Enhancing the Effectiveness of Online Groups:
An Investigation of Storytelling in the
Facilitation of Online Groups

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Dedication

To my mother, Maureen, for her remarkable and vibrant stories from working with South Auckland's new migrants and refugees.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Stephen Thorpe

Claims to Originality

The research undertaken in this PhD thesis is the first effort to investigate the potential of storytelling in the development of relationships within online groups. It makes an original contribution to the knowledge of online facilitation by investigating the effectiveness of storytelling in online relationship development.

It makes an original contribution to the field of group facilitation by investigating the potential storytelling has in addressing some of the difficulties faced by facilitators of online groups.

Practical outputs for the field of online facilitation are the formation and investigation of a range of processes and techniques that can be applied in online relationship building and maintenance across a range of online software.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Building relationships in the world of online groups is a recent, exciting and challenging area for the field of group facilitation. Evidence has shown that online groups with strong relationship links are more effective and more resilient than those with without them. Yet, the processes and techniques to effectively facilitate the building of these online relationships are not yet understood and there is scant empirical knowledge to assist practicing group facilitators in this important task.

Challenges arise when many of the embodied aspects of inter-personal communication, such as body language, tone of voice, emotions, energy levels and context are not easily readable by group members and facilitators. Many of the well established group processes and interventions that facilitators rely upon in face-to-face situations do not translate effectively or are simply not available in an online group situation. Storytelling, however, presented one approach from the domain of face-to-face group facilitation that might translate well online. Storytelling is well known as an enabler for people to connect at a deeper and an embodied level. It can be highly effective at building strong social ties and group resilience – right across a wide range of settings.

This thesis inquired into storytelling's potential for online facilitation practice with the question of *how is storytelling beneficial in building relationships in a facilitated online group?*

Starting with the premise that storytelling will be an effective approach, eighteen facilitators from the International Association of Facilitators (IAF) came together to collectively research the area using a participative approach. The intent of the approach was to involve online facilitation practitioners in the research so that their motivations, ways of looking at things, and questions could have value and that their experiences would be at the heart of the data generated. A variety of online software tools were used including: email, Skype™ conferencing, telephone conferencing, video and web conferencing, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), blogging, online surveys and within the 3-D interactive world of Second Life™.

The study affirmed that storytelling assisted relationship development across a range of online settings. As anticipated, storytelling aided identity creation; scenario description; describing conflict and to articulate learning edges. The availability of an extra text channel during a primarily oral communication is seen as a potentially valuable contribution to the art of storytelling. In addition, the study offers a challenge to the storytelling field in proposing that direct contact between teller and listener is not always a priori requirement. The blending of roles raises some ethical challenges for online facilitation practice. The also inquiry confirmed that software tool selection was critical for ensuring full participation and buy-in to online group decisions. The 3-D, avatar-based medium of Second Life™ assisted with emotional connections.

A range of new opportunities emerged through co-researchers engaging with the research process that inform the practice of group facilitation. They expand the role and horizons of the online facilitator in relation to the wider profession of group facilitation. Reflections are made about the International Association of Facilitators *Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Group Facilitators* and *IAF Core Competencies* and some guidelines for the practice of online facilitation are offered.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Ethel O'Sullivan (my grandmother) with her great grandchildren

And now a few words from the Grandmother.

- Celtic proverb.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Imagine a family gathering for a grandmother's birthday. A young boy is listening, enwrapped in the whole atmosphere of storytelling from members of his extended family. Speeches are made, songs are sung and many stories are shared. The boy's desire for more is quickly engaged and he moves in closer. The grandmother then tells her story. The room quietens and everyone listens deeply. It is a story about a previous birthday; about milking cows in the cool of dawn while her older sister got to learn to play the piano. The boy really gets the key messages about unfairness and service to others from his grandmother. He will remember these stories always. He genuinely appreciates the rich pictures that are shared and he sees these shared stories as the stories that shape the individuals, the family and the wider society around him.

If you can imagine this, then you will see that storytelling engages the thinking, the feeling, and the actions of a person in relation to others; it is not a simple mechanism that can be easily formulated. Storytelling is, in itself, an essential human element. It does a whole range of things: it draws us in, engages our imagination, and allows our critique. It also creates linkages with others, with our past, with our present and with our aspirations for the future.

It is by telling our stories that we come to know ourselves, and whenever we hear another's story, we begin to appreciate and understand them. People come to appreciate their strengths and vulnerabilities, their joys and sorrows. Storytelling teaches us to listen and enables us to find our own voice.

This Ph.D. thesis tells the story of a group of eighteen professional group facilitators who came together to cooperatively investigate the use of storytelling across a range of online software tools. They were attracted to the potential that storytelling might bring to an online group and storytelling's ability to build relationships within group members. The inquiry group's objectives were to improve knowledge and understanding of storytelling in the online domain and to expand the practice of online group facilitation.

While online groups are a relatively new and fast growing phenomenon, professional group facilitators are beginning to share their online anecdotes and best practice suggestions with each other. They are asking questions about how

they can effectively assist groups working in increasingly multi-modal, multi-cultural, inter-generational and geographically dispersed work groups. These facilitators have a strong desire to learn more, with a goal of improving their effectiveness in the exciting and emerging world of online group work.

The focus of this thesis is on the profession of group facilitation and focusing on the effectiveness of online groups from the group facilitator's perspective. While there is a range of research from a number of fields that have investigated phenomenon in online groups from a number of perspectives, very little exists from the perspective of the professional group facilitator. The intention of this research is to add to the pool of knowledge available to group facilitators by looking at the online use of a well known and successful face-to-face facilitation approach – *storytelling*.

This thesis will have also some relevance for online professionals working in a range of roles such as e-moderators, online hosts, coordinators, group technology specialists, organizational development, online training specialists, team managers, project managers, researchers, teachers, and others who seek to use facilitation skills in their practice with online groups.

By building relationships, a distinction is made in this thesis between the more intimate and personal relationship development and that needed for the establishment of professional working relationships within groups such as a work team, or a community of practice. For example, while many people regularly use the Internet to meet a special someone or to maintain personal relationships with close friends (e.g. Parks & Floyd, 1996; Ryan, 1995; Stafford, Kline, & Dimmick, 1999) The inquiry group were focused on professional working relationships – the type of relationships that would be required within a work place context. The inquiry group was also interested in the more professional forms of story rather than the fairytales of children's stories or the more intimate family stories like the one mentioned above. However, the inquiry group was open to the lessons that could be learnt from sharing a wide range of stories that could inform an online group facilitators practice.

In face-to-face settings, professional group facilitators use the power of storytelling in a range of different ways for a range of different purposes. They use storytelling as a useful approach in opening group sessions, in introductions

between group members, as an ice-breaker exercise, as a way of recalling past group events, as a way to share learning and best practice, to inspire, and to pass on shared values, as a non-threatening way to discuss a group conflict or problem and explore potential solutions, and many more.

These same group facilitators are also increasingly learning to facilitate and work cooperatively with groups using a variety of online software such as audio, video and web conferencing, blogging, forums and in 3-D virtual environments. As groups are finding more value in working via online software, they are becoming more confident in using the technology and are expanding their awareness of online communication. People are learning new ways of working together: they are Skyping each other; joining online communities; joining discussion forums; meeting in chat rooms; working in distributed teams; participating in online training; setting up their own websites; using wikis, social networking sites, blogging, VoIP, and networking with people globally. Group participation and work is happening in many new ways never seen before.

As people gain skills, experience, and confidence in using these new online technologies, they are calling for more facilitation of their groups in those environments. They are encountering many of the joys and the challenges of working with computer mediated communication. Thus, many group facilitators have been working on finding new ways to improve their online effectiveness and that of the groups they work with.

As storytelling presented itself as a useful catalyst for building group relationships in face-to-face settings, its potential in online environments warranted some investigation. Group facilitators from around the world were invited to come together to cooperatively investigate how the use of story can be beneficial in facilitating online relationship development.

1.1 THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis contains seven chapters. This first chapter presents an introduction to the research topic. Here I provide a background on group facilitation and present the wider motivation for investigating storytelling in online groups. I outline research directions presented by others and introduce storytelling and the research project undertaken.

Chapter Two introduces the reader to some of the storytelling literature, storytelling's role within groups, and how it can assist in the facilitation of relationship development.

Chapter Three describes group facilitation along with some of its underlying beliefs, and presents some of the contemporary issues that face the profession of group facilitation. Some facilitator issues specific to the facilitation of online groups are also articulated. Relevant literature in the area of relationship development and research directions are then presented.

Chapter Four presents the theoretical perspective of the participative research approach. I introduce the reader to the Participative Research Paradigm and the Cooperative Inquiry method. The research design is then presented chronologically, outlining the steps of the investigation that the group followed.

Chapter Five chronologically describes the findings as they arose from the research project according to the different online software tools in which stories were generated and shared. Some important group interactions and dynamics, and various types of inquiry methods that were used, are detailed.

In Chapter Six the findings of the project are discussed in light of the literature presented, some potential implications for the field of group facilitation are articulated, guidelines for practice are offered and several areas for further research are detailed.

Chapter Seven presents a conclusion of the thesis.

1.2   INTENDED AUDIENCE

This thesis is primarily written for the readership of the doctoral examiners and an academic Information Systems (IS) audience. It is specifically for those academics who are interested in the development of IT-based services, the management of IT resources, and the use, impact, and economics of IT with managerial, organizational, and societal implications.

Another audience of this thesis work is academics in the field of professional group facilitation, particularly those facilitators who are researching and working with groups in a range of online settings. Chapters 5 and 6 will be of particular interest to this audience as they focus on aspects that are significant directly to the practice of online group facilitation. Academics within the field

will also likely be interested in Chapter 4 and the Co-operative Inquiry method – particularly those looking for a participative approach that aligns well with the underpinning values and ethics of professional facilitation practice.

Research that focuses on practicing group facilitators' perspectives helps play a role in assisting the development and legitimization of facilitation as a professional field. Group facilitation is a comparatively new field and has some way to go before being recognized as a fully-fledged professional body.

From the International Association of Facilitator's perspective there is a strong desire for more research written in a format that group facilitators can identify with; that they know was written for them and comes from a facilitator's perspective.

An intention of this Ph.D. research is to add to the pool of knowledge available to IS academics and group facilitators by looking at the use of a well known and successful face-to-face facilitation approach – *storytelling*.

1.3   BACKGROUND

An illustrative example of the growing interest in online facilitation is contained in the following background story that introduces the reader to the domain of group facilitation. The example describes an earlier successful project conducted by the International Association of Facilitators[1] (IAF) between 2000 and 2002 to develop a *Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Group Facilitators* (IAF, 2004). This online project illustrates a growing interest that the facilitation profession has in learning about, and developing, online group processes. Similarly, this earlier online project brought together facilitators from around the world via an online medium (a list-serv) to engage with each other around a common purpose. The success of the initiative to develop a code of ethics for the profession was a key motivator and inspiration for initiating the Ph.D. research investigating the use of storytelling in the facilitation of online groups.

The IAF was formed by a group of professional group workers desiring an avenue for interchange, professional development, trend analysis and peer networking. A formal association was proposed and adopted at a networking

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[1] See www.iaf-world.org

conference in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, in January, 1994. More than 70 people signed on as charter members. Since then the IAF has grown to over 1500 members in more than 73 countries around the world. The association is dedicated to growing facilitators and encouraging the use of group process methodologies world-wide.

Within the membership of the association, a group of facilitators in 2000 saw a strong advantage in developing a code of ethics that would move the profession forward and expand the definition of group facilitation itself. The project built on previous work by members of the IAF in the area of articulating the association's values and a set of internationally recognized facilitator competencies.

The project champions - Sandor P. Schuman, Dale Hunter and Roger Schwarz - were keen to involve as much of the IAF membership in as many locations around the world as possible. Rather than using a sub-committee or a task-force to develop the code, an email-based online group was created. Called the Ethics and Values Think Tank (EVTT), the group involved over 80 members, and over a 2-year period they developed the *Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Group Facilitators* (IAF, 2004).

During the process many different perspectives were shared from a wide range of cultures and facilitation backgrounds. Through including as many facilitators as possible in the process, there has been a wide acceptance and applicability of the code of ethics. Although not mandatory, most facilitators now use the code of ethics in their own practice, including many facilitators who are not members of the international association.

Online discussion was useful for generating ideas and in-depth dialogue over time on key issues of practice and areas of difference (see Hunter & Thorpe, 2005). Additional in-person forums were held at IAF conferences in Canada, Colombia, the United States of America, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand. Agreement on the exact wording of the code was reached online on May 4, 2002, and adopted in draft form by the IAF Board in Texas, USA on May 22, 2002. The code was adopted in full by the IAF Board in 2004.

This successfully facilitated online project added more motivation to expand and generate effective ways to achieve group outcomes using online

means, specifically from a facilitation perspective. As a result, the association now hosts an online forum[2] where over 500 facilitators from around the world dialogue in English and Spanish on a wide range of relevant conversations.

Facilitators continue to debate whether using online group software will ever be as effective as face-to-face facilitation. However, many are coming to appreciate the real benefits that can be achieved by using online group software, and are excited about the possibilities that are available.

1.3.1 Research Directions

Research by several facilitators over the last few years has presented some areas and perspectives for further study into facilitation in online groups. Pauleen & Yoong (2001) conducted participatory action research with participants of a virtual team facilitation training programme in New Zealand. Their study suggested that facilitators needed to strategically use the communication channels available to them to effectively build online relationships. They highlighted issues concerning team member selection and training, organizational and Human Resources policies, as well as communication channel biases. Pauleen & Yoong (2001) suggest further research was needed to understand the channel selection criteria and affordances used by facilitators and group participants. Dale Hunter (2003) included an internet dialogue in her study of *Sustainable Co-operative Processes in Organisations,* and identified a clear need for new protocols and processes to help with relationship development in online team work and to address aspects of online *disembodiment* (p. 209). Facilitators Mittleman, Briggs, & Nunamaker (2000) suggested the development of online meeting guidelines; Rangarajan & Rohrbaugh (2003) suggested comparing participation rates across differing forms of computer-mediated communication systems and introducing online co-facilitation; and Whitworth & McQueen (2003) suggested further investigation into a voting before discussing method on group cohesion and agreement.

Some facilitators have attempted to simply adapt their face-to-face processes and techniques for online use. However, they have found a key challenge in doing this. Most of the face-to-face processes and techniques that

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[2] www.iaf-forum.org

facilitators use rely strongly on the ability of both the facilitator and group members to read aspects of group interaction (such as body language, posture, tone of voice, warm-up, energy levels, seeing what's missing and so forth) and apply interventions as needed (Kock, 2005; Thorpe, 2007). In online groups many of these aspects of interaction - vital to the facilitator - are no longer available or as easy to read. This means that proven face-to-face processes and techniques are either less effective, or simply cannot be applied in an online group (Nunamaker, Zhao, & Briggs, 2002).

> Facilitation relies on the intricacies and connection of the body
> and its complex ways of communication. These elements normally
> provide a range of feedback to both the speaker and receivers of
> communication to complete the understanding of a single message.
> Communicating online however, requires more explicit writing
> and reading to ensure communication is complete (White, 2001).

Storytelling provides a face-to-face facilitation approach that may translate readily from face-to-face facilitation practice to the facilitation of an online group. There are several key reasons for the adaptability of storytelling for online facilitation practice. Storytelling requires little learning for the teller, or audience, and it might easily be communicated online in both oral and written forms. As story is particularly useful in the face-to-face facilitation of relationship development, it similarly presents a potential catalyst for assisting online groups who struggle with developing the group relationships needed to effectively work together.

In 2004 I reviewed the use of storytelling in the Information Systems (IS) and the related Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) research communities (Thorpe, 2004). My conclusion at that time was that storytelling via computing systems was effective in enriching communication and involvement, and was useful for approaching group synthesis tasks and in promoting reflective practice. I also suggested that "understanding place as part of the story, and the dramatization of online places and events, may offer greater engagement for online environments and give people a sense of place" (p. 17). From reviewing research directions from the facilitation community and the use of storytelling within the IS and CSCW research areas, I was convinced that storytelling in

online groups warranted further investigation. I also could see that a storytelling approach to the facilitation of relationship development online could possibly present some interesting results to support critics of Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984). Storytelling's potential to create vivid connections, engaging dialogue and word-pictures to scenes, characters and plot could likely be communicated quite successfully through the very thin communication means of email and IRC chat tools. That the sharing of stories would produce rich inter-personal communication and would be highly effective via the low bandwidth and less media rich software tools. Also of interest is the potential connectiveness of storytelling within the higher media rich software tools such as video conferencing and 3-D interactive worlds in relation to people's experiences in face-to-face group.

Investigating the use of storytelling could provide more understanding of the theoretical and practical implications of its use and its effectiveness in the facilitation of online relationship building.

1.4   STORYTELLING

There is a strong value placed on effective storytelling in all human groups. Based on my own experience as an online facilitator, moderator, and as a trainer of online facilitators, I have seen the impact that storytelling can have on groups when facilitated effectively. There is something very powerful when people listen to each other's stories about moments in organizational life when the best within humans is touched. It can create a unique climate for collective dreaming, when expectations and repression are momentarily suspended. There is something special about telling one's story of a burning issue, an inspirational moment or a peak organizational experience, and listening to others stories, that can make a group open up to deeply held desires and longing. The approach is astounding in the speed with which it can create an open group climate. Into this climate, a different kind of conversation can then take place and through story relationships, a different social reality can evolve.

When personal stories are shared within a social or group context, an individual experience can come to represent the whole group's shared experience. As personal stories begin to shape a group narrative, the individual stories gain

power. The new group narrative can then become a new framework for thought and blueprint for action. Consider the example of the story of Rosa Parks, the Alabama seamstress whose soft-spoken refusal to give up her seat on a bus to a white man triggered the Montgomery bus boycott; one of the first great mass actions in the American civil rights movement of the 1950s. Consider too, the ongoing impact of this story on American society and its contribution to Barak Obama's journey to the White House. A journey and a different social reality that a short while ago could not be considered possible in America.

Through story, relationships are forged between people by the sharing of experience and meaning. This occurs in social space where people are motivated to explore their own social situation. Some stories are fun. Some stories are entertaining. Some share new perspectives or get a point across. Others are deep and potent and resonate a long way on many levels. The impact of some stories is so powerful that the effects of it can continue to be active over decades or even centuries, becoming legend and myth. The power at the heart of storytelling within a facilitated group is that through the process, relationships are forged and this can translate into a more resilient group and improved effectiveness when working together.

1.5   THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In many face-to-face settings, storytelling is used as an effective way for groups to develop relationships. *Could this also be true in online groups? Would it help with feelings of disembodiment and isolation experienced online?* Based on personal experience and anecdotal accounts identified in the scant literature (Pauleen & Yoong, 2001), storytelling presented a potential catalyst for online relationship development that warranted some investigation. Storytelling provided a powerful approach that would translate to online settings so a research project was initiated to investigate how effective storytelling might prove to be.

1.5.1   Method

Facilitators are well know as reflective practitioners (Schön, 1993) and interested in their own practice. Therefore a useful way to study the impact of the facilitation of storytelling on relationship development was to bring together a

group of facilitators who could share their stories and reflect on their own experience and practice in a group research setting. *Cooperative Inquiry* (Heron, 1996, 1998; Reason, 1994, 1988; Reason & Bradbury, 2001) was one research method that presented an appropriate match for these facilitators to investigate their own practice in a collective way. The method has been used previously by several facilitators in exploring areas of professional practice and group experience (see Hunter et al., 1999; Heron, 1999; Dale, 2001; Baldwin, 2002; Hunter, 2003).

Group facilitators offer unique expertise with both group behavior and group processes. As the research project aimed to explore group facilitation itself, a research process that is aligned with the underpinning values and beliefs of facilitators was sought. A research approach was needed that allowed all those involved to be self-directed, and in a position to contribute both to the research design, formulation of propositions, associated action, reflection and analysis. The method of Cooperative Inquiry appeared to provide a good fit for both the co-researchers and to meet the goals of the Ph.D. study.

Cooperative Inquiry is a method that produces data that has a strong grounding in participant experience and multiple perspectives of phenomena. Cooperative Inquiry also aligns strongly with the facilitator values of equality, shared decision-making, equal opportunity, full participation, power sharing and personal responsibility (see Hunter & Thorpe, 2005; IAF, 2004).

1.5.2 Cooperative Inquiry

The Cooperative Inquiry method (Heron, 1996, 1998; Reason, 1994, 1988; Reason & Bradbury, 2001) is a form of research where participants are viewed as co-researchers who participate in decision making at all stages of the project. Cooperative Inquiry involves two or more people researching their own experience of something in alternating cycles of reflection and action.

Cooperative Inquiry is traditionally a face-to-face collaborative research method. However, the method has previously been used successfully as an online research method for facilitators researching their practice. For example, Dale (2001) led an online Cooperative Inquiry bringing together academics and public policy practitioners to investigate ecological system function, structure and

processes. Hunter (2003) combined online dialogue with a questionnaire and co-operative inquiry to investigate sustainable co-operative processes in organizations. More on the Cooperative Inquiry method is outlined in Chapter Four, including a description of the wider *Participative Paradigm* that the method is drawn from.

1.6   DEFINITION OF TERMS

Several definitions are useful at this point for laying out some of the key ideas and the approach that the inquiry group have taken to define story and relationship development within this thesis.

1.6.1   Online Groups

Online groups are a relatively new phenomenon. In this thesis, the term *online groups* is used as an umbrella term to encompass many new types of internet-enabled groups that group facilitators are called upon to facilitate. This includes groups such as global virtual teams, virtual communities, e-groups, discussion forums, chat rooms, facilitated blogs, and audio and web conferencing teams. Having said that, the cooperative inquiry detailed in this thesis involved groups within a particular professional subculture – that of facilitated work groups.

A useful definition can be drawn from Jarvenpaa & Leidner (1999) who define online groups as temporary, culturally diverse, geographically dispersed, electronically communicating work groups. Online groups may communicate and work synchronously or asynchronously through such technologies as email, forums, audio, video and data conferencing, automated workflow, electric voting and collaborative writing (Coleman, 1997). These new forms of groups communicate collaboratively across time, distance and borders through the use of information and communication technology.

1.6.2   Group Facilitation

Group facilitation is a process in which a person who is acceptable to all members of a group, is substantively neutral, and has no decision-making authority, is chosen to intervene in a group's process to help it meet its agreed purpose

(Schwarz, 2002). Decisions are usually made using consensus decision-making methods (Hunter, 2007). More on group facilitation is covered in Chapter Three.

1.6.3   Narrative

There are generally four main features of a text (or discourse) that mark it as a narrative and differing from a story: (1) A sequence in time; a narrative should include a clear beginning, middle and an end. (2) A focal actor or actors; narratives are always about someone or something. (3) An identifiable narrative voice; a narrative is something that someone tells from a particular perspective. (4) A moral of the story or an evaluative frame of reference; narratives carry a meaning and cultural value such as standards against which actions of the characters can be judged.

1.6.4   Storytelling

The nature of storytelling means that it can be used across a range of settings to meet a wide range of intentions. *When story means many things to many people, can a satisfactory definition of story or narrative be easily achieved?* There are differing arguments as to what does, and does not, constitute a story or a narrative (Pentland, 1999). Reissman (1993) looked at what others think and found a wide range of definitions of story. He commented that the definition used by one group of scholars is often overly broad, includes just about anything. Smith (1981) provides one such definition: "someone telling someone else that something happened" (p. 228), whilst simultaneously definitions amongst other scholar's can be very restrictive. "Most scholars treat narratives as discrete units, with clear beginnings and endings, as detachable from the surrounding discourse rather than as situated events." (p. 17). Other writers (Scholes, 1981; Tilley, 1995) define narrative as a story with a beginning, middle and an end. Also, the terms narrative and story are often used interchangeably; considered to be equivalent by some such as Polkinghorne (1988) and not by others, including Scholes (1981) and Poirier & Ayres (1997).

Chapter 2 presents a popular and useful framework from the National Storytelling Network for storytelling that illustrates five defining aspects of the storytelling art form involving two-way interaction, oral and written language,

using actions, presenting a narrative and encouraging active imagination. This was used as a starting point for the thesis. For the co-operative inquiry study, rather than choosing or developing a working definition of *storytelling* that may have possibly constrained the outcomes of the research project, The inquiry group jointly developed (through group discussion) an understanding of the types, genres and examples of story that held most interest for investigation. This process is explained in more detail in section 5.2.3.

1.6.5   Relationship Development

A similar challenge of definition that surrounds the term story can also be said of *relationship development*. Many attempts have been made to clearly define the stages and cycles of a group's journey from its birth to its completion such as the famous Tuckman (1977) model of forming, norming, storming, performing and adjourning. Finding an acceptable definition of the relationship development phrase is difficult because it has been defined in many ways and with varying degrees of depth and complexity (Smith, 2001). In addressing this issue, Hill & Gruner (1973) discuss the fact that Hill was once an avid collector of group development theories. At one point, they report, he met up with another collector of group development theories and found that their combined collections yielded more than 100 distinct theories.

1.6.5.1   An approach to defining story and relationship development

Rather than adopt a mandatory model or definition for the cooperative inquiry, the inquiry group were keen to decide within their own research group on the emergent definitions of *story*, and *relationship development*. Thus at times the inquiry group used specific types of story, such a recount of their worst facilitation job, and at other times the stories emerged from conversation or were sparked from the hearing of another's story. Similarly, the research group also used a range of popular development models such as Tuckman's (1977) model of forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning; Scott Peck's model of community development (1987); and Katzenbach & Smith's model of high performing teams (1994).

To assist with understanding relationship development in this thesis a description of Scott Peck's stages of community development are presented here.

In his book *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (1987), Peck proposes three essential ingredients *inclusivity*, *commitment* and *consensus*. He says that community building typically goes through four developmental stages:

Pseudo-community: This is a stage where the members pretend to have a pleasant or friendly disposition or manner with one another, and cover up their differences, by acting as if the differences do not exist. Pseudo-community can never directly lead to community, and it is the task of the facilitator guiding the community building process to shorten this period as much as possible.

Chaos: When pseudo-community fails to work, the members start falling upon each other, giving vent to their mutual disagreements and differences. This is a period of chaos. It is a time when the people in the community realize that differences cannot simply be ignored. Chaos looks counterproductive but it is the first genuine step towards community building.

Emptiness: After chaos comes emptiness. At this stage, the people learn to empty themselves of those ego related factors that are preventing their entry into community. Emptiness is a tough step because it involves the ego-death of a part of the individual. This ego-death paves the way for the birth of a new entity - the community.

True community: Having worked through emptiness, the people in community are in complete empathy with one another. There is a great level of tacit understanding. People are able to relate to each other's feelings. Discussions, even when heated, never get sour, and motives are not questioned.

To understand that all groups go through several non-linear phases or stages from their genesis through to their completion it is important to note that no one model will apply to all groups. However, indicators may present that match well to one or other of the popular models of group development. Recognizing these patterns of interaction can assist a group to see their dynamics at play and also to present interventions available to take them towards their intended purpose.

The following chapter, Storytelling, presents an introduction to the art and function of storytelling. I describe some of the efficacy that storytelling can provide for the facilitation of groups and storytelling's role in assisting relationship development in groups.

1.6.6   Channel

The word channel is used in this thesis to describe the different means of communication or modes of communication access, such as text, audio, video, 2-D visual and 3-D. In online groups, one or more communication channels are available to a facilitator depending on the type of software tool available. Some tools offer only one communication channel while others offer several. For example, email is purely text-based; where as video conferencing includes both visual and audio channels of communication.

1.6.7   Thesis Framework

The framework for the literature review rests on three main areas of literature – storytelling, group facilitation and relationship building in online groups. Firstly storytelling is introduced - its historical role in society and some of its functions in building relationships in groups. Then the domain of group facilitation is brought in to establish a facilitator's role in groups. Trends and contemporary issues within the field are discussed that illustrate the community that this research has a focus on. Some of the emergent challenges online facilitators are facing are offered to establish the linkages between group facilitation and the world of online groups. These challenges present a key motivation for the study – to find effective ways to effectively facilitate relationship building in online groups. Then the central area of online relationship development from is finally introduced. Several studies are discussed along with their suggestions for future research directions.

While some comparisons to face-to-face facilitation are presented and discussed, the focus of this thesis is not on making any direct comparison between storytelling in online and face-to-face facilitation.

Chapter 2 introduces storytelling, beginning with establishing the role and importance of storytelling as a human activity. A popular definition from the National Storytelling Network in the USA is introduced to frame up what is meant in this thesis by storytelling. Several functions of storytelling are then discussed that link storytelling with its use as a facilitative approach in groups. These functions focus on storytelling's ability to generate relationship

development in groups through purpose, culture building, as a connector between people and in promoting openness.

Chapter 2

Storytelling

A painting of the Falling In story by Stephen Thorpe

2.0   INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the reader to storytelling by providing some background literature on Storytelling. Storytelling is described as an art form using a popular framework from The National Storytelling Network in the USA, and then some useful functions that are known about storytelling and its use in groups are presented. The chapter concludes with a review of storytelling as an emerging approach used by facilitators.

2.1   HISTORY OF STORYTELLING

> Story derives from the Latin *historia* - inquiry, which is related to
> the Greek *Histór* - one who knows.

Storytelling has been a form of communication throughout the history of humankind. It is a part of all civilizations on all continents. Early storytellers told stories of the hunt, of survival, of the deeds of heroes. These stories were expanded over time to become our present day tales, fables, myths and legends.

One of the earliest recorded stories is the epic of Gilgamesh (see Kovacs, 1990), first told by the Sumerians. The heroic Epic of Gilgamesh is considered one of the oldest written stories on Earth. It was originally written on twelve clay tablets in cuneiform script somewhere between 800 and 550 BC. Gilgamesh was the semi-divine king of Uruk, a city of southern Babylonia (in present day Iraq), and a hero of an epic collection of mythic tales, one of which tells of a flood that covered the earth. Other epic stories followed, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, commonly dated to the late 9th, or to the 8th, century BC. Storytellers in Greece performed these Greek myths, which included gods with super-natural powers. Aesop's Fables of the late 6th to the early 7th century BC, brought lessons and insights into storytelling. Many popular stories included *The Fox and the Grapes* (from which the idiom *sour grapes* is derived), *The Tortoise and the Hare*, *The North Wind and the Sun* and *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. Other early epics included the Anglo-Saxon tale of *Beowulf*; the adventures of a great Scandinavian warrior of the sixth century AD.

Stories in printed form have a very different reality than those told orally. A crucial distinction here is between the notion of the oral epic - transferred

through the oral tradition around the campfires by special poets who were aided in their memory of the works by certain formulaic patterns and regularly occurring phrases, (e.g. the *Iliad* and *The Odyssey* originally) - and the secondary epic (that which is written down) e.g. Virgil's epic of the Aeneid. Printed stories are set in a firm context that may be explored again and again. When a story is recorded, the words and way they are positioned must carry the message. An oral story cannot be recorded so accurately. When a story is told orally, there are nuances of eye contact and body language that serve to make a tale richer than the language itself. This also means that each time an oral story is told, there are differences. So much of the telling depends on other things – the background of the teller, the interpretation of emotions, the way the listener responds, the teller's and listener's thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and the teller's abilities. In *Oral Cultures Past and Present: Rappin and Homer* (1990), Edwards & Sienkewica, who studied the oral tradition from ancient Greeks through to the contemporary era, suggest that literature and oral storytelling are at the ends of a continuum. Rather than seeing them as dichotomous, they consider them as two parts of the same whole.

The printed story arose in the Middle Ages. Just like oral tellers, these tellers, who wrote down their stories, continued the tradition of delighting their audience with tales of history, love and war. In the fourteenth century AD, Geoffrey Chaucer retold the many stories he had heard from pilgrims passing between London and Canterbury. Chaucer put these stories on paper in his Canterbury Tales. The pilgrims, who came from all layers of society, told stories to each other to pass the time while they travelled to Canterbury. Soon others began to write down the tales that had previously been passed down orally from generation to generation, including the Brothers Grimm (1812, 1814), whose pioneering collection of over two hundred folktales included classics such as *Cinderella*, *The Frog King*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White* and *Rapunzel*. Hans Christian Andersen published many popular stories such as the *The Princess and the Pea*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Emperor's New Suit*, *The Ugly Duckling* and *The Philosopher's Stone*.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, *Hasidism* transformed Eastern European Judaism and brought with it a revival of Jewish storytelling. *Rebbes* (Hasidic leaders), praised storytelling as a divine commandment and spiritual practice,

often telling stories and also instructing their followers, to do likewise (Buxbaum, 1997). Teaching storytelling became a holy activity equated to the study of Torah or prayer. The Rebbes developed a theology of storytelling that answered questions such as *What is the place of storytelling among spiritual practices? Why do stories captivate and charm us? How should they be listened to and told?* and *What effects do they have?* Storytelling became a natural and integral part of a person's religious life.

Storytelling continues to be popular to this day, whether part of a person's religious life or not. In modern times, there are many who have studied the impact and power of story. Authors such as Joseph Campbell have written about the *Power of Myth* (Moyers & Campbell 1988), *The Hero's Journey* (Campbell, 1949) and the *Myths to Live By* (1972). Campbell believes that throughout the inhabited world, in all times, and under every circumstance, the myths of humanity have flourished. They are the living inspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind. Campbell states "It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation" (1949, p. 3). To Campbell, religion, philosophy, the arts, and prime discoveries in science and technology derive from a basic, shared collection of human myths.

Lewis Mumford echoes the human desire to create story and connect it with universal myth in his series on technology and human development in *The Myth of the Machine* (1966).

> The critical moment was man's discovery of his own many-faceted mind, and his fascination with what he found there. Images that were independent of those that his eyes saw, rhythmic and repetitive body movements that served no immediate function but gratified him, remembered actions he could repeat more perfectly in fantasy and then after many rehearsals carry out… (p. 45).
>
> Behind every later process of organization and mechanization one must, however, recognize primordial aptitudes, deeply ingrained in the human organism - indeed, shared with many other species - for ritualizing behavior and finding satisfaction in a repetitive order

that establishes a human connection with organic rhythms and

cosmic events. (Mumford, 1970, p. 277).

Campbell (1972) also argued that today the same mythical journeys are present in our personal life. Campbell sees the hero's journey continuing to play a larger role in a universal cycle of growth, dissolution and redemption. We each are moving from the microcosm of the individual to the macrocosm of the universe. Myth opens people up to the unalterable truths of human existence, its joys and sorrows, its pains and pleasures, which are the same for all people (p. 391).

Similarly, British author Christopher Booker also describes a set of basic plots that can be used to describe human experience. In his book *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (2004), he describes the patterns underlining storytelling as the seven gateways to the underworld. Booker identifies these universal themes as overcoming the monster, rags to riches, the quest, voyage and return, comedy, tragedy and rebirth. He suggests that all kinds of story, however profound or however trivial, ultimately spring from the same source, are shaped around the same basic patterns, and are governed by the same hidden, universal rules.

Jean Houston (1992) has also written extensively about the transformational power of the classic Greek tale of *The Odyssey*; and discovering the mythic elements in our lives (1996). Houston continues to expand the conversation about the power of story and the meaning it generates in people's lives every week on her website www.jeanhouston.org.

Stephen Denning introduces several story forms that can be used in the leadership of organizational change in his book *The Leaders Guide to Storytelling* (2005). These story forms include sparking action, communicating values, fostering collaboration, taming the grapevine, sharing knowledge and leading into the future. Steps are provided for designing and implementing these forms in organizational contexts. Denning refers to the discipline of storytelling as the sixth discipline of learning organizations, in addition to the five suggested by Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990).

Denning argues that we, as people, live in a soup of narratives. "Why narratives permeate our lives and understanding is that resorting to narratives is the way in which we have learned to cope with our world of enormously complex

phenomena." (Denning, 2000, p.112). Denning sees the narrative language of stories as the most appropriate instrument to communicate the nature, shape and behavior of complex adaptive phenomena. This is because stories capture the "essence of living things, which are quintessentially complex phenomena, with multiple variables, unpredictable phase changes, and all of the characteristics that the mathematics of complexity has only recently begun to describe." (p. 113).

Other substantive work has explored the use of storytelling in work groups from a wide variety of perspectives; see Gargiulo (2006, 2005); Brown, Denning, Groh, & Prusack (2005); Denning (2000, 2004a, 2004b); Allan, Fairtlough, & Heinzen (2002); Neuhauser et al., (2000) and Silverman (2006) for the use of story in organizational settings and development. MacDonald (1992) and Bar-On (2000, 2002) have looked at the use of storytelling in conflict resolution and peace work. Others have looked at cultural symbols and meaning constructed in a social context through personal narratives (e.g., Narayan, 1989; Grima 1992; Raheja & Gold 1994; Wadley, 1994; Biklen, 1995; Chase, 1995).

2.1.1 Socially Constructed Reality

From a post-modernist perspective, there is nothing inherently real or true about any social form. All social organization is a social construction. People's abilities to create new and better organizations are limited only by their imagination and intention. Furthermore, language and words are the basic building blocks of social reality. Thus storytelling is a key form that people have used to collectively build and maintain their social reality. Rather than seeing language as a passive purveyor of meaning between people, post-modernists see language as an active agent in the creation of meaning. As people talk to each other, they are constructing the world around them, and as people begin to change how and what is talked about, they are changing that world.

George Orwell understood this link between language and people's ability to articulate the world well. As described in his social science novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), the dystopian world he describes introduces *Newspeak* a language of very restricted vocabulary. Newspeak is described as being "the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year". The language is used as a form of public mind control by removing the capacities for people to

articulate change in the world around then, for example, by removing any words or possible constructs which describe the ideas of freedom, rebellion and change. If there are no words to describe and articulate a different future then that future cannot be readily shared or created.

Storytelling provides a means for people to describe alternative futures, and to envision new patterns of social organization that are different from what they currently see or may ever have individually experienced.

2.2   THE ART FORM OF STORYTELLING

Many authors describe storytelling as an *art form* that contains a range of expressions (Ryan, 1995; Shepard, 1988; Shedlock, 1917). Ryan (1995) describes storytelling as the art of telling a story that includes all forms of shared narrative. The National Storytelling Network in the United States of America defines storytelling as interactive and a form of art: "Storytelling is the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination." (National Storytelling Network, 2006).

2.2.1   The National Storytelling Network

The National Storytelling Network has grown to be one of the largest associations of storytellers in the world, with over 2,500 members. The association produces a bi-monthly *Storytelling Magazine*, which has a circulation of 25,000. The network also maintains a website. Each summer since 1973, the association has organized a storytelling conference to provide storytellers with opportunities to develop storytelling skills and discuss issues relevant to the storytelling community. As many as 10,000 people attend the network's yearly storytelling festival.

The association's structure serves as a guide for the development of other storytelling organizations and events throughout the USA and around the world. Storytellers affiliated with the network have established local guilds where storytellers gather to practice and share their craft. There are more than 250 such guilds in the United States alone.

2.2.2 Defining Aspects of the Art Form

The National Storytelling Network presents five defining aspects of the storytelling art form:

1. A two-way interaction between a storyteller and listeners - distinguishing it from forms of theatre and film.

2. Using oral and written language - distinguishing it from forms of dance and mime.

3. Using actions such as vocalization, physical movement and gesture - distinguishing storytelling from some forms of writing, illustration and text-based computer interactions.

4. Presenting a narrative (with elements of plot, characters and events).

5. Encouraging the active imagination of the listeners in the co-creation of the experience.

These defining aspects provide a well recognized and useful filter for understanding the art form of storytelling. The defining aspects provide a concise, simple, and concrete way to view storytelling. An appealing aspect of the framework is that it was developed through an online group conversation hosted on their e-list by members of the National Storytelling Network (McWilliams, 1997; Larkin, 1997). This had synergies for a research project also seeking to investigate storytelling through an online cooperative approach.

2.2.3 Two Way Interaction

Storytelling involves a two-way interaction between a storyteller and one or more listeners. It emerges from the interaction and cooperative, coordinated efforts of teller and audience (National Storytelling Network, 2006). "Storytelling is the art of using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal the elements and images of a story to a specific, live audience" (McWilliams, 1997). The interactive nature of storytelling accounts for its immediacy and impact. The storyteller provides elements of plot, scene, characters and time, while the audience members bring their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and imagination to complete the creative process.

A focus on the story alone, to the exclusion of the interaction
between the storyteller and the listener, misses the point of
storytelling. It is the interaction of the storyteller with the listeners
and the communal meaning that emerges from the interaction.
(Denning, 2000, p. 137).

Twentieth-century psychologist Bruno Bettelheim interpreted many elements of
popular fairy tales. In his *Uses of Enchantment* (1976), Bettelheim asserted that
folk fairy stories are born from the interactive process between teller and
audience:

Fairy Stories grow from the retelling to a specific audience in an
oral tradition, the story is emergent from the collective into a form,
that is then refined by the collective into a story that sticks. (p.
215).

The folk fairy tale is the result of a story being shaped and
reshaped by being told millions of times, by different adults to all
kinds of other adults and children. Each narrator as he told the
story, dropped and added elements to make it more meaningful to
himself and to the listeners, whom he knew well. When talking to
a child, the adult responded to what he surmised from the child's
reactions. Thus the narrator let his unconscious understanding of
what the story told be influenced by that of the child. Successive
narrators adapted the story according to the questions the child
asked, the delight and fear he expressed openly or indicated by the
way he snuggled up against the adult. (p. 150).

Thus the audience and teller negotiate a story into being in a highly dynamic
interactive process (Livo & Reitz, 1986), separating it from other popular forms
such as video and books. As storyteller Rafe Martin (1996) articulates it, there is a
connection made with the audience through the teller's words and the rhythms of
their voice and body. The storyteller maintains that connection throughout the
telling, molding it according to their sense of the audience's energy.

Having said that, there is also a broader cultural role of formulaic patterns
in the oral storytelling traditions when carrying down historically the same story
faithfully is a key factor. Some stories have been faithfully carried down through

generations and little tolerance has been given for modulation or dynamic interpretation.

2.2.4 Oral and Written Expressions

Storytelling uses language, whether it is a spoken language or a manual language such as Sign Language. The use of language distinguishes storytelling from most art forms of painting, sculpture, architecture, dance and mime. Storytellers use vivid language to paint pictures the audience can see in their minds. Also used are classic written language features such as simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, alliteration and repetition. When given live, the presentation of a story is immediate, unfiltered and direct.

> It is the live, person-to-person oral and physical presentation of a story to an audience. Telling involves direct contact between teller and listener. It mandates the direct presentation of the story by the teller. The teller's role is to prepare and present the necessary language, vocalization, and physicality to effectively and efficiently communicate the images of a story (McWilliams, 1997).

2.2.5 Using Actions

Storytelling uses actions such as vocalization, physical movement and gesture. These actions are the parts of spoken or manual language other than words. Their use distinguishes storytelling from writing and static text-based computer interactions. Not all nonverbal language behaviors need to be present in storytelling. For example, some storytellers use body movement extensively whereas others use little or none.

2.2.6 Presenting a Narrative

Storytelling involves the presentation of a narrative. As introduced in the Definition of Terms section in the Introduction Chapter, there are differing arguments as to what does, and does not, constitute a story or a narrative. What can be agreed upon across most of the various definitions (see Pentland, 1999 for a fuller discussion) is that there are some common elements of narrative that include:

1. Sequence in time - a narrative should include a beginning, middle and end.

2. A focal actor or actors - a narrative is about someone or something.

3. An identifiable narrative voice - a narrative has an identifiable voice or perspective that it is told from.

4. Evaluative frame of reference - a narrative caries meaning and cultural value often in the form of a moral.

The creative expression of these elements of narrative is at the heart of storytelling. Similar art forms, such as poetry recitation and stand-up comedy, sometimes include components of narrative and are also regarded as forms of storytelling by the National Storytelling Network.

> ...storytelling is spontaneous and experiential, and thus a dynamic interaction between teller and listener, it is far more difficult to describe than is the script and camera directions of a movie, or the lines and stage direction notes of a play. Storytelling emerges from the interaction and cooperative, coordinated efforts of teller and audience (McWilliams, 1997).

2.2.7 Encouraging Active Imagination

Stories are constructed reality, ambiguous, and experienced-based. Oral and written stories provide a key benefit in removing the physical circumstances before an audience. They are not a complete visual production as in theatre or cinema. Much is left to members of an audience to imagine for themselves the scale and appearance of characters and the scenes portrayed in a story. The storyteller contributes the plot, the dialogue and the dramatic tension. The audience then draws from their own experience and imagination to fill in the story's picture. They imagine what the characters look like and what the scene looks like. Thus the storytelling art form is an *actively imagined* co-created experience between a teller and their audience.

Storytelling audiences do not passively receive a story from the teller, as a viewer receives and records the content of a television program or motion picture. The teller provides no visual images, no stage set, and generally, no costumes

related to story characters or historic period. Listeners create these images based on the performer's telling and on their own experiences and beliefs (McWilliams, 1997).

> A ritual is an organization of mythological symbols; and by participating in the drama of the rite one is brought directly in touch with these, not as verbal reports of historic events, either past, present, or to be, but as revelations, here and now, of what is always and forever. Where the synagogues and churches go wrong is by telling what their symbols 'mean.' The value of an effective rite is that it leaves everyone to his own thoughts. (Campbell, 1972, p. 97).

The active imagination aspect of storytelling is described by Birkets (1994) in *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. Birkets describes the reading of a story as a virtual journey into a different world, a different mental location, the place where the story is occurring. This imagined reality is elicited by the teller, who uses linguistic tools to stimulate this world into existence. The reader enters into the role of co-creator with the author, with the conjuring up of the image taking on flavors of the reader (pp. 80-82).

More can be read about the storytelling art form by reviewing the writings of Campbell, 1949, 1972; Mumford, 1966, 1970; Birkets, 1994; Shepard, 1988; and Shedlock, 1917. Chan & Mauborgne (1992) describe Chinese stories of leadership. Estes (1992) describes stories to help women get in touch with the power of their wild side. McCann & Stewart (1997) use animals as a basis for cautionary tales about management based on Aesop's fables. Simpkinson & Simpkinson (1993) focus on transformation and healing stories. Kaye (1996) describes myths, stories and metaphors in organizations. Burrell & Morgan (1979) and Mead (1934) present a symbolic interactionist perspective of narratives in organizational settings.

2.2.8 Summary

These defining aspects of the storytelling art form present a potentially beneficial approach for online group members to engage their imagination, creativity, action, and purpose when interacting with others online. It may be useful, for

example, for participants to introduce themselves using a story, to share what is an important experience to them, and to evoke cultural meaning through the sharing and interactive storytelling process.

Storytelling therefore may provide some important functions for the facilitation of groups. Some of these functions of storytelling for groups are described further below. Later, in section 2.5, the role and use of storytelling as a facilitated process is described.

2.3 FUNCTIONS OF STORIES

In a learning context, storytelling can provide an educational function; in a therapeutic context, it can provide a means for clients to express deep hurt and emotions about past events; in a peace-making context, it can assist groups to develop understanding and empathy for enemies; and so on. What follows below is a focus on four functional aspects of storytelling that group facilitators may be looking to use with the groups they work with. These were anticipated areas that I considered to be important to the study based on exploring the literature on storytelling and how it may present a useful approach online.

2.3.1 Stories Create Culture in Groups

The telling of stories is not done in isolation or without intent. It involves others, and it involves meaning. Storytelling in this sense is a cultural production. Stories can be seen as a means through which groups articulate and perpetuate their cultural knowledge (Cruikshank, 1998). Embedded in a story are the values, beliefs and traditions of the storyteller, the context of the story and the audience.

Through the sharing of stories a group will identify themes, behaviors, qualities and aspects that the group collectively values. Even if an individual chooses a story that is not their own, what they choose to tell to others will identify something about them. It will show what is important to them, what they are attracted to, the characters, roles and behaviors that they associate with; their story will establish themes.

Storytelling thus provides a function for articulation and concretization of collective cultural values. For example, when personal stories are shared in a group context, an individual experience may come to represent the group's shared

experience if it contains the values or desired behaviors shared by all. This occurs in social space where members are exploring the narrative of their situation and their context.

As personal stories begin to shape the group narrative, each individual story builds on previous stories. The forming narrative becomes a new framework for thought and a blueprint for action (Senehi, 2002).

> It is by telling our stories that we come to know ourselves, and whenever we hear another's story we understand them. We come to appreciate their strengths and vulnerabilities, their joys and sorrows. Storytelling teaches us to listen and enables us to find our voice. It entertains us and challenges our thinking. Story continues to enhance our lives and bring us closer together (New Zealand Guild of Storytellers, 2004, p. 1).

The quote above presents an interesting assertion that when we hear another's story we understand them. *Is this possible?* I would argue that it is a stretch to see storytelling as this highly effective. One may develop a sense, or *begin* to understand someone through hearing them share their story. There may be some identification of what is important to them, what they value, and something of their circumstances through the process. Connections may even be made with my own experiences and imagination. However, to truly understand another would require a longer connection and more than one interaction. It is important at this point to qualify this statement and to not over-evangelize the effect that storytelling can have between people.

The stories told in the *Bible* present further examples of how storytelling has been used to shape behaviors, cultural norms and core values. Great stories create a rich visual imagery in people's minds, and great storytellers invite us to walk the landscape that is created by this imagery. Thus the process of storytelling involves the production of a collective meaning influenced by the storyteller, the social context, the story itself and the audience it is told to. Through story's culture-developing function, a group begins to identify itself through the stories that are told about it and within it.

