see the need to invest in Jim's process in order to achieve a more effective or worthwhile result."

"Yet when they do, the dividend is that at the end, everyone not only agrees, but they feel a much greater commitment to the outcome. They feel strongly that this IS the answer, and we will MAKE it happen."

"Normally, the feeling people have at the end of a meeting is 'Yeah, ok, I won't get in the way of the final decision.' That is quite different from the feeling that we FOUND this great solution together, and we are going to make it happen. In the latter situation, your chances of success go way up."

I asked Sarah Holstein the following wordy question:

"Sometimes facilitators describe group agreements as 'emerging' quite naturally and spontaneously from a larger process they have designed. On the other end of the spectrum, it seems facilitators sometimes lead people through a fairly structured decision-making process to help them weigh pros and cons and choose between a variety of alternatives. Where on this spectrum would you say your work lies?"

Her response was much more succint:

"The majority of the work I do is in the first mode. I am working at the edges of everyone's through processes. They are cross-pollinating, sharing ideas, and the result is that the group comes up with something that seems like a miracle each time."

Sometimes, facilitators mentioned the powerful "aha!" effect in response to a much more general question. When asked, "What do you see as the power of facilitation?" Paul Fanit offered the following:

"An upcoming meeting I will be facilitating is a project on intersectoral collaboration in the area of services to children and families. Here, we will be trying to break down silos. The challenge is how do you bring players together who have strong vested interests. It's not easy! We don't tend to train people to work collaboratively across different boundaries. That's where Dynamic Facilitation has tremendous possibilities to help break these silos down, by helping people have powerful and creative breakthroughs, where they feel that TOGETHER, we have created this solution."

"As part of the preparation for this project, we did a survey where we found that there are 165 such projects in this province. I look forward to helping them achieve the realization that TOGETHER, they could create outcomes that could never be accomplished separately. That power is what facilitation can unleash."

Of course, all of the above comments on the power of breakthroughs, as distinct from negotiated or engineered agreements, are equally applicable to breakthroughs achieved through any kind of approach. My purpose here is not to claim that Dynamic Facilitation is the only doorway that opens up into the courtyard of dialogue, only that it is a particularly effective and powerful one.

While I have already included throughout a number of examples of facilitation in the public sphere, I'd like to conclude this paper with looking more closely at one of the potential benefits of using facilitation for addressing issues of public policy, as well as some of the limitations involved.

II. G. Benefits of Facilitation in the Public Sphere

When asking facilitators about facilitation in the public sphere, one of the themes that emerged was the effect of facilitation on government employees' perception of the public. This is not surprising, given the theory and past experiences of deliberative democracy. For example, in discussing the many potential benefits of his proposal for

electoral reform, Gastil includes as an indirect benefit the increased respect that members of government can gain for the public's capacity to engage in deliberation. He refers to this effect as "dampening the cynicism of public officials," and bases his predictions of this outcome on the experiences of other efforts in deliberative democracy, which have shown some evidence of this kind of result (2000, pp. 179-180).

While the main thrust of his proposal is to restore the public's trust in government, Gastil maintains that there is also reason to be concerned about how officials feel about the general public. To support his concern, he cites a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center of members of congress, presidential appointees, and civil servants. In response to the question, "Do Americans know enough about issues to form wise opinions about what should be done?" only 31 percent of congressional respondents, 13 percent of presidential appointees, and 14 percent of civil servants said "yes" (2000, pp. 179).

While this question was not addressed specifically in the facilitator narratives, there was evidence of a general shift in public employees' perception of the public. The first instance is in Maureen's account of her facilitation work for the county library. Her statement "the library staff had never seen anything like this before. They had never seen people be so calm at the conclusion of a meeting. They had only seen screaming people before…" points to the significance this experience had on those county employees.

Another anecdote along similar lines was offered by Margaret Suet. In her case, she was not the facilitator, but was in a position to observe the effects of a facilitated public participation process on government workers:

"Another experience I've had with public facilitation has been around the Hanford Site clean-up program. There are a number of stakeholder groups that have come together as the Hanford Advisory Council. The government has taken a stance that the main Hanford Contractor (Fluor Daniel, Hanford) and the Office of River Protection (A special U.S. Department of Energy office) need to be extremely open, and meet regularly with this Council. I have not been directly involved with this… but I have observed conversations and ideas that have come about because of meetings with the advisory council. Over the years the attitude has shifted with some very positive results as a result of this "open-ness" with the stakeholders."

"Initially, the attitude was that some did not look forward to this process very much. I understand now that people [government employees] feel that it has been valuable to meet with them [citizens] and listen, and try to understand their perspective. It feels more like we are partners in this whole endeavor. This process has, of course, taken years of facilitating, talking, and listening. And, it's possible that other people may have different perspectives on this process."

Like Maureen in the first story, Margaret also has seen government employees experience a shift in their attitude toward the public as a result of a facilitated process. Of course, in Margaret's example, the shift took much longer to occur than in Maureen's.

While I concurr with Gastil that a shift in the attitudes of government officials and public employees is significant and desirable, I have a somewhat different perspective as to its genesis. It seems that Gastil makes the assumption that the low confidence in the general public held by many government employees is because they have not experienced a truly representative cross-section of the public. He writes the following description of public employees who had the opportunity to observe some citizen conferences sponsored by the New Mexico Institute for Public Policy:

"They [the public employees] had never met members of the general public who could listen carefully to public officials, ask intelligent questions, and reach well-reasoned policy recommendations. After years of public hearings and meetings, most public officials recognize that the people they meet every day are not a representative cross-section of the general public, yet they remain uncertain about the general public's views and aptitudes." (Gastil, 2000, p. 180)

However, given Maureen's story, I wonder if it is really the case that public officials hold low opinions of the general public because of who it is that they happen to meet. At least in Maureen's case, it was the same partisan, passionately opinionated folks who were behaving very differently than they might otherwise, in a different context. Of course, there are many good reasons for having randomly selected councils in citizen deliberation efforts, as Gastil does, in order to ensure a representative cross-section of the population. Yet it may be that the kind of conversation that ensues is not predominantly determined by who is present, but by the presence of facilitation itself.

II. H. External Constraints

The second major theme that emerged with regard to facilitation in the public sphere was the prevalence of external constraints. Unfortunately, the most successful facilitation experiences can still face difficulties when it comes to relationships with the larger system within which the smaller group is embedded. It seems imperative to point out these potential pitfalls. It is not enough for a group to be willing to engage in a creative and emergent process, and for the facilitator to assist them in harvesting the practical breakthroughs that emerge from the natural flow of divergence and convergence. Larger systemic difficulties can still constrain the process and produce disillusionment and frustration. As the following examples will show, this is true not only in the public sector, but in the private sector as well.

The first example pertains to Nora's story about the successful watershed council. In the interview, she mentioned that the success of this group was especially significant, considering the legacy of broken trust which the group had to overcome: the work of their predecessors had been completely ignored by the county government.

"They have come a long way, especially considering the story of what happened the first time they met. They had come together for an overview of the whole process. Also in attendance were members of a group that had formed 5 years earlier. This earlier group had been created by the county. They had created a plan, and then their plan had been shelved. The group members were very upset about this."

"So, 20 minutes into the meeting, the 25 people from the previous group started to speak out, saying that the whole process was a sham, and it would never amount to anything. Fortunately, a Council member was present, who stood up and said, 'I want to hear what you have to say. I will be in the lobby, and I will stay here until I have heard everything that anyone wants to say about what happened 5 years ago.' She stood up to head toward the lobby, and 25 people followed her."

"Afterward, the rest of the group said, 'Whew! Let's get on with this… we've got a plan to build…' I have never seen a group move so fast through the 'forming, storming, norming, and performing' stages!

The second example was provided by Paul Fanit, who earlier spoke about the power of facilitation to promote intersectoral collaboration. As inspired as he is by the potential of facilitation, Paul is less sanguine about its ability to address larger issues of power in our society. That may be in part because of his extensive experience in public consultation processes, and the difficulties he has encountered with betrayals of public trust. Since this is a key issue, I will quote from his interview at length:

"Another project I did a number of years ago was some work with low-income communities around the issue of literacy, where four different ethnic groups were represented (Cree, English, Dogrib and German). In this work, the respect you show for people as facilitator is key. The sincerity and empathy one offers is critical. At the same time, there is a dilemma present when the people you are facilitating have the expectation that you are going to advance their agenda, that some positive action is going to come about as a result of their voicing their concerns. This is a dilemma for me as part of my effectiveness because if I have some credibility with that community, it may be placed at risk. So I tried to emphasize that I can't make promises, but I am working on having the government hear the concerns that are present. It is very important to be a faithful messenger."