2.3.2 Stories Are Purposeful

Storytelling can be great entertainment; however stories told can have a range of purposes channeled through the intent of the storyteller. The role of the storyteller can be seen as a position of influence in the social construction of meaning (Bauman & Briggs, 1990). Stories taught to children have an educational purpose. Stories transfer values, beliefs and traditions from an adult to a child; from one generation to another; from one group to another. Children are told stories to introduce them to the world and begin their primary socialization[3] (Clausen, 1968). Upon learning an alphabet and sentence structure, stories then begin a child's literacy education. In many families, tales about family history and ancestors are passed down from generation to generation through storytelling. The sharing of this inter-generational information is more than simply the sharing of historical data, but it also includes the purposeful transference of family values, culture, identity and internalized ways of being.

Storytelling in itself should by no means be viewed as a panacea. Like other group techniques, it can help build an important part of a group's capabilities, but only in conjunction with other tools and processes and the effort required to hold storytelling sessions well.

Not all stories create bonds and bring people together. Some stories contain a destructive purpose. Some stories are used to harm and oppress others, such as persuasive storytelling by hate groups online (Lee & Leets, 2002). Storytelling (as well as other forms of discourse) does not always promote peaceful relationships among and within communities. Storytelling may, in fact, intensify social cleavages and mistrust and perpetuate structural violence. The harmful power stories can have is evident in the work of Nelson (1997) who looked at stories that dominant members of a community tell about oppressed others to keep them in their place. Counter-stories can sometimes emerge to combat this oppression.

> ...stories of resistance and insubordination told or enacted by the
>
> oppressed or on their behalf – exert pressure against these stories

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[3] The term socialization is used by sociologists, social psychologists and educationalists to refer to the process of learning one's culture and how to live within it. Primary socialization is the process whereby people make a child learn the attitudes, values, and actions appropriate to individuals as members of a particular culture.

of domination, allowing the oppressed to decline the identities
their oppressors have constructed for them, and so to gain access
to more of the good things their community has to offer (Nelson,
1997, p. xi).

In some stories the disconnection is the connection (Campbell, 1990). See also the work of Felix Calvino (2007) or the controversial novels by Brett Easton-Ellis (1985, 1987, 1991, 1998, 2005) for examples.

2.3.3   Storytelling Creates Connection and Belonging

Bennet (2001) describes storytelling as engaging others in personal experience, sharing our thoughts, feelings and emotions. Storytelling may be reciprocated by the listener, building an exchange of connection (p. 13). This supports comments by Taylor (1996) who sees storytelling as a connector. "We tell stories because we hope to find or create significant connections between things." (p. 1). Taylor also sees storytelling as an important element of connecting with self and others. "I am not an isolated individual desperately searching for an illusory self and plaintively insisting on my needs and rights; rather I am a character in a story with other characters, making choices together that give our lives meaning." (p. 69). Senehi (2002) describes storytelling within peacemaking as a profoundly inclusive process due to its simple accessibility. She argues that accessibility prevents exclusion. Thus, storytelling enhances people's participation in the development of social knowledge and cultural production (p. 144).

O'Halloran (2000) sees the power of storytelling to connect as one of storytelling's greatest assets, moving beyond the teller and the listener. "The power to connect is one of storytelling's most remarkable gifts. Storytelling can inspire us to see our country and us as mosaics of strength, strong and large enough to hold everybody's story." (p. 26). This is echoed by Copland (2004):

When I tell a story, an introduction of myself, I get in touch with
my personal culture. In a sense I lay down a carpet so that others
can come and sit on it. When I hear someone else's story, I pick up
something of their values, their beliefs, and the many wonderful
things about them. (Copland, 2004)

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2.3.4   Storytelling Promotes Openness

Through the storytelling process storytellers present aspects of who they are. Through choosing particular stories to share, they inevitably speak from their own belief system and convictions. In this way, storytellers reveal themselves through their storytelling. In sharing their story, people seek to get beyond the surface. They identify and clarify not only to others, but also to themselves, what is important to them and what they believe.

Openness among audience members is encouraged through the storytelling process – listeners do not seek to pry or to analyze others, but simply are open to listening to their stories and to sharing their learnings. Through a story's ability in allowing an audience to suspend their disbelief, even momentarily, an opening of the mind is created that allows for an opening of the heart. In other words, storytellers and their audience are willing to share their own experiences and are willing to listen to people talk about what is really important to them. Whether actually achieved or not, to seek such openness within a group process reflects a genuine commitment to people.

These are some important functions that storytelling provides. Following is a focused look at how storytelling is used by group facilitators in the facilitation process.

2.4   STORYTELLING IN FACILITATED GROUPS

Storytelling can play an important part in group development, and group facilitators have been learning how to create deep and safe environments for stories to be shared in groups.

2.4.1   Storytelling as a Facilitated Process

Storytelling is a popular approach used by many group facilitators. Several facilitators have recently articulated their knowledge of storytelling in facilitated groups. *The Art of Facilitation* (2007) by Dale Hunter described storytelling as playing an important part in group development, in promoting meaningful relationships, and providing a forum for mutual recognition and awareness (p. 97). Hunter sees the facilitator's role as creating safe and potent environments for stories to be shared. Several storytelling processes are described in her book,

including the use of a *shared talking stick*, *exploring a group's story*, and *using a story structure* to elicit key information from a group such as the group's history and context, a problem description, identifying potential catalysts for change, identifying impacts of change, identifying steps for action, and describing key group learning.

Facilitator and author Christine Hogan's book *Practical Facilitation: A Toolkit of Techniques* (2003) describes storytelling as a charismatic and transformational skill for facilitators and group leaders. She argues that storytelling can bring great impact to processes by motivating people, assisting with memory and learning, and empowering organizational life (pp. 115-117). In another book by Hogan, *Facilitating Empowerment* (2000), she describes in detail how facilitators can use the hero/heroine's journey to enhance the empowerment of others so that they can see their situation in a different way, as an archetypal journey.

Jenkins & Jenkins presents the value of storytelling in the facilitator role in their book *The 9 Disciplines of a Facilitator: Leading Groups by Transforming Yourself* (2006). They see storytelling as one of several art forms that contribute richness to group dialogue, increases understanding amongst a group, and touches upon deeper levels of awareness (p. 71). They articulate stories as having four functions for the leaders of groups: transmitting values, creating and supporting community, solving problems and enabling personal identity.

Facilitator Andrew Rixon has presented several facilitator archetypes developed from the collected stories of group facilitators. The archetypes he describes include: the invisible facilitator, the facilitator as chameleon, the facilitator as dictator and the facilitator as a conductor (Rixon, 2006).

Shawn Callahan (2006) described a storytelling technique for facilitators called anecdote circles, and illustrates how these circles can be set up and conducted in a manner that ensures the collection of rich stories. The paper concludes with solutions to common problems encountered by facilitators.

What each of these facilitator-authors contribute is a range of processes for facilitating groups using storytelling. They present storytelling as useful for facilitating meaningful relationships in groups; as providing a process for mutual recognition and awareness; and for allowing people to express events, issues or

perceived problems in a non-threatening way. Storytelling also allows for the presentation of experience that can suspend opinion and judgment, and this leads to expanding possibility in a wide range of groups of people.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Storytelling has, is, and will continue to be an innate human function for sharing the stories of people's lives. It presents a two-way, written and oral art form that structures and presents people's narratives. Storytelling encourages active imagination in a dynamic and woven play between storyteller, audience and social context. For the facilitators of groups, it provides a range of functions including culture development, creating connections, promoting openness, and has purposeful intentions.

Storytelling is an approach that is readily translatable to the facilitation of online groups. Storytelling requires little learning for the teller, or audience, and it can easily be communicated online in both oral and written forms. Story presents a potential catalyst for online groups struggling with group relationship development.

As yet, storytelling has not been suggested within the facilitation literature as a potential area for investigation for the facilitation of online groups. In the next chapter I present more on the domain of group facilitation and present the wider context of the PhD study, and I also point to some of the key challenges faced by facilitators when working online with groups - challenges for which a storytelling approach potentially offers some relief.

The next chapter introduces the domain of group facilitation. It describes a facilitator's role in groups and presents some of the trends and contemporary issues within the field. These assist in articulating what a facilitator is and in particular the key differences between a group facilitator and a group leader, coach, trainer or consultant who uses facilitative techniques in their work with groups.

Then some of the emergent challenges facilitators are facing when facilitating online groups are offered to establish the link between group facilitation and the world of online groups. These challenges establish the wider

domain of research opportunity that this thesis aims to address – specifically enhancing the effectiveness of online groups.

Then the central area of relationship development from an online facilitation perspective is finally introduced and several related studies are discussed along with what those authors have suggested for future research directions.

Chapter 3

Group Facilitation

The Office – in Canberra, Australia

3.0   FACILITATION

Webster's Dictionary (2002) defines *facilitation* as: to promote, to aid, to make easy, or to simplify. The word comes from Old French *faciliter*, to render facile; from Italian *facilitare*, to make easier; from *facile*, easy; from Latin *facilis,* easy to do.

A group facilitator is a person who makes the work of a group easier, or simpler, or effective, by guiding a group's process to achieving its goals. They are a process guide - someone who makes a process easier or more convenient. Group facilitation is a process in which a person who is acceptable to all members of a group, is substantively neutral, and has no decision-making authority, is chosen to intervene in a group's process to help it meet its agreed purpose (Schwarz, 2002). Decisions are usually made using consensus decision-making methods (Hunter, 2007).

Facilitators make interventions to protect the group process and keep the group on track to fulfilling its purpose. They will promote participation, address group conflict, and make interventions to keep a group working towards their agreed purpose (Schwarz, 2002; Hunter et al. 1994, 1999).

Hunter (2007) describes the facilitator as an aware and conscious listener, and a clear communicator, who understands group dynamics and provides process expertise, usually in the form of questions and suggestions. She/he grows meaningful relationships, participation and collaboration, focuses a group on its purpose, and guides its development through organic cycles, using cooperative processes and collective decision-making. The facilitator is also impartial and does not get involved in the content of the group deliberations (p. 26).

3.0.1   Beliefs Underpinning Group Facilitation

There are differing ways that groups manage their processes and decision-making. Some approaches focus on using hierarchy and autocracy, some on democratic approaches, and others on participative cooperation.

Autocratic		**Democratic**		**Cooperative**
(One person deciding on behalf of all)	⟷	(Majority deciding on behalf of all)	⟷	(Commitment by all to reach agreement)
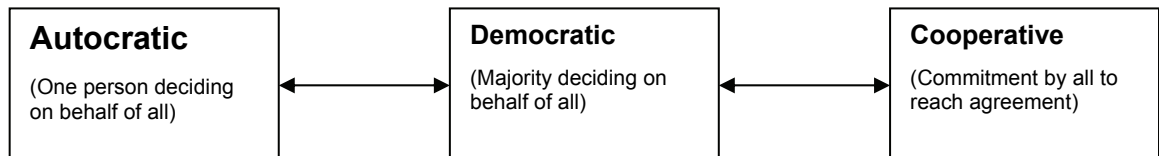
Fig. 3.1 A decision-making continuum

One of the main beliefs underpinning group facilitation is that *full cooperation* between all people is both possible and desirable – values of equality, shared decision-making, equal opportunity, power sharing and personal responsibility are basic to full cooperation (Hunter et al., 1997). Many of the group facilitation skills and techniques in contemporary use have come from processes used and developed in cooperative movements, feminism, community development, peace movements, non-violent movements and indigenous traditions based on ensuring that everyone in a group can fully participate in all the decisions that affect them. Thus group facilitation has a strong background in participative ways of working and a cooperative approach.

Benefits of a cooperative approach when working with groups are that cooperation is useful in creating stronger commitment to group decisions, it taps into the collective consciousness and potential of a group, and provides access to group synergy (Hunter et al., 1997). However, drawbacks of a cooperative approach are that it can often be seen as hard work, can raise conflict around decision points and processes, and it often takes longer to reach agreement.

One of the key functions of a facilitator is to assist the building of relationships between the members of a group. Relationships are the glue that holds a group together as they work towards achieving their purpose. Facilitators will use a range of techniques to build the relationships in a group such as employing ice breakers, energizers, developing a group culture, conflict resolution, shifting levels, balancing power, developing self awareness in the group, interrupting unhelpful behavior, and using dialogue and storytelling. In section 3.5 below, I look at the facilitation of relationship development, but first let's look at some of the contemporary issues in the field of group facilitation.

3.1   CURRENT TRENDS IN THE FACILITATION FIELD

This section introduces the reader to two key areas of change within the field of group facilitation. The term facilitator is being more commonly used and it is a rising in its acceptance across a wide range business, community and public domains. There is also a growing diversity of approaches to facilitation and the training of facilitators within the field. Introducing these here highlights some of the growth and diversity within the field group facilitation.

3.1.1   More Common Use

There is growing use of the facilitation term worldwide in diverse geographical, cultural, political, and community settings; in organizational sectors (business, public, and non-profit); and most recently in international peacemaking. For example, in June 2007, the United Nations released a report recognizing the importance of facilitators in catalyzing a global society. Entitled *Participatory Dialogue: Towards a Stable, Safe and Just Society for All* (Hemmati, 2007), the report establishes that effective participatory dialogue does not happen without a facilitator. Below is a central excerpt of the report's discussion on the responsibility of facilitator:

> Facilitators have a central role to play in dialogue processes. The simplest form of facilitation entails ensuring that all involved have a chance to speak and that the meeting starts and ends on time. Any group member can perform this function, especially if the group agrees to support him or her in this regard. It can be helpful to rotate the responsibility, giving all group members a turn. Participants rapidly come to appreciate what creative challenge facilitation is: it is simple, but not necessarily easy. Everyone is then more respectful when his or her peers assume the role (p. 103).

In another example, former South African president Thabo Mbeki's negotiating and peacemaking role in a recent Zimbabwean's political dispute has been described by many in the media as that of a facilitator rather than that of previously more common terms of negotiator or mediator (see The Age, 2008).
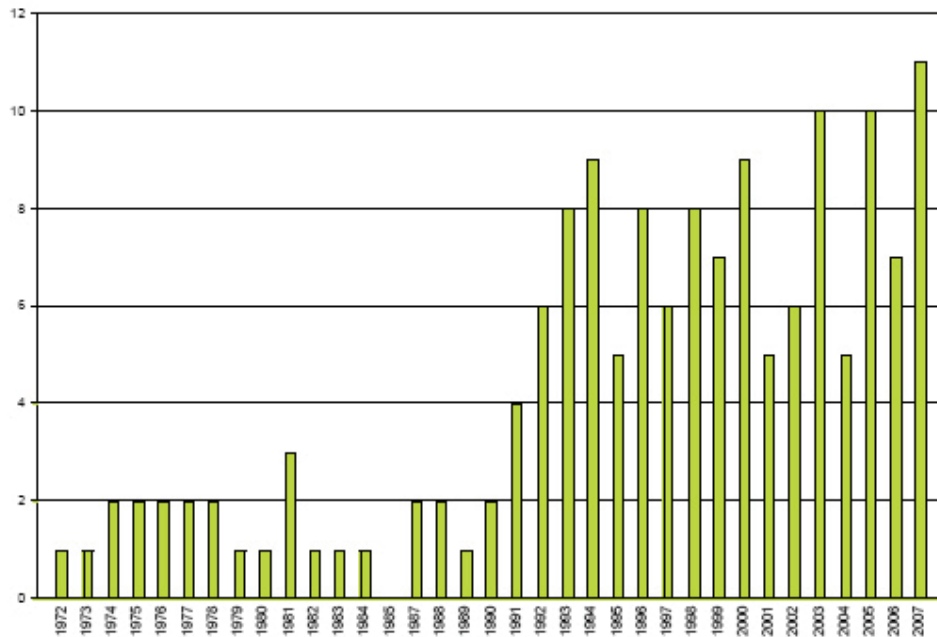
Fig. 3.2 Number of books on group facilitation published per year

Facilitation is also becoming more widely recognized in the workplace. As more work is being done using work groups, more facilitation of those work groups is being sought. And more is being written about group facilitation. Since the 70's there has been an increase in the number of books on group facilitation published each year. At the time of submission, there are currently 1,359 books available from Amazon.com on the topic of group facilitation. This trend is continuing to grow (see Fig. 3.2 below from Schuman, 2007).

3.1.2 More Facilitation Approaches

There is a growing use of a variety of approaches to the facilitation of groups in a variety of settings including: *The Interaction Method* (Doyle & Straus, 1976), the *ToP Method* of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (Spencer, 1989), *Open Space Technology* (Owen, 1992, 1997a, 1997b), *Appreciative Inquiry* (Cooperrider, 1980; Cooperrider & Srivastva,1987; Cooperrider et al., 2000), *Graphic Facilitation* (Sibbet, 2006), *Future Search Conferencing* (Emery & Purser, 1996), The *Skilled Facilitator* approach (Schwarz, 2002), the *Zenergy person-centered approach* (Hunter, 2007) and more.

To assist organizations in looking for competent facilitators, a Certified Professional Facilitator™ accreditation system has recently been introduced by

the IAF. The Amauta Facilitators' Network in Latin America and the Facilitators' Network of Singapore have introduced similar facilitator accreditation programmes.

3.2   CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN FACILITATION

Several issues that are currently engaging the field of group facilitation in lively debate and inquiry are outlined here. There are a range of questions, tensions and dynamics currently facing the field of group facilitation. Some of these contemporary issues are presented and discussed further here.

3.2.1   What is a Facilitator?

The term facilitator can be used quite loosely, to describe a range of roles such as managers, consultants, trainers, teachers and others who use facilitative techniques as part of their work (Hunter & Thorpe, 2005). For example, Osama Bin Laden has been described by some of the media as a facilitator (Whitaker, 2004; Karon, 2001). Subsequently, many group facilitators now no longer put facilitator down as their occupation on any travel documents when travelling internationally due to its association with international terrorism."…organizations now use the word *facilitator* to indicate many roles. Human resource experts, organization development consultants, trainers, coaches, and even managers have sometimes been renamed facilitators (Schwarz, 2002, pp. 7-8). Consultants will describe themselves as a facilitator when using facilitative techniques and practices in their work as an agent of management i.e. their role is to forward the management agenda and are therefore not working as a process expert for the group. Misuse of cooperative processes to manufacture consent (Herman & Chompsky, 1988) and manipulating people to agree to management goals is a criticism that has been directed both at individual facilitators and the profession as a whole (Hunter & Thorpe, 2005).

Drawing on the work of Carl Rogers (1966, 1967, 1969, 1983), many in the education sector also call themselves facilitators or learning facilitators or, when teaching online, as technology facilitators.

The use of the term facilitator in these ways presents confusion for members of the public around the differences between the professional group

facilitator and consultants, trainers or managers who have some facilitation skills but may be unable to lead consensus decision-making in a hierarchical organization (nor is that often their true brief from the client), or lead a group through chaos, or demonstrate emotional competence and resolve conflict in a volatile situation.

People operating in these *facilitative other* roles (Hunter, 2007) these consultants, managers, trainers and coaches will often hold a position of power or influence within the group, they may be involved in the content of group discussion and will actively participate in group decision making. Key differences that mean they are not operating as a facilitator of the group. A facilitator will not be involved in making decisions, they will not be involved in the content of group discussion, or provide advice, or any expertise and they will not be in an organizational position of power within the group or be a member of the group.

Much literature has been written about the nature and role of facilitators in Group Support Systems (GSS) literature (see Anson, Bostrom, & Wynne, 1995; de Vreede, Boonstra & Niederman, 2002; Lopez, Booker, Shkarayeva, Briggs, & Nunamaker, 2002; Nunamaker, Zhao, & Briggs, 2002; de Vreede, Niederman, & Paarlberg, 2001; Mittleman, Briggs & Nunamaker, 2000). In these articles the role described as *facilitator* is more accurately the role of an educator, a manager or a content expert who is using facilitative techniques when leading, managing or training. Again rather than the role purely focused on guiding process other influences of power, content and involvement in decision making are at play.

To assist new facilitators to the profession and those seeking to employ facilitators, Sandor P. Schuman has compiled a list of popular definitions in an article entitled *What is a Group Facilitator?,* published on the IAF website (www.iaf-world.org). This list brought together a collection of twenty popular definitions of a *group facilitator* by a range of authors in the field. This compilation named the many definitions and concepts that are held by those practicing in the field. Rather than clarifying specifically what a facilitator is, or stopping people from misusing the term, the collection of definitions provides a starting point for further discussion. It presents a particularly useful document for novice facilitators, facilitators in training, or those new to the field.

The debate on satisfactorily defining and articulating what a facilitator is and does continues in the profession. Some argue strongly for a simple crisp definition of *facilitator* for the field to adopt. They claim that the profession is currently undefined without a single crisp definition of a facilitator. Others, including myself, argue that the nature of the group facilitation profession is highly diverse and the multiplicity of situations and groups that facilitators work with warrant a similarly inclusive and diverse approach to definition. If the profession is to include the full spectrum of personal, professional and cultural diversity in the field of facilitation then I continue to argue for a collection of definitions as a useful and inclusive approach to defining the facilitation role. The debate continues.

3.2.2   Involvement in Content

While many facilitators see their role as that of a process guide, there is strong debate around the level of involvement in the content of a group's work. Some facilitators see that they have been chosen to facilitate due to their particular expertise in a particular domain of knowledge and they are happy to share their content expertise with a group. Others argue that this involvement in content changes the role from that of facilitator to facilitative other - be that of a facilitative trainer, facilitative leader, facilitative coach, facilitative manager, facilitative consultant, facilitative expert or similar (see Hunter, 2007; Schwarz, 2002 for more).

For me, content involvement by the facilitator is essentially introducing information that is not available from within the group, and, like others, I see this transfer of knowledge as performing a training role. At the least it could be perceived to be in a coaching role of some kind by the group participants. Clients may in fact want a facilitator that can also train in some areas of their key domain or business area. Knowing the language and underlying industry concepts can be really useful when facilitating. However, a content intervention can potentially influence the outcomes of a group; an action that could breach part of clause 6 of the *Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Group Facilitators* (IAF, 2004) which states "We are vigilant to minimize our influence on group outcomes".

Sometimes a group can get stuck as they move towards their goals, and in order to best assist a group to move forward, the facilitator may sometimes be called upon to fulfill other roles such as a coach, a trainer, and a content expert. Approaches to this in-process role-changing vary. Some recommend that the facilitator transparently change roles with the group – taking their facilitator hat off and taking up another role briefly before putting their facilitator hat back on (see Wilkinson, 2004). Schwarz (2002) recommends a substantively neutral stance on content involvement. "The facilitator does not intervene directly in the content of the group's discussion; to do so would require the facilitator to abandon neutrality and reduce the group's responsibility for solving its problems" (p. 6).

This challenge of in-process role-change is further amplified for online facilitators who are often required to spend time training participants in how to use the communication technology – particularly when the group is using a range of different software tools. Participants then become used to the facilitator in training mode with the group and can then struggle to relate to them as a content neutral facilitator.

In all of these approaches above a desire to be *in service* to the group is often held when facilitators face this challenging content dilemma.

3.2.3 Facilitator Neutrality

The facilitator's role is often described as neutral, content-neutral or substantively neutral (Schwarz, 2002). The facilitator competencies, developed in association with the IAF, include one competency called modeling neutrality (Braun et al., 2000). The facilitator does not contribute to content or take part in decision-making (unlike the chairperson of a committee who votes, and also retains a second casting vote) (Hunter, 2007). In the development of the international association's Code of Ethics, the word impartial was agreed upon. However, this term can be seen as problematic (Hunter & Thorpe, 2005). Some like to describe themselves as taking all sides which articulates the main intention that facilitators want to evoke when working with a group.

3.2.4 Balancing Participation with Results

There are often high expectations of facilitators when they are brought in to facilitate, particularly with the often short time-frames that accompany those expectations. Co-operative group processes can take time, particularly if there is a poor culture and disruptive behaviors that are sabotaging or blocking a group from reaching its purpose.

Some facilitators will emphasize the importance of enabling full participation and creating good working relationships within a group, believing that this will strengthen trust and understanding. With strong healthy relationships, decisions are made more easily and results tend to flow. Others will consider that relationship-building in groups is time-wasting and not a high priority. Such facilitators will apply a process, or move on the agenda to concentrate a group on issues, on making decisions and obtaining measurable results (Hunter & Thorpe, 2005). This means that some facilitators will tightly focus a group and use processes that are aimed at gaining results quickly. This can, at times, be to the detriment of effective working relationships – particularly if a group is focused on something larger than meeting the next quarter's projected figures.

3.2.5 The Place of a Facilitator's Values

Some facilitators see their role as value laden and socially focused. To work in co-operative and participative ways with groups can be seen as working from a values-laden or political dimension. Essentially participation is empowerment and empowerment is politics. This aspect of facilitation would be considered as the critical dimension in the *Dimensions of Facilitator Education* (Thomas, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2006) as articulated by Glyn Thomas in his research looking at the training and development of group facilitators. Dale Hunter also articulates this aspect well in her chapter on *Sustainable Co-operative Processes* in the IAF's *Creating a Culture of Collaboration* (2006). She challenges facilitators to consider the wider implications of their work in bringing about change within organizations and impacts on the wider social ecology that humans live in.

Some facilitators see their work as making a difference in the world and hold strong value in the ability of cooperative processes to enable people to be

more co-operative and peaceful with one another. Others see the facilitation profession as not something you do - i.e., a job; but as something you are - i.e., all the time. Thus some facilitators tend to be living the role; they *become* facilitators rather than *do* facilitation.

This developing conversation has led to a rise in articulating a term for the work - *social change facilitator* – a facilitator who works co-operatively with groups to bring about a particular change within a community, society, system or the world. They often lead a range of multi-stakeholder processes in areas of resource conflict, change management, or are a part of one of the stakeholder communities or organizations, so they share a desire for a consensual outcome that benefits all parties from the process. Rather than being impartial, content neutral or un-attached to the outcomes, they are highly motivated in bringing about a particular change in society.

3.2.6 Who is the Client?

While some such as Hunter (2007) and Hogan (2003) argue that it is *the group* that the facilitator is accountable to, others such as Butcher (Marvin & Butcher, 2002) argue that the contracting client - i.e. the person or manager who authorizes the paying of the bill - is the client. Schwarz (2002) identifies two clients in the Skilled Facilitator approach; the *contracting client* and *the group*. Who the facilitator ultimately is working for is a key thing. If facilitators are working primarily for the interests of those who pay them, then they might be seen as little more than facilitative mercenaries who are available to manufacture consent from groups for management needs. They utilize their sophisticated facilitative processes to achieve management outcomes rather than those of the group.

Conversely, if facilitators see that they are ultimately accountable to the group then they take the group's interests above those who pay them. Thus they are in a servant leadership role (Greanleaf, 2003) for the group. Viewing this issue from a power perspective can also be useful. Group facilitators can be seen as providing a power balancing function when coming into an organization, community or system – coming in from outside the system, they interrupt the behaviors that oppress others and empower those who haven't had an opportunity to speak up. As an external person, they are not employed within the system, nor

take part in its political life; they do not have anything at stake, nor are involved in the decision making. They can be seen as somewhat impartial in these regards. These aspects of impartiality are eroded if the facilitator does not see the group as the client and thus they become another role for the group – that of a trainer, advice giver, consultant etc. in the guise of a group facilitator.

3.2.7 Consensus Decision Making

Many facilitators see that their role is one that implicitly uses consensus decision making with groups. Others believe that democratic voting and autocratic options should also be used, and at times are preferred. There are also continuing differences on what consensus is, with some insisting that consensus is about all participants agreeing and others seeing consensus as a group committing to reach agreement by agreed means (which could include democratic and sub-group decision making options).

3.3 EMERGENT DYNAMICS IN ONLINE FACILITATION

In addition to the above issues, the following areas are emerging specific to the profession of facilitation when working in online groups.

3.3.1 Disembodiment

Many aspects of face-to-face communication such as visual cues, body language, and tone of voice are not typically available on-line (Boetcher et al. 1999). Without rich feedback, the facilitation of an on-line group can be challenging, as participants do not always respond, they may have trouble communicating, and the boundaries of the group are often unclear.

3.3.2 Full Participation

A major concern for online facilitators is gaining and maintaining participation from group members. Although the importance of matching processes, methods, and tools to the needs and skills of the group can be somewhat addressed, there are limited mechanisms to find out why some participants are *mute* or *invisible* (White, 2001). Often not all participants can participate in real-time – some are unavailable, while others do not have sufficient technology available. System

crashes and differing hardware and system standards can all further impact on a participant's ability to communicate with others. Choosing one software tool may benefit the participation of some members of a group and not others. For example, choosing to facilitate a process via an IRC chat will benefit those participants who are comfortable with fast paced typing; others who are more audio focused will find the mode challenging and participate less.

3.3.3   Diversity and Complexity

Cultural differences tend to be more significant online, and they are not always obvious due to the lack of emotional cues and feedback. Team members and facilitators will interpret the group language through their own cultural understanding and perspective. Sometimes different participants will use the same words, but they will have a range of understandings.

Considering this aspect there is one identifiable difference in the perception of place that increases these cultural differences. When a group meets face-to-face they step into a common container – often a place that has been set aside for the meeting, such as a meeting room or venue. Participants leave the environment and context of their home or workplace and step into this place specially reserved for that meeting or conference. In other words, they leave their own personal space and move into a group meeting space. This meeting space acts in some ways to hold the diversity of the group for a short period while the meeting occurs. Often this is called a container, but it is more a shared space in which the group meets. This space has its own culture – a culture of meeting that includes its own rituals and protocols.

Contrast this with an online group situation where participants do not leave their own space and are interacting with others who also haven't left their own space – wherever that may be. Without a shared group space that acts to hold the diversity of the group, participants interact more fully from their own context and culture – a context and culture that they may expect others to be operating from. This heightens the cultural, gender and generational differences. In effect, the meeting space can become the size of the planet rather than just the room or special space a group may be meeting in.

3.3.4 Privacy

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed online because written material cannot be secured 100% once it is posted on Internet-enabled software. Also, different countries have differing legal requirements for public disclosure, including disclosure of online material. For example some countries governmental policies require full transparency of meetings involving public officials, and in some instances meetings are required to be made available to public participation.

Another example comes from my recent work with the State Services Commission in developing a guide to New Zealand's E-government policy (see State Services Commission, 2008). Five key privacy concerns were identified: they included the potential that participants would make harmful challenges to the government organization and to its leaders, there would be personal attacks on public servants, and the group's space would be used for negative feedback or to push a personal agenda.

3.4 FACILITATION AND RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This section discusses the central area of relationship development, firstly reviewing relationship development in face-to-face groups, then from an online facilitation perspective. Several related studies are discussed along with what those authors have suggested as areas for future research directions.

3.4.1 Facilitating Relationship Development in Face-to-face Groups

The field of group facilitation has dedicated significant efforts in building up knowledge of and skills in the development of relationships between participants in face-to-face groups. This relationship development between group members as a vital part of the success of facilitator's work is a given. The vitality and diversity in the facilitation field is reflected in the range of models developed from practice and are drawn from a range of different fields. Several of these are outlined below.

Bens (2005) focused on difficult situations presenting specific tools and techniques to work with the challenging interpersonal dynamics that in these situations. Drawing from research with over five hundred people leading groups, Wilkinson (2004) developed some specific techniques for facilitators to produce

consistent, repeatable results with groups. His book *The Secrets of Facilitation: The S.M.A.R.T. Guide to Getting Results with Groups* includes ninety-plus group processes. Harrington-MacKin (1993) has written a team building tool kit with tips, tactics and rules for effective workplace teams. Simmerman's (1993) book has a compendium of four other toolkits containing information on facilitation skills and how to generate participative involvement. *The Art of Facilitation* (Hunter et al., 1994) has, as a feature, a toolkit of facilitative designs and processes. *Co-operacy: A New way of Being at Work*, also by Hunter et al. (1997) includes sixty-one exercises, processes and tools for the development of peer and group relationships. The ongoing work of facilitators and training of facilitators for the past forty years is testament to the efficacy and attractiveness of the precision and dedication of tools to assist the process of developing relationships in a wide range of settings.

These processes and techniques rely strongly on the ability for both the facilitator and group members to read many aspects of group interaction (such as body language, posture, tone of voice, warm-up, energy levels, noticing what's missing in the group, and so forth) and apply interventions as needed. In online groups many of these aspects of interaction, vital to the facilitator, are no longer available or as easy to gauge. This means that proven face-to-face processes and techniques are either less effective or simply cannot be applied in an online group (Nunamaker, Zhao, & Briggs, 2002).

Organizational Communications literature may convincingly argue that strong relationships do not necessary translate into improved group effectiveness. For example, strong relationships are considered present in situations where groupthink (Janis, 1972, 1982) occurs in highly homogenous teams. From a facilitation perspective, groupthink and similar dynamics would not be a sign of strong relationships being present within a group. Indicators of groupthink such as a lack of robust critique, ignored concerns and cheap closure (see Hunter, 2007, p. 111), would demonstrate to a group facilitator that the group would be in an early part of its development. For example, in the M. Scott Peck model of community development (1987), a group with this dynamic would be considered to be in the early stage of pseudo community where participants are being nice to each other and avoiding any kind of conflict. In Katzenbach & Smith's model of high

performing teams (1993), the group may be considered a pseudo team where members are actually slowed down compared to the contribution they would make without the team overhead. "In pseudo-teams, the sum of the whole is less than the potential of the individual parts." (p. 91).

Identifying and interrupting unhelpful behavior, like groupthink, may be a key reason for bringing in a facilitator to help a group reach its objectives. The facilitator would alert the group to any tendency to become autocratic and unconscious, and encourage participants to become conscious and aware. For example, a facilitator may actively encourage members of the group to become the devils advocate, or ask participants to name what is going on in the group, or question member silence, or ask for input from others, or ask for what's missing in the group (see Hunter, 2007, pp. 82-84). The facilitator may also directly challenge the group about being in "groupthink mode" (p. 123).

3.4.2 The Facilitation of Relationship Development Online

What facilitators are experiencing online is very different to what they encounter face-to-face. Online relationship development is a key area that facilitators are struggling to be effective in. Facilitators are finding it both challenging to develop an online group's relationships and in maintaining it once a group does get going. They are finding poor relationship development translates into a group that is less resilient to common group dynamics (such as poor participation, group conflict, difficult to get to agreement, misinterpretations, and so forth). As online groups tend to be less homogenous their cultural dynamics are heightened online.

> Team members and facilitators will interpret the group's language through their own cultural understanding and perspective. Sometimes different participants will use the same words, but they will have a range of understandings within the group (Thorpe, 2007).

Thus the link between group effectiveness and member relationships is an important area of study in online facilitation. It has been found that stronger online relationships do lead to improved group effectiveness. Warkentin & Beranek (1999) found that training virtual team members in interpersonal communication dynamics led to improved perceptions of the interaction process

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over time, specifically with regard to trust, commitment, and frank expression between team members. Lau et al. (2000) found professional teams (ranked high in task focus and low in social dimension), extremely vulnerable to breakdown due to a lack of social glue (p. 49) and were unable to recover from a lapse in trust due to an absence of strong social bonding (p. 51). Lau et al. (2000) suggests effective communication is the key to successful online teams, and one of the keys to effective communication is how well team members are able to build and maintain their personal relationships. Kimball (2000, P.4) states "the purpose of building and maintaining relationships in teams is to ensure that individuals develop at least enough harmony to be able to get their group work done". Warkentin et al. (1997) found that the strength of relational links was positively associated with the effectiveness of information exchange (p. 986). Walther & Burgoon (1992) found strong relational links lead to enhanced creativity, motivation, increased morale, better decisions and fewer process losses.

Warkentin et al. (1997) conducted a comparison study of face-to-face and online groups and found that face-to-face groups exchanged more unique information in one meeting than asynchronous groups did in three weeks of online communication. His research showed that it was much easier to facilitate relationship development activities in a face-to-face context than in a strictly online one (Warkentin et al. 1997). "Face-to-face groups have a higher degree of cohesion, are more satisfied with decision processes and are more satisfied with group outcomes" (p. 986). Chidambaram (1996) found that because online groups communicate inter-personal information less effectively, and the exchange of information is more difficult, they are more task orientated and exchange less social-emotional information, slowing the development of relational links. McGrath (1990) suggested that in the absence of an initial face-to-face meeting, other avenues for developing strong relationships are advised to ensure the cohesiveness and effectiveness of group interaction. Recent work by Saunders & Ahuja (2006) makes some interesting points about the focus of group attention on relationship development linked to the lifespan of a group. They recommend groups focus on tasks for short lived groups, and focusing on personal interaction and development for longer lived groups.

3.4.3 Some Future Directions

Facilitators Pauleen & Yoong (2001) have called for more to be offered in the form of systematic, empirical research to guide online group facilitators in this area, particularly with group facilitators themselves as the main focus of the study (p. 190). Research by other facilitators has presented some specific areas and perspectives for further study. For example, Hunter (2003) identified the need for new protocols and processes to help with relationship development in online team work and to address aspects of online disembodiment (p. 209); Mittleman, Briggs, & Nunamaker (2000) have suggested the development of online meeting guidelines; Rangarajan & Rohrbaugh (2003) have suggested comparing participation rates across differing forms of computer-mediated communication systems and introducing online co-facilitation; and Whitworth & McQueen (2003) have suggested further investigation into a voting before discussing method on group cohesion and agreement. Along with these comes growth and excitement in the use of 3-D environments, web 2.0 features and new developing areas are constantly emerging.

While storytelling is an approach that may translate readily to the facilitation of an online group, it has not as yet been put forward, or suggested as something to try. It presents several key reasons why it may translate readily to an online group context. Firstly storytelling does not require anyone to train in the approach. Training in this approach has been done as children developed into adults. Children develop the capacity to share story through their primary socialization as a child. There wouldn't be much controversy over how the inquiry group might go about undertaking its storytelling – perhaps a few guidelines and some scoping may need to be established. The inquiry group might define storytelling as it is taken up and people can relate to their own idea of storytelling within the inquiry. It is likely that storytelling can be communicated online in both oral and written forms. As story is particularly useful in the facilitation of relationship development, it presents itself as a potential catalyst for online groups struggling with group relationship development and it presents something worth further investigation.

The next chapter presents the research perspective and method that underpins this PhD research project. It introduces the reader to the relatively new

Participative Paradigm of research. A novel and fresh research approach that brings in the participants as co-researchers – involved in all aspects of the research design and application. It is also an approach that brings the primary researcher fully into the research process as a subjective participant rather than that of an external objective observer. The research design is presented and the chronological research process the inquiry group followed is detailed.

Chapter 4

Method

A Postcard from Boracay Island, Second Life™

4.0   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the theoretical perspective of the research approach used in this PhD research study. Section 4.2 introduces the reader to the participative research paradigm. The Cooperative inquiry method is then described in section 4.3. Section 4.4 details how the PhD research study flowed from its initial design as a Cooperative Inquiry, and details what actually happened from a method perspective. The data analysis process is presented in section 4.5 and some reflections on the method are offered in section 4.6.

4.0.1   The Research Question

The research question investigated in the PhD study was: *How is storytelling beneficial in building relationships in a facilitated online group?*

4.0.2   Phenomenological Method

Phenomenological methodologies provide ways to investigate human experience through the perceptions of participants. The phenomenological method of Cooperative Inquiry (Reason, 1988, 1994; Heron, 1996, 1998; Reason & Bradbury, 2001), within a participative approach, was chosen as a useful approach and starting point for a collective investigation of how storytelling may be beneficial in a facilitated online group. Co-operative Inquiry presented an appropriate choice for a study designed to investigate group interaction online due to its flexibility of process and multiple-perspective approach. Details of the Co-operative Inquiry method are presented in more detail below in section 4.2; but first the guiding frameworks, or paradigm, that underpins the Cooperative Inquiry method are introduced.

While the guiding conceptual frameworks for the study are somewhat rooted in constructivism it is a participative paradigm of research that provides the central standing point for this piece of research. For a wider description of the differing research paradigms of positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, constructivism and their relation to the participative paradigm, see Appendix A.

Constructivist views influence this PhD research study in two ways. In a research context, constructivism conveys an assumption that people interpret

experiences and construct reality based on their perceptions of the world. In a facilitation context, constructivism conveys an assumption that groups learn through the process of interpreting experience and constructing meaning.

The participative paradigm provides the central standing place for this PhD research study through its grounding in facilitative ways of working and alignment with facilitator values of equality, shared decision-making, equal opportunity, power sharing and individual responsibility (Hunter & Thorpe, 2005). These are articulated by Heron & Reason (1997) as enabling balance within and between people, of co-operation and of autonomy.

4.1   THE PARTICIPATIVE PARADIGM

In *Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research* (1994), Guba & Lincoln have made a useful contribution to articulating and differentiating competing paradigms of research inquiry. They identified and described positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism as the major paradigms of research.

In 1997, John Heron and Peter Reason extended Guba and Lincoln's framework to articulate a *Participatory Paradigm*. They argued that the constructivist views described by Guba and Lincoln tend to be deficient in any acknowledgment of experiential knowing; that is, knowing by acquaintance, by meeting, and by felt participation in the presence of what is there (Heron & Reason, 1997). Heron and Reason also introduced the aspect of *Axiology* as a defining characteristic of an inquiry paradigm, alongside ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

The axiological question asks what is intrinsically valuable in human life, in particular what sort of knowledge, if any, is intrinsically valuable (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. x). The participatory paradigm answers this axiological question in terms of human flourishing "conceived as an end in itself, where such flourishing is construed as an enabling balance within and between people of hierarchy, co-operation and autonomy" (p. 277).

Heron and Reason see the question of axiology as a necessary complement to balance, and make whole, the concern with truth exhibited by the first three aspects of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Heron and Reason argue that the axiological question can also be put in terms of the ultimate purpose of

human inquiry (p. 285). Since any ultimate purpose is an end-in-itself and intrinsically valuable, it asks *for what purposes do we co-create reality?* From the participatory research perspective, the answer to this is put quite simply by Fals-Borda (1996): to change the world. "The participative worldview necessarily leads to a reflective-action orientation, a praxis grounded in our being in the world." (p. x). The axiological question thus grounds all research within the participative paradigm to ultimately be in service to humankind.

4.1.1 Participative Research

The participative paradigm can further be described as an umbrella term for a number of forms of research such as Action Science (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Schön, 1983; Argyris et al., 1985), Action Inquiry (Torbert, 1991), Participatory Action Research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991), some forms of feminist inquiry (Mies, 1993; Olesen, 1994), Emancipatory Action Research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), Fourth Generation Evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), Intervention Research (Fryer & Feather, 1994), Action Research as Democratic Dialogue (Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996). Participatory research's primary concern is developing practical knowing in pursuit of worthwhile human purposes for a group (Heron & Reason, 1997).

> It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice,
> in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to
> issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the
> flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason
> & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1)

Participatory research establishes a dynamic and ongoing inquiry, moving away from the singular role of objective observers into a collaborative relationship with, and as, subjects. As subjects, or *co-researchers* as they are called, both researcher and subjects share in the control and design of the study (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Researchers and co-researchers seek to also utilize the *post-conceptual mind* (Heron, 1996), which is learning to think about their own thinking, and evaluating the paradigms supporting their knowledge production and experience of the phenomenon in question. Reflection of that type calls for a

continual reassessment by all involved to ensure an equal and agreed upon sharing of power and control of the study.

Compared to other research approaches, the participative approach would appear at a highly participative and unstructured end of the spectrum. Figure 4.1 below illustrates one example of the method in relation to the focus of other types of research.

Structured	Research with fixed or limited choice responses collected and interpreted.	Observations
Semi-structured	Open-ended research pursued in varied sequence based on collected responses. Some involvement with participants.	Partially Involved
Unstructured	Co-constructed research investigating shared narratives with co-researchers	Participative

Fig. 4.1 A spectrum of research approaches

4.1.2 The Participative Worldview

The participative paradigm holds at its essence the basic right of people to have a say in forms of decision making, in every social context, which affect them in any way. This includes the right to be involved in the knowledge creation processes.

In the participative worldview, the primary purpose of human inquiry is practical. "…our inquiry is our action in the service of human flourishing. Our knowing of the world is consummated as our action in the world, and participatory research is thus essentially transformative" (Heron, 1996).

4.1.3 Epistemology

The epistemology of the participative paradigm is based on participative knowing. Participative knowing is described by Heron as "participation through empathic communion with the mode of awareness or affectivity of a being; and

participation in sensory ways and extrasensory ways, its form of appearing" (Heron, 1996).

There are five premises that underpin the epistemology of the participative research paradigm. The first premise of participative knowing is that knowers can only be knowers when known by others. Knowing is mutual awakening, mutual participative awareness (Buber, 1937; Habermas, 1978; Wilber, 1995).

The second premise is a distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge. To participate in anything explicitly is to participate in everything tacitly. The whole is thus implicit in the part. See Govinda (1960), Stcherbatsky (1962), Teilhard de Chardin (1961), and Skolimowski (1985).

The third premise is the distinction between participative knowing and non-participative knowing in which the knower conceptually splits subject from object. It is a distinction between immediate or intuitive knowing and conceptual knowing (Heron, 1996, pp. 14-15).

The fourth premise is the idea of stages of integration. The stages range from the child in its undifferentiated participative world where it is over-participative and under-individuated, through ego development where the person is over-individuated and under participative, to the transpersonal state where there is a mature integration on individuating and participative ways of being (Barfield, 1957; Kremner, 1992; Reason, 1994; Wilber, 1995; Heron, 1996).

The fifth premise is holism of inquiry, in that the researcher's conclusions and applications are grounded in their own participative knowing (Dewey, 1938; Lewin, 1952; Kolb, 1984).

4.1.4   Ontology

Ontology refers to the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A participatory approach is based on an objective-subjective ontology, incorporating co-researchers' cooperative methodology and a broad range of ways of knowing.

Social scientists adopt one of four main ontological approaches: *realism* (the idea that facts are out there just waiting to be discovered), *empiricism* (the idea that people can observe the world and evaluate those observations in relation to facts), *positivism* (which focuses on the observations themselves, attentive

more to claims about facts than to facts themselves), and *post-modernism* (which holds that facts are fluid and elusive, so researchers should focus only on their observational claims). In contrast to positivist research, and many qualitative approaches that value subjectivity, participative research endorses a subjective-objective stance.

A subjective-objective ontology means that there is "underneath our literate abstraction, a deeply participatory relation to things and to the earth, a felt reciprocity" (Abram, 1996, p. 124). As Heron & Reason (1997) explain, this encounter is transactional and interactive. "To touch, see, or hear something or someone does not tell us either about our self all on its own or about a being out there all on its own. It tells us about a being in a state of interrelation and co-presence with us. Our subjectivity feels the participation of what is there and is illuminated by it", (p. 279). Therefore participative research is interested in investigating people's understandings and meanings as they experience them in the world.

4.1.5   Axiological Theory

The political wing of the participative paradigm is based on axiological theory about the intuitive value of human flourishing; in individual and social life in terms of enabling balance of autonomy, co-operation and hierarchy; and about participative decision making in every social context as a means to this end (Heron, 1996).

The first axiological premise is the interdependence between thought and action. Thought supports and validates action. Valid action pre-supposes a reflective grasp of standards and rules of practice. Action consummates and fulfils thought, and completes it through manifestation. Action in the form of shaping the world is the end point of thought. Thought, however, is not the end point of action. So action includes thought but not the other way around, and thought is for the action that consummates it (MacMurray, 1957).

The second premise is that of universal political rights. This is an extension of the widely accepted human right (see the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948) of any person to participate in the political membership of their community, and to participate in the framing and working of

political institutions. The extension of this human right to a universal right is that it goes further to include every social situation of decision-making as political.

A third premise is that action manifests personal values, or the suppression of them. Every choice or every decision to do something stems from a personal preference or a pseudo-preference when suppressed or unidentified. Every preference involves an explicit or implicit vision of a way of life, or some aspect of it. Action as the expression of preference manifests personal values. Parsons (1957) suggests that action includes "an agent with goals and alternate means who is in partial control of a situation, who is governed by values for those goals, by norms for the means and beliefs about the situation".

The fourth premise is that autonomous preference precedes authentic cooperative choice. In order for an individual to co-operate, they must be autonomous in their choice to do so. In all group work there is a creative tension between autonomy and co-operation. Individuals will have different requirements for privacy and disclosure depending on their personalities and cultural conditioning. Individuals will be at different places on their life journeys towards full autonomy and self-expression.

The fifth premise is about the research subject's political rights. Every human subject participating in a piece of social science research has a right to participate actively, directly or through representation, in decisions about the research design. This is so each subject can have the opportunity to identify, own, and manifest his or her personal values in and through the design, so they can therefore be present as a fully human person in the study, and they can therefore avoid being misrepresented by the researcher's implicit value system (Heron, 1996).

4.1.6   Why the Participative Paradigm?

Other methods were considered as potentially suitable for investigating the research question of *how is storytelling beneficial in building relationships in a facilitated online group?* These included Grounded Theory, Hermeneutics and Narrative Inquiry.

Grounded Theory is a systematic qualitative research methodology in the social sciences emphasizing generation of theory from data in the process of

conducting research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Rather than beginning by researching and developing a hypothesis, the first step in a Grounded Theory is data collection. From the data collected, the key points are marked with a series of codes, which are extracted from the text. The codes are grouped into similar concepts in order to make them more workable. From these concepts, categories are formed, which are the basis for the creation of a theory, or a reverse engineered hypothesis.

As a general method Grounded Theory showed promise due to the focus on using a wide range of data which would be capable of reflecting the multiple perspectives present in online groups. However, the formulaic nature of grounded theory and the focus on reporting a set of probability statements about the relationship between concepts, or conceptual hypotheses was considered potentially unhelpful for the intended outcomes study. Essentially the research study's focus was not on establishing *if* storytelling is effective but on the *how*.

Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation theory. Traditionally hermeneutics refers to the study of the interpretation of written texts, especially texts in the areas of literature, religion and law. In sociology, hermeneutics means the interpretation and understanding of social events by analyzing their meanings to the human participants and their culture. It is a method that encompasses not only issues involving the written text, but everything in the interpretative process. This includes verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as prior aspects that affect communication, such as presuppositions, pre-understandings, the meaning and philosophy of language, and semiotics (Ferguson, Wright, & Packer, 1988).

The weakness seen in this approach was the strong focus on interpreting text and communication and the articulation of the world through the words used to describe it. Developing internal mental models of the minds of subjects, and finding ways in which their understandings of words is similar or different from each other was also not seen as helpful for group facilitation practice. A focus was desired on the *impact* that could be created through the use of storytelling rather than on what mental models underpin the interpretation of messages.

Narrative Inquiry emerged as a discipline within the broader field of Knowledge Management (see Nonaka, 1991). It is an approach to understanding

behavior (markets, employees, citizens) through large collections of anecdotal material. Narrative Inquiry is a fairly recent movement in social science research and has been employed as a tool for analysis in the fields of cognitive science, organizational studies, knowledge theory, and education studies.

Again the weakness seen in this inquiry method was the strong focus on interpreting text and communication. The method focuses on texts as data sources: stories, autobiography, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, photos and other artifacts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Neither Knowledge Management or artifact analysis interpretation were considered a useful area of focus for developing knowledge that would inform the creation of group process or interventions in online facilitated groups.

The method of Cooperative Inquiry within a participative approach was ultimately chosen as a useful starting point for co-exploring story in online relationship development with an online group. Cooperative Inquiry produces data that has a strong grounding in participant experience and multiple perspectives of phenomena. Cooperative Inquiry also aligned strongly with recognized facilitator values of equality, shared decision-making, equal opportunity, power sharing and individual responsibility (Hunter & Thorpe, 2005).

Finally, choosing a Cooperative Inquiry method illustrated the principle that "research questions that explore an online phenomenon are strengthened through the use of a method of research that closely mirrors the natural setting under investigation" (Geiser, 2002). Since the inquiry group were studying group interaction and group processes online, a collaborative group method seemed highly appropriate.

The motivation for a participative approach detailed in Table 4.1 below presents some of the key areas where the participative approach matched some of the intentions of the PhD inquiry group. The table provides an illustration of the key areas that were of most value when selecting a participative research approach. Many of these areas aligned well with a shared desire for a method and approach that would closely represent a facilitated online group setting.

Table 4.1 Motivation for a participative approach

Motivation for a Participative Approach	
Methodological aspects	**Motivation for choice**
Political participation in collaborative action inquiry	Provides for equality between participants and the researcher, promotes shared decision-making, power sharing and individual responsibility
	Provides for the group's conscious agreement to the process, participation in the design and analysis.
	Allows for co-researchers to work together through collaborative and cooperative interaction and using consensus decision making.
Primacy of the practical	A focus on group autonomy to make decisions and be involved in the practical aspects of the research.
	Allows for a focus on investigating the practical aspects of group interaction and dynamics.
	Provides opportunities for all participants to examine and share their thoughts and feelings.
Use of language grounded in shared experiential context	All relevant stakeholders can be represented and involved.
	The group becomes involved in the sense-making of data and collectively agreeing on the language and definitions used within the inquiry.

4.2 COOPERATIVE INQUIRY

Based within the participative paradigm, the Cooperative Inquiry method (Heron, 1996, 1998; Reason, 1988, 1994; Reason & Bradbury, 2001) was developed as a research method for the investigation of human experience for two or more people.

The Cooperative Inquiry method is a form of research where participants are viewed as co-researchers who participate in decision making at all stages of the project. Cooperative inquiry involves two or more people researching their own experience of something in alternating cycles of reflection and action. Cooperative inquiry is traditionally a face-to-face collaborative method that allows for group synergies to develop. This method adds to the likelihood of new knowledge emerging through the cyclic, reflective process of the inquiry.

Heron (1996) considers that orthodox research methods are inadequate for a science of persons, because they undermine the self-determination of their subjects. He proposes that it is possible to conceive of a research approach where all those involved are self-directed, and in a position to contribute both to creative thinking and to the research and associated action. Cooperative inquiry was developed to provide such a framework for integrating both personal autonomy and group collaboration.

Cooperative inquiry rests on two participatory principles: epistemic participation and political participation. The first means that any propositional knowledge that is the outcome of the research is grounded by the researcher's own experiential knowledge. The second means that research subjects have a basic human right to participate fully in designing the research that intends to gather knowledge about them. It follows from the first principle that the researchers are also the subjects; and from the second principle that the subjects are also the researchers. The co-researchers are also the co-subjects. The research is done by people with each other, not by researchers on other people, with other people, or about them (Heron, 1996).

In mainline qualitative research, done within the framework of constructivism, neither of these two principles applies. Such research, using multiple methodologies, is about other people studied in their own social setting and understood in terms of the meanings those people themselves bring to their situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 2). The researchers are not also subjects. The researchers ground their propositional findings not on their own experiential knowing but on that of the researched subjects, as reflected in the subjects' dialogue with the researchers. The researchers' own experiential knowing as occasional participant observations within the subjects' culture, tend to be secondary and subordinate.

4.2.1 Other Uses of the Cooperative Inquiry Method

Cooperative inquiry is traditionally a face-to-face collaborative research method. However, the method has been used successfully as an inquiry method for facilitators researching their practice. For example, Dale (2001) led an online cooperative inquiry, bringing together academics and public policy practitioners

to investigate ecological system function, structure and processes. Hunter (2003) combined an online dialogue with a questionnaire and co-operative inquiry to investigate sustainable co-operative processes in organizations. Others have used the co-operative inquiry method successfully in other areas of facilitation (see Hunter et al., 1999; Heron, 1999; Dale, 2001; Baldwin, 2002; Hunter, 2003).

4.2.2 Limitations of the Co-operative Inquiry Method

Research from a relational perspective has its limitations. For example, dynamically objective approaches are much harder to generalize, requiring new standards of validity, reliability, and trustworthiness (Earlandson et al. 1993, Miles and Huberman 1994).

4.2.2.1 Generalizibility

Cooperative inquiry values experiential, practical, and the more traditional propositional forms of knowing (Reason, 1998). Methods, such as Co-operative Inquiry with dynamically objective approaches are much harder to generalize, requiring unique standards to establish the rigor of process and outcomes. The validity of the research is defined by the context of co-researchers, as opposed to research with substantively independent or objective researchers. These methods purposively substitute a focus on producing knowledge that is generalizable for the generation of usable knowledge or the facilitation of a better life (Heron, 1996; Schwandt, 1996).

A contrasting positivist methodology that produced highly generalizable knowledge about storytelling in online groups, such as a survey of practitioners, may collect some interesting data. However, such data is unlikely to be of little use to practicing facilitators seeking assistance with relationship development online due to the inherently complex and psychologically challenging assumptions of interdependence and inter-subjectivity between members of an online group. The interdependence assumption in particular, requires a more complex understanding of causality and the assumption of inter-subjectivity requires a strong sense of personal identity (see Kegan, 1994).

4.2.2.2 Validity

Research findings are valid if they are sound or well-grounded, and have been reached by a rational method - one that offers a reasoned way of grounding them (heron, 1996, p. 159). Within the application of the co-operative inquiry method explicit attention is placed on reviewing adherence to a set of validity procedures (see Table 4.2 below). Adherence to these procedures during a study assists in articulating the validity of the inquiry and its findings.

Table 4.2 Co-operative Inquiry validity procedures

Validity Procedures
Research cycling If the research topic (and its parts) are taken through several cycles of reflection and action, then reflective forms of knowing progressively refine each other.
Divergence and convergence Within the action phases co-inquirers can diverge and converge on the topic and its parts enabling all forms of knowing to articulate the research topic and its parts more thoroughly.
Reflection and action Since reflection and experience refine each other, it is important to keep a balance between them, so that there is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience.
Aspects of reflection Create a balance between presentational (expressive or artistic) and propositional (verbal/ intellectual) ways of making sense. Within intellectual, create a balance between: describing, evaluating descriptions, building theory and planning application.
Challenging uncritical subjectivity A procedure authorizing any inquirer at any time to adopt formally the role of devil's advocate in order to question the group as to whether uncritical subjectivity is occurring.
Chaos and order Allowing for the interdependence of chaos and order, of nescience and knowing. It is an attitude which tolerates and undergoes, without premature closure, inquiry phases which are confused and disorientated, ambiguous and uncertain, conflicted and inharmonious, generally lost and groping. These phases tend in their own good time to convert into new levels of order. But since there is no guarantee to do so, they are risky and edgy.
Managing projections If needed the group adopts some regular method for surfacing and processing repressed templates of past emotional trauma, which may project out, distorting thought, perception and action, within the inquiry.
Authentic collaboration One aspect is that group members internalize the inquiry method and make it their own so that they become on a peer footing with the initiating researchers. The other is that each group member is fully and authentically given the opportunity to engage in each action phase and in each reflection; on a peer basis with every other group member.

The purpose of the validity procedures is to free the various forms of knowing involved in the inquiry process from distortion (a lack of discriminating

awareness).The validity procedures were planned for and applied, particularly during reflection and review phases.

4.2.2.3 Reliability

Research that can be replicated by others with similar results establishes the reliability of its findings, their consistency or stability. Reliability is not specifically mentioned in John Heron's (1996) book Co-operative inquiry: research into the human condition. This is a short-fall and presents a true opportunity for an improvement on the method's description. While participative research methods such as Co-operative Inquiry do not set out to represent an external reality that can be replicated and generalized. It can be argued that attempts to show reliability and validity are neither desirable nor useful. Nether the less there are criteria by which the reliability of such research may be judged. I believe it is important for participative research and methods such as Co-operative Inquiry to address the problem of convincing critics of its scientific nature. For example Munhall (1994) present nine criteria of resonancy, reasonableness, representativeness, recognizability, raised consciousness, readability, relevance and revelations and responsibility against which phenomenological research might be judged. I suggest that a similarly mindful set of criteria be developed for the Co-operative Inquiry method.

4.2.2.4 Trustworthiness

Asserting rigor in a Co-operative Inquiry study is a process for demonstrating the truthfulness of the findings and is enhanced through authentic actions and decisions rather than presentation of idealized versions of events. The study group's inquiry process required attention to consensus procedures and accurate reporting of sessions to ensure that a level of trustworthiness could be demonstrated. All participants were encouraged to participate in the decisions the group made. Reports written up by participants were circulated and amended to reflect an accurate recount of events. Written sub-project planning documentation was also circulated for shared input before action phases were taken. Authentic collaborative approaches to decisions were maintained. Participants who could not participate during real-time sessions were invited to read the reports and contribute to the discussion via the group's email conversation.

4.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section, the initial design of the research project is outlined. Following this is a description of the journey that the research group actually followed.

Between September 2005 and December 2006, a group of eighteen group facilitators, in seven countries across ten time zones, joined together online to delve into the potential that story might have in developing online relationships. Participants were invited from the membership of IAF facilitator networks. Members of the inquiry group were interested in the efficacy and group impact of story, and wanted to pursue the facilitative possibilities of international, cross-cultural storytelling online. The study wasn't a search for a particular thing, or an answer, and it was not pre-emptive, but rather that the process itself would be a journey that would be interesting and offer freedom for individuals to be involved in their own way.

Some outcomes from the research work were however likely at the outset. Outcomes such as informing the training and development of online group facilitators, chapters in published books, development of processes that could be included in the IAF Methods Database[4], articles in journal and newsletter publications and potentially some clarification around articulating both the role of an online facilitator and the other roles they perform in the service of online groups.

Although the inquiry group began the research project with the Cooperative inquiry method in mind, the project was conceived as a generative thing. The approach was cooperative in that members would all participate in both the research and the decision-making. Those who joined were strongly drawn to the possibility of tapping into the generative capacities of other facilitators. The inquiry group didn't want to be isolated researchers. There was a desire for the research undertaken to be infused with passion and there was a strong eagerness to tap into the collective wisdom of the group.

One of the goals of the research project was to develop some practical processes and techniques that could be useful in building and maintaining relationships in online groups. The research group also wanted to investigate

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[4] www.iaf-methods.org

other areas of online facilitation including areas of group introductions, generating inspiration, leadership, the power of story, group sharing, motivation, best practice, and the use of metaphor.

4.3.1 Initial Plans

There were several main phases of planning, action and reflection initially planned for the study.

Table 4.3 Initial research plan

Research Phase	Process
Contact July 2005 –Aug 2005	Contact and informal discussion Invitation and ethics compliance
Initial Phase Sept 2005 – Dec 2005	Introduction – participants, software tools Sharing expectations Aligning on our group purpose and developing a group culture
Phase 1 - First reflection phase on topic Jan 2006- Mar 2006	Choice of the focus or topic and type of inquiry Launching statement of the inquiry Plan of action for the first action phase to explore Choice of recording tools during first action phase
Phase 2 – First action phase on topic Mar 2006	Exploring in experience and action aspects of the inquiry Applying an integrated range of inquiry skills Keeping records of the experiential data generated
Phase 3 – Full immersion in Phase 2 April 2006	Break through into new awareness Lose their way Transcend the inquiry format
Phase 4 – Second reflection phase May 2006	Share data from phase 3 Review and modify topic in light of making sense of data about the explored aspect Choose a plan for the next action phase to explore the same or different aspect of the inquiry topic Review the method for recording data used in the first action phase and amend it for use in the second.
Subsequent Phases of planning, action and reflection will: Jul-Dec 2006	Continue the inquiry in cyclic fashion Involve from five to eight full cycles of reflection-action-reflection with varying patterns of divergence and convergence, over several aspects of the inquiry topic. Include a variety of intentional procedures for enhancing the validity of the process Ending with a major reflection phase for pulling the threads together, clarifying outcomes and deciding on dissemination

These followed the Co-operative Inquiry method and are outlined in Table 4.3 above. This table presents a priori plan of action for the research project. It was created for the research proposal submitted to the Auckland University of Technology Doctoral Advisory committee as part of the application for confirmation of candidature in an Auckland University of Technology doctoral programme.

An initial phase of about 6 weeks was considered enough for co-researchers to get to know each other, get familiar with the online software, align on a group purpose and culture and investigate some areas of interest within the area of the research question. The inquiry group planned a review of the pilot stage to follow with several deeper cycles of planning, action and reflection. Finally, pulling the threads of the inquiry together, clarifying outcomes and deciding on how the inquiry group would share what has been learnt would end the initiating stage.

The plan was a useful starting point for the inquiry group. However, several challenges were experienced in putting the initial plan into action. See Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Planning challenges faced

Planning Challenges Faced
Much more time was needed to co-coordinate eighteen co-researchers across ten time zones.
Alignment on the culture was not fully achieved as some participants could not join in the processes for its development. Those participants who missed the process felt that they had less ownership of those decisions made and were less inclined to put them into action
Some online software tools failed and were difficult to use
Planning, action and reflection stages emerged in a less formal and unstructured way.

These are very common challenges experienced with many virtual teams (see Cramton & Webber 2005; Alavi & Tiwana, 2002). The challenges the research group faced are detailed further in this chapter as I describe the process the research group followed.

4.4   EMERGENT, GENERATIVE AND GROUP-CENTERED INQUIRY

This section details how the Ph.D. research study flowed from its initial design as a Cooperative Inquiry, and details what actually happened chronologically from a method perspective. The process for inviting co-researchers to join the study is presented and then the inquiry group's journey through the different inquiries are outlined.

4.4.1   The Co-researchers

An invitation email was sent to facilitator networks via the Regional Representatives of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF) (see

Appendix B). Facilitators who responded were invited to review the research information and plan posted on the initiating researcher's student web pages. Facilitators then submitted their postal address via the webpage. They were posted an information pack that included a cover letter (Appendix C), information sheet (Appendix D), consent form (Appendix E) and an article by Peter Reason: *Integrating Action and Reflection Through Cooperative Inquiry* (1999). The article is a layperson's guide written specifically for introducing Cooperative Inquiry to a new group.

Fig. 4.2 Map of the online storytelling research group

The online storytelling research group was formed with eighteen group facilitators including the initiating researcher: two in Singapore, one in Adelaide, Australia, two in Canberra, Australia, one in Sydney, Australia, two in Auckland, New Zealand, one in Taupo, New Zealand, one in Wellington, New Zealand, one in Chandler, Arizona, United States of America, one in Chicago, Illinois, United States of America, one in Allentown, Pennsylvania, United States of America, one in Houston, Texas, United States of America, one in Westminster, South Carolina, United States of America, one in Boxborough, Massachusetts, United States of America, one in Loughborough, Midlands, United Kingdom and one in Groningen, The Netherlands.

4.4.2 The Research Journey

Detailed below is a presentation of the inquiry group's journey through the different inquiries.

4.4.2.1 The pilot phase

A six-week plan was created by the initiating researcher for the pilot phase of the research project. See table 4.5 below. There were key several steps identified within the Co-operative Inquiry method that were to be to be fulfilled within the initiating stages of the research process. These steps, such as re-discussing co-researchers interested in researching the topic, developing a clear and shared group purpose and group culture, and discussion about the Co-operative Inquiry method, are designed to allow co-researchers to bring themselves fully into the inquiry as a group of peers.

Table 4.5 Proposed plan for the pilot phase at 1 Nov 2005

Proposed Plan for Pilot Phase at 1 Nov 2005
Week 1 - 24 Oct - 30 Oct – Introductions
Introductions and initial warm up to our topic Online software the inquiry group might use Organize times and a tool for our first live meeting
Week 2 - 31 Oct - 6 Nov - Initial live meeting
Real-time introductions What the inquiry group are interested in researching Group purpose and culture Cooperative inquiry discussion and questions Discuss themes of interest
Week 3 - 7 Nov - 13 Nov - Planning Phase
Develop plan of action for each area to be studied Agree on appropriate method for recording
Week 4 & 5 - 14 Nov - 27 Nov – Action Phase
Experience and action Recording data Apply inquiry validation
Week 6 - 28 Nov - 4 Dec - Reflection Phase
Make sense of the data collected Review and potentially modify our topic
Week 7 - 5 Dec - 11 Dec – Review
After Action Review Review the methods used for recording data Initial plan for further inquiry in 2006

When shared with the group for input, the proposed plan was extended to seven weeks as several participants pointed out that the holiday of Thanksgiving would fall in the middle and that most of the North Americans, about one third of the

inquiry group, would likely be absent or unavailable over part of the proposed period due to their travelling to be with family at that time of year.

4.4.2.2 Data collection

At times data was collected in a range of ways. At times different members of the research group took initiative and leadership around the collection and processing of research data and information. Copies of data collected were forwarded to the initiating researcher who maintained master copies of the group's research data.

Detailed sources of data recording were taken of the activities of real-time sessions often using video capture of the initiating researcher's screen and at times by the software tools themselves. Group data was stored offline, including transcripts, audio and video data that were transferred to CD-ROM or DVD-ROM. Other data such as audio and video tapes, print outs of co-researcher profiles, transcripts, images and diagrams were stored in a locked filing cabinet on the Auckland University of Technology's premises.

A report was written up for the inquiry group after each session and at times transcripts of these sessions were shared via email and uploaded to the initiating researcher's student Ph.D. web pages or to the research project's website (see Appendices L-Y).

4.4.2.3 Introductions

From 24 October, participants began to introduce themselves to each other by email. They described their interest in the research topic, and shared their expectations of the research project. Co-researchers were invited to talk about what was drawing them to the topic of "How story and narrative can be used to facilitate relationship development in online groups".

A Skype™ conference was scheduled for 3 November to discuss the research question, getting to know each other, and to experience one of the audio software tools that the inquiry group would be using. This session could be described as challenging at best. The meeting was organized so that participants would meet in two small groups of four to five participants. Participants would swap groups part way through the meeting. Skype was an ineffective tool to support the inquiry purpose. The tool often crashed, and there was some echoing, and voice delays.

4.4.2.4 Developing the group culture

Because the inquiry group had found the Skype™ conferencing technology so challenging, and knowing that the group culture was so important, a decision was made to use telephone conferencing to develop the inquiry group culture. It was believed that having a stable tool to connect and communicate through was of paramount importance.

A teleconference was scheduled for 2 December. After a story introduction, discussion was held on what online facilitation meant for each participant. There were variations and discussion was held to clarify some of the differences between training and facilitation. The group then moved into discussing some norms, and a group culture statement was developed for the inquiry group (see Table 4.6 below).

Table 4.6 Group culture statement

Group Culture Statement
Confidentiality
Each of us to bring any areas of confidentiality to the awareness of the wider group as and when they occur. Can use the Chatham House[9] rule as needed.
Care of data collected
Any data created or collected in the wider group processes can be accessed and used by anyone in the group. If an individual or sub-group creates or collects data in an individual or sub-group process and someone from outside that sub-group wants to use it then they will need to negotiate directly with the individual or sub-group members involved.
Spelling doesn't count
To assist speed when some are writing and remove a burden particularly with numbers.
Dealing with difficulties
If an issue comes up that people believe is going to prevent us or seriously delay us getting to our goals that we as a group are willing to stop at that point and discuss how it shall be handled. That we hold an intent to be transparent about what we have observed. Issues can be raised with the wider group via the medium we are using or contacting Stephen as a first point of call.

During the meeting the group decided collectively how to define what was a story and what types of stories would be useful for sharing and hearing. A decision was made to investigate stories about group facilitation and stories about groups, family, teaching, and leadership that could in some way inform online group facilitation practice.

It was established that the group tasks could be more easily achieved using telephone conferencing than using Skype™ or any of the other asynchronous

tools of email or the forum, so the inquiry group decided to continue to use telephone conferencing further and to combine its usefulness with other online software.

4.4.2.5 Cycles of storytelling and reflection

Six further real-time meetings were held using teleconferencing, Yahoo!™ Chat, Skype™, and a mixed meeting using both teleconferencing and the WebIQ™ web conferencing system. Stories were told, reflected upon, and a participation survey was conducted. Meeting reports were written up for each of these meetings and shared with those in the group who could not attend the various meetings.

Several observations helped to inform online facilitation practice and facilitator resources that were created including techniques for using story online. Comparisons between the use of story across the range of online software tools studied also led to the development of some online storytelling processes. These are presented in sections 6.4.

4.4.2.6 Participation survey

A concern was raised about the participation level during a storytelling meeting using Yahoo! Messenger on 10 December 2006 that only two co-researchers had joined. The small group decided to develop and send out a survey to find out where the others were at in regards to their participation. The participation survey was sent to the group on 12 December (see Appendix G).

The survey was a useful tool for finding out what other commitments participants had and several ideas were collected for improving the group's participation. These suggestions included having peer discussions, more notice of upcoming events, a common website, to remain open & curious about felt experiences, and there were also calls for more structure in the inquiry process.

As it was getting close to Christmas (17 December 2006) the review of the pilot phase was postponed until the New Year.

Just before Christmas a Yahoo! e-group (onlinestory@yahoogroups.com) and the iMeet forum system (http://imeet.com.au/login.toy) were setup to collect co-researcher's thoughts and reflections over the holiday season.

4.4.2.7   Some technical support for participation

One participant made known that her low confidence with using the technical tools was impacting on her ability to participate in the research. This experience was discussed and together with the initiating researcher a plan was developed for several one-on-one coaching sessions to trial the online software out with her.

4.4.2.8   Midwest Facilitators Network conference workshop

On 17 January 2006, the initiating researcher presented a 90 minute session on the initial learnings and impressions from the storytelling research project at the Midwest Facilitators Network conference in Chicago, Illinois. The session was presented to the workshop participants in Chicago via the internet via a Skype™ video conference. One co-researcher was at the conference session in-person, and a second co-researcher, joined in from Arizona. They both spoke about their experiences in the research group and helped answer some of the questions from the audience.

Fig. 4.3 Midwest Facilitators Network conference workshop via Skype™

Despite some delay in the audio, it was a much more stable session than had been experienced earlier during the pilot phase of the research project. Session participants had a real curiosity in seeing how the research project might inform their own practice. (See Appendix F for the MFN Conference Report).

4.4.2.9   After Action Review of the pilot phase

A review of the pilot phase began on 2 March 2006 through a series of 3 telephone conferences supported by a web conferencing tool WebIQ™

(webiq.net). Use of the WebIQ™ system was kindly granted free of charge by Raymond E. Bejarano of WebIQ™ (Vice President – Operations).

As a process for evaluation, an After Action Review (AAR) had been suggested and agreed to by the group. The AAR is a post-event evaluation process used to collect the positive aspects of an experience and areas for further improvement. The U.S. Army first developed the AAR as a learning method in the mid-1970s to facilitate learning from combat training exercises. The AAR has since become standard Army procedure in both training and operations, providing an avenue for feedback, a means of promoting evaluation, and a mechanism for improving unit cohesion. (Garvin, 2000; Gurteen, 2000; Shinseki & Hesselbein, 2004) Many organizations have adopted the AAR as procedure; in many cases, adapting it to their own needs; and it is used in diverse environments including government, medical, industrial, retail, service, and not-for-profit organizations. (Garvin, 2000; Graham, 2001; Parry & Darling, 2001; Sexton & McConnan, 2003; Shinseki & Hesselbein, 2004).

Nine out of the eighteen co-researchers participated in at least one of the three sessions and several others contributed to the resulting report via email. Reflections were collected on the different events that had occurred within the project so far.

Identified next steps in the review were to create a website with a web blog and photos for the group which would include: the project vision, the summaries and files, what had been completed so far in the inquiry, pictures and profiles of group members, member's time zones, what was coming up, when, and any relevant telephone numbers to ring with web links as needed.

4.4.2.10 1st sub-project - Inspiring Online Participation

While developing a structured series of themes to provide some focus for the research, a smaller, focused topic emerged for one of the co-researchers to investigate in more detail. This co-researcher's practice involves the training of secondary (high school) teachers via a combination of residential and distance learning with the Christchurch College of Education (in New Zealand). She wanted to facilitate a professional practice session via a chat session to see if a combined process approach of storytelling and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider

& Srivastva, 1987) could inspire further online participation in the sharing of professional practice learnings.

A proposed process was sent to the co-research group for comments and input into the design of the session (see Appendix H for the initiating email to trainee teachers). On 24 March 2006, a storytelling chat session around professional practice was facilitated with the group of nine third-year trainee teachers. The trainee teachers had all volunteered to participate.

The online chat session took 90 minutes and the feedback from participants was very positive about the experience. A follow-up questionnaire was sent to the trainee participants (see Appendix I). A semi-structured interview with the chat session facilitator was conducted by the initiating researcher and a summary was presented to the research group for input (see Appendix J).

4.4.2.11 Onlinestory.net

One of the identified next steps coming from the After Action Review was to develop a website for the research group.

The intention was to create something online with a web blog and photos for the group. Other options considered were to create a Yahoo! 360, wiki or our own online story website. A clear aim for this space was for it to become a home-base for our project group and that would contain the project vision, the summaries, files on what had been completed so far, pictures and profiles of group members, member's time zones, and what was coming up. Another important aim was for the space to also to list when group events were happening and any relevant telephone numbers to ring or web links to follow.

The creation of a Yahoo! 360 webpage was attempted by the initiating researcher (http://360.yahoo.com/profile-b0y5QTUib6PCRmZfJfl3ULxgZtGa). During the webpage's creation, the Yahoo! 360 system was found to be unsuitable for the group's needs. Yahoo! 360 is essentially a social networking tool similar in nature to Bebo or Facebook. There wasn't the same control and flexibility that could be achieved by simply creating the website ourselves.
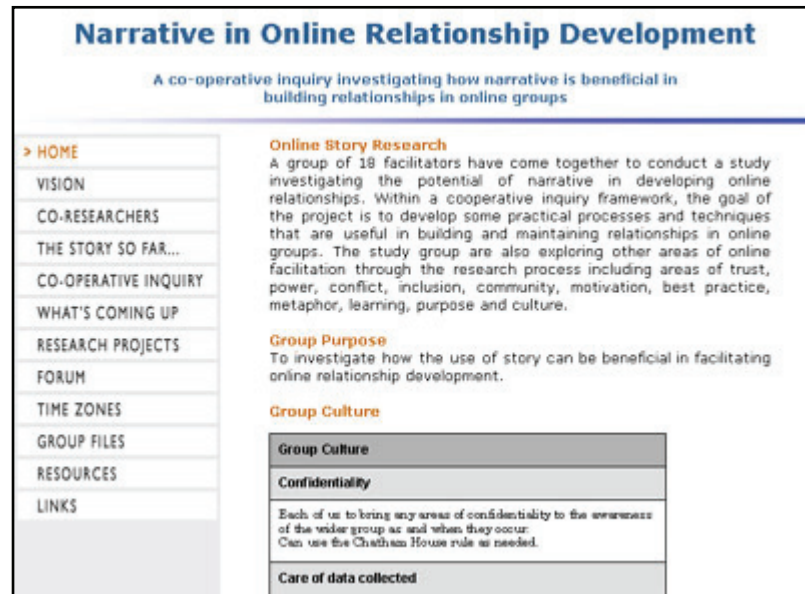
Fig. 4.4 Home page of Onlinestory.net

The creation of the www.onlinestory.net website began on 9 April 2006, and over the following weeks began to take shape. Feedback was sought from the group and incorporated into the website.

4.4.3 Phase 1 - Reflection on Topics and Developing a Plan

There was a range of areas that the group was interested in investigating; areas such as engaging and inspiring participation; the social functions of stories; belongingness; best practice; motivation; creating community and building trust (see Table 4.7 below).

On 18 April 2006 a planning phase was begun, this time by using the Yahoo group email so that all could have input and participate. Co-researchers were sent a list of areas that might be researched in-depth. These areas had been identified by individuals and the group throughout the pilot phase and identified in the After Action Review. See Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 Areas identified for investigation

Areas suggested for researching story online
Creating community
Feelings of connection, integration and belongingness
Engaging and inspiring participation (Some but more enabling participation rather than inspiring)
Belongingness
Building trust
Relationship development
Strengthening teams
Best practice of online facilitation and eliciting stories
Facilitation effectiveness
Engaging people
Reaching out to a faceless audience
Online leadership
Focusing group energy and attention
Social functions of stories
The power of storytelling
Sharing our story vs. sharing our information

These areas of interest were orientated around a vision of facilitators using storytelling in online facilitation. Some possible ways of investigating these areas of interest also began to emerge (see Figure 4.5 below).

Fig. 4.5 Research and projects

4.4.3.1 The research plan

The research plan illustrated in Table 4.8 below was developed based on the areas that the co-researchers had identified as key of interest around the research topic. Some of these areas of interest did not have a particular research project or means of investigation identified; however, they were still included in the plan as it was thought at the time that a project or a means of investigation would possibly emerge through the process of investigating some of the other areas that could be moved forward on.

Table 4.8 The research plan

Areas	Research Projects	Who and When
1. Community		
1.1 Creating community	<u>Defining Community</u> I think we first need to develop a working definition of 'Creating community' before we can research it. Any ideas? We could collect our own definitions or favorite ones we like to use in our various contexts.	All - May-Nov Conversation started on the forum. Create a login and contribute to the discussion.
	<u>Participant Introductions in Workshops</u> People introduce themselves different ways. Through storytelling. Through formal introduction. Through formal introduction then story telling. Finally through story telling then formal introduction. H will present a reflection of the effects on developing community in groups.	<Name> May-June.
1.2 Feelings of connection, integration and belongingness	?	
1.3 Engaging and inspiring participation	<u>Online Chat Session</u> Facilitated story session with 3rd year trainee teachers using Appreciative Inquiry approach. Questionnaire to collect feedback.	<Name>&<Name>. June-July.
1.4 Building trust	<u>Trust Mapping</u> Creating and exploring our socio-metric trust maps	<Name> & <Name> to explore socio-metric maps?
1.5 Relationship development	<u>Defining Relationship Development</u> Again I think we need to develop a working a definition of 'relationship development' before we can research it.	All - May-Nov Conversation started on the forum. Create a login and contribute to the discussion.
1.6 Strengthening teams	?	
2. Facilitator Effectiveness		
2.1 Best practice	<u>Expert Interviews</u> Take the members of our group as experts and conduct semi-structured interviews. <u>Internet Dialogue</u> Each create our own list of the top 10 best practice, then dialogue using a forum or email – see what elements are common and what elements are contentious.	All - May-July.
2.2 Facilitation effectiveness		
2.5 Online leadership	Leadership Stories Project	<Name> to interview <Name> &

	Interviews with M & S about their series of facilitated leadership stories via video conference. Questionnaire feedback from participants.	<Name> when they become available.
2.6 Focusing group energy and attention	?	
3. Techniques		
3.1 Social functions of stories	Defining Social Functions One view of social functions (Buhrmester & Prager 1995) includes self-clarification, self-expression, social validation, relationship development, and social control. Discussion on understanding of social functions?	All - May-Nov Conversation started on the forum. Create a login and contribute to the discussion.
3.2 The power of storytelling	Powerful Stories Review Collect a group of stories and collectively review for themes. Organize the themes into a model of power in story. Test the model for its fit Institute of Cultural Affairs Contemplative Exercises Explore the Spirit Conversations of Water, Fire, Wind and Earth.	<Name> to collect submitted powerful stories. Review for themes. <Name>
3.3 Sharing our story vs. sharing our information	Comparison test Between public personal information with our initial email introductions to this group.	<Name> to collect links to profiles and email introductions by 23rd. <Name> to prep 5-6 question tests. All to respond to online questionnaire late May

4.4.4 Phase 2 - First Action Phase on Topic

During June and July of 2006 several projects were initiated exploring: the power of story, participant introductions in workshops, sharing stories versus sharing information, and leadership stories via video conference.

4.4.4.1 A slow down in the research project

During the period between August - November 2006 some of the momentum of the overall project slowed. Through this period the initiating researcher's time and energy diverted into a range of other commitments (leading an online facilitation skills training programme, authoring a chapter on *Facilitation Online* and other editing for a revised edition of *The Art of Facilitation* (2007) by Dale Hunter, associate editing work on the *IAF Journal of Group Facilitation*, part-time teaching at the Auckland University of Technology, and a normal working week).

This slow down highlighted a key impact that the initiating researcher was having on maintaining the momentum of the overall project. Co-researchers also had their own commitments and facilitation work. A breakdown in the group culture occurred as the initiating researcher did not effectively identify his

growing commitments. The group also did not identify or discuss how the plan may have been falling short of the group's goals and take action to intervene.

4.4.4.2   Storytelling via web blog

The use of humor in facilitating online groups has long been considered a challenging area and it was thought that investigating the sharing of some funny stories using a blog might be a useful approach, as audience members might post feedback through commenting and build on a story. To investigate this further, the initiating researcher developed a sub-project investigating the use of storytelling using a blog as part of the online facilitation training programme that he was co-leading. The blog was set up using Blogger™ at blogger.com to explore the topics of dialogue and storytelling. The blog was facilitated over four weeks (between 19 September and 21 October, 2006) with eleven participants.

Participants were asked to submit a funny facilitation fable based on an experience with their groups. As participant stories flowed and comments were posted, themes began to emerge from the group sharing. The stories chosen and told held insights for the participants (see 5.2.9). Participants found the blog tool very familiar and easier to use than the forum tool they had been learning previously. The blog was also considered a fun tool for people to use. Other participants however, found storytelling on the blog challenging. It was difficult for some to just produce a story. Although the blog facilitator opened with an example story, a clearer context for the storytelling may have been useful and more options to tell stories other than fun ones.

4.4.4.3   Leadership stories via video conferencing

A sub-project was initiated by two of the co-researchers from Global Learning in Canberra to explore stories about leadership using video conferencing. The goal was to build on a face-to-face four-day leadership programme with twenty middle managers in a large Australian government agency that delivered services all around Australia.

The stories that were told during these sessions were related to experiences of dealing with a challenge in their leadership environment and their own personal development. These stories often involved a third party, such as a mentor, manager or colleague who had a significant impact on the storyteller.

This third party had demonstrated leadership and particular values in their behavior that had inspired the storyteller. Some of these stories also had a living or traveling in another culture theme to them.

Participants offered feedback that they were fully absorbed and engaged in the stories and strongly valued the lessons learned by the storytellers. The sessions triggered more openness, trust and personal disclosure. Positive outcomes identified from the storytelling session included the building of personal trust, active open listening, and learning that peoples' perceptions can be different.

4.4.4.4 Comparing email introductions with public web profiles

A comparison test was created to explore the impact of two different types of introductions used within the inquiry group at the beginning of the project. The first type of introduction was the email introductions which included a story that participants had made to introduce themselves to each other in the group. The second type of introduction was participant's own web biographies or professional profiles. These web biographies either came from a participant's own website or they were uploaded to the co-researchers page of the project website.

The purpose of the comparison test was to establish what might be useful for the introductions stage of online groups. Participants were asked to review and compare eleven different profiles each containing a public profile and a corresponding email introduction to the inquiry group. Members were asked to respond to eight questions via the research project website. Thirty-eight responses were received in total. While not intended to be statistically significant, the test was aimed at being indicative and to present an early reflection of the group. The inquiry group wanted to see if people felt closer, could see more personal aspects, and identify more points of connection in a story introduction when compared to the same person's web biography. The inquiry group also wanted to know what participants thought had contributed to their sense or level of trust, and the impact that the inclusion of a photo may have had. Overall, the comparison test showed that the story introductions were more popular than the web profiles.

4.4.4.5 Storytelling in Second Life™

A storytelling sub-project was also conducted in Second Life™ with twelve participants in an *Online Facilitation Skills training* programme that the initiating researcher was leading. Each person joining Second Life creates their own cartoon-like avatar that represents them in the 3-D world. Participants travel around the various environments, and interact with other people from around the world. The facilitated storytelling session was held in a virtual camp fire on Boracay Island, and explored participant's journeys to becoming a group facilitator. Discussion on the experience followed on the programme's discussion forum. Participants found the experience emotionally engaging and many wanted to explore the environment further.

4.4.5 Final Reflection Phase

In November and December 2006, the inquiry group moved into the final reflection phase and reviewed all the data collected throughout the data collection phase. It was hoped that the research group would tie together the findings from each of the sub-projects and inquiries undertaken. However co-researchers preferred to give feedback via email on summary findings presented in the sub-projects and by the initiating researcher.

Some small discussion was held on how the findings were to be presented. A proposal for a chapter submission to the *Handbook of Research on Computer Supported Communication* was accepted. Short articles were called for in the *Communique* newsletter of one of the co-researchers. Submissions to the IAF's *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal* and IAF conference workshops were also suggested and put forward.

There were also reflections collected on the overall research process. These reflections were captured through email. The data collection phase of the research project was then completed on 30 January 2007.

4.4.6 Post Data-collection Reflection Phase

The reflections and analysis presented later in this thesis in *Chapter 6 Discussion and Implications* were developed many months following the completion of the co-operative inquiry with co-researchers. These were put together by the initiating

researcher. This is a key distinction and presents discussion that is drawn from the group data and findings collected.

4.5   DATA ANALYSIS

Traditionally, data analysis has come under the purview of research specialists, who emphasize a split between professionals who create knowledge and the participants and organizations that benefit from it (Barley et al. 1988). In the Co-operative Inquiry method the split between researcher and participant is brought together in a participative perspective of research by including participants in all phases of design and analysis of a study.

A range of data was collected across the nine software tools investigated, including session reports written up and circulated after a storytelling session, session transcripts, interviews with session facilitators, a survey, post session evaluations, and an After Action Review report. In addition, forum and email discussions amongst participants were also used as data. Whilst some (Newell, 1992; Carroll et al., 2002) question the value of such evidence, others (Garbett & McCormack 2002, Rolfe 2005a, 2005b, 2006) have made a robust defense, arguing that generation of contextual empirical evidence of practice through reflection may be stronger than that derived from non-naturalistic experimental designs.

Whilst the principles of co-researching were maintained as far as was practicable, perhaps inevitably, the initiating researcher was expected by many co-researchers to assume the lead role in many aspects of the inquiry, including data analysis. One guard against data analysis being dominated by any one person within the group was to ensure that the processes of planning, action and reflection were accessible and meaningful to those involved. Participants were given opportunities to contribute iterations and review the reports and transcripts between group sessions. Interpretations, emerging themes and reflections were shared via email and provided opportunities for co-researchers to challenge and feedback. Through document iteration, working collectively, and the After Action Review process, the group was able to develop a general consensus on identified themes.

Grouped by the nine different online software tools investigated, Table 4.9 below presents a summary of investigations, their corresponding data analysis, and the validity procedures undertaken.

Table 4.9 Investigation summaries

Investigation Summary	
Email and web profiles	
Inquiry	To investigate the impact of storytelling in the two kinds of introductions used during the inquiry group's formation.
Instrument	A comparison survey of email introductions that included story and co-researchers' static web profiles.
Process	Planning Discussion held via Skype and email to create a set of questions and an online vehicle for conducting the comparison survey. Action Participants invited to take the survey over a 10-day period. Reflection Initiating researcher collated results and circulated via email for input. Charts were developed to represent results, and Initiating researcher identified themes.
Data collected	Survey data
Data Analysis	Survey data collated, shared and amended based on feedback.
Validity procedures	Research cycling – The investigation itself was a cycle of reflection on actions that the group had already taken. As a reflective form of knowing, it progressively refined topic focus of following investigations via other software tools. Divergence and convergence - Divergence and convergence was present in investigation results. Balance of reflection and action - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience. Aspects of reflection – Although not intended to be statistical, more could have been done during data analysis on evaluating descriptions, and building theory. Challenging uncritical subjectivity – Opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate formally offered during design and results circulation. Chaos and order – not expressly evident Managing projections - The investigation itself was inquiring into forms of co-researcher identity – no clear distortions or evidence of past emotional trauma surfacing, Authentic collaboration - Members were given full opportunity to participate in planning, action and reflection phases; on a peer basis with other group members.
Skype™ conferencing	
Inquiry	Observations about storytelling in a real-time experience with audio. The use of a burning issue question to elicit stories.
Instrument	Participant observation written into post event report and theme identification
Process	Planning Discussion held via email to hold a Skype™ audio session to discuss the research project and conduct a storytelling session. Action Participants invited to participate in Skype sessions, share

	stories, reflect on session and identify importance. Reflection Participants reflected at the completion of sessions and some shared reflections by subsequent email. Initiating researcher authored draft meeting report and circulated via email for input from participants. Amended report circulated to inquiry group.
Data collected	Meeting reports After Action Review Initiating researcher 's screen capture of session
Data Analysis	Themes identified in the meeting reports were matched with feedback identified in the After Action Review. Initiating researcher integrated pertinent comments to reflect identified themes.
Validity procedures	Research cycling – Challenges with 1st session reduced reliance on Skype in further sessions – used only with small 3-4 participant sessions. Divergence and convergence - Strong convergence was present in the identified themes. Balance of reflection and action - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience. Aspects of reflection – Post event reflections and review present. More data analysis could have been done to evaluate descriptions, themes and theory building. Challenging uncritical subjectivity – Opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate formally offered during After Action Review and during report circulation. Chaos and order – Highly evident due to technical challenges and disruptions. *Skype wrestling* term was articulated to evidence the impact of challenges faced by all. Authentic collaboration - Members were given full opportunity to participate in planning, action and reflection phases; on a peer basis with other group members.
Telephone conferencing	
Inquiry	How to define what was a story and what types of stories the inquiry group were interested in sharing and hearing. The power of sharing worst facilitation experiences.
Instrument	Participant observation written into post event report and theme identification Session transcript
Process	Planning Suggestion and discussion held via email to hold a telephone conference to discuss the research project, develop culture and conduct storytelling sessions. Action Participants invited to participate in several telephone conference sessions (using system at freeconference.com), share stories, reflect on stories and identify important aspects. Reflection Participants reflected during and at the completion of sessions and some shared reflections by subsequent email. Initiating researcher authored draft meeting report and circulated via email for input from participants. Amended report circulated to full inquiry group.
Data collected	Meeting reports After Action Review Audio capture of session

Data Analysis	Themes identified in the meeting reports were matched with feedback identified in the After Action Review. Initiating researcher integrated pertinent comments to reflect identified themes.
Validity procedures	<u>Research cycling</u> – Telephone session fed through to a new cycle involving a blended telephone conference and WebIQ conference <u>Divergence and convergence</u> – Divergence seen in story topics, convergence present in identifying potentially archetypical themes. <u>Balance of reflection and action</u> - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience. <u>Aspects of reflection</u> – Post event reflections and review present. More data analysis could have been done to evaluate descriptions, themes and theory building. <u>Challenging uncritical subjectivity</u> – Opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate formally offered during After Action Review and during post-event report circulation. <u>Chaos and order</u> – Challenges articulated in the impact of in-group, out-group phenomenon faced by all. <u>Authentic collaboration</u> - Members were given full opportunity to participate in planning, action and reflection phases; on a peer basis with other group members.
Internet Relay Chat	
Inquiry	The use of story to open facilitated chat sessions. Tapping into the emotional depth of story.
Instrument	Participant observation written into text chat, theme identification from event reports and session transcripts
Process	<u>Planning</u> Discussion held during Skype conference session. Suggestion circulated via email to hold chat sessions using both text and audio channels for storytelling sessions. <u>Action</u> Participants invited to participate in IRC text chat sessions (using Yahoo! messenger), share stories, reflect on stories and identify important aspects. <u>Reflection</u> Participants reflected during and at the completion of sessions and some shared reflections by subsequent email. Initiating researcher authored draft meeting report and circulated reports and transcripts via email for input from participants. Amended report circulated to full inquiry group.
Data collected	Meeting reports Session Transcripts After Action Review Initiating researcher screen capture of session
Data Analysis	Themes identified in the meeting reports were matched with feedback identified in the After Action Review. Initiating researcher integrated pertinent comments to reflect identified themes.
Validity procedures	<u>Research cycling</u> – Chat sessions fed into each other, process suggestions were developed, modified and carried over between chat sessions. <u>Divergence and convergence</u> – Divergence seen in story topics, convergence present in identifying potentially archetypical themes. <u>Balance of reflection and action</u> - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too

	much experience. Aspects of reflection – Post event reflections and review present. More data analysis could have been done to evaluate descriptions, themes and theory building. Challenging uncritical subjectivity – Opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate formally offered during After Action Review and during post-event report circulation. Chaos and order – Some different uses of the text channel– to share complete story in one long post or to feed story slowly into text conversation. A dual band storytelling phenomenon emerged during process. Authentic collaboration - Members were given full opportunity to participate in planning, action and reflection phases; on a peer basis with other group members.
Web conferencing	
Inquiry	How web conferencing may assist the storytelling process. The use of web conferencing for post-story reflection.
Instrument	Participant observation captured via WebIQ system, theme identification from event reports and After Action Review
Process	Planning Discussion held during previous Skype conference session. Suggestion circulated via email to group to hold WebIQ supported storytelling session. Action Participants invited to participate in WebIQ supported storytelling session, share stories, reflect on stories and identify important aspects. Reflection Participants reflected during and at the completion of sessions. Comments were collected within the WebIQ system, downloaded and integrated into draft meeting report authored by initiating researcher. Amended report circulated to full inquiry group.
Data collected	Meeting report with integrated WebIQ text data captured After Action Review Initiating researcher screen capture of session
Data Analysis	Themes identified in the meeting report were matched with feedback identified in the After Action Review. Initiating researcher integrated pertinent comments to reflect identified themes.
Validity procedures	Research cycling – Teleconference session fed into the WebIQ session process, suggestions were carried over from the previous session. Divergence and convergence – Divergence seen in story topics, convergence present in identifying potentially archetypical themes. Divergence also present in culturally different approaches to challenging situations. Balance of reflection and action - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience. Aspects of reflection – Post event reflections and review undertaken. More data analysis could have been done to evaluate descriptions, themes and theory building. Challenging uncritical subjectivity – Opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate formally offered during After Action Review and during post-event report circulation. Chaos and order – not expressly evident Authentic collaboration - Members were given full opportunity to participate in planning, action and reflection phases; on a peer

	basis with other group members.
Student Net Chat	
Inquiry	Investigation of the potential of appreciative storytelling with a group of student teachers to inspire participation.
Instrument	Post-session evaluations Interview with session trainer-facilitator
Process	<u>Planning</u> Discussion held during Skype conversation with initiation researcher. Session proposal and draft instructions circulated via email on sub-project looking at appreciative storytelling with a group of student teachers to inspire participation. <u>Action</u> Participants invited to participate in IRC text chat session (using Student Net Chat), share stories, reflect on stories, and identify important aspects. <u>Reflection</u> Participants and trainer-facilitator reflected at the completion of session using post-event evaluation. Initiating researcher interviewed trainer-facilitator to draw out key themes upon reflection.
Data collected	Post-event evaluations Transcript of interview with trainer-facilitator
Data Analysis	Themes identified in the post-event evaluations were discussed and themes clarified in an interview with trainer-facilitator.
Validity procedures	<u>Research cycling</u> – a single cycle of initiating, planning, action and reflection completed within the sub-project. <u>Divergence and convergence</u> – Some divergence seen present in themes identified by participants. Strong convergence around value of session and modified process. <u>Balance of reflection and action</u> - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience. <u>Aspects of reflection</u> – Post event reflections captured in evaluation and interview for theme clarification and identify themes, processes and theory building. <u>Challenging uncritical subjectivity</u> – Opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate was formally offered during post-event participant evaluations. <u>Chaos and order</u> – Chaos present during session as participants modified process focus and discussed challenging situations rather than those that were purely appreciative stories. <u>Authentic collaboration</u> – Co-researchers were given full opportunity to participate in planning, action and reflection phases on a peer basis with other group members via email. The actual student-participants were only involved in the action phase of the session and their reflection was limited to the post-event evaluation.
Video conference	
Inquiry	Exploring stories of challenge in the leadership environment using video conferencing with participants in a leadership development programme.
Instrument	Interview with the two session facilitators drawing on comments in post-session evaluations from participants
Process	<u>Planning</u> Discussion held during Skype conversation with initiating researcher. Session proposal and draft instructions circulated via email on sub-project looking at leadership storytelling via video

	conferencing.
	<u>Action</u> Participants in leadership development program were invited to participate in a video conference session to share leadership stories, reflect on stories, and identify important aspects related to leadership. <u>Reflection</u> Participants reflected at the completion of the video conference session using post-event evaluations. Initiating researcher interviewed the session facilitators to draw out key themes drawn from their reflections and comments from participants.
Data collected	Transcript of interview with facilitators
Data Analysis	Themes identified in the interviews were discussed and clarified. Interview and transcript were then circulated with call for feedback from co-researchers.
Validity procedures	<u>Research cycling</u> – a single cycle of initiating, planning, action and reflection completed within the sub-project. <u>Divergence and convergence</u> – Some divergence present in themes identified by participants. Strong convergence around the value participants placed on the session. <u>Balance of reflection and action</u> - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience. <u>Aspects of reflection</u> – Post event reflections captured in participant evaluations drawn from the interview, with theme clarification from session facilitators. <u>Challenging uncritical subjectivity</u> – Co-researchers had the opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate upon circulation of interview transcript. <u>Chaos and order</u> – Meeting challenges present for facilitators to bring in participants located on their own rather than in locations where participants were participating in groups. <u>Authentic collaboration</u> – Co-researchers were given an opportunity to participate in planning, action and reflection phases, on a peer basis with other group members. The actual leadership programme participants were only involved in the action phase of the video conference session and their reflection was limited to the post-event evaluations.
Blog	
Inquiry	Reflections on sharing funny facilitation fables via a Blog from participants of an online facilitation skills programme.
Instrument	Participant observations, reflections and themes identified written into the blog Post-event evaluations
Process	<u>Planning</u> Planning conversation with co-researcher who was to facilitate blog storytelling session. Initiating researcher advised group of brief plan. <u>Action</u> Training programme participants invited to participate in blog storytelling session (using a blog setup at www.blogger.com), to share funny facilitation fables. Reflections captured via post-event evaluations. <u>Reflection</u> Participants reflected directly on the blog during the session and at the completion of the activity via programme completion evaluations.