"An example is a recent project for some MLA's, members of the legislative assembly. It was a series of hearings designed to have them meet with the people who depend on income support programs, such as welfare. My role was to engage those who came to the meetings in a way that helped them to feel comfortable… [yet] often the challenge is creating a commitment to the credibility of the process, on the part of the folks who are commissioning the work. So many times I find myself in the position of needing to say, 'you HAVE to be committed to doing something with the information afterwards.'"

"If you promise people that they will have an impact, and then don't follow through, people have every reason to say "we did this before, and the promises that were made did not materialize' [….] Yet I can't commit governments to follow through on their commitments. I don't have that power. In the low-income review, the politicians said, 'we will give you a copy of the report as soon as it is done.' Meanwhile the bureaucrats were warning them, 'you can't say that, it's the Minister's report'. The politicians did not listen, and kept making promises. Meanwhile, that report has not yet seen the light of day."

"In this situation, there was a promise made to give the people who participated a copy of the report as soon as it was written. Yet at this point, the Minister is still sitting on the report. Since I am in touch with the community, I've been able to let them know that they need to speak out and organize, get on the politicians' case about this."

Of course, this problem is not limited to processes that involve public participation. Ben Woods speaks eloquently about a similar situation within the Navy shipyard, where the issue of "what happens next?" is crucial.

"Recently, there have been a few cases where a group I have facilitated has come up with a great solution. Yet management has not supported the implementation of that solution. […] My own recommendation was, now that the group has found a solution, let's use the process again to come up with an effective implementation plan. If we did so, the next problem statement would be, 'How do we effectively get this implemented?'"

"But management tends to think that they can just issue an edict, that change will happen as they direct it to. That is ineffective, in that the people that need to apply the solution were not involved in the original effort, so it's not their solution. Therefore, they are not convinced of the value of the solution. They are likely to be suspicious of the change and not vested in its implementation. […] The thing about the process, is that you can't turn it on and off. You need to turn it on, and let it run. However, to do so would take more meetings, more people, more time, and managers are used to implementing changes by memorandum."

Also in the context of government, Tammy Nestor mentions a similar difficulty in her work environment:

"One situation in particular I am thinking about involves 5 different units, and as a result there are 5 different ways of handling service requests. Because we were siloed in our thinking, no one could see how the other ways might work for the other units. So much of my work went into helping people understand one another's different approaches."

"When this project went to implementation, and I was no longer facilitating, the manager who took it over was not into discussion. As a result, the common understanding we had been building, the willingness to accept other points of view, evaporated. There was no one holding that energy for the group, and they were not able to hold it themselves."

These kinds of difficulties will of course be very familiar to practitioners of organization development. We know all too well that the whole system needs to be considered, and the small group's relationship to the larger whole is crucial. The examples above illustrate the pervasiveness of this problem across a wide variety of settings. Yet I hope that it is also clear that, when working with public participation or deliberative democracy projects, the stakes may be even higher than in other contexts. What can be at risk is not just employee satisfaction or organizational effectiveness, but instead, the public trust itself.

It appears, then, that it is not enough to have a powerful approach to facilitation, regardless of how effective it may be. In order to ensure that the breakthroughs of a small group can be shared with the larger system, we need to bring our consulting skills to bear in the design of the larger process. This is not a surprising finding. Indeed, it is very similar to one of the conclusions reached by Holmes and Scoones (2000) in their review of 35 case studies world-wide in the field of environmental policy. Holmes and Scoones reviewed instances where some form of "deliberative inclusionary process" was used, including citizen juries, consensus conferences, and other similar processes. They found that:

"Too often DIP's have been one-off events, separated from the wider policy-making process. Embedding such processes in effective institutional contexts is therefore seen as key […] As the review has shown political and organisational contexts make a big difference to the potentials of a more participatory policy-making process." (2000, p. 49)

My own interview findings confirm that effective group facilitation is a necessary but not sufficient condition to ensure the success of deliberative democracy projects. At the same time, the facilitators I interviewed felt that their ability to work with groups had been powerfully and uniquely influenced by their training in the distinctive and powerful approach of Dynamic Facilitation. I hope that their stories will be useful for those wishing to help groups that are passionately at odds, to discover creative and practical breakthroughs, greater understanding, and a genuine appreciation for diversity.