Data collected	Blog transcript Post-event evaluations
Data Analysis	Initiating researcher integrated blog comments with feedback from online facilitation programme to reflect identified themes.
Validity procedures	<u>Research cycling</u> – a single cycle of initiating, planning, action and reflection completed within the sub-project. <u>Divergence and convergence</u> – Divergence seen in variant experiences of the storytelling session. <u>Balance of reflection and action</u> - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience. <u>Aspects of reflection</u> – During and post event reflections integrated. More data analysis could have been done to evaluate descriptions, themes and theory building. <u>Challenging uncritical subjectivity</u> – Opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate formally offered within evaluations from online facilitation programme. <u>Chaos and order</u> – Some participants found storytelling via blog difficult. <u>Authentic collaboration</u> - The actual programme participants were only involved in the action phase of the blog session and their reflection was limited to the post-event evaluations. Co-researchers given opportunity to scrutinize identified findings published via the www.onlinestory.net website.
Second Life™	
Inquiry	Meeting around a virtual campfire in Second Life™ and sharing stories about how members of a facilitation training group came to be facilitators.
Instrument	Post-event reflections captured via group forum and post event evaluation.
Process	<u>Planning</u> Planning conversation with participant who was to facilitate Second Life™ storytelling session. Second Life™ island secured and location for storytelling session prepared. Training of participants on avatar creation and in-world navigation Assisting with technical challenges with the Second Life™ high system specifications required. <u>Action</u> Training programme participants invited to storytelling session sessions at Boracay Island in Second Life™ to share stories on how participants came to be facilitators. Reflections captured via forum conversation and post-event evaluations. <u>Reflection</u> Participants reflected directly during the session and on the training programme forum upon completion of the activity. Other reflections were captured via programme completion evaluations.
Data collected	Forum comments Post-event evaluations Initiating researcher's screen capture of session
Data Analysis	Initiating researcher integrated blog comments with feedback from online facilitation programme to reflect identified themes.
Validity procedures	<u>Research cycling</u> – a single cycle of initiating, planning, action and reflection completed within the sub-project. <u>Divergence and convergence</u> – Some convergence and divergence of themes identified during the storytelling session.

	<u>Balance of reflection and action</u> - There is neither too much reflection on too little experience, nor too little reflection on too much experience. <u>Aspects of reflection</u> – During and post event reflections integrated. More data analysis could have been done to evaluate descriptions, themes and theory building. <u>Challenging uncritical subjectivity</u> – Opportunity to adopt the role of devil's advocate formally offered within evaluations from online facilitation programme. <u>Chaos and order</u> – Some participants found Second Life™ a challenging tool to navigate and use. Strong explorative and imaginative desire generated by the Second Life™ experience present sometimes conflicted with facilitator process focus. <u>Authentic collaboration</u> - The actual programme participants were only involved in the action phase of the Second Life™ session and their reflection was limited to the post-event evaluations. Co-researchers given opportunity to scrutinize identified findings published via the www.onlinestory.net website.

4.6   REFLECTIONS ON THE METHOD

The use of the Cooperative Inquiry method was an enjoyable way to investigate the use of storytelling in online groups. Although the inquiry group had hoped to achieve more in terms of the number of cyclic phases - a single cycle of phases 1, 2, 3 and 4 (initiating, planning, action, and reflection) was essentially completed of the method. These four phases were also followed through on a smaller scale within several of the sub-projects that were conducted.

Due to the online nature of the inquiry group, meetings were different than those that would occur in a traditional Cooperative Inquiry group meeting face-to-face. Rather than having separate, distinct meetings for the differing phases of initiating, planning, action and reflection, these tended to occur in a range of ways. Planning was often done via email, then a real-time session was sometimes used to focus on the action and reflection. Sometimes all four phases would occur within a single session or over one – two weeks within sub-projects.

One key weakness in the research plan was an under-estimation of the time it took to organize and coordinate suitable timing for an online group meeting. It could take up to two weeks to organize timing for a single meeting via email. This translated into slowing some of the momentum and created project creep (Wideman, 2002).

Of real benefit from using this method over others was the ability to work together consensually and in a way that replicated common experiences when facilitating or participating in groups. There was a sense of equality between co-

researchers; individual responsibility was highly relied upon for participation and leadership of the research design and process. Members of the inquiry group could discuss and agree on processes to use, what software tools to use, and be involved in the practical aspects of the research if participants chose to. A culture of exploration and sharing was available and the research group collectively decided on the language and definitions used within the inquiry.

4.7   SUMMARY

Overall the inquiry group covered a lot of ground and investigated storytelling from several angles with a wide range of online software. The inquiry group didn't follow through the full series of Cooperative Inquiry cycles as planned. Subsequent phases of planning, action and reflection would have taken much more time than the research group was committed to. It is likely that the original plan was too ambitious; however the inquiry group gained many insights into the inquiry topic from a range of perspectives and across a wide range of online group software tools. The study did follow through four full phases of the cooperative inquiry method, thus completing a full single cycle. The nature of meeting online meant that distinct phases of initiating, planning, action and reflection tended to occur within sub-projects, via email, and within real-time sessions rather than at set periodical meetings.

The wide range of software tools that were used included email, audio and telephone conferencing, video conferencing, telephone with web conferencing, internet relay chat, a web blog, Second Life™, and online surveys. These software tools and the types of inquiry that were investigated with them are summarized in Table 4.9 above.

Chapter 5

Findings

In Second Life™: Sharing stories of how we came to be facilitators

5.0   INTRODUCTION

The findings described and discussed in this chapter are structured according to the different types of online software in which stories were generated and shared, namely: email, audio and telephone conferencing, web conferencing, two different types of Internet Relay Chat (IRC), a blog, an online survey, and in the 3-D interactive world of Second Life™. Section 5.2.6 leads into some of the sub projects that emerged at times during the study. Emergent sub-projects are a common occurrence of the Co-operative Inquiry method. These sub-projects drawn from outside the inquiry group add to the pool of rich data collected around the topic of inquiry.

Aligned with the research method, inquiries were generated for each software tool that was considered most relevant to the emergent group motivations and dynamics (see Table 5.1). In this way, the inquiry group was not only able to investigate the majority of the key online software current at that time, but also some important group interactions and dynamics. The inquiry group also used various types of inquiry methods that can be used to investigate these interactions and their effects within online mediums.

It could be strongly argued that the same research instrument and research process should have been used right across the different tools. This would potentially produce comparable data and identify the similarities and differences with using story across the board. It could also be questioned why different inquiry instruments were used to investigate the different online software types.

This approach was considered. Two key challenges are faced in taking this approach. One is that the software tools are fundamentally quite different. Any comparison data would be like comparing apples and oranges as an analogy. The second key challenge is that such an approach would likely require control groups to be established to avoid the bias on storytelling sessions investigated towards the beginning and end of the investigation period.

A focus was held on the emergent creative possibility and on the life within the inquiry group, which meant that different areas of relevance were presented for each storytelling situation and choice of software tool. This emergent focus presents a strong alignment with the method.

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Table 5.1 Investigation summary table

Investigation Summary Table	
Online Tool	*Inquiry*
Email and web profiles	An investigation of the impact of storytelling in the two kinds of introductions used during the inquiry group's formation.
Skype™ conferencing	Observations about storytelling in a real-time experience with audio. The use of a burning issue question to elicit stories.
Telephone conferencing	How to define what was a story and what types of stories the inquiry group were interested in sharing and hearing. The power of sharing worst facilitation experiences.
Internet Relay Chat	The use of story to open facilitated chat sessions. Tapping into the emotional depth of story.
Student Net Chat	Investigation of the potential of appreciative storytelling with a group of student teachers to inspire participation.
Web conferencing	How web conferencing may assist the storytelling process. The use of web conferencing for post-story reflection.
Video conference	Exploring stories of challenge in the leadership environment using video conferencing with participants in a leadership development programme.
Blog	Reflections on sharing funny facilitation fables via a Blog from participants of an online facilitation skills programme.
Second Life™	Meeting around a virtual campfire in Second Life™ and sharing stories about how members of a facilitation training group came to be facilitators.

Table 5.2 Media mode type summary table

Media Type Summary Table					
Online Tool	*Text*	*Audio*	*Visual*	*Synchronous (Real-time)*	*Asynchronous (Different-time)*
Email	✓				✓
Web profiles	✓		✓		✓
Skype™ conferencing[5]		✓		✓	
Telephone conferencing[5]		✓		✓	
Internet Relay Chat	✓	✓		✓	
Student Net Chat	✓			✓	
Web conferencing	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Video conference		✓	✓	✓	
Blog	✓				✓
Second Life™	✓	✓	✓	✓	

The Media Mode Type Summary Table (5.2) above presents the range of characteristics that each of the software tools have in comparison to each other. Although a comparison of the benefits of storytelling between the different software tools was not a priority of the study the inquiry group did intend to cover a wide range of online group situations and modes of communication.

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[5] Note that although Skype and Telephone conferencing tools are different in that one uses Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and the other used the Plain Old Telephone System (POTS) they were seen to be equivalent.

5.1 FINDINGS

In this section below the findings are described and discussed. They are structured according to the different types of online software tools in which stories were generated and shared.

5.1.1 Comparing Email Introductions with Public Web Profiles

In the initial stages of the research project, co-researchers were invited to introduce themselves by email and many included a story in their introduction email. They shared their interest in the topic and expectations of the research project. Co-researchers were invited to talk about what was drawing them to the research question of *how is storytelling beneficial in building relationships in a facilitated online group.*

Some participants also shared profiles of themselves and these were later linked to and added to the www.onlinestory.net website that was developed for the research group. One idea put forward was to investigate the use of storytelling in the inquiry group's beginnings. A comparison test survey was subsequently designed to explore the impact of the two kinds of introductions that had been used. The first type of introduction was the email introductions, which included stories that participants had used to introduce themselves to each other. The second type of introduction came in the form of sharing each other's web biography or professional profiles. These web profiles either were linked to a participant's own website, or they were uploaded to the co-researchers page of the research project website (www.onlinestory.net).

Email introductions and the uploading and sharing of profiles are two very common ways for members of an online group to begin the task of getting to know each other. The uploading and sharing of profiles online has recently become a very popular way for people to introduce themselves to others online. For example, the use of profiles are the predominant basis of many new social networking websites such as MySpace™, Facebook™, Bebo, Skyrock Blog, Hi5, Orkut, Friendster, CyWorld and LinkedIn™. Email introductions and the sharing of profiles were well known ways that the group used as a starting point for getting to know each other. *Would introductions with story be a more effective way to create connections compared to sharing biographies (profiles)?*

The purpose of the comparison test survey was to establish what might be useful for the introductions stage of online groups. The inquiry group was interested in knowing how story may assist group members to present different aspects of themselves. It was wondered if more of who a person was could be communicated via story than was achieved through a web profile.

Does story help build trust? The inquiry group wanted to find out if people felt closer, could see more personal aspects of others, and identify more points of connection in a story introduction when it was compared to the same person's web profile. Also of interest was to know what, if anything, story had contributed to participants' levels of trust, and also the potential impact that a photo may have. While not intended to be statistically significant (note small sample size and large standard deviations in Appendix K), the test was aimed at being descriptive and to present an early reflection of the research group. The intention was not to undertake a formal positivist research based approach, but rather to collect some pointers or indicators that may be compelling, or worth investigating further. It was a way to collect a snapshot or a way to mirror the group back to itself.

In the test, participants were asked to review and compare eleven different participant profiles from the research group, each containing a participant's profile and a corresponding email introduction. Members were asked to respond to fifteen questions via the research project website (www.onlinestory.net). Five questions were about the email introductions, five questions were about the web profiles and five were comparative questions. Questions were developed by the initiating researcher and shared with the group for wider input before the test was launched.

Twenty three responses were collected in total. The results are presented here and discussed according to closeness, characteristics identified, points of connection, trust, photos, and preference. See *Appendix K Comparison Summary Results* for detailed results of the comparison test.

5.1.1.1 Closeness

Participants were first asked to rank on a seven-point scale how close they felt in relation to another person after reading their web profile and their story introduction; 1 being *very close*, and 7 being *very far*. Story introductions from

email scored a median and mode of 2 (close) and an average of 1.9 (close) and web profiles median and mode of 4 (neither close nor far) and an average of 3.8 (neither close nor far) (Figure 5.1).

How close do you feel to this person after reading their email introduction?

From email introductions with story

Very Close   *Neither close nor far*   *Very Far*
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
<- - - - - - - - - - - A M - >

How close do you feel to this person after reading their web profile?

From web Profiles

Very Close   *Neither close nor far*   *Very Far*
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
<- A M - >
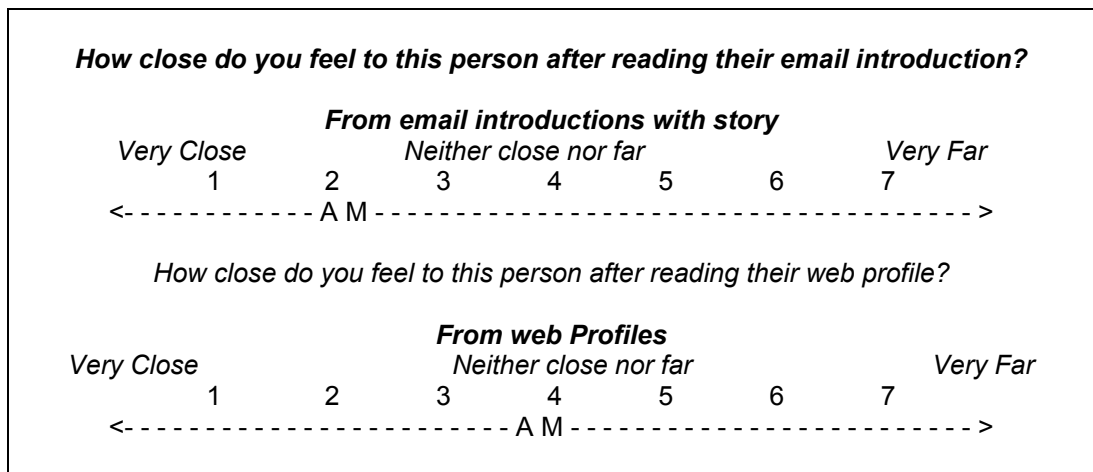
Fig. 5.1 Median and mode (M) and average (A) closeness ranking

This result suggests that email introductions including story had a beneficial impact on bringing people within the group closer, while web profiles had little or no impact on participants. They felt neither closer nor further away from others after reading their web profile.

5.1.1.2   Characteristics identified

The following question asked participants to identify *what aspects, if any, of the person's attitudes, values, personality traits or concerns can you see in this email [or web profile]?* Rather than narrow the scope and tightly define what would qualify as correctly identifying an *aspect* of another's story or profile respondents were invited to simply identify what they noticed. This would be in-line with common facilitator practice when working with groups as people tend to notice different things about one another and this a phenomenon of normal group functioning that was desired to be represented.

While it could be argued that there is no consistent or common interpretation of a shared construct of what an aspect is, clearly this approach provided for multiple perspectives to be identified and counted.

Participants identified more personal aspects in story introductions than in their corresponding web profiles. The average participant could identify 5.1 aspects (median and mode of 4) in the story introductions from email while an

average of 3.2 aspects (median of 3 and mode of 2) were identified in web profiles (Figure 5.2).
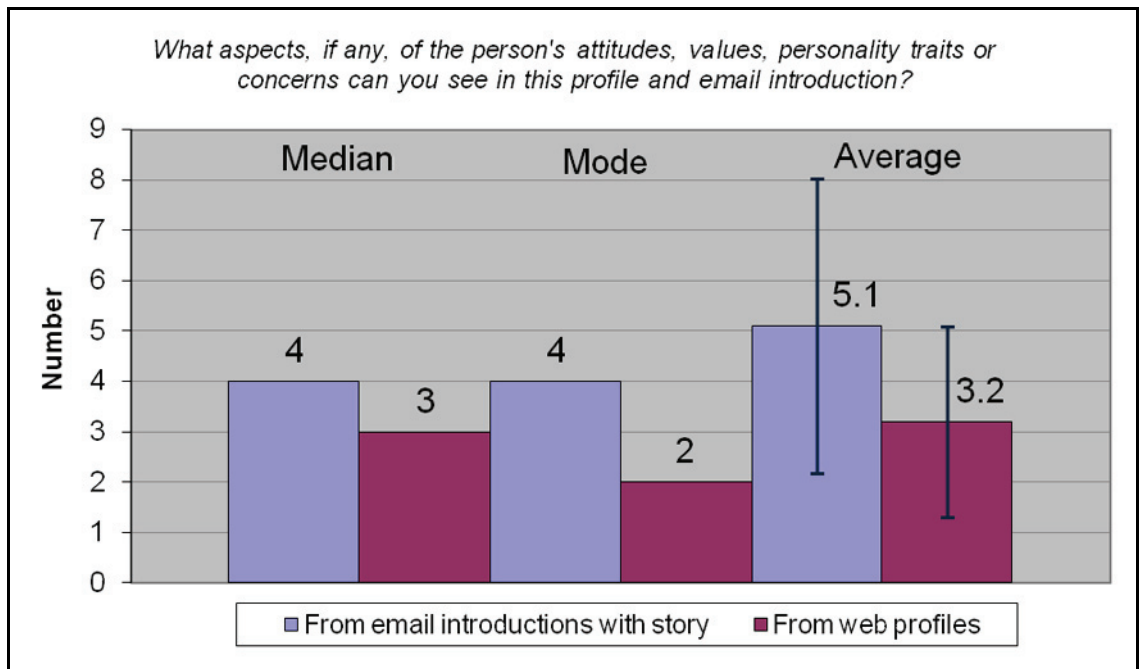
Fig. 5.2 Median, mode and average characteristics identified in email introductions with story compared to those from web profiles (error bars represent one standard deviation)

A total of 118 aspects were identified by the group in the story introductions, with a total of 73 aspects identified in web profiles. As a percentage, 62% more aspects were identified in the story introductions than in reading web profiles. Popular aspects identified in the email introductions included: family, being a people person, a positive attitude, and aspects of culture and history. Popular aspects identified in web profiles were: cultural aspects, facilitation, creativity and being hard working. See Appendix K for details of aspects identified.

This finding suggests that email introductions including a story contained more identifiable aspects about participants than were identified by reading their web profiles. With more identifiable aspects, participants are arguably more visible to others within the group and so there are potentially more ways of connecting between members.

5.1.1.3 Points of connection

In question 3, participants were asked: *What are the points of connection, if any, between this person and yourself?* More points of connection were identified by participants in the story introductions than in the web profiles. Median of 4, mode of 2 and an average 3.9 points of connection were identified in the story introductions from email and median/mode of 1 and an average of 2.1 points of connection were identified in web profiles (Figure 5.3).
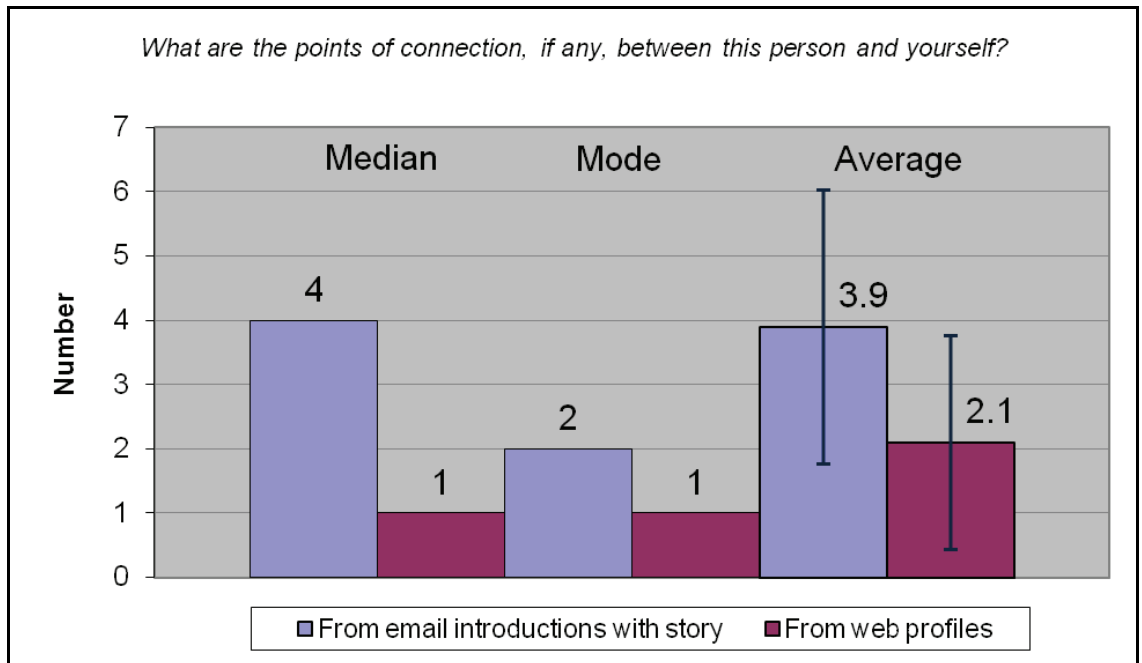
Fig. 5.3 Median, mode and average points of connection identified from email introductions with story compared to those from web profiles (error bars represent one standard deviation)

A total of 90 connections were identified by the group in the story introductions, while a total of 49 connections were identified in web profiles. As a percentage, 84% more connections were identified through story introductions than reading web profiles. Popular points of connection in story introductions included: family, facilitation, and the International Association of Facilitators (IAF). Popular points of connection in web profiles were: facilitation, the IAF and university study. See Appendix K for details of the points of connection results.

5.1.1.4 Trust

Trust is a complex issue and an extremely well examined construct in the MIS literature (see Tan & Sutherland, 2004; Nöteberg et al., 2003; Ratnasingham & Pavlou 2003; Gefen, 2002; Webster & Watson, 2002; McKnight & Chervany, 2002; Belanger, Hiller, & Smith, 2002; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Tan & Theon, 2001; Cheung & Lee, 2001; Dekleva, 2000; Benassi, 1999; Huberman, Franklin, & Hogg, 1999; Rousseau et al., 1998; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Mayer et al., 1995). While robust and useful the literature fails to form a clear definition of just what trust is and often ends up causing further confusion and debate amongst researchers rather than adding to the knowledge base. This lack of a widely accepted definition has been highlighted most clearly by Hosmer (1995), who stated that "there appears to be widespread agreement on the importance of trust in human conduct, but unfortunately there also appears to be equally widespread lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the concept".

Rather than take the approach of researchers listed above and narrow the scope of trust so it will fit into the empirical research framework, the approach taken in the comparison test survey was to allow respondents to choose exactly what trust meant to them and allow them to present and articulate their own construct unimpeded by imposing external meaning from others.

While using existing trust frameworks or scales may have been useful to compare outcomes to other studies this was by no means an intention of the survey. Thus, rather than intending to demonstrate that the respondents had consistent or common interpretations of a shared construct of trust, multiple perspectives were welcomed.

Participants were asked *What aspects of this email introduction* [or *web profile*] *contribute to your level of trust and safety with this person? A* median and mode of 3, and an average 3.4 aspects of trust were identified in the story introductions from email and median of 2, mode of 3 and an average of 2.4 points of connection were identified in web profiles (Figure 5.4).
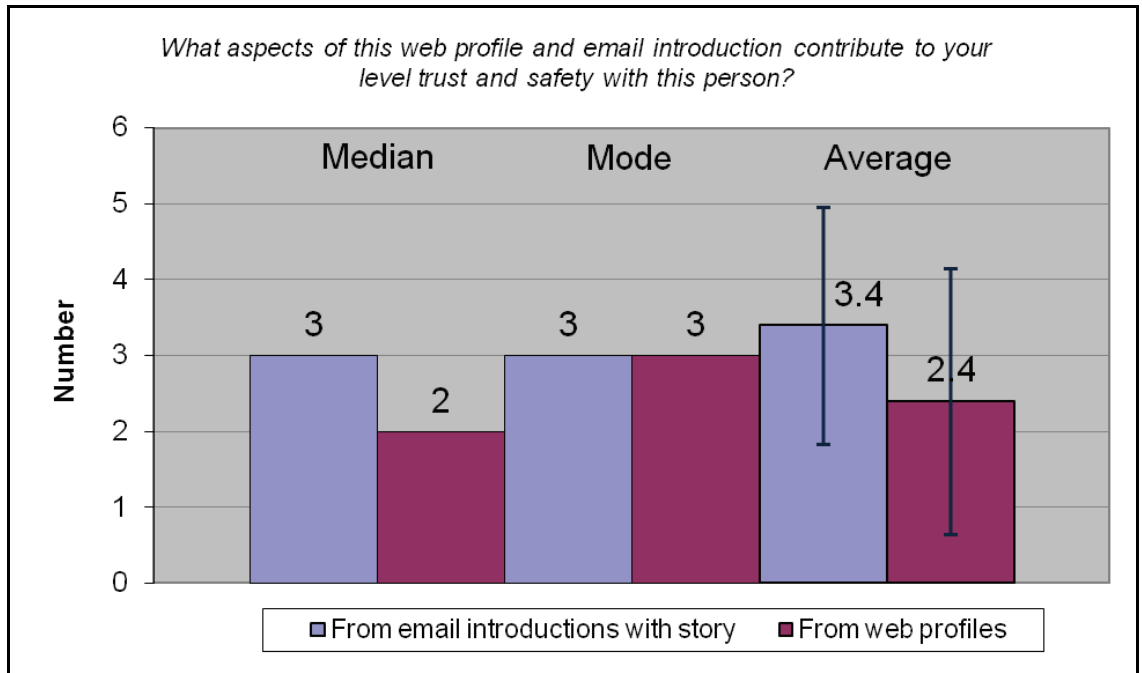
Fig. 5.4 Median, mode and average aspects of trust identified from email introductions with story compared to those from web profiles (error bars represent one standard deviation).

A total of 79 trust aspects were identified by the group in the story introductions, while a total of 55 trust aspects were identified in web profiles. As a percentage, 44% more aspects contributed to participant's levels of trust in the story introductions from email than in the web profiles. Popular trust aspects identified in story introductions included: family, work experience, overseas experience/travel, membership in the IAF, and the level of personal sharing. Popular aspects of trust identified in the web profiles were: qualifications, photos, and membership in the IAF.

5.1.1.5 Photos

Photos on profiles were found to have a large positive impact on participant's levels of trust. Photos were described as engaging participants' imaginations of what the person was like. When there were no photos on a person's web profile, that person's profile was described as dulled or faceless.

5.1.1.6 Preference for story introductions from email

Co-researchers had indicated a strong preference for the story introductions from email over the web profiles. While not intended to be statistically significant, the

comparison test presented an interesting reflection of the group. It suggested that storytelling was beneficial in building relationships within the inquiry group through assisting with the presentation of oneself, through communication of aspects that people could connect with, and with assisting in the development of trust.

In question 5 respondents were asked *If someone was introducing themselves to your group, which of these two approaches would you prefer?* Two respondents chose the web profiles as their preference, citing their reasoning that the profiles would provide more information and that it depends on the situation. Twenty participants preferred the email story introductions because they were seen as more real, more human, easier to connect with, and more engaging. One respondent gave no answer to this question (Figure 5.5).
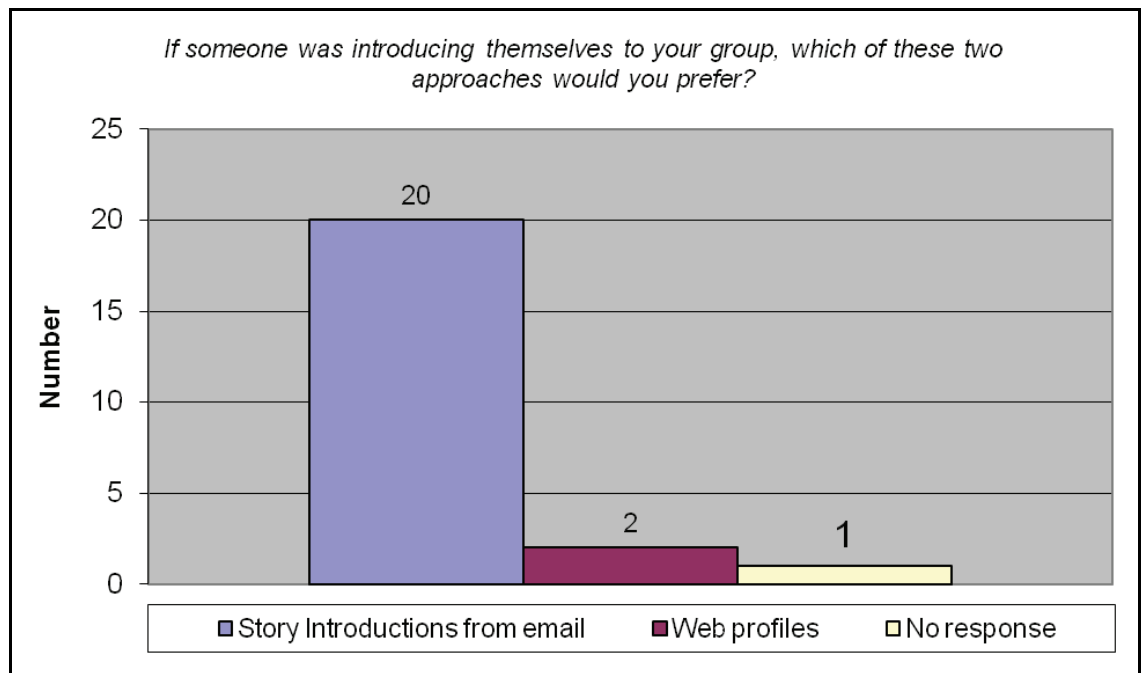
Fig. 5.5 Introduction preference

5.1.1.7   Some new questions emerging for the group

One of the final questions of the comparison survey asked respondents *What other information would you like to know about this person?* The group presented a range of responses to this including: curiosity about learning interests and challenges, hobbies, instruments, life episodes, shared interests, inspiration, Scottish history, journalist stories, travel, religion, baseball, future directions, and particular statements made in profiles or email introductions. The final question

asked for any other comments. From the two responses received one participant identified some difficulty in doing the exercise when knowing some of the participants and not others. The other mentioned how much better the e-mail introductions were and commented that the connection in the group had dropped away since the round of introductions.

5.1.1.8 Summary

Overall, the comparison test showed that the story introductions were more popular than the web profiles, and photos had a large positive impact on participant's levels of trust. These aspects are discussed further in more detail.

While web profiles were described as providing more information, story introductions were seen as more real, more human, easier to connect with and more engaging. From the comparison test the inquiry group found that introductions made by email including a story assisted the creation of a more human connection, more aspects of others could be seen, more points of connection were made, and profile photos had a positive impact on people's trust in each other.

Storytelling with email presented a useful way for people to present aspects of themselves, and for others to make connections with them. Combining these two aspects of introduction with story and the sharing of personal photos appears to be a very useful way for creating relationship linkages during the beginning stages of online groups. Mirroring work done by Jarvenpaa & Leidner (1999) and Jarvenpaa, Shaw & Staples (2004) into stages of groups and trust development; the creation of more points of connection between co-researchers provided more ways to interact with each other as the group developed over time.

5.1.2 Skype™ Conferencing

Skype™ (www.skype.com) is a free internet-based program that uses peer-to-peer technology[6] to make voice communications available to people all over the world. Skype™ is an emerging Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)[7] technology that

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[6] The term *peer-to-peer* refers to the concept that in a network of equals (peers) using appropriate information and communication systems, two or more individuals are able to spontaneously collaborate without necessarily needing central coordination (Schoder & Fischbach, 2003).

[7] A protocol for transmitting the human voice in digital form over the Internet or other networks as an audio stream (The American Heritage Science Dictionary).

offered the group accessible peer-to-peer and small group audio conferencing. Several members of the group had used Skype™ before and others were interested in learning its potential.

Following early group introductions, a suggestion was made to meet each other via Skype™ in real-time and discuss the project. As the Skype™ conferencing could only handle up to 5 participants at one time; two concurrent real-time Skype™ conference sessions were coordinated. Goals were to conduct introductions via audio, discuss the research project and share some stories in sub-groups of five participants.

5.1.2.1 Technological challenges

Challenges getting the technology to work using audio conferencing were experienced as soon as the session began. Some participants experienced a long delay and others echoing. Others could hear but could not speak in the conversation. For one participant, it sounded as though she was in a room full of people who were all talking at once. The delay and echo experienced by participants slowed down the flow of the conversation and made some conversations difficult to understand. Several times the conference rooms crashed. One participant summarized the sessions by describing them as "pretty hard to get past even introducing ourselves." Another participant reflected "In a way, this experience is a very good one, given our topic. So often when we try to do work in a non-collocated way, the first big obstacle to overcome is the technology. Working together to overcome this snafu[8] is such a real life thing." See Appendix L Skype™ Report for summary details from our meeting and Appendix M for a transcript of the Skype™ text chat conversation.

The Skype™ experience and its technical challenges did not present new understanding about the use of storytelling in facilitated online groups. However, several things were identified that present useful discussion for online facilitation practice. The group connecting through an audio channel for the first time was beneficial, participants found the experience was closer to face-to-face practice and confusion around group boundaries was experienced.

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[8] Snafu - A chaotic or confused situation (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. (2000) Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin).

5.1.2.2   Benefits experienced

Despite the technological challenges, one participant described the experience as connecting on a new level. "It was great to hear each other's voices, and we connected on a new level". Up until this point, the inquiry group had only been in contact via email, and having the real-time experience and audio channel gave participants a new sense of each other. Working together in real-time was considered more familiar and similar to what the inquiry group were used to when facilitating face-to-face. Things happening in the background of conversations became tied into parts of the group conversation. Strong humor was present. One participant coined the term *Skype wrestling* when some loud crashing was heard in the background of a conversation. The Skype wrestling term was used again at other times to describe the technology struggles the inquiry group experienced. The crashing heard by participants turned out to be a participant's dog.   This event inspired a round of stories about pets, particularly dogs. Other story themes were about events of the day and traveling.

5.1.2.3   Managing group boundaries

Although the desired process of having two concurrent sessions and then swapping was a good idea, managing the way in which people came in and out of these groups surfaced as an unexpected disturbance. Essentially the group boundaries were unclear. How to go about adding and joining people to the conversations was unclear and led to people being put on hold or accidentally dropped from the group conversation. One participant described the experience in his reflection on the session as: "I got a sense of meeting people, but not a group."

5.1.2.4   Further sessions

Other Skype™ storytelling sessions with smaller two-three participant groups were more successful. A starting point used for one of the smaller sessions was to ask participants to tell a story about a hot or burning issue for them right now in their work or life. This was a useful way to quickly focus the stories that were told during the session and also created a strong relevance for those participating. It gave participants a sense that they could gain some learning and insight from both telling their own story and hearing from others. It also presented an opportunity to listen to the hot topics and burning issues of peers and an opportunity for group

reflection on each story. See Appendix N Skype 11-12Dec05 Report, and Appendix O Meeting Initiation Transcript 11-12Dec05, for detailed content of the *Hot or burning issue* storytelling session.

Other Skype™ sessions focused on sharing experiences where the facilitator had reacted highly defensively or strongly to particular questions or challenges from a group they had facilitated. Stories were also told about facilitating a group which included a particularly challenging participant.

It was considered that sharing these stories and hearing others' brought validity to peoples' experiences. One participant reflected on the session saying: "By sharing it, and hearing it, we bring some level of validity to other peoples' experiences". Another said: "I was simply surprised that we all had the same challenge or similar experience stories." The stories did not necessarily have to be extraordinary or even that much about storytelling, but the question and the sessions were considered useful. It was believed that "sharing our stories assisted the group to articulate their authentic selves and the issues they are facing". Another benefit was the value in storytelling for debriefing after a facilitation event, and getting the deeper learning from situations. Some speculation was made about there being *archetypical* stories that all facilitators may experience when working with groups.

This facilitator archetype concept is echoed in some recent research conducted by another facilitator and change consultant Andrew Rixon (2006) who collected 270 group facilitator's stories at the Australasian Facilitators' Network conferences. From his collection, Rixon came up with a distilled selection of six facilitator archetypes. Archetypes include: The Invisible Facilitator, Facilitator as Chameleon, Facilitator as Dictator, Facilitator as Conductor, Facilitation is like moving with the elements and sailing the seas, and Facilitation is like a parent holding a bicycle and then letting go.

For several group sessions, the closest of these archetypes may have been *feeling more like the child on the bicycle that the parent had let go of* – particularly for the sessions on sharing worst facilitation experiences. Stories in these sessions included conflict between participants in the group, challenges to the facilitator, challenges to the process, past group conflict re-surfacing in the group, being rejected by a group, losing control of the meeting process entirely

and another (possibly the Mother archetype) coming in and taking over the facilitation of the meeting.

5.1.2.5 Summary

While the inquiry group experienced some challenges using the Skype™ system as a whole group, smaller groups using the tool were more successful. The Skype™ audio offered affordances that were considered close to a face-to-face group experience. Participants were able to share stories from their facilitation practice and learn from each other. The recall of events with a group of peers provided new learning for some and good ideas for better practice for others. Noticing the similarity of some of the stories was an interesting discovery.

5.1.3 Telephone Conferencing

Because the inquiry group had found the Skype™ conferencing technology highly challenging, and knowing that the group culture was an important element in the success, or failure, of the research project, a decision was made to use telephone conferencing to develop the group culture statement. It was believed that having a stable tool to connect and communicate through was of paramount importance.

5.1.3.1 Group culture

Developing a shared group culture, or ground rules, or agreed ways of being with each other, is an important part of the facilitation of most groups. Culture is about how a group will be together, or how things are done around here. On a group level, the group culture can be considered the group agreement, group contract, charter, ground rules, mores, understandings or desired behaviors (Hunter, 2007, p. 42). On a structural level, the group culture can be perceived as the container within which the group operates.

The inquiry group arranged a time for their first telephone conference. 6 participants joined at the agreed time. The session began with a story that orientated the group to the theme of the project. A round was facilitated by the initiating researcher to identify what attracted each member to the research question. Then the group began discussing what was important in the research project to each member and how the inquiry group might work together. These items of importance began to shape into the group culture statement. Key topics

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in this conversation were how the inquiry group would share the group information collected, confidentiality, and what to do when issues arose within the project. One participant was dyslexic and asked that the group include a statement that spelling doesn't count so that she could participate fully in the research without worrying about her challenge with spelling correctly. Below in Figure 5.6 is the group culture statement that the inquiry group developed.

Table 5.3 Group Culture Statement

Group Culture Statement
Confidentiality Each of us to bring any areas of confidentiality to the awareness of the wider group as and when they occur. Can use the Chatham House rule[9] as needed. **Care of data collected** Any data created or collected in the wider group processes can be accessed and used by anyone in the group. If an individual or sub-group creates or collects data in an individual or sub-group process and someone from outside that sub-group wants to use it, then they will need to negotiate directly with the individual or sub-group members involved. **Spelling doesn't count** To assist speed when some are typing, and remove a burden, particularly with numbers. **Dealing with difficulties** If an issue comes up that people believe is going to prevent us, or seriously delay us, getting to our goals, we as a group, are willing to stop at that point and discuss how it shall be handled. That we hold an intent to be transparent about what we have observed. Issues can be raised with the wider group via the medium we are using or by contacting Stephen as a first point of call.

5.1.3.2 Confidentiality

The confidentiality of information will have an impact on the depth and level of connection that a group may be able to achieve with the storytelling process. While the Chatham House Rule was included in the group culture as a form of protection for any stories that may have been personally or commercially sensitive, it was not explicitly invoked during the storytelling within the study. In other settings confidentiality may need to be more explicit and enforced

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[9] The Chatham House Rule is a rule that governs the confidentiality of the source of information received at a meeting. Since its refinement in 2002, the rule states "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed." (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2008).

organizationally in order for a safe environment for storytelling to be used as a facilitative intervention.

5.1.3.3 What is online facilitation?

Email conversations before the teleconference had indicated some desire to define some of the different aspects of the project such as what constitutes a story, what is meant by online facilitation and what online software the inquiry group might explore. Gaining alignment on these aspects was also an important part of the sharing expectations part of the initial phase of the Cooperative Inquiry method that the inquiry group followed. Therefore, discussing the latest email conversations to achieve alignment on these aspects was high on the agenda for the teleconference. When discussing online facilitation it became apparent that there were some very differing views about what members of the inquiry group thought online facilitation was. Some summarized examples include:

> A group of people not in the same place coming together for a purpose. Generally with something they either have to do, or produce, within a certain time frame, either online or using telephone or web.
>
> A company reorganized in a global way. No longer able to work face-to-face.
>
> Facilitation as a fundamental part of e-learning. Eliciting participation and interaction is a key.
>
> Facilitation as a style of training or a way of delivery in online asynchronous communication.
>
> Any assisted group that is using a computing network or the internet.
>
> The intent of facilitation is to do with accomplishing a group task of some kind. The intent of training is to do with developing capacity in others as a primary intention – to develop particular skills and knowledge.

Some descriptions of practice were shared to help distinguish between facilitation and other facilitative roles such as trainer, manager and coach. Due to the variance in understandings of the online facilitation role, and its blending with others such as the facilitative trainer role; members agreed to keep alert to where

members of the group may be using the same language to describe different things.

5.1.3.4 What is a valid story?

Also high on the agenda for the telephone conference was the need to decide collectively how to define what was a story and what types of stories the inquiry group were interested in sharing and hearing. The group began discussing what a valid story is so that everyone might feel comfortable in bringing their stories forward into the wider conversation. A strong preference was initially raised to focus solely on stories about group facilitation. Others in the group then expressed an interest in keeping open to stories about groups, family, teaching, and leadership. After further discussion, the story scope was reworked to be stories about facilitation including other stories about groups, family, teaching, and leadership that could in some way inform online facilitation practice. A decision was also made to remain open to sharing stories that were told and written by other people, particularly about challenging situations and stories about situations when facilitating groups didn't go well.

After the session the group culture was shared by email in a 3-page report (see Appendix P Telephone Conference Report 2-3Dec05). A link to an mp3 audio file of the meeting was also provided. Those participants who could not participate in the telephone conference were asked to provide any thoughts, concerns, and culture items to be included. Agreement on the culture and decisions of the sub-group came from one member, and a suggestion was put forward that members of the group raise their observations at the moment that they were noticed within the group process.

5.1.3.5 Further use of telephone conferencing

Overall the inquiry group had found that group tasks could be more easily achieved using the stable communication platform of telephone conferencing than using Skype™ or the other asynchronous software tools of email. The group decided to make further use of telephone conferencing and to combine its usefulness with other online tools. From the meeting a decision was made to begin a round of additional stories using a chat tool for text-based stories

(described and discussed in 5.1.4 below) and then followed by another telephone conference call for audio-based stories.

The next telephone conference, held two weeks later with four participants, focused on facilitation stories about challenging situations. An initial story shared focused on coping with the impact of emotional disturbances experienced when facilitating. After sharing the experience, the teller of the story asked for suggestions as to what alternative actions others might make if faced with the same situation. A range of scenarios were shared by the group. Consequently, some key learning arose from post-story discussion for both the story teller and the audience.

Another participant introduced a very poignant story about facilitating a group session with a hostile participant who made strong racist slants against him. This particular story session was a real highlight of the whole research project for several of the participants. The value was seen in hearing from participants from different cultures, and exploring the different cultural approaches facilitators would choose when facilitating difficult situations. Having a free flowing audio channel to participate in was really beneficial. Feedback could flow quickly between members and the tone of voice, pitch, pause and volume all impacted on the power of stories told. (For more on the session see Appendix Q Telephone Conference Report 16-17Dec05).

5.1.3.6   Limited participation

A key downside found with using teleconferencing was that often up to seven or eight participants could not be present for the conversation and participate in any decisions made. Thus decisions the group made were not fully inclusive. Participants who missed the real-time conference sessions felt that they had less ownership of the decisions and were less inclined to put them into action or to participate in any of the subsequent discussions about them done via email.

This lack of commitment to the decisions made by others could be considered an *in-group out-group* phenomenon as described in the Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST) model by DeSanctis and Poole (1994). Although agreement with the decisions made by the sub-group was expressed via email by some afterward, there was no commitment to those decisions made. This phenomenon did not appear to occur when using other asynchronous tools such as

the forum, blog and email when a written record of the group conversation was available to all those who were unavailable for the real-time sessions.

These issues with sub-group communication present interesting issues about the decision points facilitators face around both software tool selection and intervention timing. Software tool selection is a critical factor for any online group. Selecting one tool over another will impact both on the ability for some to participate and on the down-stream outcomes from group the group work using those tools. Facilitators do need to be somewhat familiar with each of the software tools in practice to be able to assist a group in its software tool selection decision.

Some online facilitated processes are critical and will require all to participate. Processes such as aligning on a group purpose, developing group culture and conflict resolution will be undermined if all are not able to participate. Thus the software tool selection should align with all having access and able to participate. This may mean for some groups that these processes can only be done via asynchronous means.

Other processes may benefit from breakout groups or sub-group. Group activities such as evaluation, self and peer assessment, reviews, dialogue and storytelling can be performed in sub-groups without impacting on the group's ability to meet its purpose.

In terms of timing, facilitators may be reluctant to move forward on the group's plan or agenda or they may choose hold off on their next intervention if they are not able to generate suitable times for all to participate using the chosen software tool. Similarly a particular challenge is when a decision point has been reached and only a proportion of participants respond within the agreed time frames. In other situations they may be tempted to allow the group to hold off on reaching agreement until a time when the group meets via a particular software tool – for example, to wait until the group's monthly telephone conference rather than making decisions via a forum conversation or via email.

This may be a more comfortable choice for participants (and the facilitator); however, the group's momentum will be sacrificed. The opportunity to make key decisions in the natural course of the groups conversations will be

lost; crucially so too will be the loss of the opportunity for all to participate in the decision making process.

5.1.4 Stories Using Yahoo!® Messenger Chat

Between the telephone conference calls the inquiry group investigated storytelling using the Yahoo!® Messenger chat tool. A range of times were coordinated that would work for most people. Three chat sessions were conducted through December and one in January 2006. See Appendix R-V for reports and transcripts from the Yahoo! Messenger sessions.

5.1.4.1 Storytelling processes

One storytelling processes used began with asking a focus question such as *What is a hot issue, or a burning issue, for you right now in your work and life?* Stories orientated to this question were told and then debriefed collectively.

Another process was to share a personal best and a personal worst story, following with a round to discuss collectively the key learnings that could be gained from each.

Another process the inquiry group used involved the storyteller telling their story, then feedback being shared from the audience, and then the storyteller interviewed audience members about aspects of the story that they would like an audience perspective on. This process often resulted in sparking audience members to share their stories of similar experiences and thus restarted the three-step process.

5.1.4.2 Story a useful way to open

The inquiry group found that using a story to open a chat session was a good way to begin as it set up and created a culture of storytelling within the mood of the group. Opening the session with story provoked thinking about members' own interior responses to the story and sparked reflection and related stories that then served to build on the emerging group theme.

A strong benefit of the Yahoo! chat tool was that stories could be told in parts, with feedback included by the audience as the stories progressed. At times, short sentences and emoticons were used by audience members to show that a story was being followed and enjoyed. The suspense could be built as the parts of

the story and dialogue were shared over time. Here's one example story from a
Yahoo!® Messenger chat session:

Teller: I had my parents over for dinner last night and my older
brother and it was really nice to hear my father tell some stories
from our childhood - he's often quite reserved and it really warmed
my heart

Audience: nice

Teller: I could probably share the story

Audience: ok that would be great

Teller: My brother and his friend who were 13 at the time really
wanted to go to a Split Enz concert (they're a kind of a soft rock
band, quite famous in NZ)

Teller: Antony's (my brother) friend David (the kid across the
street) weren't allowed to go according to David's dad without a
parent and David's dad certainly wasn't going to be it!