III. Directions for Future Research

Herb Shephard described the "primary mentality" as based on the assumption that individuals can attain their goals only at the expense of others. A correlate of this assumption is that individual needs must be sacrificed to some extent for "the good of the group." By contrast, the "secondary mentality" is one where humans realize that they cannot attain their own goals without the active collaboration of others. Consequently, the expression of everyone's genuine, individual feelings and concerns is seen as beneficial to the group as a whole (1965, p. 1133). According to Shepherd, "the question of

individualism versus collectivism is not an issue for the secondary mentality." (1965, p. 1128)

Based on my own experiences with Dynamic Facilitation, this statement rings uncannily true. I personally have not experienced another process where the fullness of individuality AND the fullness of a larger "group mind" are BOTH experienced so deeply and compatibly. From this perspective, I would describe Dynamic Facilitation as a current, state-of-the-art, new-paradigm approach to helping a task group shift from internalized primary assumptions to internalized secondary assumptions, while continuing to work on their immediate, practical tasks at hand.[13]

From the perspective of culture change, this focus on task makes sense. Schein (1992) describes culture change, or the shift in underlying assumptions, as the "residue of learning". It is the success that a group achieves with regard to their practical issues that helps to create and/or shift the underlying culture of the group. Of course, in Dynamic Facilitation this focus on task is simultaneously open to the evolving agenda of the group, as defined by each individual member. The resulting creativity, unleashed by each person being able to bring their full self to the encounter, results in powerful breakthroughs, which in turn create a powerful learning experience and a shift in basic assumptions (Zubizarreta, 2002).

This particular research has been focused on the experience of the facilitator in Dynamic Facilitation. It would be very interesting to study participants' experiences as well, including the shift in their attitudes as a result of participating in this process.

Another related question has to do with "capacity building" effects on participants. I have seen group members in a four-day seminar become very familiar with the process, to the point where they are able to coach a novice facilitator in how to more effectively

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[13] As I've tried to show throughout this paper, the approach of Dynamic Facilitation has both significant continuities and discontinuities with other approaches, as might be expected from the evolutionary process (Kuhn, 1962).

fulfill his or her role. It would be interesting to see what happens in a group that has sufficient experience with this approach. One could study to what degree they have become able to coach a novice external facilitator, to obtain the specific kinds of assistance that would be most helpful to the group and free all of its members to participate fully in the process.

In terms of deliberative democracy, there is much work to be done on how citizen deliberative councils can be used to help catalyze transformation in the larger system. One interesting proposal is the Citizens' Amendment for a Wisdom Council, which seeks to re-create a sense of the commons in our collective moral imagination by chartering a randomly-selected, facilitated "jury" of citizens to come up with a "vision" statement for our country every year (Rough, 2002). While different in a number of significant details, something along broadly similar lines was successfully held in Canada in 1990, when Roger Fisher was invited by MacClean's to facilitate a small group demographically chosen to reflect the wide diversity of the Canadian population. This group was tasked with coming up with a vision for the country as a whole (Atlee, 2002). It would be quite interesting to explore how such a process could be designed to involve the public as a whole.

One proposal for increasing participation in democratic dialogue is the work of Barber (1984). In his call for a "strong," participatory democracy, Barber lists a spectrum of functions that democratic talk needs to serve, and points out that current liberal democracy only addresses the first two. [14] Dynamic Facilitation may well be an effective way to support the whole of the spectrum. Yet in order for it to effectively support the kind of broad-scale social change he envisions, we would need the social capacity to

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[14] The nine functions are: 1) the articulation of interests; bargaining and exchange; 2) persuasion; 3) a pervasive, ongoing and inclusive process of agenda-setting; 4) exploring mutuality;   5) affiliation and affection; 6) maintaining autonomy; 7) witness and self-expression; 8) reformulation and reconceptualization; and 9) community-building as the creation of public interests, common goals, and active citizens. (Barber, 1984, pp. 173-198)

foster the emergence of large numbers of facilitators. The question of how to do so would then become critical.