Audience: ok

Teller: Arnold (my Dad) saw the gleam of hope fade in the young
boys as these words were spoken...and they hung their heads in
disappointment.

Arnold (my dad) took pity on them and said "oh I'll take them"...

So the two boys went off to the concert with Arnold and David's
younger brother Andrew

Audience: :D

Teller: It was a great concert, and Andrew (the younger brother,
who was 11) told Arnold that "This is the bestest concert I've ever
been to Mr Arnold!"

"Oh" said Arnold, "How many concerts have you been to
Andrew?"

"Only one, and it's the bestest concert ever!" said Andrew...

This was the punch line during dinner and it was just great

Audience: :))

Audience: nice story

> Teller: yeah - Antony (my brother) is now 37 so it was nice for
> him to see as an adult what his dad had done for him when he was
> younger.

If you follow the short story above you will see the interaction between storyteller and audience. Emoticons are used to express feedback at moments. It also demonstrates how some stories were simply impromptu.

Other stories impacted on the depth of communication and deepened rapport. Stories touched participants on an emotional level. After a story about facilitating within a racially conflicted community, and a reflective story about online communication, one audience member responded with this statement:

> Wow! My heart is filled, I'm still taking in the first story - I've
> been in rooms like that, and then your second one is like
> poetry…and I think they both touch the same deeper humanity in
> all of us.

The depth of stories told was also considered an important part of developing relationships and participation within the group.

> Touching our humanity like this is an important aspect of hearing
> and sharing stories. I think a depth of sharing will call forth a
> depth of hearing and this attracts a depth of participation.

Post story reflections and feedback assisted in deepening the experience for both the audience and tellers. For example, one audience member expressed that she really related to the story she had just heard and felt more connected to the storyteller from hearing his story because he had opened up and revealed quite a bit of himself.

> I just really related to that, and I just felt more connected to you
> because you kinda opened up and talked about yourself quite a bit.
> So I really appreciated that.

Another participant expressed that he saw something of the man behind the message and that there were many layers to the story.

Walther (1996) also found that partners working via computer mediated communication became intimate over time, and become *hyperpersonal* creating a greater sense of intimacy than face-to-face partners experienced. It is likely that this intimacy developing over time is not the case for all groups of people. In

terms of building resilience and capacity in groups building a sense of intimacy can be seen as a useful intention. More is needed to be known about why this happens naturally over time and also about the key benefits and downsides that a greater sense of intimacy has on groups.

The storyteller then made an interesting observation that it is a part of facilitation itself to have the courage to expose oneself in such a way that others are given courage to expose themselves or share their thinking. Another expressed that she could see the story with new eyes and new understanding based on the post story sharing.

5.1.4.3   Reflections on the chat tool

The ability to combine the use of text and audio was a useful aspect of using chat. Switching communication modes from text to audio was easy and straight forward. Stories could be shared by text and discussed using audio. The text could be revisited for post-event reflections as parts of the story could be referred back to. Stories could also be shared by the audio channel, and audience members could use the text chat to comment, add emoticons, add things to the story, or ask questions. The storyteller could then alter the telling of their story based on input from their audience. New learning could also be gained by the storyteller when debriefing the story they had told in light of the feedback part of the process.

5.1.5   WebIQ™ Web Conferencing Support

One of the research group's participants in Chicago had been talking to Raymond Bejarano, Vice President of WebIQ™ (www.webiq.net), who offered to support the research project by providing their web conferencing system at no cost. WebIQ™ is a web conferencing system that provided the inquiry group with a tool to collect data and discussion via a web-based system. Combined with an audio channel such as the telephone and Skype™ conferencing, it was a useful tool for providing a sense of who was in the room and creating a speaking order to work from.

The main page of the WebIQ™ interface is the *Agenda* that all participants can see and interact with as needed. This was useful in maintaining the structure of the session. Having a visual reference for the meeting gave participants a sense of what was to be covered and where the group was in the

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overall process. The system also included a list of the current participants in the room and this was used as an order of speaking when conducting a round for story feedback or discussion.

During the first WebIQ™ session, stories from worst facilitation moments were shared. One surprising finding was that many of the participants had a similar disaster story about losing control of a session that they were facilitating and the adverse dynamics required someone else to intervene and complete the meeting. As the stories were being told via the audio channel, participants could pose questions and comments by text during the actual telling of the story. All participants could see these questions and comments from the audience showing up on their screen as the story progressed. The storytellers could then choose whether to weave these into their story as they went.

A useful feature of using WebIQ™ was that participants were able to conduct a Plus Delta evaluation (positives and negatives) following each storytelling session. Participants could type their evaluation directly into the system. The system then collated the feedback and presented the evaluations back to the group via the Agenda home page. This was a very quick way to collect feedback on the session that could be presented back to the whole group. Another useful aspect of WebIQ™ was that any data collected from participants during sessions could be revisited by members who were unable to attend the meeting.

5.1.6   Transition to Sub-Projects

The opportunity for several sub-projects emerged within the inquiry group that involved groups of people outside of our research group. The sub-projects were often designed between one or two co-researchers with the wider research group providing feedback on the research and session design.

Emergent sub-projects are a common occurrence of the Co-operative Inquiry method. These sub-projects often drawn in data from outside the inquiry group that contributes to the data collected around the topic of inquiry.

The sub-projects undertaken focused on using online storytelling in the contexts of education, leadership and an online facilitation training programme.

5.1.7 Inspiring Online Participation Using Student Net

An opportunity emerged for one of the co-researchers, to investigate the potential of appreciative storytelling with a group of student teachers she was training. The co-researcher's practice involved the training of secondary (high school) teachers via a combination of residential and distance learning at the Christchurch College of Education in New Zealand. She wanted to use storytelling to facilitate a professional practice session using the college's intranet chat tool, called *Student Net*.

A sub-project was launched to investigate the potential of appreciative storytelling to inspire participation and engagement using the Student Net chat tool. The goal of the investigation was to see if a combined process approach of both storytelling and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperider, 1986; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) could inspire further online participation in the sharing of professional practice learnings. The student group had a strong culture and a well established history of working together remotely over a year, and had also met each other in-person during several three-week-long residential training programmes.

A plan was developed for the research sub-project, which was then shared with the wider research group for their feedback and input into the design of the session (see Appendix H Mid-placement Meeting Process and Guidelines). The chat session was a new and voluntary initiative for both the trainer and the nine distance students who chose to participate. The chat session was conducted and facilitated by the trainer over 90 minutes on 24 March 2006.

Students chose to put themselves into a group of three and each had a turn sharing a positive story from their practice. After each story was told, two of the audience members would take on a *Critical Friend* role (see Costa & Kallick, 1993) and asked probing questions to enable the storyteller to gain fresh insights into their work. The goal of using the critical friend approach was to provide an outsider's view of the story, some independent questioning to ensure that the focus was maintained, and to provide an alternative source of information or expertise for the storyteller.

At the end of the chat session, a follow-up questionnaire was emailed to all participants and collected over the following week (for summarized responses

from participants see Appendix I Student Teacher Feedback). The trainer of the session facilitated the chat session as a *critical friend* (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) and rotated between the sub-groups. She was interviewed several weeks after the chat session.

5.1.7.1 Learning from others

A strong benefit was identified in providing an appreciative forum for students to share their experiences, particularly when it was focused on their own professional practice development. When asked to *Describe 1-2 learnings you gained from the online chat experience,* one participant said:

> It was really helpful to learn that the others were experiencing similar issues in the classroom and it was useful to be able to discuss them when they were happening rather than after the practice.

Another said:

> I was able to share information with others and reflect on the teaching that I had been doing.

Some students intended to take their learnings from the session into their future practice.

> It was great to get ideas on lessons from others to take back and try later in the classroom.

Another student found that the session helped her to establish a measure of her own success in relation to others:

> I learned that some of my course-mates were struggling and some were succeeding – it gave me a measure of my own success and experience.

5.1.7.2 Connecting with others and reducing isolation

The student teachers placed a high value on the opportunity to connect and dialogue with their peers using the appreciative stories:

> Being able to connect with other people from my class, in the same boat as me!

> Being able to share and give support made all the difference and lets you know there are others out there going through the same experiences as you.

The student teachers found the session was an opportunity to connect with others during a busy time when connecting would normally be too difficult.

> To be able to touch base with everyone when we were on practice – it was reassuring to be able to "talk" to the others without feeling guilty about encroaching on their precious free time.

> …it is really essential for distance students to be able to catch up with their lecturer and peers during placement – as it is we get quite isolated and it is helpful to be able to check on issues and also to be able to find out if we are on the right track. The helpful suggestions we can get from our peers are invaluable.

5.1.7.3   Were the student-teachers inspired?

Four of the student teachers said that they were inspired during the session. Inspiration was gained from ideas learnt from others and hearing that others were experiencing similar problems or feelings.

When asked how they would rate the experience overall (1 being poor and 10 being excellent), students gave the following responses: 8, 9, 9 , 4 , a fun learning experience, encouraging, it gave me things to think about, not applicable, 1 - frustrating because I couldn't connect.

While some guidance was provided on protocols for the chat, more participant experience with chat rooms and more instructions on being a *critical friend* would have enhanced the session. Management of the interruptions and changes in the group boundaries was also called for. A strong desire for more storytelling was called for by the students, and most recommended that the opportunity be offered again.

5.1.7.4   Reflections from the trainer-facilitator

Several reflections were made by the trainer-facilitator when completing the follow-up questionnaire (see Appendix W Trainer-Facilitator Feedback for her full responses) and in her post-event interview (see Appendix J Trainer-Facilitator Interview for her comments). Firstly, she was appreciative of the benefit in

providing a forum for her distance students to share experiences when they were on their professional practice. She identified a key value in the opportunity for students to connect and dialogue:

> I was surprised at the positive response in the feedback and realize this is very valuable. I will continue to develop a structure to enable the students to dialogue meaningfully and professionally during their practice.

She identified a tension between being in a trainer and then in a facilitator role and the expectations from students that she would be mentoring them during the chat session. She also identified a key issue regarding the need for balance between the time spent storytelling and being in critical friend mode afterwards - quizzing about the story. She suggested a more minimalist critical friend approach might be more effective. Also, one student had some technical challenges and not having technical support available was identified as further suggestion for improving the experience for students.

Process recommendations for online chat sessions in the future included the suggestion to have an opening and a closing circle with all present in one chat room before breaking into small groups, a similar process to that used in Open Space Technology (see Owen, 1997a; 1997b).

5.1.7.5   When was the trainer inspired herself?

The trainer felt most inspired when she saw that the students were talking about their teaching experiences and were acknowledging and supporting each other.

> I felt inspired when I popped in and everyone had started talking about their teaching experiences and were acknowledging and supporting each other. I was very happy that so many attempted to join in and I was pleased that they responded to the invitation rather than the requirement.
>
> I'm also delighted about the amount of the positive feedback I got about the benefits to students.

5.1.7.6   Summary

In this sub-project study, appreciative storytelling was considered an important part of developing relationships and inspiring participation within the student

group. Students found they had similar experiences but that they were unique as well. The experience helped address a sense of isolation that some had been experiencing and key professional development learnings were able to be shared amongst the students. Managing the group boundaries was again important. Therefore, the need for the group to open and close as one full group was identified as a key process learning, as well as providing adequate technical support to enable everyone to participate.

5.1.8 Leadership Stories via Video Conferencing

A following project was initiated by two participants from Global Learning in Canberra, Australia to explore stories about leadership using video conferencing. The goal was to build on a face-to-face four-day leadership programme with twenty middle managers. The managers were from a large Australian government agency that delivers services all around Australia. Some managers were located in cities and some in remote communities. They were Australians mainly of European descent, ranging from mid 20s to late 40s in age, but there were also people from Australian aboriginal, South Asian and Caribbean backgrounds. Participants had attended a four-day residential module three weeks previously and participated in a series of weekly online tasks in the two weeks that followed.

From eight locations around Australia, they logged into a virtual conference room within the department's IT system. They had been given some process instructions, which invited them to share leadership victory or challenge stories, followed by discussion to explore aspects of the story and to identify any burning issues raised. (For detailed process instructions see *Video Conference Session Instructions* at the bottom of Appendix X Video Conference Interview).

The stories that were told during the sessions related to the participants' experiences of dealing with a challenge in their leadership environment and their own personal development. These stories often identified a third person, such as a mentor, manager or colleague who had a significant impact on the storyteller. This third party had demonstrated leadership and shown particular values in their behavior that had inspired the storyteller. Some of these stories also had a living or traveling in another culture theme to them.

Participants offered feedback that they were fully absorbed and engaged in the stories and strongly valued the lessons learned by the storytellers. The sessions generated more openness, trust and personal disclosure.

> Using the leader's own experience, the leader was able to connect with the team member and empathise with them. Using this method, communication and trust developed which improved both their working and personal relationship.

People offered feedback at a later stage in the process that they were fully absorbed and engaged in the story and the value of the lessons to the story teller and to themselves (the listener). It triggered more openness, trust and personal disclosure.

Positive outcomes identified from the storytelling session included the building of personal trust, active open listening, and learning that people's perceptions can be different.

5.1.8.1 Summary

Although the video conferencing technology was considered clumsy, key benefits identified included being able to see everyone, being able to see that the team was happy (visual feedback of the team's emotions), and that there was deepened honesty and deeper listening by both management and other team members. One participant decided to organize further fortnightly conferences to improve his manager's awareness of the day-to-day work contributions his team members were providing.

Suggestions for improving the facilitation of future meetings included the need to be more inclusive of those who are at video conference centres by themselves, and that the facilitator(s) must control the speaking order to avoid too much cross-talk. (See Appendix X for an interview with Global Learning on the Use of Leadership Stories via Video Conferencing).

5.1.9 Blog Storytelling

A third sub-project was launched in the following two months to investigate storytelling using the medium of a web blog. One of the co-researchers was leading an online facilitation skills training programme and *Storytelling and Dialogue* was a topic to be covered within the programme. A blog was set up for

the eleven participants using Blogger™ (www.blogger.com). The blog was facilitated over four weeks by one of the training programme's participants (see section entitled The stories that were told in Appendix Y Feedback from Online Facilitation Programme for details of the blog conversation and feedback from participants).

Participants found the blog tool very familiar, and easier to use than the forum tool they had been using previously in the programme. The blog was also considered a fun tool for people to use. One participant said:

> It was fun, I went and found lots of blogs on facilitation and put messages on lots of places I hadn't been to before. I looked at the other participants' blogs too.

Participants were asked to submit a funny facilitation fable based on an experience that they had had with their own groups. As participant stories flowed and comments were posted, themes began to emerge from the group sharing. The stories chosen and told generated insights for participants. One participant summarized this by commenting:

> It is good to see an emerging theme and a variety of responses. That helps me understand other participants. Their responses provide insights into who they are and helps me relate to them more personally.

Another said:

> Stories reveal a lot about passions, beliefs, personalities and experiences. They are rich with images and are wonderful opportunities to learn about each other – more of that!

Other participants, however, found storytelling on the blog to be challenging. It was difficult for some to produce a story.

> I found it difficult to just produce a story - maybe if there was more context around the storytelling, it would have been more beneficial for me.

Although the blog facilitator opened with an example story, a clearer context for the storytelling may have been useful, and more options to tell different stories other than fun ones may have made the process more effective. Participant feedback included:

I don't think you can force storytelling. I think it is better when it comes naturally as part of a conversation.

I like storytelling, but find it difficult online.

One story almost had me rolling on the floor with laughter, it got my imagination going. I thought I'd had tough groups… I think we needed more options/story choices as it was hard for most to think something up.

5.1.9.1 Summary

As the group was mostly new to blogging, the exercise was novel and interesting for them. When using the blogging system, opening with a story seemed to be less effective at drawing the group together than it had been previously with the telephone, chat, video conferencing and email introductions. Constraining participant's choices to present a funny facilitation fable also appeared to constrain some members' participation in the exercise. Keeping the story choice options open to a group may be a useful approach for facilitators and more beneficial for participants.

5.1.10 Storytelling in Second Life™

Following on from the sub-project investigating storytelling using a blog, a fourth sub-project was generated to investigate storytelling using the medium of a Second Life™ (www.secondlife.com). Changes in the format of the following semester of the *Online Facilitation Skills* training programme meant that the *Storytelling and Dialogue* topic was to be covered within in the 3-D interactive world of Second Life™. It was hoped that the 3-D interactive environment would enhance the storytelling by providing a sense of place and a storytelling metaphor for the group and the stories told.

5.1.10.1 What is Second Life™?

Each person joining Second Life™ creates their own cartoon-like avatar that represents them in the 3D world. Participants travel around the various online environments, and interact with each other. Second Life™ is an internet-based virtual world that launched on 23 June 2003. It was developed by Linden Research, Inc (commonly referred to as Linden Lab). Second Life™ came to the

attention of international mainstream news media in late 2006 and early 2007 (Sege, 2006; Harkin, 2006; Parker, 2007; Lagorio, 2007). A downloadable client browser called the Second Life Viewer enables users, called residents, to interact with each other through moveable avatars, providing an advanced social network service combined with general aspects of a metaverse[10]. Residents can explore, meet other residents, socialize, participate in individual and group activities, and create and trade virtual items and services with one another (Atkins, 2007).

Second Life™ provided an accessible environment for the training group to explore the potential of a 3D environment for group work and the facilitation of storytelling in building online relationships. The group had access to a virtual island attached to the New Media Consortium's campus[11] that had a range of group environments that could be used for the storytelling session.

Nine participants joined in the session. The participants were from Auckland and Nelson in New Zealand; Sydney, Canberra and Perth in Australia; Hong Kong; Uppsala in Sweden; and Den Haag (The Hague) in The Netherlands. Participants were asked to create their own avatar in advance of the storytelling session. They were invited to also explore the tutorials on the Orientation Island within Second Life™ to familiarize themselves with the virtual world and navigation.

The storytelling session was held on 9 October 2006 at a virtual camp fire setup for the group on Boracay Island in Second Life™. Participants were invited to share their journeys about becoming a facilitator, and to reflect on the experience in the 3-D environment and through the use of storytelling. It was a rewarding experience for many in the group to experience each other's avatars within the 3-D environment.

> When we were sitting around the fire on the Thursday SL session I
> felt as if we had finally come into "the room" together, and with
> the background work we had done behind us and basic
> introductions handled already, it felt like we had this amazing

---

[10] The Metaverse is a fictional virtual world, described in Neal Stephenson's 1992 science fiction novel Snow Crash, where humans, as avatars, interact with each other and software agents, in a three-dimensional space that uses the metaphor of the real world.
[11] The NMC Campus is an experimental effort developed to inform the New Media Consortium's work in educational gaming. See www.nmc.org/about for details.

opportunity to engage each other about this matter of facilitation and what it means to us and how it can be used in service in the world.

Fig. 5.6 Storytelling session on Boracay Island in Second Life™

5.1.10.2 A strong emotional connection

A reflection discussion on the Second Life™ experience followed on the training programme's discussion forum. Participants found the experience emotionally engaging, lots of fun, and many wanted to explore the environment further after the programme. Combining storytelling with the interactive 3-D fireplace metaphor meant that participants' connections with each other were on an emotional level. One participant described this emotional connection by saying:

> The SL experience allowed people's personalities to come through.
>
> Engaged my emotions and seemed most like a face to face group.

Another reflected:

> In an environment where the clues to peoples inner self are distant and difficult to detect this is the place where I will come to help me gather those clues and I thank you <name removed> for setting it up and all of you who have contributed.

Another commented:

> More than any other tool we have used so far it taught me about myself as a facilitator and what I need to be awake to. I referred to

my need to monitor my emotions and it was that aspect that I was referring to: If I am feeling frustrated, what does that mean for me as facilitator? If I want to go silly and have some fun, what will I do as a facilitator when some of the group want to get down to business and others are in the fun stage? I liked the pressure it placed on me to listen without interrupting and having to find other ways to indicate that I was listening.

5.1.10.3 A felt sense of place

The Second Life™ experience was described as being very close to what participants experience when meeting face-to-face. It was considered by some a very direct experience with an environment or place.

With <name removed>'s help I managed an appearance and was able to soak up the atmosphere and after you all left <name removed> and I sat quietly around the fire enjoying the glow and talking about life the universe and everything…this time with <name removed> reminded me of many times sitting around the camp fire when most had gone to bed and gently, quietly exploring the space."

Another participant described another of the participants as though she had been sitting beside the person face-to-face:

I felt your quiet presence sitting on the log next to me in your white muscle shirt :-) trying to orientate yourself when we had all had an opportunity to do so earlier.

Another described the experience as quite natural and summarized her experience by saying:

…the session around the virtual fireplace was so natural and really felt like I was present with others. We managed, quite naturally, to blend story with fun and I certainly went away with a sense of ease and satisfaction…

5.1.10.4 Changes in the perceptions of place

One participant had found her pre-conception about the experience in the 3-D environment had changed after the Second Life™ encounter. When responding to another participant's post on the forum she said:

> Dear <name removed>, I really relate to what you are saying about creating an artificial world when the real world needs so much attention, but after my SL experience, I have changed my mind. Of all the ways we have "met" so far the SL environment was for me the most rewarding…The SL allowed people's personalities to come through. Engaged my emotions and seemed most like a face to face group.

These comments reflect elements of *embodiment* in the sense described by Merleau-Ponty (1962) in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. He argues that humans are in their bodies, and that lived experience of this body denies the detachment of subject from object, mind from body. Similarly the Second Life™ experience contributed to a highly embodied experience through participant's senses.

5.1.10.5 Summary

Key findings in the Second Life™ storytelling experience are that all the participants felt a strong sense of place and they connected with each other directly on an emotional level. As part of these findings, two key differences were identified when using Second Life™. One was that the group had a perceived environment or place that they were experiencing and interacting with. The virtual campfire added to the metaphor of storytelling and engaged participants with the place as well as the conversation and story being shared. This notion of *place* as a culturally inhabited locus is also articulated in some detail in research by Clear (2007) and Harrison & Dourish (1996).

This relates back to comments made earlier in section 3.4.3 about perceptions of place and cultural differences. The 3-D environment of Second Life™ helped create a sense of a shared space that participants could move into – participants make a conscious shift leaving their own sense of personal space and moving into a meeting space in of the virtual campfire.

The second key difference was that the group interacted with each other on a strongly emotional level. The emotional connection assisted with the depth of sharing and the depth of listening in the group.

5.2   SUMMARY

Several key findings have been described and discussed in this chapter. These are summarized in the following table.

Table 5.4 Key findings summary table

Key Findings Summary Table	
Email and web profiles A comparison survey between email story introductions and individual web profiles.	The use of story in group introductions assisted the creation of a more human connection, more aspects of others' could be seen, and more points of connection were made. • Email introductions had a positive impact on bringing people within the group closer; web profiles had little influence. • 62% more aspects were identified in story introductions than in reading web profiles. • 84% more connections were made through story introductions than web profiles. • 43% more trust aspects were identified through story introductions than in web profiles.
Skype™ conferencing Observations about storytelling in a real-time experience with audio. The use of a burning issue question approach to elicit stories.	Despite technical challenges the group was able to connect on a new level (from text to audio). The real-time experience and audio channel was very effective in bringing participants closer together and giving a new sense one another. Managing the way in which people came in and out of audio groups assists with smoothing disturbances and keeps the group boundaries clear. Stories about things happening in the background can be tied into the group conversation and inspire and illicit stories from others. The recall of events with a group of peers provided new validated learning for some and good ideas for better practice for others.
Telephone conferencing How to define what was a story and what types of stories the group were interested in sharing and hearing. The power of sharing worst facilitation experiences.	Value was found in hearing from participants from different cultures and exploring the different cultural approaches facilitators could choose when facilitating difficult situations. While using teleconferencing was highly effective, a downside was its lack of inclusiveness. Participants who missed the real-time conference sessions felt that they had less ownership of the decisions and were less inclined to put them into action or to participate in the discussions about them done via email.
Internet Relay Chat The use of story to open facilitated chat sessions. Tapping into the emotional depth of story.	Using a story to open a chat session was a good way to begin as it set up and created a culture of storytelling within the mood of the group. Post story reflections and feedback assisted in deepening the experience for both the audience and tellers.
Web conferencing How web conferencing may assist the storytelling	Having a visual web conferencing tool was useful in maintaining the structure of the session. Participants could pose questions and comments by text

	during the telling of the story and these could be woven into the story by the storyteller.
process. The use of web conferencing for post-story reflection.	Web conferencing provided a quick way to collect feedback on the session that could be revisited by members who were unable to attend the meeting.
Student Net Chat Investigation of the potential of appreciative storytelling with a group of student teachers to inspire participation	Peer learning helped establish participants' degree of success in relation to others. High value was placed on the opportunity to connect and dialogue with peers using the appreciative stories. Inspiration was gained from ideas learnt from others and hearing that others were experiencing similar problems or feelings. The need for the group to open and close as one full group was identified as a key process learning, as well as providing adequate technical support for everyone to participate.
Video conferencing Exploring stories of challenge in the leadership environment using video conferencing.	Participants were fully absorbed and engaged in the stories and strongly valued the lessons learned by the storytellers. The sessions triggered more openness, trust and personal disclosure. Key benefits identified included being able to see everyone, having visual feedback of the team's emotions and that there was deepened honesty and deeper listening by both management and other team members.
Blogging Sharing funny facilitation fables via a blog. Post event reflections were collected.	Themes began to emerge from the group sharing and the stories told generated insights for participants. Opening with a story seemed to be less effective at drawing the group together than it had been previously with the telephone, chat, video conferencing and email introductions. Constraining participant's choices of story also appeared to constrain some member's participation.
Second Life™ Meeting around a virtual campfire in Second Life™ and sharing stories about how a facilitation training group came to be facilitators. Transcripts were collected during sessions, and reflections were captured via email and a group forum.	The group had a perceived environment or place that they were experiencing and interacting with as well as the storytelling. The virtual campfire added to the metaphor of storytelling and engaged participants with the place as well as the conversation and story being shared. The group interacted with each other on a much more emotional level than they had using the other online group tools.

From the inquiry group's investigations it was noticeable that the use of storytelling offered a useful means for facilitating the development of relationships between members across the different communication channels investigated above. Key themes that storytelling offers across the range of media investigated are that storytelling can act as an emotional connector between people, it can offer deep learnings, it can inspire others and it assists with reducing the isolation experienced by some online.

Storytelling in introductions assisted people to better present aspects of themselves and to create more points of connection with each other. Photos had

an impact and assisted trust and the humanness of connections. Opening chat sessions with a story provoked thinking in participants, sparked related stories, and served to build on an emerging group theme. Telephone and Skype™ sessions provided a familiar tool that allowed the inquiry group to connect on a whole new level. Web conferencing assisted storytelling sessions by providing a strong visual reference for members during the meeting and gave all a sense of where they were in the process. Participants telling stories via video conferencing were fully absorbed and engaged in the story and enjoyed the value of the lessons to both the storyteller and the audience. While the blog storytelling was rich with images and provided wonderful opportunities to learn about each other, it was not for everyone. Storytelling in Second Life™ provided a sense of place that people interacted with, and strong emotional connections were made through using the 3D environment.

Storytelling can help improve human connections across a wide range of different computer mediated communication channels. It appears to be particularly useful for addressing aspects of disembodiment experienced by facilitators and groups working in online mediums. Storytelling, as a technique, can be introduced in combination with other facilitated techniques to build online relationships and thus improve a group's internal relationships and its effectiveness.

Internal relationships are established between members through the ability to connect with each other at a deeper – heart level. This kind of connection in groups creates an opening for possibility. People are also presenced more clearly to one another as they establish their identity through the sharing of their stories. Areas of connection are seen and links are established between participants and their stories.

Although follow through effectiveness as a shared construct was not measured what is shown clear is the successful use of a face-to-face facilitation technique in building connections, trust and identity between participants of an online group.

The implications of these finding for the audience of the research are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Implications

In Second Life™: Sharing stories of challenges faced

6.0   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss some of the key aspects, themes, and ideas arising from the findings that may have relevance for the field of group facilitation. Reflections on the storytelling art form are discussed; functions of storytelling, and online facilitation introduced in Chapter 2 are also revisited. Guidelines for online facilitation practice and some areas for further research are offered.

6.1   REFLECTIONS ON THE STORYTELLING ART FORM

When thinking about and reflecting on the findings, several observations fitted well into the five aspects of the storytelling art form as articulated by the National Storytelling Network. The first section in this chapter returns to the five defining aspects introduced earlier in Chapter 2.2.

6.1.1   A Two-way Interaction

The inquiry's investigations presented an interesting enhancement to face-to-face storytelling's two-way interaction. In particular, participants had an extra text channel in their mode of communication when using the chat software tools and sharing stories via an audio channel. This provided an additional interactive feedback channel during the storytelling process that was unobtrusive and allowed for audience members to articulate their experience, or ask questions, while a story was being told. Storytellers could choose to pick up on the text comments made or questions asked, and they gained valuable feedback from the story's impact without an interruption to the story flow. This enhancement extends beyond what is generally experienced in a face-to-face storytelling setting. The extension enhanced the group's experience at both ends of the interaction. Storytellers could get another direct in-vivo feedback, over and above the audio feedback channel, and audience members could contribute something of their experience for all to share in as the storytelling progressed.

A three-channel interaction is, in essence, available when storytelling online with computing assistance. Thus audience members can quite explicitly influence and participate in the story as it is told. This layer of participation provides a new dimension to the facilitation of storytelling online, and provides

an interesting opportunity for facilitators to engage an audience more explicitly in the story as it is created. *How might this extra channel impact on online relationship development?* The impact of this extra channel would be an interesting and beneficial area for further research. More thoughts on this are offered in 6.7 Areas for Further Research.

6.1.2 Oral and Written Expressions

The two key areas of emotional connection and in-direct contact were evident through the inquiry group's investigations These are discussed here in relation to the aspects of the oral and written expressions within the storytelling art form.

6.1.2.1 Developing emotional connections

In many groups expressing and developing a shared understanding of things is often vital to group success. Emotional connections between members are useful for supporting shared understanding processes. With online groups so strongly focused on their tasks in the initial stages developing emotional and relational connections can be challenging for leaders and facilitators. Emoticons can go some way in emulating emotions within chat conversation and enhances meaning in the language shared. However, within the metaphor of a 3-D fireside storytelling experience, participants can step into a fuller fantasy space of storytelling and experience a rich and full experience – almost as real as if members are meeting in person. The 3-D environment provides a sense of place that none of the other online software applications can provide. In an online environment, like Second Life™, emotional actions are created by artificially intelligent (AI) gestures that create a range of visual cues for participants. These varied expressions all enhance both the facilitated process and the stories shared when sharing oral and written expressions online.

6.1.2.2 Direct contact - indirectly

The experience of storytelling in the study does challenge an aspect of storytelling that has been considered central - that direct contact between teller and listener is essential (McWilliams, 1997). A storytelling climate was developed within inquiry sessions across a range of software tools including email and the process

was not hindered by the group being geographically distributed or mediated by very thin technologies.

One could argue that indirect storytelling has been alive and well in the form of books. However, storytelling differentiates from books in the two-way interaction that makes it more living and co-created. So it appears the online medium there is a new and emergent form that has aspects of both but is neither.

In some cases using indirect modes of communication provides improved access to storytelling. Typing literacy is an interesting example being an important factor for two participants who were dyslexic. Dyslexic people can find the keyboard and screen useful for both reading and writing. The computer assists with the crafting and spelling of words. The asynchronous nature of some online communication provides space to think about and articulate responses. Typing becomes more usable than a pen or pencil and for reading use of highlighted of text and the cursor to assist the pacing of reading.

6.1.3 Using Actions

There are various means by which action can be present and effective when online participants are not face-to-face or in real time. These have advantages and disadvantages. A range of approaches can be used to simulate action when storytelling online. For example, audio tools allow vocalization to be used. Volume, quality, pitch, rate, and pauses can all carry important meaning. However, one thing to remember is that choosing a real-time audio mode may result in excluding some participants from the conversation and the decision making if they are unable to be present at the chosen time. Emoticons used in text chat also are useful to simulate actions and present some indication of emotional response – these help bridge a gap in visual feedback and interaction.

The 3-D virtual environment, such as that offered by Second Life™, offers participants a virtual body to interact with other bodies in an environment. This evokes and stimulates varying degrees of presence and engagement. Unexpected and spontaneous actions can happen through novice use with groups who are new to the interface. These unexpected spontaneous actions are both beneficial and unhelpful at times. They are beneficial because they create some fun and playfulness with participants as they enjoy the expressive life in their

avatars. They are potentially unhelpful as they can act as a distraction from the focus of the group process.

In one example during a Second Life™ storytelling session, one participant went off flying and exploring the other places in the virtual island. The facilitator of the session noticed that her avatar had left the fireside where the group were sitting and intervened to check that she was still with the group. The participant replied to say that she was following the session via the audio and was still actively listening and engaged. The group could still hear her ok. One member then asked if she was a *doodler* when she talked on the phone. This created some great laughter in the group as people related the metaphor of doodling on the telephone to the group's Second Life™ experience and interaction. Several participants then also noticing the group's moment and used the *laughter* gesture with their avatars and together the avatars laughed along with the participants.

One interpretation is that this is an interesting example of a difference around perceptions and expectations around attention, visibility playfulness and rules of belonging. In a face-to-face session, the action of a participant leaving a group circle would usually signal their leaving of the group. In the example above, group members could still be within the group's boundaries – connected through the audio channel and also expressing themselves through actions of their avatar in a similar way that doodling happens whilst participants are on a telephone conference call.

This presents one interpretation from a group facilitation perspective grounded in the ethics of freedom of choice, self responsibility, and balancing the creative tension between autonomy and cooperation. Assumptions in this are unlikely to be consistent in other theories of knowing where the interpretation is grounded in alternative theories of evidence.

6.1.4 Presenting a Narrative

Throughout the research project there was an ever-present desire to share and experience stories with other professionals. There was a strongly desire to hear the stories directly from peers and professionals in the field. This is likely to be

true of many work groups as they join together in a similar shared purpose to learn about practice.

It might be argued that the inquiry group was a group of practitioners who were simply *recounting events* rather than storytelling. A *recount* is the retelling or recounting of past experiences. Recounts are generally based on the direct experiences of the author but may also be imaginative or outside the author's experience (Education Department of Western Australia, 1997). Reflecting on Pentland's four criteria on what constitutes a story however there are several indicators that signify that the inquiry group were sharing stories rather than simply recalling events:

1. *Sequence in time* - while stories tended to focus on the climax of a particular facilitated event, much of the beginning sequences were short frame-ups, with strong emphasis given to the crisis, or climax, and the resolution, or not, of a particular group situation or facilitative dilemma.

2. *A focal actor or actors* - stories tended to contain the group facilitator, or other leader as the main protagonist. Other focal actors included disruptive participants, a manager or CEO, or someone external to the main group who intervened in the process.

3. *An identifiable narrative voice* - The identifiable voice or perspective was that told from the practicing facilitator's perspective. The inquiry group strongly desired stories that would inform their practice and this was the predominant narrative voice of stories shared in the inquiry.

4. *Evaluative frame of reference* – the meaning and cultural value in shared stories was in the focus on practice.

Further, echoing the view expressed well by McWilliams (1997) that storytelling emerges from the dynamic interaction between teller and listener, stories were interactive and involved some audience input, whereas a recall does not have the same interactive process.

The inquiry also illustrates that there are a range of ways that narratives can be shared and presented to others online. Presenting a story can be done in small dialogue-spaced chunks of text using the chat tools, allowing space for audience participation. In other situations, stories can be shared via audio and de-briefed upon afterwards to draw out potent aspects of practice for all to learn

from. Post-telling reflections can be shared and these deepen the experience, as both audience and storyteller articulate new learnings from the collaborative process.

With facilitator guidance, participants' experiences may be related and matched to the elements of common or mythological stories where a storyteller may be able to see themes, elements of plot, characters, and scenes of a particular story playing out in their real-life narratives. Raising awareness around the matching of stories to the mythological ties in well with suggestions put forth by Campbell (1972), and others about universal myths playing out in our daily lives. This matching provides a form of self-reflective structure for systemically exploring the motives and behaviors of those involved. New paths can be identified for future action through identifying and understanding the universal narrative at play and the key roles performed within it.

6.1.5   Encouraging Active Imagination

While the presence and nature of imagination was not a focus of the inquiry group, nor was there specific reference to it as an outcome of the storytelling processes developed and used, several things can be surmised and reasonably generalized. Imagination was present in audience members as they created images in their minds based on the description of the scene, the key characters and their pertinence in relation to professional practice. Using the storytelling art form allows for active engagement in collectively dreaming or imagining the experience of others. The engagement of imagination becomes presented in the form of new questions that audience members raise and in new stories that become sparked from a telling. Thus the purpose of storytelling can become fulfilled in new actions and questions that emerge within a group. Active imagination is very likely to be present when storytelling results in new questions or stories arising within the group conversation.

Reflection provides a link to imagination as an imaginative process. Imagination can be a way to envision one's professional identity in advance of, during and subsequent to actual practice (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2006). Reflection and self-reflection was highly present when storytelling was used. Reflection itself involves the use of imagination and is a useful indicator that

imagination has been present during the storytelling process. Imagination of the scene, the characters, the processes used and actions from the characters are all imagined within the storytelling process. As a group, participants most wanted to share stories from professional practice and there was often a strong focus on the elements of professional effectiveness within them. The scene of a group and the protagonist of the facilitator were common to all participants. The highly reflective nature of the inquiry group was most likely due to the nature and goals of that particular professional group. Facilitators are well known as reflective practitioners – in a similar way that teachers may desire to learn from those they teach – facilitators too aim to learn from the groups they lead and from the effectiveness of the processes they use.

6.2   FUNCTIONS OF STORYTELLING

This next section reflects on the four functional aspects of storytelling that were introduced in Chapter 2.3. Some important observations are presented for facilitators on the functions of storytelling in building group culture, purpose, creating connections between participants and in promoting openness within a group.

6.2.1   Stories Create Culture in Groups

How did our stories create culture in our group? A strong connection was created early on between members of the research group through the use of email introductions that included story – within several days of email exchange participants had all shared a strong desire to share stories, they had noticed several connections with each other, and identified a desire to learn from one another. In contrast, a similar process with a new group using a different software tool (a blog) proved to be ineffective at building a similar shared warm up or learning culture. When inviting participants of a recent online facilitation skills programme to introduce themselves, this time, using a blog posting rather than email to introduce themselves proved ineffective at creating the same culture within the group. Individuals' blog posts were shorter, less detailed, and didn't create a sense of group peerness or cohesion in the way that emailed stories had. Despite the blogs having photos of participants included, they were less able to

build on each other's postings, and the group email presented itself as a more effective mode of communication. As both email and blogging are asynchronous mediums, this difference in group unity confirms findings from others (e.g., Fulk, 1993; Rice & Love, 1987; Carlson, 1995; Carlson & Zmud, 1994) that channel selection has an important impact when facilitating the beginnings of an online group.

While it may be comparatively easy to develop a culture statement or agreement using teleconferencing, one of the biggest learnings comes from affirming that all participants need to be present and involved in the development of a group's culture. Developing a group culture statement in a sub-group will result in creating an in-group out-group effect where those who are not present will have no ownership of the decisions made, they will be less inclined to put those decisions into action, or to even join in the discussions about them afterwards.

Choose a process and communication mode that will be fully inclusive when developing agreements about how the group will work together. Choose an asynchronous software tool if needed as it will allow all participants to have the same opportunity to participate.

6.2.1.1   Archetypes may emerge

As more stories were shared in the inquiry group, it became evident that many had a similar story or experience from their practice. A learning culture developed as these were unearthed.

Participants begin to learn from each other's perspectives and sometimes, when sharing is encouraged, storytellers can come to see their own internalized stories in a different light. Shared stories will carry themes, behaviors, qualities and aspects that will be collectively valued. Aspects of these shared qualities may represent archetypical elements of a group's life and development – archetypes that might concretize the cultural values of groups of people and identify and distinguish one group as distinct from others.

6.2.2   Stories Are Purposeful

A useful aspect of online storytelling in this study was the way that it transferred knowledge about the internalized ways of being a facilitator. A key attractor for

sharing stories was a desire to learn from peers and to identify best practices. For example, one of the key aspects of becoming a group facilitator is learning to develop internal discipline (see Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006), or the ability to facilitate oneself (see Hunter, 2007), when working with groups. The storytelling process allowed facilitators to easily articulate a descriptive scenario, or a situation, and to portray their inner dialogue, internal conflict, or learning edge from recalling facilitation experiences. The stories were of group resistance to change, fractious challenging situations and key moments of group transformation.

A specific purpose was not always articulated for each session or sub project. The over-arching purpose for the sessions was to forward the inquiry and address the research question of *how is storytelling beneficial in building relationships in a facilitated online group?* Individual stories themselves also did not have an articulated purpose, however, this would have been useful to establish. Having aligned on a purpose for each story would have provided an opportunity to reflect back on how effectively a story had achieved its purpose.

A focus of stories was often on *what to do when... what happened in your groups? What was the key question that shifted the group?* Audience members shared some common facilitation language and experiences and thus could analyze and discuss the internalized ways of being that were occurring during the key learning points of shared stories. New knowledge could be identified and practices shared that were grounded in both the narrative of a shared story and in the process of learning it through an interactive process with peers - storytelling.

6.2.3   Storytelling Creates Connection and Belonging

Beebe et al. (2002) describe non-verbal communication as the primary way in which people communicate feelings and attitudes toward each other, and that these messages are usually more believable than verbal messages. Furthermore, they suggest that nonverbal communication plays a major role in relationship development. While it is the non-verbal communication that is often low or missing when working across many of the online tools used in this PhD study, benefits were evident for relationship development in the non-verbal and non-immediate aspects of asynchronous communication. A keen example lies in the

non-verbal, non-immediate aspect of email where one of its greatest advantages is that the reader and responder has in some ways a much larger space within which to think and ponder and articulate a response.

The video conferencing in real-time and the 3D environment of Second Life™ provided one of the highest levels of access to non-verbal communication. Second Life™, assisted participants by providing a substitute form of non-verbal communication (body language) both as a part of the embedded AI avatar actions and those actions that occurred when users interacted with each other in the 3D environment. The video conferencing was the closest experience to a face-to face group and had non-verbal information richness that supported the communication.

Mirroring Taylors (1996) comments that people tell stories because they hope to find or create significant connections between things, one key connector with online storytelling is that long after the storytelling event has passed, and many of the events and occurrences have faded into vague recollections, the stories and their impact on us, as well as the distinct memory of the storyteller, are still with us and relatively easily recalled. Meeting the storyteller face-to-face long after the event can also be a very pleasant mutual experience. Having met several of the PhD research co-researchers face-to-face for the first time at facilitator conferences since the data-collection phase has been a rewarding experience. When we meet we remember the stories we have shared and our process of coming together to learn from one another. The strong sense of connection and belonging is still present. Such is the power of stories and the deep listening that occurs around them. In some instances where the stories were about turning points in our lives, I can still recall the stories and the faces of those who were there in each session or sub-project and what their reactions where to those stories. Storytelling can evoke a re-living of those moments at later times.

In contrast to a description by Senehi (2002) who sees storytelling as a profoundly inclusive process due to its accessibility and that accessibility itself, naturally prevents exclusion in society (p. 144); online storytelling will not always be accessible to everyone in an online group at all times. While the storytelling process itself is inclusive, the nature of meeting online often means that not everyone can always take part at the same time. Some participants will likely not be able to use the full range of software tools available, others will

simply prefer to join in asynchronously. Time-zones, commitments and travelling also are a challenge to collective real-time access.

6.2.4   Storytelling Promotes Openness

Two co-researchers from the research group were dyslexic. One described the inquiry group being the only group that she had ever felt comfortable being 100% open with about her dyslexia. She spoke about her challenges when working as a face-to-face facilitator; particularly when a group wanted written material or work which involved numbers. In the inquiry group she felt she was able to participate as her full self and found a sense of peerness through the sharing of introduction stories and excitement of the early genesis of the inquiry group setup. This echoes some of the research by Walther (1996) who found that partners working via computer mediated communication could not only become intimate over time, but may even become hyper-personal and create a greater sense of intimacy online than face-to-face partners can. Turkle (1995) might describe this intimacy as increased risk-taking with personal revelations, however, the phenomenon appears to more support research by McKenna & Bargh (2000) who would see this as someone "expressing the way they truly feel and think" (, p. 62).

The group had also played a part in this process. She let one of the others in the group know about her situation and they had called for a *spelling doesn't count* statement in the group culture statement to allow her to be included more fully. The intention of the group was to create a clear possibility for two of the co-researchers to participate in the study. They both had the disability of Dyslexia. In the same way that wheel chair access provides possibility for disabled, so too was the intention of this particular request. This showed that the group valued this member as a whole person (Hunter, 2007) and that she could participate in a way that would work for her. The sharing of stories in the inquiry group's email introductions shortly before had created an openness that had not been available to her in other group situations. Social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) may also play a part here, predicting that when people perceive that rewards associated with self-disclosure outweigh costs, they will reveal personal information to indicate their commitment to the ongoing relationship, which will in turn increase relationship quality. This could further be assisted by the nature

of an online environment where there is less at stake for an individual. To leave the group, or be less visible, is much easier. It could also be due to the nature of the storytelling art form. It engenders openness. Others in the group expressing themselves through the storytelling form – willing to make themselves vulnerable in the group – had paved a path for others to follow. This is the nature of belonging in an online geographically distributed group.

6.3   ONLINE FACILITATION

This section returns to some of the contemporary dynamics and issues facing the group facilitation field described earlier in Chapter 3.1 and 3.2.

6.3.1   What is a Facilitator?

A fundamental shift has occurred in how I can now view the relationship between face-to-face group facilitation and online facilitation. Several thoughts have come together to assist this shifting process. One is revealing several ethical challenges for the online facilitator in the profession's *Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Facilitators* (see discussion in 6.3.2). Recent comments from colleagues and discussions around the impact of differing roles required when leading a recent online facilitation skills training programme have also shed light on a wide range of emerging ways that people can now easily work together across time and space in a range of blended realities.

Following the recent US presidential campaign and noting a poignant comment by CNN's senior political analyst David Gergen[12] attributing the success of Obama's electoral campaign to *a marriage between the internet and community organization*. He saw this new marriage as a clue to the new ways that people are coming together online and thus changing the landscape of politics in America. This too identifies too a change in how people working together for shared purpose leads to some interesting new thinking about the role of online facilitation and its relationship within the group facilitation profession.

The view represented below (Figure 6.1) would perhaps be typical of how the field might view the relationship between online facilitation and the field of

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[12] Also a professor of public service at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and director of its Center for Public Leadership.

group facilitation; seeing *online facilitation* as a sub-set or sub-discipline within the wider profession.
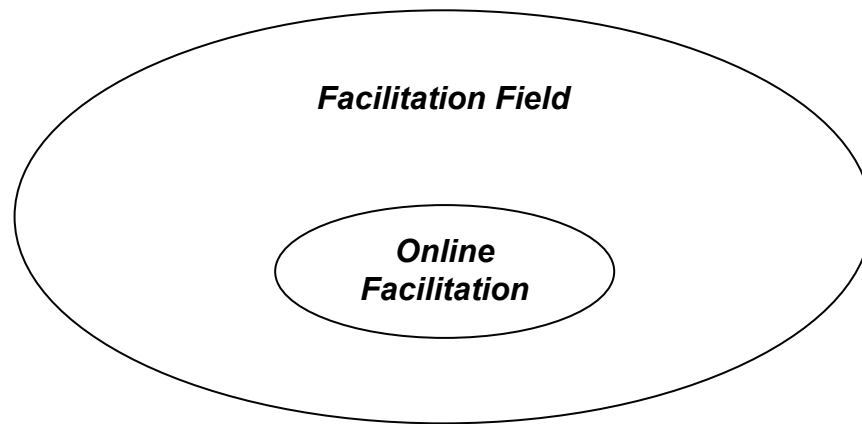
Fig. 6.1 Former view of group facilitation and online facilitation

6.3.1.1   Addressing a fundamental shift in group work

Group work is fundamentally changing and thus facilitation needs to change with it. Over just the last few decades, we've seen substantial movement from companies managed along functional lines, to new organizational forms based on cross-functional cooperation and online team-based work. Online group effectiveness has become increasing critical, and the need for facilitation skills in these new environments is evident. Organizational group work is becoming supported by new and emerging technologies and thus the nature of group work itself is becoming mediated by computing and telecommunication means.

Facilitators may need to shift from thinking of group work as something that is done predominantly face-to-face. There may be some catching up to do. As people move into a future of increasing global distributed teams, virtual organizations, online communities, distance learning and online training all these areas will require a new set of adapted facilitation skills. In these areas, and others, the world is coming closer together with expanding cultural and worldwide inclusiveness becoming much more possible.