For this particular study, I chose facilitators who resonated the most with Dynamic Facilitation. Many of them already brought complementary skill sets to their work with Jim Rough. If we wanted to train large numbers of facilitators, it would be important to explore what might be helpful pre-existing skills. My hunch is people who already have experience with presence-related modalities, such as Gendlin's Focusing, could learn and apply Dynamic Facilitation fairly easily. In addition to working with people already familiar with Focusing, I think that offering novice facilitators training in inner presencing modalities would help them learn more easily how to offer presence to a group. It would be interesting to research this further.

Ultimately, I believe that the greatest potential of Dynamic Facilitation is in the simple yet powerful model that it offers for individuals to help support the emergence of a group's collective intelligence. I believe that our society's capacity to work effectively will be enhanced to the extent that practices such as Dynamic Facilitation become widely available through peer-based networks. Just as people in the Focusing and Re-evaluation Counseling communities can exchange effective emotional support with one another outside the money economy, I believe that one day practices such as Dynamic Facilitation could be easily made available to a wide variety of groups in a similar fashion.

While all of the people I have interviewed for this research work as professional facilitators, there is a growing network of activists who are taking Jim Rough's seminars and applying this work on a lay basis. Much of the research needed to realize this vision of peer facilitation exchange networks may be more experiential than academic, yet I believe this work is vital to developing our larger social capacity for collective self-governance.

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Appendix A

Key Similarities between Dynamic Faciliation and the Interaction Approach

- Both approaches were designed to address real problems
- Both approaches assume the possibility of new, win-win outcomes
- The group is seen as "owning" the problem
- The facilitator maintains a neutral role
- The facilitator does not contribute their own ideas nor judge others'
- The facilitator values conflict and diversity, welcoming differences
- The facilitator protects group members from personal attack
- The facilitator seeks to create a safe climate for exploring creative ideas
- The facilitator steps back when a group is working effectively
- The creation of a group memory is an essential part of the process
- Success is evaluated on both results and relationships

Key Differences between Dynamic Facilitation and the Interaction Approach:

- Dynamic Facilitation is non-linear, with a fluid and emergent agenda. The group can appear to be working on a variety of issues at the same time.
    This contrasts with approaches where the facilitator's job is to keep the group "on task" and lead a sequential, step-by-step process.

- In Dynamic Facilitation, practitioners operate on the assumption that when people feel fully heard, they are naturally able to listen to others.
    This contrasts with approaches that to place great emphasis on "managing" what are seen as "problem people."

- In Dynamic Facilitation, "initial solutions" are actively elicited early in the process, as part of generating a shared picture of the composite field.
    This contrasts with approaches where people are discouraged from talking about solutions until they have reached a pre-designated point in the process.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Logistical questions: Where do you work? How often do you facilitate? What size groups? What was your position when you first took Jim's class? When was that?

1) What do you enjoy most about your facilitation work?

2) How would you describe your purpose as a facilitator, when you are with a group?

3) What kind of a relationship do you try to create with the group?

4) What are some of the most important things you do, as a facilitator, to help ensure a good outcome?

5) Tell me some stories about your work. What have been some of your successes?

6) What have been some of the challenges you've encountered in facilitation, and what have you learned from them?

7) What has been your experience with public participation projects?

8) Imagine a client called to ask you to facilitate a citizen's jury. How might the work that you do apply in that context? Any modifications you might make?

9) People sometimes have concerns with regard to citizen juries. These concerns include questions about the ability of folks with widely divergent positions to come to a real consensus, and about the ability of non-specialists or non-experts to come up with useful answers. Do you have any comments about these concerns?

10) In what ways do you see your work as having been influenced by Jim's seminar?

During the interview process, I realized I needed to ask another question to explore the nature of the breakthroughs that people were describing. This question came out in a variety of ways, including:

11) "What differences do you find between using a more linear versus a non-linear approach?"

"Is there a difference between when a group arrives at a decision on their own, and when they are asked to vote?"

"Do you find that there is a difference between processes where people are led through a series of formal steps to come to a decision, and a process where the decision emerges on its own?"

"Sometimes facilitators describe group agreements as 'emerging' quite naturally and spontaneously from a larger process they have designed. On the other end of the spectrum, it seems facilitators sometimes lead people through a fairly structured decision-making process to help them weigh pros and cons and choose between a variety of alternatives. Where on this spectrum would you say your work lies?"