The skills of online facilitation will present a real benefit to the effectiveness of these online groups and the ways they are now working. Reflecting on the shift in the ways groups work over the last two decades to a more distributed and computing and internet-mediated means, face-to-face group facilitation therefore continues to be useful for assisting groups when they meet

face-to-face; and online facilitation for the other times when groups are meeting. The domain of online facilitation focusing on groups working at one end of a continuum of how groups are now predominantly working (see figure 6.2 below).

| Groups meeting face to face, same-time | Groups meeting face to face computing assisted, same-time | Hybrid groups meeting - some face to face, some distributed, same-time | Distributed groups meeting same-time, computing assisted | Distributed groups meeting different-times, computing assisted |

Face-to-face facilitation   **Online Facilitation**
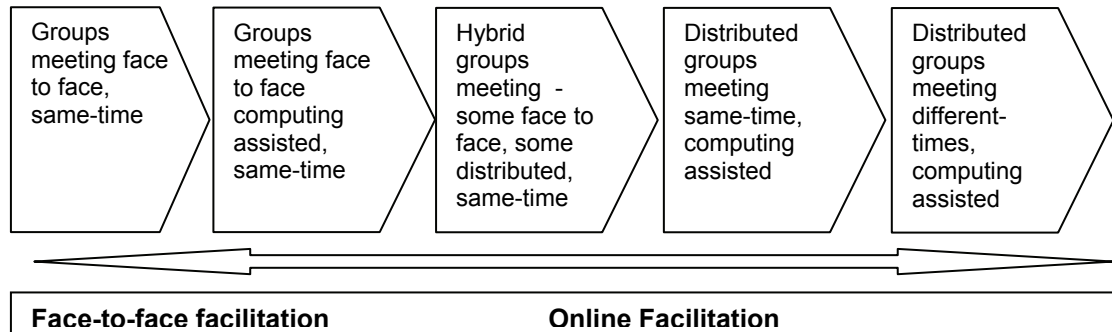
Fig. 6.2 A continuum of ways of groups working

Rather than online facilitation being a sub-set of group facilitation, it can be seen as a somewhat related skill-set alongside that of face-to-face group facilitation. See the Venn diagram (figure 6.3) below.

Facilitation Field   *Online Facilitation*
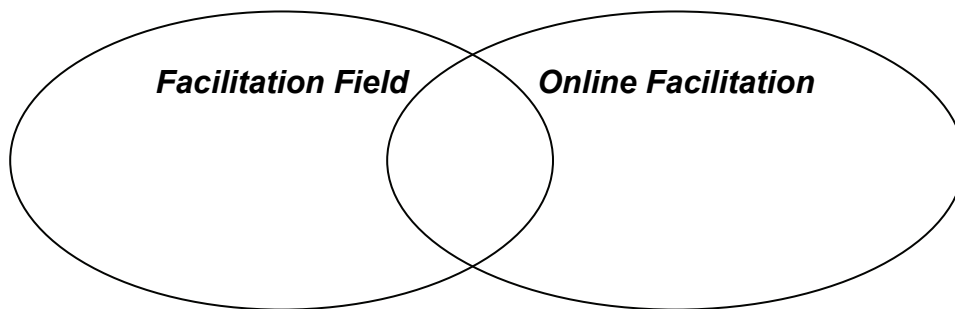
Fig. 6.3 New perspective on group facilitation and online facilitation

This new perspective does throw up a range of questions about the applicability of some aspects of face-to-face facilitation when applied online. Specifically, there are some areas of the *Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Facilitators* that may need rethinking in terms of online facilitation work. Other challenges lie in ensuring privacy and confidentiality of information, and in matching appropriate technology to the needs of groups.

6.3.2   Code of Ethics for Group Facilitators

The new perspective above opens up a wide opportunity for the profession to reflect on how the core skills of a facilitator can be adapted to meet the many new ways groups of people are now meeting. Aspects of the *Code of Ethics for Group*

Facilitators, for example, potentially present some new issues relating to its application in an increasingly internet and computer-mediated world. The focus of the code's development was mainly around face-to-face facilitation issues. The consensus at the time it was developed (2000 - 2002) was that online facilitation involves substantially the same ethical concerns as face-to-face facilitation (Hunter & Thorpe, 2005), which this study indicates is not so.

One area of contention is that of ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of a participant's information. Privacy and confidentiality continue to be difficult to guarantee online due to the easily shared and digital nature of online communications. Other issues include different legal requirements for public disclosure and the transfer of personal information across borders, and the blocking of software and content in some countries. It is argued that there is an average of 34 gigabytes of personal information now stored about each person on information systems around the world (see Hansell, 2004). Various aspects of people's lives are now easily transportable and shared across a range of computing systems and international borders. Participants in online meetings may be video taped, audio taped and that at times data (such as screen shots, images, audio and video) are likely to be captured through the computing systems used. Managers and IT personnel can easily access, join, or listen in on group conversations without their presence being obvious to those participating – including the facilitator. These aspects make it somewhat challenging for an online facilitator to ensure the complete safety of a group and protect their personal information.

Other opportunities the new perspective opens up are presented in reflecting on the IAF *Core Competencies* for group facilitators. A set of competencies for facilitators was developed and published in *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal* in Winter 2000, along with several commentaries by IAF members with suggestions for further refinement (Braun et al., 2000). These competencies have provided a basis for many facilitation training and accreditation programmes around the world. A review of these core facilitator competencies to see how they apply within an *online facilitation* context may be overdue. Online facilitators are likely to offer some interesting additions and differences to the core set of established competencies for face-to-

face facilitators. A range of new competencies, or additions to those existing, will emerge that take into account the extra roles that an online facilitator plays, such as a technology mediator, trainer, and technician.

6.3.3 Effectively Matching Tools, Processes and Agreement

Generating full participation continues to be a challenge for online facilitators. In order to meet objectives, new forms of consensus are required online that do not rely on fully explicit agreement being received. Silence sometimes needs to be taken as agreement in order for the group to move forward and not lose its momentum towards meeting the stated purpose. *Can agreement be considered as achieved when only half of the group responds to requests? What if the result is one third, or less?*

The time involved in gaining agreement can slow a group's progress, particularly when it requires full participation. It was discovered that it could take several weeks to agree on a suitable time when *most* of the group could meet. Despite articulating clear timeframes, it can sometimes take participants several days for some members to respond, and several more to reach agreement. Some participants didn't respond at all, others were happy to go with the decisions made by others – however this stance was not always expressed. Waiting for full agreement tended to lose the energy and commitment for those participants who had made themselves available early. As facilitators work consensually there can be a dilemma – to aim for full consensual agreement and potentially lose half the group waiting, or modify online processes to seek for zero disagreement to proposals rather than full agreement.

Matching processes, methods, and tools to the needs and skills of the group also adds to the online facilitator's challenge. Switching to a more effective tool of teleconferencing in this PhD research project resulted in the group more effectively achieving what was desired. However, creating an *in-group out-group* dynamic where those who were not at the meeting had less ownership of the decisions, were less inclined to put them into action or to participate in the discussions about them afterwards. This suggests that a facilitator needs to focus on choosing the best tools to meet both participation needs and the purpose of the group. Choosing a software tool that meets the lowest common denominator in a

group may be the only option available to an online facilitator, and thus the choice may contrast with achieving effective outcomes within sufficient time.

Although the inquiry group did not look directly at the effect or potential that storytelling may have on reaching agreement or influencing decision making processes it may potentially be inferred that groups who had sufficiently developed would be more capable at accepting differences of opinion and more able to reach consensus. This presents a useful area for further investigation.

6.3.4   Online Place

While it is fun to take a group of participants base-jumping off the Eiffel Tower in a Second Life™ version of Paris in the early 1900's, or swimming with dolphins on the Boracay reef, it is the sense of *place* and *emotional* connection that is evocative and stimulating of participants interest in each other.

I wonder at times which is more real as I lay on the virtual couch at a Second Life™ addiction centre (in Second Life™) and share my deepest thoughts about life *in-world* with another person's avatar. It is a *real* person at the other end of the avatar that I am talking to, and we are connected through very real aspects of technology; connected through real phone lines and real computers. *How is putting on my avatar any different, or less real to me, than putting on a change of clothes?*

Susan Greenfield (2008) describes a blending of realities within the human experience through a merging of the modern creations of information technology, nanotechnology and biotechnologies. "In ways that we could never have imagined, the technologies of the twenty-first-century are challenging the most basic components by which we have made sense of our environment, and lived as individuals within it." (p. 12). Greenleaf sees a clear blending of former dichotomies - of the real and the unreal; the old and the young; the self and the outside world.

The word *virtual* is often chosen as an adjective to describe different types of online group places. It implies that they are unreal or non-existent; that they exist as an idea, but without form. Many adopt the word virtual as a form of jargon – for example, in the areas of computer applications and computer science. Over time, though, the *virtual* adjective has been applied to many things that

really exist and are created or carried on by means of computing and internet technologies. *Virtual* conversations are conversations that take place over computer networks, and virtual communities are genuine social groups that assemble around the use of e-mail, websites, and other networked resources. The adjectives *virtual* and *digital* and the prefixes *e-* and *cyber-* are all used in various ways to denote things, activities, and organizations that are realized or carried out chiefly in an electronic medium. The term virtual in its literal sense is not accurate to the actual experience. Through use, it has the connotation of online or cyber; but perhaps a more fitting term could be chosen or constructed. *Facilitating in blended realities* has become a phrase that I now use to describe the training in online facilitation that I offer. I am training people to facilitate others in different modes of computer-mediated reality rather than in anything virtual.

I don't see it useful to describe a group's sense of place as virtual and have chosen to use *online* as an alternative within this thesis. The Second Life™ facilitators in this PhD research experienced a strong sense of place through a visual interface that could be moved around in, could be interacted with and changed, along with others who were also experiencing place at the same time in a similar way. These facilitators' skills are highly embodied skills and depend on a tight coupling between their perception (awareness) and actions (interventions). There are interesting ways that this perception and action plays out in 3D group places. In his book, *The Tacit Dimension* (1966), Polanyi makes a distinction between *proximal* and *distal* phenomena. Proximal is like close at hand, while distal is at a distance. An example is using a stick to feel through a dark room. Tapping the ground is distal, what you feel in your hand is proximal. We think distally but act proximally. This can be conceived too in 3-D environments - our mind's ability to actually experience ourselves as the avatar interacting in the world with others rather than experiencing our hands on keys and mouse and voice through the headset – although these are our embodied aspects in action. The key thing for relationship building is that when people shift their attention from proximal to distal, there is also a semantic shift. In the example, a change in the pressure we feel in our hands is interpreted as meaning the presence of an object in the world. When people see and hear other's avatars they interpret them as human and interpret the 3-D environment as place.

6.3.5 Emotional Connections

Emotional connections were the highlight of the Second Life™ experience. The ability to develop an emotional connection with others evoked a highly positive effect between members of the group. The combination of a sense of place, a sense of others, and the metaphor of an evening campfire all contributed to creating a group environment that was conducive to deep sharing.

The following conversation sheds some light on the perceptions on the blended experiences of the Second Life™ storytelling experience for one participant who joined in and one who didn't during the PhD study.

> Thanks for sharing some of the things that have happened on SL. As I have not been able to participate in it I really feel again quite on the outside. And I do have objections to create and be in an artificial world while the real world needs so much attention. Dear <name removed>, I really relate to what you are saying about creating an artificial world when the real world need so much attention, but after my SL experience, I have changed my mind. Of all the ways we have 'met' so far, the SL environment was for me the most rewarding. I really enjoy the one-to-one Skype sessions and felt I got a feeling for people through the talking, but the group Skypes are hard due to delays, not knowing who is going to talk next etc etc. The SL allowed people's personalities to come through. Engaged my emotions and seemed most like a "face to face" group. I would be interested in spending more time in this environment...

3-D spaces can be another way of providing an online story place for groups that helps to bind not only those who experience the event, but also those who are included in the retelling of those stories, and have a similar emotional connection with each storyteller as others in the group.

6.3.6 Storytelling's Adaptability

As a face-to-face approach, storytelling translated very readily to an online group setting. As expected it didn't require anyone to be trained in the approach. The inquiry group didn't argue over how to conduct storytelling – the group spent

about 20 minutes during an early conference call deciding on the types of stories that would be a useful as a working definition for the research project. Outlines of process were quickly developed and put into action.

6.4   GUIDELINES FOR THE ONLINE FACILITATOR

These guidelines aim to be succinct and provide some starting points for using storytelling with online groups.

6.4.1.1   When to tell a story?

Use storytelling to catch the attention of your audience at the start of a meeting, workshop or session, and to establish an atmosphere of sharing - a harmony between speaker and audience. This can be useful if there is a need for deeper listening in the group.

Use storytelling to quickly summarize a whole chapter of group discussion. It may be appropriate and useful for complex situations to be re-presented to a group through the actors, events and scene identified by the group. In a similar way that a graphic facilitator interprets a group's conversation and mirrors it back, a story can be useful in a similar way. A story can quickly illuminate a key point, articulate a challenge or vision, or refute an argument with a few words.

Use storytelling to share knowledge within a group. Much organizational knowledge is held within its members. Storytelling about a burning issue, an inspirational action of another or a vision for the future can help deepen and share the collective wisdom of a group.

Use storytelling to reduce isolation. Storytelling is a great connector between people and for people who are geographically dispersed it can be a useful way to identify and build connections between people.

The storytelling must be pertinent. It must relate directly to what the group is focused on and in alignment with the group's purpose or goals. A story that is to represent an illustration of a situation must meet that desired purpose.

Some things to check before using storytelling: 1. Is it likely to prove objectionable to anyone? (Does it offend anyone's race, religion or culture?) 2. Is the group ready for storytelling? Or will they resist, or not take the process

seriously? 3. Is the purpose of the storytelling clear and will it achieve, or forward, the group's purpose?

6.4.1.2 Group boundaries

As participants can more readily move in and out of an online group's space, and even switch between different tools for communication, effective facilitation of those transitions becomes more important to ensure that the group continues to remain focused on its purpose and is well contained. The facilitator needs to monitor the group movements and assist a group with its knowledge of who is currently in the group, who isn't, and how people can come and go.

6.4.1.3 Technical interruption

The facilitator needs to be prepared for a certain amount of technical interruption. Advise participants in advance of potential interruptions, that these are a normal part of working online. Have a Plan B fallback technology prepared in advance and inform participants of any links, login instructions, or participant pin numbers to follow for accessing the Plan B. For example, switch to another technology such as telephone conference if needed. It can be useful to check with the group it they want to switch to the Plan B as sometimes participants are willing to tolerate some level of noise or interruptions and may be happy to persevere. However, if participants find the experience too challenging then you are unlikely to achieve the group's goals and switching technologies may be in the best interests of the group.

It can be useful to bringing in a technical support person or assistant, sometimes referred to as a technology mediator, who can assist participants to login and use the technology while the facilitator focuses on the flow of the session.

It is also advisable to invite participants to feedback any challenges to the whole group rather than one-to-one to the facilitator. This raises visibility and allows others to get a sense of where are in terms of their ability to participate. It also allows for those who may be too shy to speak up about their abilities or challenges with the technology to see that it is ok to ask for help.

Buddying participants together may also be a useful way of assisting participants with both overcoming the technical challenges and avoiding isolation.

6.4.1.4 Group support and other roles

The online facilitator is often required to fill the extra tasks of preparing specialized technology for group use and training participants in its use. A learning curve is involved, and participants' abilities to use and learn complex online tools differ. As a facilitator you will likely need to fulfill a number of roles such as mentoring, coaching, training, coordinating, innovating and directing others. Some of these roles can be performed by others, however it is important to know how each of these distinct roles serves the group differently. Be clear with the group where the boundaries are and the differences between these roles.

6.4.1.5 Group culture

When developing group agreements about how the group will work together it is important that everyone is actively involved. Choose a software tool that will allow everyone to participate. Particular things you may want to address in the culture of an online group are: Appropriate timeframes for responses; Notice period for real-time events; Cultural differences; Assuming goodwill from others; Checking out assumptions; Appropriate netiquette; How acknowledgements will be done — individually or in a group; Notice for upcoming events; and Confidentiality.

6.4.1.6 Assume goodwill

Messages and their meanings can easily be misinterpreted online. Inflamed conversations can erupt based on the words that were said, argued and justified rather than what was intended (known as *flaming*). Inviting all participants to *assume goodwill* – to assume that all participants will be acting out of their own best intentions for the group in the messages they send and actions they make. Assuming goodwill is a good counter to the triggering conversations that can easily spark when people become upset by challenging interactions. People are likely to have differing assumptions about expected behavior, and different expectations of what will happen in the group. Conversations that are normal in one participant's own context may be alien or offensive to others in theirs. Assuming goodwill interrupts this type of flaming conflict and assists the group to move forward.

6.4.2 Techniques for Using Story Online

When using traditional stories make sure the story: connects to the purpose of the work; connects to you; is appropriate for your audience; connects in some way with the human condition; is written or told with passion; is rich in language; has a strong beginning and satisfying conclusion; and shape your story around what appeals to you.

Change descriptions of things into dialogue – use language to articulate the scene.

Group stories can come from just about anywhere. Focus questions or topics that worked well within the research study are: Sharing a learning from a previous career and how it now helps you in your current role; sharing a learning from your worst job or worst failure; share a dream for the future; conquering a challenge; share what are the burning questions around the topic; share what your deepest knowing or yearning about a situation; and what would you do if _____ happened to you?

6.4.3 Add Cultural Markers

Open a story by sharing something from a particular culture. For example you could begin with a question like *Did you know that part of the Chinese word for Crisis is the word Opportunity?*

Orientate your story to your particular audience – *what will be most important to them?* Learn about cultural practices, rituals and customs. Lead in by incorporating language for: Place names, food, customs; objects names; courtesy phrases – such as hello, good bye; key repetitive phrases; and names from other cultures that personalize your story.

6.4.4 Online Storytelling Process

Detailed here are some recommendations for the use of storytelling in online facilitation practice across the different software tools of email, audio conferencing, video conferencing, and in 3-D interactive environments.

6.4.4.1 Using story with email

Email is a great leveler in a group and comparatively easier for people in a group to use. Despite being an unsophisticated medium stories shared via email can be

highly effective. When beginning a group using email may be the best way to start. Then as the group establishes itself you can buddy those who are new to online group technologies with the more confident members. Use story to warm participants up, or to set the theme for the work to be done. It is great for creating connections and building relationships between members. Using email can be a great way to gauge participant's orientation to a topic or to articulate their attraction to the purpose or group work. Sometimes it can be useful to return to the email for sharing instructions and in times of transition.

6.4.4.2   Using story with audio conferencing

The one thing to remember when using an audio channel such as telephone conferencing or Skype is that there may be a fair bit of time involved in coordinating a meeting time that will work for all participants, particularly if they are situated across several time zones. Audio conferencing comes naturally to most people and sometimes the key to using story with this mode is to make sure it is on topic and succinct.

6.4.4.3   Using story with video conferencing

Video conferencing is great for allowing participants to *get* each other. Often people will have developed a perception or projection of who and how others are and having the video reference helps re-present group members in a more realistic way. When leading your story session, remember that the audio channel is the most important when using this mode of communication. Make sure that your instructions to participants are clear and work to ensure that everyone gets sufficient *air-time* as sometimes people can get left out of the conversation – use structured rounds to assist this process.

6.4.4.4   Using story within 3-D environments

One of the fantastic things about using a 3-D environment – such as the interactive world of Second Life™ is that you can dress up your avatars and find, or create, an environment that suits the type of environment that you wish to create. Very strong emotional connections are created when participants experience each other within a 3-D environment.

Despite the visuals remember that the audio channel is again the most important when using this mode of communication. Participants may find a desire to look around and explore the world whilst being engaged in the group conversation and work. This does not always mean that participants are distracted from the conversation but is similar to the way that some people doodle and draw when engaged in a telephone conversation.

Choosing a 3-D environment for your session does tend to require quite high computer specifications. Some participants may need to add more memory to their PCs or to purchase a 3-D capable video card. There is also often an overhead in participant's setting up their avatars and getting familiar with navigating around *in-world*. Be sure to allow several weeks notice for these two aspects.

6.5   REFLECTIONS ON COOPERATIVE INQUIRY

Three aspects of cooperative inquiry are reflected upon from the experience of the study.

6.5.1   A Meta-view of the Methodology

Reflecting on the method in relation to the etymology of the word *story* itself, there are some interesting synergies that emerge with the approach to this research project. As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Two, story derives from the Latin *historia* - inquiry, which is what the inquiry group undertook – to inquire into the use of storytelling. Story is also related to the Greek *history* - one who knows, and in a similar way the inquiry group wanted to expand their understanding and knowledge of online groups. Thus the process of inquiry spoke directly to the origins of the storytelling word in its contemporary use.

6.5.2   Developing Practical Knowing

One of the key goals of the Ph.D. research project was to develop some practical knowledge and processes within the life of the group as it worked towards its purpose. There was a strong desire for research that could quickly feed back into the group process, or would provide a reflection back to the group that could then take the group forward. Reason & Bradbury (2001) promote this desire as one of

the primary concerns of the participative research paradigm; "to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others" (p. 1).

What the inquiry group was able to achieve was to conduct pieces of research that fed directly back into the group's process and informed the research question. Short pieces of research such as the participation survey, were useful in presenting back a reflection, within several days, of some the key questions around the group's participation. In the comparison survey, respondents were able to revisit the early stages of the group and use the emails and profiles shared to inform the research topic. By conducting an after-action review through a rolling series of real-time meetings using the WebIQ™ system, the inquiry group was able to collect and review written comments from the group within the system and also include the conversation captured about them in the reporting output. Several recommendations for the group process were identified that were later implemented, such as the building of a website for the project. The inquiry group researched what was most pertinent at the time to the group, and were not fixed to a pre-set agenda that was divorced from the group life.

Taking on research within the participative paradigm, with its emphasis on the person as an embodied, experiencing subject among other subjects, allowed the inquiry group to satisfactorily pursue research projects that were of emergent interest to the group experience as it developed over time. The integration of action with knowing that resulted assisted the exploration of the practical use of storytelling across a wide range of online group settings and software tools. The inquiry group developed several models for action inquiry and were able to build on these as the group engaged with the topic.

6.5.3   System as Objective Observer

One of the useful things about researching computer mediated group work is that the computing systems themselves can, in effect, become the objective observer of the group process and interaction. Several of the software systems the inquiry group used were able to capture elements of text, audio, visuals and video. These allowed co-researchers to participate fully as they normally might in the group process rather than taking an explicit participant-observer role. Some analysis

may even be possible by the system with the potential of tools like Survey Monkey™ to identify popular words and themes in participant responses.

6.6 SOME AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research project evokes and invites several interesting areas and additional challenges for further investigation. Some of these are introduced in this section, along with some possible ways for investigation.

6.6.1 Impact of an Extra Mode of Communication

As introduced in section 6.2.1 above the inquiry group found an interesting opportunity in having an extra chat channel available when storytelling via an audio channel. A question was introduced of *how might this extra channel impact on online relationship development?* Investigating this further may advance the work of online facilitation by establishing some understanding of boundaries around its usefulness. *Does this process potentially create a new genre, or type of storytelling, or a completely new form of co-created narrative? How much input from audience members is beneficial before the interaction becomes distracting to the storyteller, or the other participants? What types of text input from participants assist the storyteller, and what interactions are unhelpful?* A series of tests could be established to investigate these questions. Comparison tests could be conducted along with post-event interviews, or focus groups to capture what participants find they are experiencing and their understanding of the impact from both audience and storytellers perspectives. It is possible that tolerance levels differ across cultures and generational differences may present. A further post-event review of the session captured by video of the screen capture could be conducted with facilitators to elicit their domain expertise on the dynamics that they observe.

6.6.2 Tolerance for Technical Interruption

One area for further research is to investigate the amount of technical interruption and setup overhead participants are willing, wanting, or can, tolerate when using online software tools for group work. Participants in this particular PhD research study were open, generous and willing to return and use the same software tools

again despite system crashes and poor performance. Would that be as true for other hierarchical, workplace, or community groups? Several different group types might be subjected to a range of different online meetings types with common interruptions such as echoing and system crashes to see what common types of interruptions have the greatest impact on the group process. Again it is possible that tolerance levels differ across cultures and generational differences may present. Processes to alleviate these impacts could then be formulated, developed and tested for effectiveness.

6.6.3 Discovering the Boundaries

One key challenge for facilitators is effectively maintaining an online group's boundaries, and creating effective ways for participants to become aware of participants moving in and out of the group. It can be common for participants to become dropped from an online conversation or they may come into a process part way through. Asynchronous groups often have participants coming and going over time. *What are effective ways for facilitating these online transitions of participants? What are the key factors that bring about successful transitions* Future work might investigate textual, visual and audio feedback patterns for assisting a group's perceptions of its boundaries - to know when participants have come into, and leave the group. Analysis could be done in reviewing the affordances of existing online software tools attempts to represent group boundaries. Some potentially useful approaches could be developed and tested with live participants to see how effectively they reflect the group back to them selves.

6.6.4 Extending into Mobile and Other Emerging Technologies

How far can storytelling extend into the future of computer mediated communication? Further research may be beneficial extending this PhD investigation into storytelling's usefulness in building relationships via mobile computing and other emerging technologies. As bandwidth costs improve and adoption of third generation mobile technologies becomes the norm for accessing the internet – with developments like WiMax and likes of the Apple iPhone continue to be taken up by users and developers - internet access mediated by

integrated portable wireless devices will become the norm rather than the exception. This trend is already evidenced by there now being a greater number of internet-enabled mobile phones in the world than the number of internet-enabled PCs. Building relationships in facilitated groups offers new mobile challenges and opportunities - but ones which will be pursued due to the high interest and affordances offered by mobile technologies. Some of the processes the inquiry group have used in this study could be repeated with different combinations of internet enabled mobile settings.

6.6.5 Validity of Findings with Other Groups

The inquiry group was voluntary, highly motivated, and very keen to learn. They were very open to new things, to the emergent, and to the depth that the group might go to with storytelling, but this cannot be expected of all online groups. The findings from this group may not be highly generalizable to others. *How similar would the findings be with other groups, such as highly controlled, hierarchical groups, or in groups with time pressured performance situations?* Some of the processes used could be repeated using different types of work groups in different settings. Effectiveness could be investigated across groups in the different sectors of government, business, not-for-profit and community groups. Effectiveness with different generational groups and different cultures may also yield some interesting results.

6.6.6 Success Model

An opportunity lies in reviewing the data collected in light of DeLone and McLean's (1992) *Information Systems Success Model*. This involves considering the information quality, such as the type, genre and quality of stories shared; system quality across the various software tools; and storytelling use in its various manifestations and outcomes.

In the model, *systems quality* measures technical success; *information quality* measures semantic success; and *use, user satisfaction, individual impacts*, and *organizational impacts* measure effectiveness success. This approach would organize the results in a format that would then be comparable with other studies in the Information Systems research field.

6.6.7 Interactive boundaries of dual band storytelling

Further research is needed to investigate the limits of group tolerance when using storytelling in a dual band format where stories are told using the audio channel and audience members add their comments via a text tool. *How does this format of storytelling interaction enhance or subtract from the effectiveness of the process? At what moments of the process is it most beneficial and how much interaction is needed before they become un-helpful or distracting diversions?*

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The Peace Dove

7.0   CONCLUSION

In the exciting and challenging world of online group work building relationships is a recent and newly emerging opportunity. Throughout history, storytelling has provided a powerful and effective means for building relationships within groups of people in face-to-face settings. Storytelling offers a uniquely human way to developing these group relationships and sharing learnings with others. Inspired by this motivation this thesis inquired into the question of how storytelling can be used to develop relationships across a range of online group environments.

With a strong interest in developing some practical processes eighteen facilitators came together to collectively research the potential of storytelling in online group environments. This thesis has presented a cooperative inquiry that the group undertook. The method was used within a participative research approach to investigate storytelling in both the inquiry group, and in the groups that co-researchers were working with. The cooperative inquiry produced data grounded in the inquiry group's motivations, ways and questions, perspectives and experiences.

The thesis question investigated was: *How is storytelling beneficial in building relationships in facilitated online groups?* Storytelling was investigated across a variety of online media, including: email, Skype™ conferencing, telephone conferencing, video and web conferencing, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), blogging, online surveys and within the 3-D interactive world of Second Life™.

The inquiry group's investigations revealed that storytelling can be a powerful means for group members to develop connections with each other and assist relationship development. Storytelling in introductions assisted people to better present aspects of themselves and to create more points of connection with each other. Photos had an impact and assisted in the building of trust and connections. Opening chat sessions with story established a culture of storytelling and served to build on an emerging group theme. Telephone and Skype™ sessions provided a familiar tool for participants to use, which allowed them to connect on a whole new level. However, some participants were always left out of the group process. This affected the effectiveness of the decision making. Web conferencing provided a strong visual reference and gave a sense of where

participants were in the process. While the blog storytelling was rich with images and provided wonderful opportunities to learn about each other, it was not for everyone.

When the art form of storytelling is reflected on from the experiences of this research, some new ideas have been generated which may be of interest, or may be taken up, and may stimulate further discussion in the field. Specifically, the inquiry group found the additional text channel available during an oral communication offered flexibility without interrupting flow of the storytelling process; storytellers could get another direct in-vivo feedback, over and above the audio feedback channel, and audience members could contribute something of their experience for all to share in as the storytelling progressed. The study confirmed that software tool selection was critical for ensuring full participation and buy-in to online group decisions; using a similar process with a different software tool proved to be ineffective at building the same warm up or learning culture in the group. The experience of storytelling in the inquiry challenges an aspect of storytelling that has been considered central - that direct contact between teller and listener is essential; a storytelling climate was developed within sessions across a range of software tools including email and was not hindered by the inquiry group being geographically distributed. The storytelling process still assisted facilitators to articulate a descriptive scenario, or a situation, and to portray their inner dialogue, internal conflict, or learning edge from sharing facilitation experiences. Within the metaphor of a 3-D fireside storytelling experience, participants could step into a fuller fantasy space of storytelling and experience a rich and full experience – almost as real as if members are meeting in person. It became apparent that online facilitators are likely to fulfill additional roles over and above those required of a face-to-face facilitator, raising some ethical challenges; privacy and confidentiality will continue to be difficult to guarantee online. Other ethical issues include different legal requirements for public disclosure and the transfer of personal information across borders, and the blocking of software and content in some countries. And as facilitators of groups in online blended realities, a range of new opportunities emerge for online facilitators to expand their role and the boundaries of their particular skill-set in relation to the wider profession. Aspects of the IAF *Statement of Values and Code*

of Ethics for Group Facilitators and *Core Competencies* may need to be revisited in light of new issues emerging in an increasingly internet and computer-mediated world.

Additionally, this thesis depicts aspects of unclear membership and describes some boundary perception challenges the study group faced with participants transitioning in and out of online group spaces. The inquiry group's tolerance for technical difficulties is described and some guidelines for the practice of online facilitation are offered including when to tell a story, addressing technical interruption, group support and other roles, developing group culture and the benefits of assuming goodwill.

Storytelling is one of a range of means that may be used in combination with other techniques to build relationships in online groups. Storytelling is particularly useful for addressing aspects of disembodiment and, as a technique, can be introduced in combination with other facilitated techniques to build online relationships and improve group relationships.

This Ph.D. thesis has told a story of a group of eighteen professional group facilitators who came together to cooperatively investigate the use of storytelling across a range of online software.

> *Speeches are made, songs are sung and many stories are shared. The boy's desire for more is quickly engaged and he moves in closer. The room quietens and everyone listens deeply.*

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Appendix A Theoretical Perspectives

This appendix describes some of the major research paradigms of positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, constructivism and it places the PhD research within the perspective of the participative research paradigm. The participative research paradigm is a paradigm articulated by John Heron and Peter Reason within the last decade and is relatively new in comparison to these more established research approaches.

In *Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research* (1994), Guba and Lincoln made a useful contribution to articulating and differentiating competing paradigms of research inquiry. They identified and described positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism as the major paradigms that frame research.

In 1997 John Heron and Peter Reason extended Guba and Lincoln's framework to articulate a *participatory paradigm*. They argued that the constructivist views described by Guba and Lincoln tend to be deficient in any acknowledgment of experiential knowing; that is, knowing by acquaintance, by meeting, and by felt participation in the presence of what is there (Heron & Reason, 1997). Heron and Reason also introduced the aspect of *Axiology* as a defining characteristic of an inquiry paradigm, alongside ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

The axiological question asks what is intrinsically valuable in human life, in particular what sort of knowledge, if any, is intrinsically valuable (p. x). The participatory paradigm answers this axiological question in terms of human flourishing, conceived as an end in itself, where such flourishing is construed as an enabling balance within and between people of hierarchy, co-operation and autonomy (p. 277). Heron and Reason see the question of axiology as a necessary complement to balance, and make whole, the concern with truth exhibited by the first three aspects of ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

Heron and Reason argue that the axiological question can also be put in terms of the ultimate purpose of human inquiry (p. 285). Since any ultimate purpose is an end-in-itself and intrinsically valuable it asks *for what purposes do*

we co-create reality? From the participatory research perspective the answer to this is put quite simply by Fals-Borda (1996), to change the world.

The participative worldview necessarily leads to a reflective action orientation, a praxis grounded in our being in the world (p. x).

The axiological question thus grounds research, done within the aegis of the participative paradigm, to ultimately be in service to humankind.

INTERPRETIVE PARADIGMS

Building on the contributions of Heron and Reason, Denizen & Lincoln, in the *Handbook of qualitative research* (2000), included the new participative paradigm in describing qualitative research as structured by five major interpretive paradigms: (a) positivism, (b) post-positivism, (c) critical theory, (d) constructivism, and (e) the participatory paradigm.

Denizen & Lincoln defined the research paradigms as interpretive frameworks that contain a researcher's premises. As stated by Guba (p. 19), an understanding of the paradigm shapes how the researcher sees the world and acts within it.

The premises within each interpretive paradigm present the assumptions made about how science should be conducted, the social world that research is conducted within and what serves as legitimate science (Creswell, 1994). The ontological premise is how the researcher perceives the nature of reality. The epistemological premise is how they relate to that reality and in what way they can come to know the world. The methodological premise then establishes the techniques they have available to approach increasing their understanding of the world. These assumptions then guide the researcher in both theory and method throughout a particular study (p. x). These major interpretive paradigms are outlined further here.

Positivism

Positivism is the paradigm that underlies the quantitative approach. Positivism holds that there is a "real" reality and that researchers who employ chiefly quantitative methods can apprehend reality.

Post-positivism

Post-positivism alters positivism by maintaining that, while there is indeed a "real" reality, it can be acquired only imperfectly, though by using empirical evidence it is possible to differentiate between findings as being more or less credible and to distinguish between belief and valid belief (Fay, 1996).

Critical Theory

Critical theory focuses on how injustice and power relations affect the experiences of people and their understandings of their circumstances (Merriam, 2002). Critical theory research includes paradigms such as feminist, post-structural, and queer theory. Critical theory approaches research with a framework of being fundamentally and explicitly political as a change oriented form of engagement (Patton, 2002).

Constructivism

Constructivism is based on the premise that the human reality is fundamentally different from the natural, physical reality. Constructivism holds that people construct their version of reality that is "made up" and shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs (Patton, 2002).

Participative paradigm

A participative paradigm is where the researcher inquires through various modes of learning in a subjective, immersed reflective process. Heron and Reason (1997) place the participatory paradigm within how we come to understand what is real as a participative reality. A participative reality is considered to be the relationship of a subjective (*the knower*) and the objective (*the known*), or a subjective-objective nature. Additional themes of participatory inquiry are related to the production of knowledge and power. Political, gender and hierarchical imbalances are often explored in this form of inquiry. The participative paradigm is described further in Chapter 4.

The following table shows the five major inquiry paradigms and their sets of underpinning beliefs about the nature of reality and how it may be known. The first five columns are taken directly from Guba and Lincoln's framework of inquiry paradigms (1994) and the final participatory column and the fourth Axiology row are taken from Heron and Reason (1997).

Table A.1 Framework of inquiry paradigms

Research Paradigms	Positivism	Post-positivism	Critical theory	Constructivism	Participatory paradigm
			Framework of inquiry paradigms		
Ontology	Naive realism: 'real' reality and apprehendable	Critical realism: 'real' reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Historical realism: virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values crystallized over time	Relativism: local and specific constructed realities	Participative reality; subjective-objective reality, co-created by mind and given cosmos
Epistemology	Dualist-objectivist: findings are true	Modified dualist-objectivist: critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional-subjectivist; value mediated findings	Transactional-Subjectivist: created findings	Critical subjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos; extended epistemology of experiential, propositional and practical knowing; co-created findings
Methodology	Experimental-manipulative: verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental-manipulative: critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Dialogic-dialectical	Hermeneutic-dialectical	Political participation in collaborative action inquiry; primacy of the practical; use of language grounded in shared experiential context
Axiology	Propositional knowing about the world is an end in itself, is intrinsically valuable	Propositional knowing about the world is an end in itself, is intrinsically valuable	Propositional, transactional knowing is instrumentally valuable as a means to social emancipation, which is an end in itself, is intrinsically valuable	Propositional, transactional knowing is instrumentally valuable as a means to social emancipation, which is an end in itself, is intrinsically valuable	Practical knowing how to flourish with a balance of autonomy, co-operation and hierarchy in a culture is an end in itself, is intrinsically valuable

Appendix B Invitation

Subject: Research study for online facilitators

If you are involved in the facilitation of online groups, researching online facilitation, virtual team meetings, or something similar you may be interested in joining my PhD research study.

I am bringing together a group of like-minded online facilitators from around the world to explore the use of story and narrative in the art and practice of online facilitation. I am looking for facilitators to join his research group, particularly those that facilitate in online group spaces, virtual teams and the like.

I am a PhD student with the Auckland University of Technology and work with Zenergy, a New Zealand-based group of facilitators, mediators and transformational coaches. I am a member of the International Association of Facilitators and an Associate Editor of the IAF Journal of Group Facilitation.

If you are interested in finding out more about this study, email Stephen at: sthorpe_AT_aut.ac.nz

Warm regards from Stephen Thorpe

Stephen Thorpe

School of Computing and Information Sciences

Auckland University of Technology

e: sthorpe_AT_aut.ac.nz

Appendix C Cover Letter

Narrative in online relationship development

<Name>

<Address>

Dear <First Name>,

Thank you for joining my PhD research. There are some talented facilitators joining this study and together we will develop a better understanding about facilitating in online groups.

In this information pack there is a Project Brief that concisely explains the study with a short plan of the main phases we will go through. There is a Participant Information Sheet that explains who is going to be involved, what's likely to happen, some of the potential risks and the likely benefits to come from the study. The accompanying Consent Form grants permission to use the information collected for the purposes of the study.

We will be using a co-operative inquiry as our research method. This is not a very well known method. However, I believe that it is an excellent method for a co-operative study of this kind. I have included an article that may help to explain what this method and approach is about.

Please fill out the attached consent form (Consent to Participation in Research) and post to me in the addressed envelope. Included is an International Mail Coupon which can be exchanged for unregistered air postage to New Zealand.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards,

Stephen Thorpe

sthorpe_AT_aut.ac.nz

Appendix D Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced 29-April-2005

Project Title Narrative in online relationship development

Invitation

You are invited to participate in a PhD study investigating the facilitation of online relationship development.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the use of narrative can be beneficial in facilitating online relationship development. The goal is to develop some processes and techniques that are useful in building and maintaining relationships between members in online groups.

How are people chosen to be asked to be part of the study?

Those invited to join are facilitators, like you, who are interested in the facilitation of online groups. Some of them you may know already through your facilitator networks, particularly the International Association of Facilitators (IAF). Others may be new to you, adding to the variety and experience of our research group.

What happens in the study?

The research will happen in two stages. An initial 6-week pilot will begin with investigating agreed themes of interest within the area of the research question. This pilot stage will have a particular focus on how we might research cooperatively together and we will try a few things out to see if they are useful ways to research. At the end of this pilot stage, we will likely have a major evaluation to see what has worked well for us and where our energy is for investigating in more depth.

The second stage of the research will see us follow through several cycles of planning, action and reflection. The planning will involve discussion about our choice of focus or topic and what type of inquiry we wish to apply. In the action phase we will explore, in experience and action, aspects of the inquiry. The reflection phase reviews what has been experienced and we may decide to modify our topic in light of the data we have collected. At the end of the cycles we will complete a major reflection phase for pulling the threads together, clarifying outcomes and deciding on dissemination of what we have learnt.

What are the discomforts and risks?

As part of the research process we will discuss and decide how we want to work together. We will address several aspects that may be important to you such as how we may deal with adverse group dynamics and the confidentiality of any sensitive information.

Adverse group dynamics

We may pass through a full range of group dynamics and may deal in some things that may have a strong emotional expression or content. Our group may have conflict, laughter, joy, frustration even boredom, all of the things that are common in groups. The risk of potentially upsetting aspects of group dynamics is mitigated by the fact that the research group, as facilitators, deal with these group dynamics in their everyday professional work. Group members are likely to have their own resources and personal development methods for dealing with and addressing the adverse effects of group dynamics. Also discussion will be held in the initial stage to clarify what resources each of us has available such as differing personal development methods, supervision and/or coaching.

Sensitive personal information

The use of sensitive personal information will be mitigated by a discussion we will have as part of the group initiating process. A protocol will be established (within the group culture) to protect the confidentiality of sensitive personal information. Co-researchers will be encouraged to identify, as appropriate, any sensitive personal information that they do not wish to be shared or identified in the research dissemination.

It is my vision that when dealing with conflict, discomfort and issues in our research group: We all will hold a commitment to work through any difficulties as they arise; That it is collectively our responsibility to bring forward any point or matter of discussion, debate or dispute rather than keeping them private;   That we may possibly seek help from others, who may or may not be involved in the research group, when needed.

Other relevant issues will be discussed and addressed on an ongoing basis. Difficulties arise in groups and it will be useful to include them in as part of our research process.

What are the benefits?

We will generate and test some practical approaches, methods and techniques to facilitate online relationships. We will explore the usefulness of several research methods for investigating our individual and group experience online (such as cooperative inquiry, narrative inquiry, sociometric processing, others brought by individuals in the research group, and those that emerge from our group process). Through fully immersing ourselves in the research topic, we are likely to tap into the collective wisdom and synergies of our research group. Through conscious attention to the differing perspectives of our experience, we are likely to better understand many of the difficulties faced in online groups. We will all learn from one another and potentially build stronger peer networks.

How will my privacy be protected?

It is possible that screen captures (including video) and biography photographs are likely to be collected both by co-researchers and the computing systems used by the group. Due to the nature of these tools anonymity may not always be ensured.

Discussion will be held in the initiating stage of the research project to develop a group norm on the use of co-researchers photos, images, audio and video in subsequent research outputs. Pseudonyms will be used in the PhD thesis and any subsequent publications.

How do I join the study?

Fill out the attached consent form (Consent to Participation in Research) and post to me in the reply-paid envelope.

What are the costs of participating in the project? (including time)

The research project will involve somewhere between 2-4 hours per week in the pilot research stage. Time commitments in subsequent stages will be by group agreement based on what is experienced and what will work best for all participants.

Opportunity to consider invitation

Please let me know within the next two weeks if you are interested, or feel free to contact me should you have further questions.

Participant Concerns

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to Stephen Thorpe, and the Project Supervisor – Dr. Philip Carter.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda_AT_ut.ac.nz, 917 9999 ext 8044.

Researcher Contact Details: Stephen Thorpe, PhD Candidate, School of Computing and Information Sciences, sthorpe_AT_aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Dr Philip Carter, Senior Lecturer, School of Computing and Information Sciences, philip.carter_AT_aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 April 2005 AUTEC Reference number 05/53

Appendix E Consent Form

Consent to Participation in Research

Title of project: Narrative in online relationship development

Project Supervisors: Dr Philip Carter

Researcher: Stephen Thorpe

I have read and understood the information provided about this research project as outlined in the information sheet dated 29 April 2005.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

I understand that I may be video taped, audio taped and that at times data (such as screen shots, images, audio and video) are likely to be captured through the computing systems used.

I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

I agree that I will not disclose information to any person, firm, or corporation about the research conducted without permission from co-researchers. This includes specifications, photos, images, video, drawings, models or operations of any machine or devices encountered.

I grant permission for information collected to be used for purposes as outlined in the information sheet.

I agree to take part in this research.

Participant signature: ....…………………..

Participant name: ……………………………………………………………….

Date: ………………………………………………………….

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 April 2005 AUTEC Reference number 05/53

Appendix F MFN Conference Report 23-24 Jan 06

Narrative in online relationship development

Midwest Facilitators' Network Conference

23-24 January 2006

NZ: 8.45am – 10.15am Tuesday 24

Chandler: 12.45 pm – 2.45pm Monday 23rd

Huston and Chicago: 1.45pm – 3.15pm Monday 23rd

Agenda

20 min - Talk from Stephen: project background, what we are trying, what's happened, what's next.

20 min - Conversations from others in our group: anything they would like to say/ add.

30 min - Interactive storytelling in pairs and then fours.

8-9 min - Discussion.

10 min - Q&A.

1-2 min - Completion.

Present

<Name>, Stephen Thorpe (New Zealand), <Name> and participants at the Midwest Facilitators' Network Conference.

Stephen introduced by <Name>

Introduction

The session on the research into the Effectiveness of Narrative in Facilitating Online Relationship Development was introduced by Stephen. Stephen asked for permission to record the session and make it available to the other members of the research group should they be interested in reviewing the session.

He introduced the purpose of the study to investigate how the use of narrative can be beneficial in facilitating online relationship development and that the goal is to develop some processes and techniques that are useful in online groups. Some things from the process so far: Invitations initially sent out through the Regional Reps of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF);   17 facilitators joined the project. 2 from Singapore, 4 from Australia, 4 from New Zealand, 6 from the USA, 1 from the UK and 1 from The Netherlands. A pilot phase was begun in late October last year running through to Christmas;   195

emails received so far – some group, some individual; Real-time meetings using a combination of Skype, Yahoo! messenger, Web IQ, iMeet and telephone conferencing; We've had challenges along the way including the time differences between us, conferencing system crashes, a thing we termed 'Skype Wrestling' when a microphone went crashing about, excited pets joining in on meetings, and the holiday season arriving; Along the way we have learned a bit about each other and managed to tell some stories.

Project background

Stephen talked about how the project came about. The research ideas started in 2000 while was facilitating an online group of 38 students who were going to a conference in the United Arab Emirates. The student group consisted of students from 16 different countries. Some of them did not have English as their first language. Over 600 e-mails were collected pre-conference and several yahoo chat meetings were run.

What Stephen found with this group was that really strong relationships were developed online, across borders, across cultures, across religion and across languages and that it was the stories that had given the human connection between people.

Stephen looked at a range of areas and ways he might go about researching these ideas. Then while at the Australasian Facilitators Network conference in 2004 he met Dr Gil Brenson-Lazan the president of the Global Facilitators Service Corps (GFSC) and decided that working with a group of other facilitators was the best way to go. And from there the project was born.

So what's happened so far?

The pilot stage of 8 weeks had a particular focus on getting to know each other, getting familiar with some of the tool we might use, we discussed the purpose and created a shared group culture.

We have explored some tools that might work for us and this is continuing. There are differing types of internet connection in our group - from dialup, to DSL, to satellite and there are 4 Mac users.

The types of stories and the process for telling them has had an open approach so far rather than directed. More structured and directed sessions are needed particularly as it is a rather nebulous research area and not highly known.

We have had a discussion about what is facilitation and what is a good story to tell. We created a focus on telling our facilitation stories, particularly our worst facilitation stories.

We have also used a 10 question participation survey. The survey has been useful to see where everyone is at, how we rank our participation, what would help improve individual and group participation and what times are best for people to meet.

Just before Christmas we created a yahoo group and set up the iMeet system (an asynchronous forum system) to collect thoughts and stories over the holiday season. And the holiday season closed in.

So far we've identified: That the stories and shared experiences are great; We want to share more stories and hear more from others; That the purpose and goals of each real-time meeting we have need to be a lot clearer; More structure and direction is needed for people; And more lead in time for meetings.

<Name>, who joined the session via Skype from Arizona spoke about her experiences in the group. She talked about her interest in using story to bridge the gap between facilitation and training. She used the art of storytelling to shift the focus away from the technology and on to the learning, the story and the facilitation. She sees a multi-method approach is the key for taking us forward as a group. <Name> then spoke about a story he told during one of the sessions. There were 5 in the session and we discussed our facilitation stories. It was interesting to see how similar they were in terms of the outcome of the facilitation. <Name> talked about some of the questions that were asked that helped him understand what had happened. <Name> mentioned that the people at WebIQ have offered to support us by providing their system and support for our group to use and it will provide a useful place for us to collect all our data and discussion in one place.

Some questions were then asked by the conference participants such as what tools we have used and how we have found them. One question was asked about group interaction and gaming culture within online gaming. One participant asked <Name> if she had designed online programmes. She said she had taught at college using asynchronous. Another question was about facilitating administrative university meetings with a multi-site campus where the remote

campuses joined via video conference. The remote campuses felt left out of the decision-making process and less connected with the main campus.

We discussed this last question as a scenario and shared some reflections and possible solutions such as having the satellite campus host the meeting once a month, or having the whole meeting remotely. The meetings aren't currently facilitated and introducing a neutral facilitator was suggested as useful for ensuring the satellite locations have opportunities for input.

So what's next for the project?

At this point we will start in February with an evaluation of what we have done so far, an After Action Review process has been suggested. So we may use something like that. We will be looking to see what has worked well for us and where our energy is for investigating further in more depth.

There are many areas of particular focus that we are interested in exploring such as, engaging and inspiring participation; the social functions of stories; belongingness; best practice; motivation; creating community; building trust.

So what we are likely to develop is a structured series of themes to focus our story telling and provide a smaller domain to research in more detail. So we might choose a "theme of the month" and focus our efforts on that area.

Although we did have a few sound difficulties using Skype during the conference session (particularly as we brought <Name> into the discussion) we did successfully manage two-way video and ran a successful session at the MFN conference.

Appendix G Survey 12 December 2005

Narrative in online relationship development

Participation Survey Results:

1) What was your main motivation for joining the study?

<Name> - Experience sharing on the approaches and new concepts.

<Name> - To learn more about techniques in online facilitation that can enhance relationships online and feelings of connection, integration and belongingness. Everything seems to point to improved productivity, innovation and effectiveness as a result of such feelings of participants. Storytelling seems to be a technique that can span cultures. As I work in the intercultural and international field, this is important to me.

<Name> - I want to explore how to engage, inspire and call forth from my students a desire to create a learning community through story telling and sharing rather than direct, expect, or require participation. That makes our current issue very relevant for me

<Name> - Very interested in how online participation and facilitation can be made more effective. Also interested in - and have done very little work on - the power of storytelling, in general and as a facilitation tool in particular.

<Name> - I am interested in the social functions of stories and in online facilitation

<Name> - I have been working a lot with remote facilitation and I have noticed that it is a lot harder to engage people remotely compared to when we are all in the same room. I have a hunch that story might well pull people in... I would like to be more effective and if story can help, then that's great! It also makes work less hard work...

<Name> - To explore best practice, globally, about online facilitation.

<Name> - To find out with others how story can build relationships through using the internet across time, place and cultural differences.

<Name> - To learn more about facilitating groups on-line using storytelling (what works and what doesn't) as a motivator, a way to create community - help build

trust, or as a method to reach out to the frequently faceless audience of virtual communication.

<Name> - To learn more about facilitating groups on-line using storytelling (what works and what doesn't) - you said it <Name>!

<Name> - Wanted to discover how the use of stories could strengthen the collaboration of remote teams, and how storytelling can help virtual team leaders focus the group's energy and attention

2) Are you more interested in:

1) Audio-based

2) Same-time text-based

3) Different time text-based

4) Other (please specify)

<Name> - b) Same-time text-based (preferred)

<Name> - 1) Audio-based YES, 3) Different time text-based YES

<Name> - I am not confident with the technological aspects, other than using the college intranet. I guess it has made me aware I need to learn more about those before the first goal can be achieved. All of the above would work for me when I have figured out how to do them! And what I realise, my students face technological issues every day. How can I as the facilitator pre-empt the technological challenges? And how can I also facilitate self responsibility at the same time. Am I willing to accept an open space approach – whoever turns up is the right people or do I come from the accountability position, this is a skill to learn and demonstrate!

<Name> - If you mean for this project, 3 then 1 then 2 (mostly due to time).

<Name> - all

<Name> - I like audio based, as a basis. It's nice to read the transcripts if I can't be in a meeting - it makes it feel as if I've haven't missed too much. Text based is harder for me... I've only used this internally so it means setting Yahoo up and using my home computer, which isn't a laptop, so I can only use when at home.

<Name> – I'm interested in best practice so any medium or format that is easy and inclusive is of interest to me.

<Name> - All of the above.

<Name> - Interested in using all types of technologies.

<Name> - 1, 2, 3, 4-video. In order of priority - audio, video, 2, 3.

<Name> – Both a) and b) together - simultaneously

3) What have been the best things so far?

<Name> - Stories sharing

<Name> - Perspectives of new colleagues (though you didn't ask, worst is scheduling concalls!! :)

<Name> - Your facilitative responses to situations, Stephen.

<Name> - Liked the transcript. Was interested in people introducing themselves, but I felt it needed to be framed or structured a bit more.

<Name> - Getting to know others.

<Name> - Hearing other people's experiences, stories and lessons/

<Name> - The introductions and rare opportunities to talk with some others

<Name> - The introductions were fantastic, I'm in awe of the depth and experience in our group. The individual stories have been really poignant. I've enjoyed getting to know and making connections with everyone.

<Name> - Watching this group form and events unfold while noticing my own perceptions of the process as both a researcher and participant.

<Name> - Hearing the stories, fascinating!

<Name> - Must confess—my participation has been very meagre. However, I would say that the enthusiastic commitment of many team members has been superb---always trying to find a way to meet, exchange, share---sometimes against all odds.

4) On a scale of 1-10, how would you rank your participation so far?

<Name> - Reading and get to know more about the subject matter to explore the approaches

<Name> - 5

<Name> - 1-2

<Name> - Not high, maybe 3 or 4.

<Name> - 7

<Name> - 4

<Name> - 3

<Name> - 7. I have a sense that I could have been quicker to respond sometimes and I may have sometimes missed things. I also think that putting the wrong dates and times out has probably lowered the group participation.

<Name> - 7

<Name> - (can't really comment, as I haven't fully caught up with all the emails!)

<Name> - Probably a 2 (unless you count reading emails vs. more active participation)

5) What other commitments impact on your involvement in the research group?

<Name> - More on the online messages

<Name> - work/family

<Name> - The time of the year is really impacting on my participation. I had reservations at the beginning regarding the timing for establishing relationships (and realise I needed to say that and didn't). Work and personal commitments at this time of the year are significant for me, with the end of the university year, and Christmas, birthday 'stuff' etc!

<Name> - Mostly work.

<Name> - This month I am finishing a book for Jossey-Bass (way over due), working on the IAF Methods Database, and getting ready to move. Next month we move the house and the office.

<Name> - It's very hard to get anything done this time of year when there is so much going on - Christmas parties, writing cards, finalising work for the year, appraisals, buying presents.... it's manic in and out of work.

<Name> – None, I can manage these if the times we meet, and the process we can connect with each other asynchronously, are established in advance.

<Name> – Sleep, work, family and Christmas preparations. Attending the AFN conference in Perth took me away from my email for several days - which I didn't enjoy. I'm also on the holding committee for the Heart Politics Gathering here in Taupo, NZ, which is happening 3-8 January 06.

<Name> - My contract work and marketing.

<Name> - Biggest commitment is a full time job, which involve travelling extensively at times (since my scope of coverage is global, I regularly work in the evenings as well)

<Name> - Client work, creating and delivering webinars on remote teams, my 6–year-old twins, parent volunteer work, church commitments, exercise, and the work of running a busy household

6) What timing/ days of the week work best for you?

<Name> - Singapore time - evening

<Name> - during regular working hours are the best (though I am aware all feel this way). Mon-Fri

<Name> - At this point, I would prefer to wait until after the New Year with family about and holiday makers. However I am not sure if that applies in the northern hemisphere. I would be willing to make myself available after the first week of January. I can work times if I know in advance.

<Name - 6pm on weekdays, except Thursday and Friday. Mid-afternoon Saturday. Late morning, early afternoon Sunday. Sunday night. (Sydney time)

<Name> - Saturday night, Friday night, during the day Groningen time Sunday - Friday.

<Name> - Not between 10pm to 6am (although I realise that this is going to come up sometime... I just end up falling asleep or not waking up)

<Name> - Mon - Fri 9am - 5.30pm

<Name> - Fri - Tuesday 7am - 12.00pm.

<Name> - It will change, but for now the best times are 8 - 10 pm in the evenings.

<Name> - It depends, but would say afternoons 2-6 pm Singapore/HK/KL time zone (except Tuesdays)

<Name> - Varies week to week – 6 AM Eastern US time would work well, or 9 PM evenings

7) What can be done to improve your participation?

<Name> - a) Online facilitation approaches and obtain feedback or b) Put up the various stories on facilitation process and the outcome of each situation; request feedback from readers.

<Name> - clarity on goals and my own time management

<Name> - I do need more notice of events to work out how I can participate.

<Name> - More notice and more clarity about what is expected. Perhaps a more structured process.

<Name> - I would appreciate more lead time for meetings at least a couple of weeks. Nothing else that I can think of.

<Name> - More notice - would be great if we could know what's happening over the next two/three weeks, when and what and why. This would help me to plan my participation. It would be nice to have an overview of what's happening over the project (not at a huge level of detail, but just an overview which would be more likely to remain the same - our top level plan seemed to go out of date very quickly so I'm feeling a bit lost)

I agree with this from <Name>: More of an open space approach. A series of times set up and whoever turns is the right person.

<Name> - Conduct events (synchronous and asynchronous) where and when everyone can participate.

<Name> - More stories.

<Name> - Restate our goal, general tasks to be accomplished, overall timeframe for the next few months so I can plan around, in the context of using the cooperative inquiry method.

<Name> - Clear objectives, general timeframes, no clashes with office meetings (can't be helped sometimes), advance notice

<Name> - Better time management on my part. Also, better clarity about intended outcomes, deadlines, and better definition of "story." I may have great stories to tell, but perhaps don't see them as "stories" in the way everyone else means.

8) What can be done to improve the group's participation?

<Name> - Stories sharing and request input or other approach for the same subject matter.

<Name> - perhaps same as above [clarity on goals and my own time management]

<Name> - One idea which came to me is something which I have participated in as part of Appreciative Inquiry list. An invitation was put out by a coordinating person to those who would like to have peer introduction and discussions about what is important to them. Pairs were randomly created. Conversations took place at agreed times between pairs. It might be a way to get involvement at the first stage. It only needs to last for as long as participants want. Peer discussions establish relationships which lead to increased participation in group discussions.

<Name> - More relationship. More sense of what we can contribute to each other.

<Name> - We need to rehearse why we are doing this. We need a bit more structure.

<Name> - Planning and more notice...

<Name> - Conduct events (synchronous and asynchronous) where and when everyone can participate.

<Name> - More suggestions on how we can create a better structure for telling our stories.

<Name> - Perhaps ask each member what creates value for them.

<Name> - Aligned/common motivations

unrelated comment: Feels like email storms with this approach of info sharing when I gets loads of emails re this subject in my Inbox(any way to send have an email digest?) - here's me adding to it! :-)

<Name> - Specific instructions and deadlines---e.g., sometime within the next five days, please go to XXXX and respond to the three questions posted there…..

9) What might contribute to creating more online community?

<Name> - Each member shall share one story per month from their personal experience on the website for readings.

<Name> - we need some continuity. Perhaps we could set a schedule that has weekly shorter calls (45 min), same time for 1 month at a time. Keeping up with changing schedule is one thing that makes this hard to get in gear with. Frequency which leads to increasing familiarity may contribute.

<Name> - I think the questions you are asking in this survey would be better said on the list- generate the discussion that way rather than in a separate

<Name> - Get people to send photos, or better to post them on a common website. With them, more information about what they are passionate about, highlights of their lives and/or careers, what they want to see happen in the world (through facilitation or otherwise).

<Name> - More stories

<Name> - Story? :-)

<Name> - More interaction, sharing and storytelling with each other.

<Name> - One idea: pick a "story topic of the week" - a story about something, e.g. What is one of your holiday rituals? And that question gets emailed out to

everyone and then everyone responds - if the story happens to strike someone in a particular way - perhaps they could comment on it or interview the storyteller as <Name> and <Name> suggested.

I'm feeling like some of the stories about facilitation may help us explore facilitation in general, which I'd like to do too, but I'm also curious about human nature stories that may draw others in and help them to relax, build trust. Not to use just for this group, but to trigger ideas for future storytelling uses.

<Name> - pictures, real-time chats (which we seem to be doing)

<Name> - Perhaps come up with specific topics for which we will write stories — maybe one a month. Perhaps offer a choice of three topics (e.g. The biggest mistake you have ever made in planning virtual work…and how you overcame it….The best use of storytelling you have ever witnessed in a facilitated environment…)

10) Useful comments to contribute:

<Name> - Each story would relate the effectiveness of the approach and request for further enhancement.

<Name> - Merry Christmas!

<Name> - Because the possibilities of this project are so wide, it needs perhaps more structure rather than less. In particular, what goals do we have from the project (i) as a group and (ii) as individuals?

<Name> - I believe online group work needs a platform and processes that people can engage with at times they are in control of as well as live events.

<Name> - <Name> suggested after asking 3) What have been the best things so far? I could have asked 3.1) What have been the worst things so far? It made me wonder what other questions could be useful to ask ourselves? I've found the responses people have made so far really useful. It feels like there are a few themes emerging. They may provide a key to what needs to happen in our group next.

<Name> - Miracles occur daily in our lives.......keep on keepin' on!

<Name> - Be open & curious, you never know what you might learn

<Name> - I would like to play a more active role in this group starting in 2006!

Appendix H Mid-Placement Meeting Process and Guidelines

THE PROCESS

Each chat room will have a maximum of three participants. I will move between each chat room and let you know I am present.

Join a chat room.

Task - Each person will share a success story with two critical friends who ask questions and give feedback.

Guidelines for Time frame

2.00 pm Greetings and hellos, decide order of sharing stories

2.05 Person A Story 5 min

Questions and or discussion 5 minutes

Acknowledgements / closure 2 min

2.17 Person B as above 12 min

2.29 Person C as above 12 min

2.41 Close chat if you wish to post a question, or continue informally

2.45 – 3.00 Post a question to group forum or go to other chat rooms to say hello.

GUIDELINES FOR STORYTELLER

Type as succinctly as possible – some flexibility with grammar and punctuation is acceptable

Type 2-3 sentences at a time to enable critical friends to see emerging story.

GUIDELINES FOR CRITICAL FRIENDS

The role of a critical friend is to question the storyteller in order to deepen their critical thinking, learning and reflective practice.

It is important for the storyteller to complete the story

Ask questions during story only if you need clarification.

The following questions are a guideline only.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Why was this important to you?

What did you as facilitator that enabled it to be successful?

How does this experience confirm or challenge your beliefs about teaching? How did you feel during the experience?

How might you adjust your practice in the future as a result of this experience?

What do your feel is the NLS after this experience?

Reminder – sent out by email Friday 17 March

Online mid-placement meeting Friday March 24 2.00 – 3.00 pm

Thank you to those of you who have responded or indicated you will be on line on Friday.

Log on Student net Wednesday (after 8 pm) or Thursday evening.

Join a chat room, maximum of 3.

Think about your most exciting or significant experience in the classroom during this practice. A suggestion is to formulate 4-5 key ideas so that you can write it succinctly.

Talk to you on Friday.

Appendix I Chat Session Evaluations

Describe 1-2 learnings you gained from the online chat experience

How to participate in a chat room.

Ideas about homework management

It was really helpful to learn that the others were experiencing similar issues in the classroom and it was useful to be able to discuss them when they were happening rather than after the practice.

n/a Couldn't connect to chat so couldn't view others chat either

I was able to share information with others and reflect on the teaching that I had been doing. It was great to get ideas on lessons from others to take back and try later in the classroom.

I learned that some of my course-mates were struggling and some were succeeding – it gave me a measure of my own success and experience.

What did you enjoy about the online chat?

Being able to connect with other people from my class, in the same boat as me!

Finding out things that others were struggling with – makes it not seem so bad, that everyone is finding it heaps of work.

n/a

To be able to touch base with everyone when we were on practice – it was reassuring to be able to "talk" to the others without feeling guilty about encroaching on their precious free time.

It was good to catch up with our tutor and class mates and see how they were going and share some of our experiences from practice.

Sharing experiences with my course-mates.

What challenges did you experience?

Some delay in typing responses, sometimes I would wait for 2-3 minutes then put on another question, but people would still be wanting to respond to a previous question, so sometimes we got a bit muddled in the order of our conversation, or some comments were just left.

Basically it was a simple process, except for the fact that we lost some time trying to decide on which chat room to enter.

Could not connect to chat. I could see that other were in the room but couldn't see what they were writing.

One challenge would have been to keep my writing short and to the point, as I tend to want to give the whole story. This has been a good learning point though.

Whatever the program was that we were using, it was not user-friendly at all.

How would you rate the preparation you had beforehand? 1poor -10 excellent

6 – clear guidelines given, I had never been in a chat room first, so probably would have benefited from a social chat with my colleagues the night before to "practice" the process, it was quite a lot to think about the process as well as reflecting on our mahi [work].

I would rate it 7-8, we were given all the instructions earlier, but because I was preoccupied with the practice, I did not read them till the last minute – so I guess if it was given to us at residential school I would have paid more attention and been better prepared.

There wasn't much we needed to know. Perhaps whether or not there was anyone to contact if we had technical problems.

9

I don't really understand this question. I knew it was approaching well in advance, but I did not know how to use the chat program, so I will say 5.

How would you rate it as a forum for peer support? 1 poor -10 excellent

With practice I think it would be excellent, as long as it wasn't open for too many people to use it at once because then it gets a bit confusing to follow one conversation.

I'm sure it would have been great. I probably can't really answer this question though as I couldn't connect properly

I would rate it as excellent

9

I would rate it about 6 – you are able to give and receive support, but I would not use that particular program regularly.

Would you recommend the use a chat room forum for a mid-placement meeting for distance students? Why?

Yes – it's nice to connect to encourage each other. It was hard to keep to the guidelines set – critical reflection on each others teaching – was probably more of

a how are you? What's working well? What are you finding hard? We did make some suggestions for each other, but not really facilitating each other to come up with our own solutions.

Definitely, because it is really essential for distance students to be able to catch up with their lecture and peers during placement – as it is we get quite isolated and it is helpful to be able to check on issues and also to be able to find out if we are on the right track. The helpful suggestions we can get from our peers are invaluable.

Definitely as it gives a chance to actually all talk about experiences

I would definitely use this forum again, given the opportunity. It was great to share ideas and gain information from others who were doing the same things as you. Being able to share and give support made all the difference and lets you know there are others out there going through the same experiences as you.

I wouldn't recommend it, but only because of the technical difficulties I experienced, and I understand that not all participants had these problems.

How would you rate the experience overall?   1 poor -10 excellent

8 – Fun, a learning experience, encouraging, gave me things to think about

n/a 1 – frustrating as I couldn't connect

I would rate is a 9

9

4

What recommendations would you make for future online chat sessions?

Make sure everyone has an opportunity to practice the process first.

Might need some more practice of critical reflection and asking questions of each other before going on-line?

Technical support

As I mentioned it earlier, it would be helpful if it is discussed at the RS or during briefings. Of course after the first one the rest would definitely go more smoothly.

To make sure that all members can access the chatrooms and maybe have a bit longer to chat.

If possible, use a reputable, well established chat service such as MSN Messenger or ICQ, or upgrade the current program.

Would you use a chat room forum on Gradnet on completion of your course?
Yes, maybe, sometimes, not at all. Why?

Yes! It's great to be able to talk back to people in our class – we know they're coming from a similar place in terms of what they were taught at teacher's college in order to bounce ideas and situations about our current teaching experiences.

I would love to use it, but I feel it would be sometimes as it does take time. It would depend on how useful one would find it. I can say more after experiencing the process.

Sometimes if I knew others I knew would be online too

Yes I would as it is good to share and reflect on your learning experiences. It would also be a great way to get support and share resources or put an idea to the group for feedback.

Maybe. I would like to keep in touch with fellow grads, but it needs to be simpler.

Were you "inspired" at any point during the chat? If yes, at what moment did it occur, or how did inspiration occur? If not, how might you or others have been inspired in the online chat?

I think I was when hearing about some of the great things other people were trying, like P and how they were doing homework in her class.

Also it encouraged me to have positive feedback from <Name> during the chat.

Yes. I did get some ideas for how to finish everything I had planned for in my classroom.

n/a

I was inspired in the form of sharing ideas and information. I will take back what I learnt from my peers to enhance my teaching and use some of the ideas shared in my future classrooms.

I cannot remember, sorry! Usually my inspiration when I talk to my peers comes from hearing that I am not the only one who is experiencing that problem or feeling that it is happening to others at the same time.

If you did this again, how would YOU improve the session for yourself?

Write down some points I want to discuss first.

Have the page of questions to prompt others handy.

Be early in the chat room so I can get the social greetings done before our formal discussion begins.

I would try and be better prepared and also write down some alternative issues to discuss. What I had wanted to discuss this time would have been a repeat and so I had to change at the last moment

n/a

By being more precise and succinct when sharing my learning experiences. I would be ready and prepared with questions to ask or some to pose for feedback.

I would try to familiarize myself with the program beforehand.

Is there anything you would like to comment on or add?

Maybe chat rooms could have the rotation of speakers up first, we seemed to take a while to get started.

Maybe there could be a chat room facilitator?

Maybe it could be stricter that if you are not on line at the start, you come in half way through, rather than in and out at different points – just meant our discussions were interrupted by social greetings to other people – which was o.k. but it would have been easier if we knew when the interruptions were due to come.

I enjoyed the process and it should definitely become a part of the programme – rather than having a mid placement meeting. This takes less time too.

I believe this would be an excellent source of communication for future grad students and tutors and a great way to share in the learning experiences we have while out on placement and doing assignments. It would be good to have on a more regular basis to use for informal chat and any queries that are course-related.

No thank you

Appendix J Trainer-Facilitator Interview

Transcript from interview with <Name> Online Stories with 3rd-year Trainee Teachers

<Name>: This has been quite good for me because I haven't really looked at this for a long time, but I did last night and it was quite good to go back over it because when it didn't work for the Masters papers I put it aside and now I've come back to it I thought oh, this is interesting.

<Interviewer>: Yeah, fascinating stuff. I was just rereading the email that you sent to the group about what you did and I was thinking what kind of questions I could ask.

<Name>: I was wondering what questions you might ask me and I was trying to think what you may well say, what you'll ask me before you'll ask me but I fell asleep… what I did yesterday, I did an evaluation I'd asked them to do an evaluation then I thought I'll just do it myself, so the same one I asked them to do, so that was a useful thing to do because it really made me think about what I'd do differently and some of the feedback that they gave me, based on that and based on my own sense of it as well.

<Interviewer>: In terms of what you might do next time I suppose because you're planning to do more, aren't you?

<Name>: Yes, this year I'll be working primarily with distance students so I'll do a lot more online. There will be a face to face component so I think the cool thing, one of the most important things for me in that experience was that I knew the students really well, I'd had a lot of face to face contact with them and I was really well established as their key tutor so that relationship, for me that's a fundamental thing so for me that was important that we had that trust beforehand.

<Interviewer>: Interesting to reflect on what comes up when you haven't had that… fascinating.

<Name>: Yes. That will be possibly be happening. The first group that I begin with next year if all goes according to the current staff loading will be a group that I don't know particularly well so that could be a different situation. So here I am. What would you like to ask me?

<Interviewer>: I thought I would ask you things about the session first then get into the in depth reflection-y type things afterwards.

<Name>: Yes. Yes.

<Interviewer>: So the first thing I wanted to ask you was about the participants to get a rough sense of what type of participants they were, were they mostly women, what their age brackets were, were they mostly European descent, kind of the demographic-y thingys.

<Name>: Yes. I think I ended up with, I can't remember the numbers actually I'd have to check back on that I had mainly, to begin with, our average age student is 36, that's a distant student, that's one statistic that we've already calculated out. In that group I had one student of Maori, no, 2 students of Maori descent and the rest were Caucasian. I started off with a group of 11 and I had 9 potential participants and one person opted not to participate so I ended up with 8 participants and two of those were Maori descent. Geographically they're spread from Whangarei to Gisborne to Wanganui and including Rotorua and they were spread.

<Interviewer>: Were they all in separate locations or were there two of them together in groups?

<Name>: They were all in separate locations.

<Interviewer>: The next thing I was going to ask about was the system you used, a brief talk about what that was.

<Name>: That brought up some issues with some of the feedback. It was, we were using the Christchurch College of Education intranet or internet website which meant I was using all the – I'm trying to think of the word - I was able to create that whole chat room effect from all the – I'm trying to say the word processes, but that's not really the right word – but I could just create that from what was available to me on that intranet. And that's been in place for about – it started in 2002 – so it's been in place for about 4 years but not all the students are familiar with all of those processes that most of them won't use them unless they're guided to.

<Interviewer>: I found a similar thing at AUT unless there was an assessment attached

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<Name>: Yes, that's about it, the fundamental thing, put an assessment there, they'll do it.

<Interviewer>: Must be the same the world over.

<Name>: Yes, except in this case it wasn't actually, it wasn't an assessment.

<Interviewer>: So that's interesting to note too, that it's kind of a voluntary thing.

<Name>: It was by invitation, that's why there's the opportunity not to participate and I thought that was a significant thing really, but 8 of the 9 chose to participate.

<Interviewer>: That suggests something around the value that they place in you and the process that you're offering.

<Name>: Yes, and from the feedback they said something about the importance of distance students having a way of coming together and talking about their common experiences in the classroom particularly while they're on practice out on a placement, so they have that opportunity and…

<Interviewer>: So they're missing that way to get together, and do something a bit less formal.

<Name>: Yes, so I was very surprised at that from reading [the student feedback] yesterday I hadn't realized the extent to which they thought that was really valuable.

<Interviewer>: Ok. So what kinds of stories did they tell?

<Name>: Very interesting. I would ask them to talk about their successes but that didn't always happen but most of the time they were talking about things that were current, right on the top for them and how they were working through the problems that they were encountering in that scenario. There were success stories, they did talk about their successes and they asked for support too and ideas from each other so some of the stories were about behavioral issues or things that they'd done really well or perhaps some of them talked about things that when I was on practice I visited them I had talked to them about taking those ideas a step further. One person talked about a problem that she actually asked for some support around a management problem with children.

<Interviewer>: Could get a few of those come up too.

<Name>: Yes, that comes up quite a lot and then just little things that they spoke about in between all those things so they tended to really follow their own threads

and that was good because they … if you actually read the transcripts there's a huge amount of learning in this -

((Disconnect / reconnect))

<Interviewer>: We were talking about the different kinds of stories they were telling.

<Name>: And rather than long stories they were, because we didn't have a lot of time anyway they were small, short discussions around what was on top of them and because of the nature of them, most of them having this as their first experience, that I think that would have impacted on the flow of the story. So that's an important thing to remember next time I think they need more practice before they do this, they had to deal with a number of things all at once 1) the technology 2) other people making comments while they're talking about their story and then 3) people coming in or going out because of their late arrivals so I think that's part of the feedback that I would get them up and into the chat rooms before this mid-placement meeting, do it perhaps as an introductory - anyway I'll come back to that later, some of the things I might do differently, that would help.

<Interviewer>: What were the general responses to hearing other peoples' stories?

<Name>: I think the nature of these students, because they're training to be teachers, they are reflective people and so they like to hear each others' stories, they like to share their stories and that's probably the bit that inspired them the most because they, hearing how it was for other people and that came through in the question I asked them were you inspired at any point during the chat and at what moment did it occur, and it was all about, they didn't use that word 'story', but it was about what other people had talked about. So that was a key thing and it's really just sharing their experiences, and everybody realizing their similar experiences but they're unique as well.

<Interviewer>: Mirror-like I suppose in a way, they get to see that everyone else is similar.

<Name>: Yes, and what I did last night was actually put all of the responses under each question that I asked them and that question I had asked was were you inspired? Those that were on there successfully, apart from one who had difficulties with the processes, but they talk about 'inspired' in the form of sharing ideas and information and hearing about some of the great things other

people were trying, it was encouraging to get positive feedback, and get ideas of how to finish their (something) plan for the classroom. So those were some of the comments that came through about hearing what was going on for other people and that's really that notion of the narrative and their experience, so that was great for me because I feel that's really encouraged me to do it again.

<Interviewer>: What kind of comments did they make about the use of the Appreciative Inquiry approach? It sounds like they did something slightly different anyway. Did they like the idea of the method and…

<Name>: I've used it with them before and I don't think they sort of distinguish it as different, because we come from a strengths-based approach, they didn't actually come into it and I think they just see that as just the norm.

<Interviewer>: Did they raise any kinds of burning issues through telling each other stories, for them collectively?

<Name>: I think maybe the one, probably the one issue that comes up frequently is about managing behavior as we've talked about before, so that comes up often, just looking back through that. If you actually go through and look between the lines most of it is about, directly or indirectly about anger management, or managing children, or difficult children.

<Interviewer>: That sounds a lot like what my girlfriend goes through and she's been teaching for 7 years and still has…

<Name>: Welcome to the world of teaching is what I say to them.

<Interviewer>: Yeah, specific darlings she has in class.

<Name>: Yes, that's right and they get used to the fact that that is a key issue and yeah, that's right.

<Interviewer>: Now you had a few ranking scales that you were going to ask them, did they give it a good rank?

<Name>: When I asked them to rank I asked how they would rate the preparation beforehand, 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, so we had a 6 and then a 9 and a 4 for that –

<Name>: … there's another one… oh no, no, that's not correct, I've given you the wrong one there it was a 6, a 7 to 8 and a 9 and a 5 and then one person said there wasn't much we needed to know. Which I thought was quite interesting and then the other question that I asked them which was a rating one was how would

you rate it as a forum for peer support and I had a 9, a 6, an 'excellent' and a comment 'with practice I think it will be excellent as long as it wasn't open for too many people to use at once because then it gets a bit confusing to follow one conversation'.

<Interviewer>: Oh right, they like the small groups.

<Name>: Yes. Yes. I've thought about that as well and I'd make some changes along the line to be a bit more directive about who's going to be with who and give them guidelines on how to – I did give them guidelines but that's where the practice comes in I think. So, on the whole that was rated very highly, the peer support. And then overall how would you rate the experience overall? I had 8, 'a fun learning experience' 'encouraging, it gave me things to think about', and 'not applicable', 1 frustrating because I couldn't connect. That's something I need to look at. The other one I would rate it as a 9 and then another 9 and then a 4 from the student who thought it was, the technology was not good, so that was interesting.

<Interviewer>: Very interesting. So they enjoyed the, what they did there but the technology sounds like it was what let the side down so to speak.

<Name>: Yes and probably part of it was my, I hadn't, because I hadn't experienced it myself I didn't know what I didn't know and I would change the organization more so those poor guinea pigs have gone through the experience and I would scaffold them more so they wouldn't encounter the problems once they were in and on and encountered problems. How I would cope with the technology problems that were encountered by two students I don't know, I'd have to think about that one. I don't know whether to use chat like Skype or something like that rather than intranet but there's a lot of good processes you can use on the intranet like having different chat rooms, and so on but I come to that one as well because I've been thinking of that whole open space technology approach to online and that's what I think's going to be the answer to some things too. Yes, so that was in relation to that question.

<Interviewer>: The next question I had which you've probably just answered it was 'generally what were the suggestions for improvement from the participants?' Probably the technology was the main thing, it sounds like.

((Disconnect / reconnect))

<Name>: So the question you asked me was what recommendations, one was make sure everyone has the opportunity to practice the process first, more practice of critical themes really, critical reflection and asking questions of each other before doing it online, technical support, I don't know whether that would be possible and perhaps giving me a bit more information when they're in a face to face situation about it which I could do the next time because I know what I was going to do, which I didn't know, at first. A bit longer to chat, the last one was the guy who didn't like that particular methodology: 'if possible use a reputable, well established chat service such as MS Messenger or upgrade the current programme'!

<Interviewer>: Might be ICQ or...

<Name>: ICQ, that's right. He's a cheeky guy so he sort of might be about that but I asked them if you did this again how would you improve the session for yourself? and he's put down 'write down some points I want to discuss first' 'have the page of questions to prompt others handy' 'be early in the chat rooms so I can get social greetings done before a formal discussion begins and that's why I want to talk about the opening circle and closing circle from open space technology because I'd use that next time. 'I would try and be better at peer review and write down some alternative issues to discuss what I had wanted to discuss this time would have been a repeat and so I had to change at the last moment' that was another comment. I'll send you this actually as well if you'd like. I'll send you a copy of this feedback, they've got no names on it so it's okay then 'by being more precise and succinct when sharing my learning experiences, I would be ready and prepared with questions to ask or some to pose for feedback' and the last one is 'I would try to familiarize myself with the programme beforehand' and then the final one they asked 'is there anything you would like to comment on or add?' and I got some quite good ones here. I enjoyed the process and it should definitely become part of the programme rather than having a mid-placement meeting which is a face to face. Then the next one was 'I believe this would be an excellent source of communication for future grad students and tutors and a great way to share in the learning experiences we have while out on placements and doing assignments, it would be good to have a more regular basis to use for more informal chats and any queries that are course related'. And then

another person wrote 'maybe chat rooms could have a limitation of speakers up first, we seem to take a while to get started. So there's good suggestions for future ones 'could there be a chat room facilitator?' I thought that's a good idea 'maybe it could be structured that if you're not online at the start you come in half way through rather than in and out at different points – just meant our discussions were interrupted by social greetings to other people which was okay but it would have been easier if we knew when the interruptions were due to come'. So that's a bit about my management there and facilitation, so that's good. And lots of very good productive thoughts.

<Interviewer>: Yeah, great things for improving it for next time.

<Name>: Yes, very well guided and very on to it. Students!

<Interviewer>: Very frank.

<Name>: Absolutely!

<Interviewer>: That's what I like about students.

<Name>: Yes, I love it, yes. Great group. Yes, so I'll send that to you and its all in different colours for each person so you can...

<Interviewer>: Perfect. My next question I had is was the timing, enough time. You mentioned that it was a bit short. Was the timing, enough time –

<Name>: I think the time frame if I recall was about 45 minutes, it wasn't a short frame.

<Interviewer>: It was quite short, 8 people…

<Name>: You think that was too short?

<Interviewer>: I was just dividing the 45 by 8 and that's about 5 minutes each really, isn't it?

<Name>: Well -

((Disconnect / reconnect)) x 2

<Interviewer>: What would you do differently as the facilitator during the sessions?

<Name>: As a facilitator during the session I would organize to have an opening circle where everybody had a chance to greet each other and get present and then I would ask them to go to chat rooms and I would have the people to set up the chat rooms differently I would also, I'm still not sure how I would manage the facilitation of the chat rooms because I, what I did was I popped in and out and I

added comments where I thought they were useful and I wasn't really sure about the value of that, how much value there was. I did get a comment back about one student who said she was really pleased with the feedback I gave her, I got the sense they enjoyed that but I don't know, that part I'm not really so sure about how I would manage differently but I know I certainly have time for them to get present and time for them to, as a large group as I had a group of 8, and then divide back out into chat rooms of 3 or 2 and then come back again to close at a closing circle, as a whole group. I'd try that next time.

<Interviewer>: Break out rooms.

<Name>: Yes.

<Interviewer>: I wondered too about your role as a trainer as well as a facilitator they may have had expectations of what your role might have been too?

<Name>: Yes I want to make that much clearer to them, more explicit and overt. Once I've figured out what it is myself. I always have this tension between the facilitator and the trainer in my own head. So yes that was interesting for me and I'm still pondering on that and it's started me pondering again because I've just looked at it in the last day and that's probably the bit I'm going to be working on the most in my own head.

<Interviewer>: It kind of leads a little bit into the next question which I had which was are there particular things you'd do differently setting up the exercise next time? You've mentioned a few of those all ready.

<Name>: I think all of those I talked about I think the main thing is I think they need not to be doing too many new things at once and because it was an experiment in a sense I had the idea to do it, I hadn't really had sufficient time to lead them into it. So that would be the main thing. And yes, I think most of the things I would do differently I think I have spoken about, but I'll also put that on paper so if you want a copy of that I can send that to you as well 'cause I thought I'd keep all of this information to provide further fodder for anything I do subsequent to this.

<Interviewer>: Oh good and I'll send you back the transcribed interview we do today so that will add into it, hopefully.

<Name>: Yes although I don't know if I will get any research time, I don't know if they are actually going to give me the time. They expect us to do it in our own time.

<Interviewer>: I've got three more questions. One was how much influence do you think the face to face contact had on the success of the chat session?

<Name>: I think it was enormous. I'd have to say that would have to be at least 90%.

<Interviewer>: Wow. That's pretty big for…doing it all online

<Name>: Yes it is. Yes. I know. Well, I think that's the key, it's how do you establish relationship leading into something like that? That's, that work, is the work of the person who is the distance facilitator.

<Interviewer>: That kind of relationship thing is part of the next question I was going to ask 'what relationship aspects were already built up before the session?, well you mentioned trust already so I, what other sorts of things were there?

<Name>: Yes, we had already built up, we had an established learning culture which we'd already set up so that was formalized, we had a history of being together over, I think we'd been together over 5 days in a residential school

<Interviewer>: Ah right, it was residential.

<Name>: Yes, and we had a history of over a year of being in a group, so a long history. We had some kura kaupapa, we had a history, we had relationship and trust and we knew, everybody knew personally as well, not just professionally. We'd come together as a very strong group, they were a particularly strong group anyway. Part of that 90% is the constitution of the group.

<Interviewer>: Makes a lot of sense.

<Name>: Yes. So it will be interesting to see what happens this year.

<Interviewer>: Fascinating, early next year.

<Name>: Yes.

<Interviewer>: The final question was 'any other comments you'd like to add?'

<Name>: Well at this stage, it is interesting, but at this stage because I've come back to it, I haven't looked at this for a long time come back to it I really feel very confident about doing it again.

<Interviewer>: Oh, great!

<Name>: I'm also delighted about the amount of the positive feedback I got about the benefits to them. Of coming together in some way like that so I'd like to explore other ways for them to come together as well and I think if we have the technology -, setting up the technology now to use Skype in the College so that's another way, its not the only way to do it, I'd like to explore other ways but what is critical here is that there are times for them to come together outside of the residential school so that's where I'd be heading as well. I'd try, perhaps I can try different ways with different groups throughout the year and see what works really well in this time.

<Interviewer>: I was just reflecting on my own students based on what you were saying about having that time to do that kind of peer learning through talking about the experiences they've had and we do a little bit in class which then we get to learn each other's workplace experiences and there's not really much outside the classroom for that even for the face to face students unless they kind of create something themselves. It's quite interesting.

<Name>: Yes. Well I, I also, I think the other thing I would like to do is, I do a lot of feedback with them, in the critical friend, peer feedback in the face to face situation so I need to make the links very clear from that experience to an online experience; it needs to be so explicit and so overt, I often assume that they can transfer that experience from one context to another, and they didn't. So, some of them didn't, some of them didn't, that's not accurate, most of them attempted it really well but it needs to be, they need to be scaffolded more in that so that was interesting too.

((<Name> queries if <Interviewer> can still hear. <Interviewer> replies that his sister is distracting him))

<Name>: I think that's probably most of what I can remember that I wrote down I haven't got in front of me what I wrote down last night when I was doing this reflection but I will send you all of what I have written.

<Interviewer>: Oh that would be great.

<Name>: Yes, I won't send you the actual chat room because that's got their names on it.

<Interviewer>: It's great to get the feedback and that it was so valued, I think was…by the students.

<Name>: Yes, well I think this is very encouraging. I think your right, and how to support them more with that is the next step.

<Interviewer>: It almost gives you a mandate to do more next semester because they've said they want it.

<Name>: Yes, yes. The first students will be graduating next Wednesday…

<Interviewer>: Oh, well done!

<Name>: So that's all good stuff.

<Interviewer>: Congratulations.

<Name>: Yes, thank you.

<Interviewer>: They think it's all about them.

<Name>: Yes it is, it's all about them. The other question that I guess comes up for me about comments is how to support those students from a technical perspective, you know. Those students who went off or couldn't get on, that is a big thing. I mean I was completely not able to help them in any way, if they dropped off, they dropped off. So that's a big one really, that's really disappointing for them.

<Interviewer>: I have done sessions in the past where I had someone specifically brought in to do the technical 'guru' so to speak. If you have trouble getting in, contact him as the first point of call and that was great 'cause then I could run the meeting while he got people into the room that couldn't get in and all those sorts of things.

<Name>: I think that's a good idea.

<Interviewer>: A problem during my online programme with <Name>

<Interviewer>: <Name> downloaded the conferencing tool and went to install it but it would do something and disappear so it didn't even install the software on her system so she couldn't join our room and I emailed the Hot Conference people and Gil Brenson at the Global Facilitators who uses it and Gil had never seen this problem occur before. It's one they couldn't fix very obviously we thought it might have been the anti-spyware or the Norton Anti-virus stopping it from installing but she had those switched off so it was all a bit of a query…bit of a mystery.

<Name>: Yes. Those are the mysteries, and they're going to occur so I guess we need to prepare them for that, that these things can happen especially.

<Interviewer>: We do our best!

<Name>: Have eyes in all directions.

((Interview continues on other matters))

<Interviewer>: Thank you very much <Name>

<Name>: Well thank you also because I think I might not have come back to this so readily if I hadn't been having this chat with you and I'm so pleased I have.

<Interviewer>: Oh that's good; it's beneficial to both of us.

<Name>: Yes it has been, very, very beneficial in fact. So thank you and I will send you as much stuff as I can in written form.

<Interviewer>: Great! Thanks <Name>.

<Name>: You're welcome. Thank you. Goodbye.

Appendix K Comparison Summary Results

Sharing information vs. sharing our stories comparative test – 23 responses

Questions about the web profiles and email introductions

Q1 Closeness

Please rank how close do you feel to this person after reading email introductions and web profiles

Response data story introductions: 2, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 3, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1.

Response data web profiles: 6, 4, 4, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 6, 1, 2, 6, 3, 6, 4, 4, 3, 6, 3, 4, 3.

	Frequencies	
	Emails	**Web profiles**
1.Very Close	7	1
2. Close	11	2
3. Somewhat close	4	7
4. Neither close nor far	0	8
5. Somewhat far	0	0
6. Far	0	5
7. Very far	0	0
Total	22	23
Mean	1.9	3.8
Standard deviation	0.7	1.4
95% confidence	0.4 - 3.3	1.0 - 6.6
Median	2	4
Mode	2	4
Range	1 - 3	1 – 6

The email introductions were more popular than the web profiles. On the 7 point scale, with 1 being very close and 7 being very far, email introductions scored an average of 1.9 and median/mode of 2 (close) and web profiles an average of 3.8 and median/mode of 4 (Neither close nor far). The standard deviation of the Web profiles is high due to participants' choice of 'Far' creating a broad range of results. However, closeness from emails clustered around Very Close to Somewhat close.

Q2 What aspects can be seen

What aspects, if any, of the person's attitudes, values, personality traits or concerns can you see in this profile and email introduction?

Response data - count in emails: 4, 6, 2, 5, 4, 4, 4, 2, 6, 2, 8, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 4, 7, 4, 16, 4, 5, 7.

Response data - count in web profiles: 0, 3, 1, 2, 1, 4, 1, 2, 5, 4, 4, 7, 5, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2, 2, 4, 7, 3, 6.

Total email introduction aspects: 118

Total web profile aspects: 73

	Frequencies	
Count	Emails	Web profiles
0	0	1
1	0	3
2	4	6
3	0	4
4	8	4
5	3	2
6	3	1
7	3	2
8	1	0
16	1	0
Total	23	23
Mean	5.1	3.2
Standard deviation	2.9	1.9
95% confidence	-0.7 - 11.0	-0.6 - 7
Median	4	3
Mode	4	2
Range	2 - 16	0 - 7

On average there were more personal aspects found by participants in the email introductions than in the web profiles. There was an average of 5.1 aspects identified in the email introductions compared to an average of 3.2 aspects identified in the web profiles. However, due to the small sample size and outlier results, the standard deviations in both samples are too high to draw solid conclusions from the data.

The number of personal aspects seen in email introductions had a median and mode of 4 compared to a median of 3 and mode of 2 for aspects seen in the web profiles.

Again, participants favored email over web profiles. Popular email introduction aspects identified were: family, a people person, positive, cultural and historical aspects. Popular web profile aspects identified were: cultural aspects, facilitation, creativity and hard working.

Response data - aspect categories of story introductions: people person, equity , diversity, animals, urban sprawl, competent, curious, positive, co-learner , a lot of explanation, Maori, talkative, friendly, outgoing, being part of a group, active, wanting to do a good job, skeptical initially, making it work, balance, honesty, range of outcomes, beyond science, practical, interested, doing things well, making a difference, cultural, connection between people, connection to themselves, historical, Maori, multi-ethnic, cultural, valuing of our treaty partner, importance of storytelling, relevance of storytelling, connecting people, interested, too much information, Warmth, caring, Value on human connections, family, Relationship-oriented, Complex world view, historical, similarities, differences, Willingness, cultural, caring, allowing, guiding, sharing, loves work, authenticity, passionate, animals, loving, hard working, deep connections , making a difference, doesn't give up, honesty, realness, spirited, environmentally conscious, hard working, think deep, true love, laugh loud, learn fast, family, magic, helping people, historical, family, magic, yogic teachings , yogic traits, commitment, adventuresome, engaging, experienced, open, travelled, participate, intentional, careful, family, people person, journeyman, adventurer, passionate, open, statement maker, sustainable processes, engaging, reflective, active learner, open with limitations, positive, changes, adaptable, capable , positive, humor , family, belonging, interest in opinions, people person, running, reading, human connection, people person, curious, cultural, challenges

Response data - aspect categories of web profiles: Myers-Briggs, putting people in boxes, performance improvement, academic credentials, facilitation, effective groups, family, people person, development, education, moves job often, cultural, education, facilitation, effective groups, facilitation, relationships, online medium , picture, approachable, theoretical, technical , technology, creative, Focused, Organized, fun, creative, inspirational, balanced, effective, courageous, confident, control, order, positive, people person, patient, cultural, cultural, variety, working, writing, corporates, passionate, leadership, hard working, competent,

communication, cultural, cultural, travelled, hard working, education, experience, creative, cultural, bridging differences, high-impact (high-pressure) sessions, time=results focused, methods, tools, techniques, practice what he preaches, facilitation, solutions focused, adaptable, hard working, active, fun, happy, writing

Q3 Points of connection

What are the points of connection, if any, between this person and yourself?

Response data - count of story introductions: 3, 6, 2, 4, 2, 4, 3, 1, 4, 1, 2, 2, 3, 5, 6, 5, 5, 5, 5, 7, 3, 2, 10.

Response data - count of web profiles: 1, 4, 3, 1, 0, 1, 2, 2, 6, 4, 2, 5, 4, 1, 3, 0, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 4.

Total email introduction connections: 90

Total web profile connections: 49

	Frequencies	
Count	**Emails**	**Web profiles**
0	0	2
1	2	10
2	5	3
3	4	2
4	3	4
5	5	1
6	2	1
7	1	0
10	1	0
Total	23	23
Mean	3.9	2.1
Standard deviation	2.1	1.7
95% confidence	-0.3 - 8.2	-1.2 - 5.5
Median	4	1
Mode	2	1
Range	1 - 10	0 – 6

On average there were more points of connection made in the email introductions than in the web profiles. There were an average 3.9 points of connection in the email introductions and 2.1 points of connection in web profiles. However, this is not a robust conclusion due to high standard deviations and low sample size.

A median of 4 and mode of 2 were recorded for points of connections in emails. This is a better result than the median/mode of 1 for points of connection in web profiles.

Popular email introduction points of connection were: family, the IAF, and facilitation.

Popular web profile points of connection were: facilitation, the IAF, and university study.

Response data - connection categories of story introductions: people person, equity, diversity, Irish, family, storytelling, technology, people, IAF, Dale Hunter, Facilitation, facilitation, power of story, ethics, IAF, facilitation, family, science, math, realization that people can't be forced to change, facilitation, travelled, Mary-Alice Arthur, IAF, person-ness, toastmasters, storytelling, cultural, power of story, likes to talk, learning about others, relationship development, willingness, cultural, Zenergy, Taupo, Auckland, family, Texas, animals, Catholic, reading, Youthline, Zenergy, ethics, realness, university, psychodrama, Canada, global warming, adventures fuel the spirit, values , university, family, heritage, ethics, IAF, grandparents, yoga, family, running, walking, Mary-Alice Arthur, IAF, IAF Handbook, Flash developer, Methods Database, <Name>, Canberra, family, Catholic, Mother was also a nurse, Ireland, redheaded siblings, <Name>, interest in the topic, storytelling, ethnicity, world view, Irish, IAF, GFSC, Journal, Toastmasters, running, Zenergy, AUT, AFN, IAF Handbook.

Response data - connection categories of web profiles: facilitation, IAF, training, simplicity, ease of learning, facilitation, IAF, writer, facilitation, IAF, training, facilitation, education, effective groups, facilitation, relationships, online medium , facilitation, casual, exciting, trusting, zest, globalization, facilitation, fun, creative, inspirational, balanced, effective, Diploma in Facilitation, girlfriend is a teacher, university, cultural , Singapore, Diploma in Facilitation, Zenergy, Ethics, IAF, Honors, IAF, university, IAF, university, IAF, GFSC, AUT, Journal.

Q4 Aspects of trust

What aspects of this web profile and email introduction contribute to your level trust and safety with this person?

Response data - count of story introductions in email: 3, 6, 0, 3, 3, 3, 2, 3, 4, 3, 2, 5, 2, 5, 1, 4, 5, 5, 6, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Response data - count of web profiles: 1, 3, 0, 2, 2, 0, 0, 0, 2, 4, 1, 3, 3, 3, 5, 6, 3, 1, 2, 4, 1, 4, 5.

Total email introduction aspects of trust: 79

Total web profile aspects of trust: 55

Count	Frequencies	
	Emails	**Web profiles**
0	1	4
1	1	4
2	4	4
3	7	5
4	3	3
5	5	2
6	2	1
Total	23	23
Mean	3.4	2.4
Standard deviation	1.6	1.8
95% confidence	0.3 - 6.6	-1.1 - 5.9
Median	3	2
Mode	3	3
Range	0 - 6	0 - 6

On average there were more trust aspects found by participants in the email introductions than in the web profiles. There were an average of 3.4 aspects identified in the email introductions and 2.4 aspects identified in the web profiles. However, the standard variances are high and sample size small so the results are not robust.

The median/mode for aspects of trust from email was 3 compared to a median of 2 and mode 3 for aspects of trust from web profiles. Not significantly different.

Popular web profile aspects of trust were: qualifications, the photo (if available), and IAF membership. Popular email introduction aspects of trust were: family, work experience, overseas experience, the IAF and personal sharing.

Response data - trust categories of story introductions: sharing, family, vulnerability, people person, Irish, animals, experience, IAF, experience, vulnerability, revealing, rapport , rapport, showing humanity, vulnerability, honesty, shared interests, overseas experience, less perfect, sharing, person-ness, authentic, humanness, connection, value, experience, belief, open, willingness,

sharing, conversational, casual, similar experience, competence, family, motivations, transparent, experience , family, passion, confidence, knowledge, animals, overseas experience, making a difference, Inspired, family, people person, experience , family, married, experience , qualification, overseas experience, yoga, overseas experience, positive, intelligent, similar experience, experience , IAF, IAF, writer, editor, ICA, Catholic, family, experience , competent, collaboration tools, giving, open, sharing, positive, IAF, AFN, GFSC, experience, networked.

Response data - trust categories of web profiles: photo, IAF, qualification, photo, facilitation, effective groups, children's toys, similar interests, profile, photo, photo, photo, photo, zest, photo, work approach, daughters, humor, qualification, photo, experience, qualification, qualification, experience, qualification, qualification, qualification, qualification, overseas experience, commitment, qualification, qualification, association membership, overseas experience, facilitation training experience, IAF, CFP, facilitation training experience, qualification, photo, IAF, qualification, qualification, qualification, qualification, IAF, professional, experience, IAF, writer, photo, qualification, IAF, journal, GFSC.

COMPARATIVE QUESTIONS

Preference

If someone was introducing themselves to your group, which of these two approaches would you prefer?

Web profile: 2
Email introductions: 20
No answer: 1

Reasoning for Preference

Why do you choose that preference?

Web profile responses included: provides more information, and it depends on the situation.

Email introductions responses included: more real, more human, easier to connect with and more engaging.

Photo impact

What impact does having a photo in the profile have on your impression of this person?

Photos on profiles generally had a large positive impact and assisted participants imaginations. Where photos were unavailable the person's profile was seen as dulled or faceless.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

What other information would you like to know about this person?

Response data: Learning interests and challenges; Any hobbies, instruments; Life episodes told as stories; Would like to talk about shared interests; More about Appreciative Inquiry; Any tips for working across our different cultures; What he struggles with as a parent; Keen to know what it is about wilderness adventuring that really sparks that spirit in people and how to give that to people who need an adventure in their lives; Curious to know more about the Scottish history; Would like to know some of his journalist stories; Wonder how his visit to India went - what had changed over 25 years?; I wonder what theology he teaches?; I'd really like to know about that Sydney tower statement he mentions; What ever happened about that World Series Baseball?; Possibly some wishes (e.g. where does he see himself heading career/personal wise)

Other comments?

Response data: Very hard to do this exercise when I already know you <Name>!; Very hard when I know the person!; It's fascinating how much better the e-mail profiles are. I think that we realized this once we received them. However, this connection has really dropped away since... how can we get this back?

Appendix L Skype Report 04Nov05

Narrative in online relationship development

Skype Fieldtrip Report 3-4 November 2005

Singapore: 6.00am - Friday 4th South Australia: 8.30am - Friday 4th NSW and ACT, Australia: 9.00am - Friday 4th NZ: 11.00am - Friday 4th Chandler: 3.00pm - Thursday 3rd Huston and Chicago: 4.00pm - Thursday 3rd Eastern US: 5.00pm - Thursday 3rd London: 10.00pm - Thursday 3rd Groningen, The Netherlands: 11.00pm - Thursday 3rd

Agenda

Welcome

Introductions

Connections made in reading the introduction emails

What we think of the Skype system

Interested in checking out other tools

Rotate to group 2

Skype Contact Names [deleted]

Apologies

<Name>, <Name>, <Name>

Some key findings

Audio

Some participants experienced a strong delay and echoing. Others could hear but not speak in the conversation. For one participant it sounded as though she was in a room full of people who were all talking at once.

The delay and echo slowed down the conversation and made some things difficult to understand. At times the conference rooms crashed and it was pretty hard to get past even introducing ourselves.

The conversations became effective in small groups of three with clear audio and free flowing.

Bandwidth may have been a contributing factor, also differing headset, microphone and speaker configurations were being used by people.

Skype did not have any voice settings to help adjust for the operating system and line people were using.

Things that added to the conversation

It was great to hear each other's voices, and we connected on a new level.

Things happening in the background of conversations became tied into parts of the group conversation. Strong humor was present. One participant coined the term 'Skype Wrestling' when some loud crashing was herd in the background of a conversation. This term was used again to describe our experience.

Profile pictures of each other were useful topics in conversations.

During the conference a few participants used the web to finding out information that could be brought into the conversation.

The accompanying text chat was useful, particularly when people were dropped off a conversation and at times to communicate who was in each conference room.

Discussing pets, particularly dogs were one of our conversation themes.

Boundaries

It was unclear which people were in a conference call and those who were not.

How to go about adding and joining people to the conference conversations was unclear and led to people being put on hold or dropped by mistake. Having a full list of contacts added to the Skype system before the meeting may have been useful.

At times the system would drop people out of a conference call. For example, one participant received a large amount of error messages and was then kicked out of the conference, other times the conference rooms would crash.

Although the process of having two small groups and then swapping was good, managing the way in which people came in and out of these groups was a struggle.

It was very frustrating for people who were continually being dropped off from the conference rooms.

Cross platform

One benefit of Skype is that it's cross-platform capability for the 4 Mac users. Skype can also be used to dial into Phone-based conference rooms.

Closing comments

In a way this experience is a very good one, given our topic. So often when we try to do work in a non-collocated way, the first big obstacle to overcome is the technology. Working together to overcome this snafu is such a 'real life' thing.

Appendix M Skype Transcript 04Nov05

Narrative in online relationship development

Skype Fieldtrip Transcript

5pm US Eastern Standard Time Thursday 3 November 2005

Local NZ Time: 11am Friday 4 November 2005

Agenda

Welcome

Introductions

Connections made in reading the introduction emails

What we think of the Skype system

Interested in checking out: PalTalk, HotConference, Facilitator.com, freeconference.com, Yahoo! Messenger,

Rotate to group 2, 3

Skype Contact Names

[deleted]

Apologies

<Name>, <Name>, <Name>

Chat Content

[10:55:31 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Hello I am online

[10:57:56 a.m.] <participant 2> says: hello <Name> - I was just checking in with <participant 6>

[11:05:34 a.m.] <participant 1> says: I'm not sure my mike is working properly I'm in a chat with <participant 6>

[11:06:54 a.m.] <participant 2> says: ok <Name>, I'll try adding you to this room

[11:05:54 a.m.] <participant 1> says: they say they hear me but when I speak they don't respond

* <participant 1> added <participant 7>, <participant 6>, <participant 3>, <participant 5>, <participant 4> to this chat 11:06:48 a.m.

[11:07:33 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Hello I just got cut off from <Name>s groups

[11:10:20 a.m.] <participant 3> says: Hi <Name>

[11:11:05 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Hi <Name>

[11:11:37 a.m.] <participant 3> says: I have been listening to you, <participant 6>, <Name> and <Name> but you weren't able to hear me. I have then connected with <Name>'s group and had a similar problem.

[11:12:59 a.m.] <participant 2> says: I think we just lost our conference???

[11:13:05 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Yes

[11:13:17 a.m.] <participant 4>says: Yes, mine went off as well

[11:13:26 a.m.] <participant 3> says: It seems that when the group gets above 4 it cuts out

[11:13:41 a.m.] <participant 2> says: I will try again to invite <Name>, <Name>, <participant 4>and <Name> - See how we go

[11:14:19 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Did you hear my last long sentence about my delay - as I didn't get any response it was as though you couldn't hear me. <participant 3> was having same problem

[11:14:33 a.m.] <participant 5> says: This is <Name>. Interesting that many of us can chat at once but not speak...I hung up from <participant 6>'s call due to the fact my kids are here and making a racket

[11:16:07 a.m.] <participant 2> says: <Name>, <participant 4>and <Name> in this room with me

[11:16:23 a.m.] <participant 6> says: I suddenly only have <Name>!

[11:16:30 a.m.] <participant 6> says: <Name> just dropped off

[11:16:37 a.m.] <participant 6> says: <Name> had to go

[11:16:51 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Keep getting cut off

[11:16:54 a.m.] <participant 5> says: Wow--technology at its best!(puke)

[11:17:14 a.m.] <participant 7> says: Hi for some reason I got about 100 error messages and was kicked out of Skype

[11:19:26 a.m.] <participant 1> says: So what now?????/ (ninja)

[11:20:10 a.m.] <participant 6> says: How do you take someone off hold?

[11:20:16 a.m.] * <participant 1> Has changed the chat topic to "Help with Skype"

[11:20:34 a.m.] <participant 2> says: I've got <Name>, <Name>, <Name> and <participant 4> in the room

[11:20:56 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Try selecting their name then go to call menu and uncheck hold

[11:23:22 a.m.] <participant 7> says: It does not seem to be working

[11:24:12 a.m.] <participant 1> says: I'm not getting any calls ???

[11:24:59 a.m.] <participant 6> says: I have <Name> and <Name>

[11:25:37 a.m.] <participant 3> says: <Name>, <participant 6>, <Name> and <Name> - after being able to listen to you. I had about 5 mins continuity with <Name>, <Name>, and <Name>. <name> then joined us. Several mins later I got cut off. <Name> you seem to have much happening on your computer!

[11:26:01 a.m.] <participant 7> says: Yes

[11:26:56 a.m.] <participant 2> says: Skype addresses for [deleted]

[11:27:08 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Did anyone figure out how to get rid of the echo

[11:27:29 a.m.] <participant 3> says: KHI <participant 6>

[11:28:02 a.m.] <participant 3> says: <participant 6>, I can hear you but you can't hear me.

[11:29:05 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Yes there is still a long delay after I speak

[11:29:28 a.m.] <participant 6> says: Hi <Name>, I answered your call but I can't hear you

[11:30:34 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Oh, cut off again

[11:30:44 a.m.] <participant 3> says: Hi <Name>, I can hear you. I have been able to talk with some others so my microphone works at least sometimes

[11:30:46 a.m.] <participant 1> says: <Name> answered your call but only got garble

[11:30:56 a.m.] <participant 6> says: Looks like Skype is not working so well tonight

[11:31:11 a.m.] <participant 2> says: I've now <Name> and <Name> and <participant 4>in my room

[11:31:49 a.m.] <participant 6> says: I only have <Name> and <Name>. But when anyone calls, all go on hold and I can't get all together unless I begin all again. Very frustrating.

[11:32:38 a.m.] <participant 2> says: I see yes - we need to know who should call who

[11:33:15 a.m.] <participant 2> says: I've now <Name> and <Name>, <Name> and <participant 4> in my room

[11:35:31 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Gone again, paltalk also has rooms where people can go and get technical help as needed

[11:37:41 a.m.] * <participant 1> added <participant 8> to this chat

[11:37:43 a.m.] * <participant 8> is using older version of Skype which doesn't support multi-person chats and cannot join

[11:37:59 a.m.] <participant 2> says: Does paltalk have a Mac version?

[11:38:56 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Not sure, I'll go to paltalk.com and have a look

[11:40:50 a.m.] <participant 2> says: Seems we are using various platforms and different microphones

[11:41:20 a.m.] * <participant 2> added <Name> to this chat

[11:41:21 a.m.] <participant 1> says: I'm using a headset

[11:42:07 a.m.] <participant 1> says: I noticed <Name> is running an older version of Skype so he can use multi groups

[11:44:23 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Sorry about that hope it didn't blow anyone's eardrums

[11:44:37 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Dogs are now out of my den

[11:49:46 a.m.] <participant 3> says: Hi <Name>

[11:49:54 a.m.] <participant 7> says: Hi <Name>

[11:50:03 a.m.] <participant 3> says: I can hear you but you can't hear me

[11:50:12 a.m.] <participant 7> says: I see you are online but I can't hear you

[11:51:26 a.m.] <participant 3> says: I can even hear you typing and then I heard <Name> and <participant 9> join

[11:51:40 a.m.] <participant 7> says: Funny

[11:52:22 a.m.] * <participant 4> left this chat

[11:52:58 a.m.] <participant 2> says: We're just finishing off

[11:53:38 a.m.] <participant 2> says: I believe <Name> is to host one of the next calls

[11:53:51 a.m.] <participant 1> says: Good bye all. Nice talking with you from what I could gather. It seems that in an "open conference" setting I was getting a lot of cross talk.

[11:54:11 a.m.] <participant 3> says: I can hear you <participant 6>

[11:54:12 a.m.] <participant 7> says: bye <Name>

[11:54:22 a.m.] <participant 6> says: I can't hear you!

[11:54:38 a.m.] * <participant 1> left this chat

[11:54:45 a.m.] <participant 3> says: I can be heard by some people but not others

[11:56:01 a.m.] * <participant 3> left this chat

[12:05:25 p.m.] <participant 2> says: Room crash

[12:05:36 p.m.] <participant 2> says: <Name> Can you re invite us in?

[12:05:44 p.m.] <participant 6> says: I thought I said something offensive!

[12:05:52 p.m.] <participant 6> says: :D

[12:06:07 p.m.] <participant 2> says: Yes - very funny!

[12:16:21 p.m.] <participant 6> says: Crashed again. Must be time for a drink!

TRANSCRIPT

Logged into Skype system

Had added others previously to Contacts list and prepared an agenda in Word.

Skype contact names were listed below on the agenda. No one online at this stage.

Tested audio by dialing <participant 4><Name> then again with the Skype Test Call

Setup VCR for recording – checked output on TV

Viewed <participant 4>'s profile

Tested the chat tool

3.03 Tested adding Skype Test Call to the conference tool

3.30 <participant 9> Hello, testing 1, 2, 3, testing 1, 2, 3. Just checking out the Skype".

<participant 1> has logged in

4.30 <participant 4><Name>logged in

4.35 <participant 3> logged in

4.52 Added <Name> to contacts list

4.56 <participant 5> logged in

5.45 <participant 7> logged in

6.15 Deleted Skype Test Call from contacts

6.45 Made grammatical adjustment to the agenda.

Waiting for session co-leaders <participant 6> <participant 8> to login

8.26 (11.03am) <participant 6> calls,

8.36 <participant 9>"Hello <participant 6>"

8.37 <participant 6> "Hello <participant 9>this is <participant 6>"

8.39 <participant 9>"How are you today?"

8.41 <participant 6> "Fine thank you, I just wanted to test it out with you first and say hi before we begin".

8.45 <participant 9>"It's great that you're here, I'm curious as to that picture you've got up there?" [referring to <participant 6>'s picture on her Skype profile]

8.52 <participant 6> "You are?

8.54 <participant 9>"Is that your puppy in the seat there?"

8.58 <participant 6> "Oh you can see my, ha ha ha"

9.00 <participant 6> "Yeah that's the picture I have"

9.02 <participant 9>"Is it Blossom?

9.05 <participant 6> "Blossom, yeah"

9.06 <participant 9>"Yes I remember from your introduction [email], you mentioned a puppy from the Catholic nuns. It was a wonderful story"

9.08 <Name> puts up the chat screen "Hello I am online"

9.08 <participant 6> "Yeah that's right, that's good you can see it, because the other day I was on a call and people couldn't see it, they just see like the black head".

9.15 <participant 9>"I hope we can get more into the stories in people's introductions"

9.18 <participant 6> "Yeah well…

9.19 <participant 9>"It's so great that you're here and going to take the other group, I see <Name> has just logged on, I guess we now get started"

9.23 <participant 6> "Ok"

9.23 <participant 9> "How do we go about splitting the group?"

9.25 <participant 6> "No, no, I just really wanted to call and check it out and um, and as far as choosing the people, I'll just go down the list and choose four. How's that?

9.37 <participant 9>"Sounds great to me"

9.38 <participant 6> "It's ah at random, ah actually right now I see online, <Name>, <Name>, <Name>, <Name>, you and me…So"

9.44 <participant 9>"I've also got <participant 4><Name> on my list"

9.48 <participant 6> "Oh, I don't have that…where is <participant 4> …I thought I'd…Oh because I sent him, I don't have him on my list because he hasn't put me on his list"

10.06 <participant 9>"Ok, I'll have him in my group then"

10.08 <participant 6> "Yeah…ok well that will help us then determine who we call. I'm going to call the ones that are on my list" [laughing] "Ok so I'm calling right now <Name>, <Name>, <Name> and <Name> and you can call everybody else".

10.25 <participant 9>"<Name> has said that she might be in and out today as she has to pickup her two kids from school"

10.31 <participant 6> "We - how about this, right now I invite all the others who are here, who are online".

10.37 <participant 9>"I think that's going to work"

10.39 <participant 6> "Ok"

10.40 <participant 9> "It's been great talking to you <participant 6> and we'll talk soon"

10.43 Call ends

11.00 (10.55am) Reply to <Name> on txt chat "Hello <Name> - I was just checking in with <participant 6>"

12.15 It's unclear which people are in conference with <participant 6> and which are not at this stage. Try looking for an indication on the Skype interface.

13.55 Started a text chat with <participant 6> – resized it to suit

<participant 9> "Can you tell me who you have in your conference so that I don't invite them into mine?"

<participant 6> "<Name>, <Name>, <Name> and <Name>"

<participant 9> "Thanks"

15.51 Closed text chat windows

15.52 Clicked on conference (while an inactive participant was selected) – nothing worked

15.55 Selected <participant 3> and clicked on conference. This opened a conference between <Name> <participant 6> and I – not what I wanted. Closed this conference call.

16.08 Selected <participant 4><Name>'s profile and selected conference again

16.30 Added <Name>, <Name> and <participant 4> to a new conference call

16.43 <Name> "Hello"

16.44 <participant 9> "Hi"

16.45 <Name> "Hi <participant 9> is it?

16.45 <participant 9>"Yes"

16.45 <Name> "Yeah, <Name> here…how are ya?"

16.46 <participant 9> "Pretty good, just getting my head around the system"

16.56 <Name> "Right"

16.57 <participant 9>"I can hear you very clearly, it's great"

17.00 <Name> "Oh that's good, ah this end my, I think my headset's pretty ordinary, but I'm still hearing you ok"

17.22 <Name> "new/getting <Name> call, he's in Canberra"

17.19 Ringing from a new call from <Name> – switched to the call – also put the conference call with <Name> on hold - no audio seemed to come through from <Name>

18.01 Closed call with <Name>, switched back to conference call with <Name>

18.01 <participant 9>"Tried to bring <Name> in"

18.02 <Name> "What, you couldn't get <Name> on at the same time?

18.04 <participant 9> "No, he called in and I thought if I clicked ok it would bring him into the room. I'll see if I can add him in"

Clicked conference – no luck

18.16 <Name> "Add him as a user or -"

Went to contacts list and right-clicked on <participant 4>'s profile then down to 'Invite to conference'

18.24 <participant 4>"Are - this is, that is <Name>, that's <Name>? Morning"

18.28 <Name> "We've got two on now"

18.30 <participant 4> "Can you hear me ok?"

18.31 <participant 9> "Yeah, sounds great"

18.32 <Name> "I can"

18.36 <participant 4>"Ok"

18.40 Invited <participant 3> into the room

18.43 <Name> "Oh <Name>'s ringing"

18.50 <participant 4> "Well <Name>'s here with, do you want to get on to <Name>?"

18.53 <Name> "<Name>'s appears to be ringing in"

19.01 (11.05) Text message pops up from <Name> "I'm not sure my mike is working properly. I'm in a chat with <participant 6>"

19.01 <Name> "Hello, is that <Name>?"

19.05 <participant 9> "Yes, hi <Name>"

19.01 <Name> "Oh hi <Name>, it's <Name> here"

19.08 <participant 9> "Great to hear your voice <Name>"

19.15 <participant 4> "Yep"

19.16 <Name> "Good"

19.17 <Name> "Hello <Name>"

19.18 <Name> "Oh hi <Name>"

19.21 <Name> "<participant 6> wants to add you to his her contact list"

19.25 <Name> "Is that ok?"

19.25 <Name> "Yes so I've been listening in on the other conference with <participant 6>, but I haven't been able to connect, I've only just been able to get my microphone working"

19.33 opened up chat window

19.35 <participant 9> "I'm just going to see if I can get <Name> into the room

19.45 Text chat message <participant 9>"ok <Name>, I'll try adding you to this room"

19.46 Text chat message <Name> "They say they hear me but when I speak they don't respond"

19.46 <Name> added <participant 7>, <participant 6>, <participant 3>, <participant 5>, <participant 4> to the chat

20.03 <Name> "Oh crashed"

20.07 <Name> "I thought they were able to do 5, I can hear you in the background, are you on speaker <Name>?"

20.10 <participant 4>"Ah, me?"

20.11 <Name> "Yeah"

20.14 <participant 4> "Um, No I'm using iSite mic [Mike] and ah speakerphones"

20.18 <Name> "Oh ok, oh ok, well I guess I can hear <Name>'s comments through the iSite mic"

20.23 <participant 4> "Yeah, maybe he and I'll do the, we might combine, that would take, we could then leave one out"

20.30 <Name> "Well when <Name>, <participant 9> I think's got us on hold, he's chases someone else, so we can take that up when he comes through."

20.36 <participant 4> "Um, I'm just going to go to speakers rather than this, we'll see how this goes"

20.42 <Name> "Ok"

20.42 <participant 4> "Can you hear me ok now?"

20.44 <Name> "I can hear you fine yeah"

20.46 <participant 4>"Yeah"

20.47 <Name> "Bit of an echo though"

20.46 <participant 4>"Oh is there."

20.50 <Name> "I'm getting an echo, on what I'm saying"

20.53 <participant 4>"Right, yeah, actually its interesting iChat's better than that isn't it – takes that echo out"

20.57 <Name> "Yeah…"

21.02 <participant 4> "Yeah um, how bad is the echo?"

21.04 <Name> "Oh, no it seems to have diminished, oh it's still there a bit"

21.09 <participant 4> "Is it, yeah"

21.10 <Name> "Yeah"

21.12 <participant 4> "'Cause <Name>'s"

21.12 <Name> "I think there's an option somewhere you cut the echo out"

Closed chat window

21.17 <participant 4> "Oh is there?"

21.19 <Name>? "Here comes Skype rocks, don't ask when I explain it to her I'm going to finish up out of here, anyway I'll answer it"

21.40 Chat text message pops up from <Name>. "Hello I just got cut off from <Name>, groups"

Opened chat window

21.45 <participant 4> "My sense is that with…yes I'm here and I've seen what's going on, I…yeah, yes and I've…I'm here can you hear me?"

21.59 Invited <Name> into conference

22.05 Closed chat window

22.10 <Name> "Hello, this is <Name>"

22.12 <participant 9> "Hello <Name>"

22.18 <Name> "Can we hear you?"

22.19 <Name> "Yes I can hear you fine, I was having some trouble"

22.23 <participant 4> "<Name> are you there?"

22.24 <Name> "I was having some trouble, with the delay with my microphone"

22.30 <participant 9> "Well welcome <Name>, we have <Name>, <participant 4> and <participant 9> in the room, we did have <Name> but I think he's gone"

22.40 <Name> "So are, is"

22.42 <participant 4> "No <Name> is still there I think"

22.44 <Name> "<Name>'s in with <participant 6>"

22.50 <participant 4> "Or maybe we should"

22.52 <Name> "<participant 6> is calling me now as well"

23.15 <Name> "So who's, who's a, who else is on"

23.24 <participant 4> "Um, yep, this is <participant 4><Name> in Canberra"

23.30 <participant 9> "This is <participant 9> in Auckland"

23.41 <Name> "This is <participant 1> in Arizona"

23.53 <participant 9> "And that's the three of us in the room at the moment"

23.54 <participant 4> "I thought <Name> was with us"

23.54 <Name> "This is <participant 1> in Arizona"

23.57 <participant 9> "Yes <Name> is in our list, it has 'on hold' under his name, he must be in the other room"

24.10 <Name> "Hello this is <Name>, can you hear me?"

24.14 <Name> "I can hear <Name>"

24.16 <participant 4> "Yeah I can hear you <Name>"

24.18 <participant 9>"Yes, I can hear you <Name>"

24.22 <Name> "And <Name>, so we're all in together"

24.24 <Name> "Oh good nice"

24.25 <Name> "…not so far, hahaha"

24.34 <Name> "I'm also on chat with a few people, it's nice to meet you all, I'm having trouble with a really large delay, when I speak, you guys can't hear me for a while"

24.49 <Name> "Oh, ok, I can't tell how long the delay is"

24.53 <participant 9> "Yeah, how do we work that one out? How can we measure it?"

25.03 <Name> "Yeah, how do you tell how long the delay is, unless you want to try"

25.08 <participant 4> "<Name> do you want to just try talking again and I will test what the delay's like"

25.22 <participant 9> "I think we might have lost <Name>?"

25.25 Conference room crashed

25.40 Switched to text chat then to conference then back to text chat <participant 9> (11.13) "I think we just lost our conference???"

26.18 Text chat <Name> "Yes"

26.28 Text chat <participant 4> "Yes mine went off as well"

26.36 Text chat <Name> "It seems that when the group gets above 4 it cuts out"

26.53 Text chat <participant 9> "I will try again to invite <Name>, <Name>, <participant 4> and <Name> - see how we go"

Selected conference added <Name>, <Name>, <Name> and <Name>

27.12 <Name> "Hi <Name>, <Name> here"

27.13 <Name> "That would be <Name>"

27.14 <participant 4> "<participant 4> here as well"

27.15 <participant 9> "and <participant 9> here"

27.20 <Name> "And <Name>, <Name>, <Name> was speaking to me, but we seemed to be having separate conversations, so she…That's <participant 6>, if I answer her I would probably disappear, anyway"

27.58 <Name> "Can anyone hear me?"

28.00 <participant 9> "Yes I can hear you fine"

28.02 <Name> "Oh that's nice, this is <Name>, I'm, is that <participant 9> is it?"

28.06 <participant 9> "Yes"

28.08 <Name> "Oh nice to hear your voice, I'm sort of wondering whether my problem is because my microphone didn't work, but now you've given me evidence that it does. I've been moving in and out of conversations with others.

28.23 <participant 9> "…"

28.28 <Name> "It is"

28.29 <participant 9> "…"

28.39 <Name> "Yeah that is"

28.41 <participant 9>"…"

28.44 <Name> "Well it's pretty hard to get past ah even introducing ourselves, but I think this is life, life on the internet"

28.49 <participant 9> "Well I think we've identified an important issue with identifying the boundaries of our group as it's unclear people are coming and going"

28.55 <Name> "Yes it seems it's that limit of participants is probably the issue, every time someone new comes in over the limit of it, it knocks us all out.

29.10 <participant 4> "We could talk to Skype and see what they say about future potential of that because if we can't solve that problem on Skype, we'd probably be better off going somewhere else"

29.08 Switched to Text chat <participant 9> "<Name>, <participant 4> and <Name> in this room with me"

29.18 <participant 9> "I'm going to let <participant 6> know who's in our room. The plan of having two small groups and switching seems a bit ambitious at this point"

29.37 Text chat <participant 6> "I suddenly only have <Name>!"

29.42 Text chat <participant 6> "<Name> just dropped off"

29.42 <Name> "The process that you are suggesting <participant 9> is good, we have is having small groups for a while and then swap people around"

29.48 Text chat <participant 6> "<Name> had to go"

29.42 <Name> "But if we can't sort of manage the way in which we come in and out of groups very smoothly it's a struggle"

29.55 <participant 9>"…"

30.05 <Name> "Yeah, ha ha"

30.06 Text chat <Name> "Keep getting cut off"

30.07 Text chat <Name> "Wow--technology at its best! (puke)"

30.10 <Name> "Yeah, ha ha, actually the other thing, we use a Mac product, Apple product, called iChat, ah I'm not sure what the windows interface for it is, but it, it ah is certainly very good"

30.25 Switch to text chat

30.26 Text chat <Name> "Hi for some reason I got about 100 error messages and was kicked out of Skype"

30.30 <participant 9>"…"

30.34 <Name> "Yeah, um, you know whether it would handle conferencing with everybody I don't know, we'd have to do some research on that"

30.43 <participant 9>"…"

30.51 <Name> "Actually I'm just reading that too <Name>, that's handy to have that there, but obviously ah, actually this little conversation that <Name>, <participant 9> and <Name> that we're having now is the longest continuity that I've had so far, It's probably because there's just a small group of three.

31.10 <participant 9> "I can hear a plane flying over in the background, is that with you?"

31.14 <Name> "Yeah that's here in Canberra"

31.16 <participant 9>"…"

31.23 <Name> "Well we've just had a lot of rain lately, and it's just bursting with green and the spring time and ah, growth, it's excellent.

31.32 <participant 9> "I can remember travelling through Canberra on the upper deck of a double-decker bus, a very beautiful place"

31.46 <Name> "Oh yeah, yeh"

31.47 <participant 9> "A very monumental town as I remember. The buildings seemed very well spread about and well planned with the lake in the middle there"

31.57 <Name> "Yes that's the major theme"

32.00 <participant 9> "I was there in the summer of 2002 I think"

32.09 Message popup – <Name> wants to add me to his contacts

32.10 <Name> "Yeah, and after you would have left <Name>, a big bush fire came through here from the west. Some burn out some of the houses in some of the suburbs

32.14 <participant 9>"Yeah I remember seeing something on TV, The Canberra Rex [hotel] had given all it's bedding to those who were struck by it".

32.16 <Name> "Right"

32.35 <participant 4> "Actually I was just having a look at ah iChat it will deal with 10 people on an audio conference, but it's, it's I think, only Mac specific so it's probably not an option. Unfortunately.

32.44 Invited <Name> to conference

32.50 <Name> "Morning <Name>"

32.51 <participant 9> "Gidday <Name>, how's things"

32.54 <Name> "It's good"

32.16 <participant 4> "Hi <Name>, <participant 4> in Canberra"

32.59 <Name> "Hello <Name>"

33.01 <participant 4>"How are you?"

33.02 <Name> "Very well"

33.03 <participant 4> "Welcome back"

33.04 <Name> "Thank you very much, is it just the three of us?"

33.07 <Name> "There's <Name> here as well <Name>, so welcome back"

33.08 Switched to Text chat

33.12 <Name> "Well, well good, thank you, well er, I've only joined Skype er, 20 seconds ago, so it's absolutely miraculous, I just can't quite get over it"

33.26 <participant 4> "Well there's a little bit more to learn than just 20 seconds worth"

33.31 <Name> "Make the most of it while you're here"

<Name> "Ah very good, the suffering comes later".

33.34 "Yeah"

33.35 <Name> "That's grand"

33.35 Text chat <participant 6> "How do you take someone off hold?"

33.37 <Name> "Yeah, gidday is that <Name>?"

33.37 Text chat - <participant 1> has changed the chat topic to "Help with Skype"

33.40 <Name> "Yeah, I just resumed this conference hosted by <Name>, I've been on this conference hosted by <participant 6>, it's pretty wild out there.

33.45 Text chat <participant 9> "I've got <Name>, <Name>, <Name> and <participant 4> in the room"

33.46 <Name> "Wow, yea, this is ah amazing suddenly I, as I've just told these guys, ah when I joined which is 30 seconds ago now, I had joined Skype for 20 seconds and I can now see <participant 2>, <Name> and <Name> and <Name>. Though we're going to have to do something about our pictures because those guys look a bit um, blank compared to <Name>"

34.06 Text chat <Name> "Try selecting their name then go to call menu and uncheck hold"

34.08 <Name> "Well I've got no picture"

34.10 <Name> "That's correct"

34.13 <Name> "Well <Name>, over to you"

34.15 <participant 9> "…"

34.17 <Name> "Looks like an out there guy"

34.18 <participant 9> "…"

34.24 <Name> "Yeah I was on another conference hosted by <participant 6> who was trying to bring in other people without much success"

34.28 <participant 9> "…"

34.32 <Name> "So there's something about how you go about how you host it, how you bring people on and how you resume talking to them she doesn't quite understand and I said…"

34.40 <participant 9> "…"

34.50 <Name> "How did you know that I was online <Name>, did I suddenly appear, in your list?

34.53 <participant 9> "I got a message to add me you your contacts…then I right-clicked on your name and invited you in"

34.59 <Name> "Yeah because I said that…you were the one person I had added as a contact and then I said yes notify you, that's interesting. This must be really easy"

35.06 <Name> "Hello, I just got bounced out and had to resume to get back in"

35.10 <participant 9> "…"

35.19 <Name> "You're breaking up a bit"

35.22 <Name> "Now <participant 9> my Mac version said that I can have up to 50 people, five-zero people on Skype, em, do you think that's, is that the latest, I wonder if it's the latest Mac version or if it's the latest overall version.

35.36 <participant 9> "…"

35.50 <Name> "Yeah…well I think that"

35.50 <participant 9> "…"

35.52 <Name> "I quite like er, using Skype if we can, so many people I met in the states ah, just had Skype on the bottom of their email addresses – it's almost universal"

36.07 <participant 9> "Have we lost <Name>?"

36.11 <Name> "Yeah <Name>'s dropped out"

36.14 <participant 9> "…"

36.25 <Name> "So are you still on board <Name>?"

36.27 <participant 4> "Yes"

36.27 <participant 9> "Yes"

36.28 <Name> "Excel, <Name>'s I'll call <participant 2> <participant 9> and <Name> <Name> <Name>, um yeah I'd like to come across and see you <Name>"

36.31 Text chat <Name> "It does not seem to be working"

36.34 Phone rings in background

36.36 <participant 4> "Well that would be great"

36.50 <Name> answers the phone ringing in their Canberra office

36.52 <Name> "Isn't it amazing"

36.54 <participant 9>"Is that the Canberra office I can hear in the background?"

36.56 <participant 4>"Oh we're in the same room actually, so"

36.58 <Name> "I'm amazed at how clear this is, what kind of headset are you using <Name>? You still there <Name>?"

37.12 <participant 9> "<Name> has left our room"

37.13 <Name> "So who have we got here just <participant 4> and <Name>, um have you got your full team onboard now Stephen? Not on, er, not on Skype, but having introductions and things?"

37.28 <participant 9> "Yes, we've got 16 in all, most have introduced themselves, some are travelling at the moment and are unable to join us"

37.46 <Name> "Right, it's some good work you're doing I like it"

37.59 <Name> "Now did I mention, have I mentioned to you the young fella in um, London, that I met, at the hub? no"

38.09 <participant 9> "Yes, you mentioned him in your email"

38.10 <Name> "I might have, I don't know if I did what I said I would do, which is to follow through on that one. He was very keen on the issue of developing trust in er, online groups, you know facilitation, very interesting."

38.11 Text chat <participant 6> "I have <Name> and <Name>"

38.09 <participant 9> "Well I think it's been good to find out that Skype isn't going to be so great for us"

38.45 <Name> "Yeah, um, Oh it was great that it didn't did you say? Ah, so you like being tested aye?"

38.48 Invited <Name> to conference

38.48 Text chat <Name> "<Name>, <participant 6>, <Name> and <Name> - after being able to listen to you. I had about 5 mins continuity with <Name>, <Name>, and <Name>. <Name> then joined us. Several mins later I got cut off. <Name> you seem to have much happening on your computer!"

39.49 <participant 9> "We've discovered here what many of our groups face I think"

38.58 <participant 4> "Lessons in failure"

39.01 <Name> "Hello"

39.03 <Name> "Hello"

39.04 <participant 9> "Hello <Name>"

39.10 Text Chat <Name> "Yes"

39.11 <Name> "Yeah I'm, can you hear me?"

39.13 <Name> "Yip, can hear you clean as a bell"

39.14 <participant 9> "I can hear you fine"

39.16 <participant 4> "Yip I can hear you"

39.21 <Name> "Oh great, I, I hear some people talking, but they're out in the distance"

39.33 <Name> "<Name> what's your Skype address, I'll just type it in now"

39.43 <Name> "<SName>"

39.47 <Name> "Ar that's you, that's good I'll put that in now"

40.02 <Name> "Did you all find out how to get rid of the echo?"

40.07 Text Chat <participant 9> "Skype addresses for <Name>, <SName>, <SName>, <SName>, <SName>, <SName>, <SName>, <SName>, <SName>.

40.08 <Name> "This is the first time I've heard echo on this conference. What do you do er, <Name>?

40.28 <Name> in the background of <Name>'s call "Oh, Hi <participant 6>, can you hear me, ok I'll send you a message"

40.28 Text chat <Name> "Did anyone figure out how to get rid of the echo"

40.30 <Name> "I couldn't understand that"

40.32 <Name> "Ok"

40.33 <participant 9> "…"

40.42 <Name> "Ah, it's <Name>"

40.43 Text Chat <Name> "KHI <participant 6>"

40.44 <participant 4> "That was <Name>, <Name>"

40.50 <participant 9> "…"

41.16 Text Chat <Name> "<participant 6>, I can hear you but you can't hear me."

41.20 Some crashing in the background

41.25 <Name> "You ok?"

41.26 <Name> [Laughs] "Is there some Skype wrestling going on out there?"

41.33 <participant 9> and <Name> [laughing]

41.40 <Name> "That sounded painful"

41.43 <Name> [Laughs] "Great, it's a new phenomenon"

41.45 <participant 9>"Yeah I like it Skype wrestling"

42.18 Text chat <Name> "Yes there is still a long delay after I speak"

42.22 Call lost with <Name>

42.23 <Name> "So is that you online <Name>?"

42.25 <participant 4> calls in to <Name>, puts <Name> on Hold

42.35 <participant 9> "Hi <Name>"

42.37 <participant 4> "Hi <Name>, it's <Name>, I moved outside to get away from any echo from <Name>, so I'm out in the garden now"

42.42 <participant 9> "I can hear something in the background there"

42.46 <participant 4> "Yep it's the birds, so have you still got other people"

42.49 Text chat <participant 6> "I only have <Name> and <Name>. But when anyone calls, all go on hold and I can't get all together unless I begin all again. Very frustrating."

42.55 <participant 9> "I think I have lost them"

42.56 <participant 4> [laughs]

42.57 <participant 9> "I thought when I clicked on the phone for you it would add you into the conference, but I think it's put them on hold"

43.01 <participant 4> "Right"

43.02 <participant 9> "I'll try hanging up on you and calling you into the conference room"

43.08 <participant 4> "Ok, yep sure"

43.14 Closed conference with <Name> by mistake as well as <Name>.

43.26 Re-started conference re-inviting <Name>, <Name>

43.41 <Name> "Hello <Name>"

43.42 <participant 4> "Yep, <Name>, <participant 4> back online here"

43.45 Text Chat <Name> "<Name> answered your call but only got garble"

43.45 <participant 9> "…"

43.45 Call from <Name>

43.50 <Name> "Oh I've got it, so <participant 9> would you like to do a quick roll call and we'll see who we have got"

43.55 <participant 9> "…"

43.58 Text Chat <Name> "Hi <Name>, I can hear you. I have been able to talk with some others so my microphone works at least sometimes"

43.59 Text Chat <Name> "<Name> answered your call but only got garble"

44.02 <Name> "Oh well we will develop a level of intuition, that will allow us to know, it's the next step"

44.07 Text chat <participant 6> "Looks like Skype is not working so well tonight"

44.16 <Name> "Oh, well I see that <Name> appears to be online, yes she is"

44.22 Text chat <participant 9> "I've now <Name> and <Name> and <participant 4> in my room"

44.22 <Name> "Hello"

44.25 <Name> "Hello" [laughs]

44.26 <participant 9> "Hello"

44.26 <participant 4> "Hi <Name>"

44.34 <Name> "Is the wrestling match over?"

44.35 <Name> [laughs]

44.39 <participant 3> Calls

44.40 <participant 4> "I think we haven't even gotten to the ring yet"

44.45 Hung up on <Name>'s call

44.45 <Name> "Yes we've still got, we're still working through the packed stands"

44.49 <Name> [laughs] "Yeah there's a long, long delay after I speak"

44.53 Invited <participant 3>

44.53 <Name>'s conversation is paused as <Name> is added

44.53 <Name> "Long delay after I speak"

44.58 <Name> "Yeah it's great, it's like going back to phone calls in the 1960's" [laughs]

45.01 Text Chat <participant 6> "I only have <Name> and <Name>, but when anyone calls, all go on hold and I can't get all together unless I begin all again. Very frustrating.

45.17 <Name> "Who said they had success with this tool"

45.22 <participant 9> "Yeah, it worked ok when I used it with the global facilitators"

45.33 <Name> "I think it's good, I mean most people"

45.36 <Name> "Sorry with what?"

45.37 <participant 9> "It was ok with the global facilitators"

45.49 Text chat <participant 9> "I see yes - we need to know who should call who"

45.54 <participant 4> "I think it depends a lot on the bandwidth of everybody as well"

45.59 <Name> "Yeah, that's right"

46.10 <Name> "Yeah, I'd agree, I'm just on a regular dial up"

46.16 <participant 4> "Oh ok, that's probably why it's such a lag I'd say"

46.25 Text chat <participant 9> "I've now <Name> and <Name>, <Name> and <participant 4> in my room"

46.33 <participant 9> "…"

46.35 <Name> "Although I've used PalTalk with people in other countries, and there were many people"

46.42 <Name> "And did that work well <Name>?"

46.50 <Name> "Yes it worked very well because they have a feature where one person can raise their hand at a time so you're not talking over each other"

46.59 <Name> "Oh, nice"

47.08 <Name> "And you can talk and chat while…?"

47.18 <Name> "Real good, and did you use that on the same dial up connection you're on now?"

47.26 <Name> "Yes, it was the same"

47.28 <Name> "Oh, I's great"

47.34 <Name> "And I didn't have this delay problem"

47.39 <Name> "Yeah that's good, so what was that called again powertalk?

47.47 <Name> "Paltalk, P-a-l-t-a-l-k"

47.51 <Name> "Ah ha"

47.53 <participant 9> "…"

48.08 <Name> "Yeah I can hear there's value for Skype for it's universal use, but maybe for the conference calls, we want to explore some options"

48.20 <participant 9> "Yeah, the good thing about Skype is that we can use it to dial into conference rooms – so if we set one up on the states with a free call 1-800 number, like freeconference.com, then we can use Skype to call in to it. So it's really useful in that sense"

48.34 <Name> "Ah yeah good idea"

48.35 <participant 9> "So I guess it's not such a bad thing that we've used this one first"

48.39 <Name> "Yeah <Name> and I used a conference platform in the states, which you dial into, and we had up to 2, probably, maybe 200 people on, up to that and that worked quite well, but we needed to use a phone card to dial into, but we could use Skype to dial into it.

48.41 Text Chat <Name> "Gone again, paltalk also has rooms where people can go and get technical help as needed"

49.02 <participant 9> "…I think I worked out that it would cost 3 cents a minute to call the states using Skype out, which is a pretty cheap"

49.26 <Name> "Shit yeah, that's great"

49.31 <participant 4>"I think the value of Skype is it's cross platform. I'm just looking at Paktalk, Paktalk is just ah, windows centric by the look of it"

49.52 <participant 9> "That's interesting, are you guys using Mac's"

49.56 <Name> "I am, I've got a IBM at work as well, but em, so I'd quite like to be cross platform if I could so that I could actually do either"

50.08 <participant 9> "Yes I've got access to a Mac at my college if needed, but I'm no expert at using it"

50.19 <Name> "This is just really, really, really clear, I'm impressed. Is that <participant 4> that's in Canberra that's on?"

50.25 <participant 4> "Yea, yeah I'm here"

50.26 <Name> "Yeah, this might even be worthwhile for us guys to try as well <Name>"

50.29 <participant 4> "Yeah um, well in, in iChat you can do just audio only as well, um and it actually cuts out the echo"

50.41 <Name> "Right, iChat does?"

50.43 <participant 4> "Yeah and it will take up to 10 people at once"

50.46 <Name> "Very good. Well this is the first time I've used a USB microphone, er, which is in front of me like an old radio style microphone, rather than the microphone up on the iChat Chat um iSite.

50.53 Text Chat Systems Message [11:37:41 a.m.] * <participant 1> added <participant 8> to this chat, [11:37:43 a.m.] * <participant 8> is using older version of Skype which doesn't support multi-person chats and cannot join.

51.00 <participant 4> "Right"

51.01 <Name> "…camera so I think this might be, what kind of microphone are you using <Name>? Eh St. <participant 4> and <Name>?

51.09 Text Chat <participant 9> "Does paltalk have a mac version?"

51.10 <participant 4> "Oh, ok I'm just using my iChat camera mic"

51.14 <Name> "Are you, God that sounds good"

51.15 <participant 4> "Yeah, Yeah"

51.16 <Name> "That's why we could hear your phone call as well

51.18 <participant 4> "Yeah that's right. Yeah, I'm just on a, I'm on a laptop walking around"

51.19 <Name> "Oh really?"

51.20 <participant 4> "Yeah"

51.26 <Name> "That's pretty trendy. Thanks for showing me your cat last time we were online, or was it your dog?"

51.29 <participant 4> "It was my dog"

51.30 <Name> "It was your dog, yeah. It's pretty good <Name>, It's something that we can't do here that we can't do here with Skype. We can't see <Name>'s dog"

51.38 <participant 9> "Dogs seem to be one of our themes today, I was chatting to <participant 6> earlier about her dog Blossom that she talked about in her introduction"

51.40 <Name> "That's good and what kind of microphone are you using <Name>?"

51.42 <participant 9> "I'm using a standard headset, one from Dick Smiths here in Auckland'

52.06 <Name> "Yeah good one, oh well that sounds, so we're actually using a variety of instruments and platforms so this is, and we've got just the three of us at the moment?"

52.08 Text Chat <Name> "Not sure, I'll go to paltalk.com and have a look"

52.10 <participant 9> "We have <Name> with us as well"

52.16 <Name> "Yeah, so sounds like, sounds like there's, him who's there? <Name>?"

52.22 <participant 4> "<Name>'s here"

52.24 <Name> "Oh are you <Name>! Are you in the same office as er, young <participant 4> at the moment?"

52.30 <participant 4> "I've, I've walked outside"

52.32 <Name> "So what are you using? As technology?

52.38 <participant 4> "Is that to <participant 4> or to <Name>?"

52.43 <Name> "For <Name>, ah, ah is <Name> here?"

52.48 <participant 9> "I think <Name> may be in the other room with <participant 6>, he's possibly been switching between conversations"

52.58 <Name> "So is <Name> in the same office as you <Name>, at the moment?"

53.01 <participant 4> "Ah yeah, but I've walked outside"

53.04 <Name> "I see and he's using, he's using the server inside is he or a?"

53.07 <participant 4> "Yeah, yeah"

53.13 <Name> "So you're sharing the same broadband connection?"

53.15 <participant 4> "Yeah. It's a 2 meg link so it's pretty, pretty good"

53.17 <Name> "Yeah should have plenty of bandwidth for that. This is good. And it's really been good to be back in New Zealand"

53.26 <participant 4> "Yeah, it must be"

60.03 Text Chat <participant 9> "Seems we are using various platforms and different microphones"

Appendix N Skype Report 11-12 December 2005

Narrative in online relationship development

Draft report: Yahoo! Messenger meeting 11-12 December 2005

Singapore: 2.00pm - Monday 12th

South Australia: 4.30pm - Monday 12th

NSW and ACT, Australia: 5.00pm - Monday 12th

NZ: 7.00pm - Monday 12th

Chandler: 11.00pm - Monday 12th

Huston and Chicago: 12.00am - Sunday 11th

Eastern US: 1.00am - Sunday 11th

London: 6.00am - Sunday 11th

Groningen, The Netherlands: 7.00am - Sunday 11th

Agenda

Short welcome

A round where everyone can check-in

Discussion on the group culture

Discuss and tell our stories

Share our experiences

Plan for further action

Completion

Present

[Names deleted]

Apologies

[Names deleted]

REPORT

We discussed the confused dates in setting up the meeting. A suggestion was made to shift from messenger to Skype and we then moved our meeting to Skype. We discussed the systems that <Name> and <Name> use for video, audio and text in their Global Learning organization.

An update of what was covered at the Freeconference and messenger meetings was given.

We talked about some of the things happening in the media – these conversations were sparked from the stories in the messenger meeting.

We then discussed the culture and group norms that have been generated by the group.

We talked about how to discuss feelings of frustration in working online. A suggestion was made to summarize the threads of ideas coming together. We also discussed a task focus and having one spot where different threads could be kept in a structured way.

We discussed the group's different time-frames and how we can go about making our group decisions online. Some would work quite well asynchronously; others could be done in small groups like this one.

<Name> and <Name> offered their website to the group that would include a bulletin board, forum, chat and place for storing our group files. We decided to create a spontaneous Skype meeting to explore the Global Learning website and to invite others along, should they be interested in exploring the system with us.

We chose to have it at 3.30pm Canberra time: Singapore: 12.30pm - Tuesday 13th; South Australia: 3.00pm - Tuesday 13th; NSW and ACT, Australia: 3.30pm - Tuesday 13th; NZ: 5.30pm - Tuesday 13th; Chandler: 9.30pm – Monday 12th; Huston and Chicago: 10.30pm – Monday 12th; Eastern US: 11.30pm - Monday 12th; London: 4.30am - Tuesday 13th; Groningen, The Netherlands: 5.30am - Tuesday 13th.

We then discussed the conversation about facilitation and training and Jon Jenkins discussion document about facilitation, training and consulting. Also the discussion on the different perspectives on what facilitation is and how it is perceived.

We then discussed what sort of stories would be useful to tell - about having a very tight scope versus having it more open. We discussed a range that would engage our audience from delivering babies, to facilitating groups and leadership stories.

The 3-stage post-story process of the storyteller interviewing the audience, then the audience interviewing the storyteller and then the audience sharing their stories of similar experiences was put forward.

We identified that we were discussing "what's a valid story" so that everyone could feel comfortable in bringing it forward into the wider group. An introduction might be "What's a hot issue, or a burning issue, for you right now in your work and life?"By sharing it, and hearing it, would bring validity to other peoples' experience. We thought they don't necessarily have to be extra-ordinary stories or even that much about storytelling, but the question may help people articulate their authentic selves and the issues their facing. And it would have a rich reward for everybody.

Personal best and personal worst leadership stories were suggested as a good frame up.

Safety was seen in our group norms for discussing our challenging facilitator stories.

<Name> told a story about an experience leading a conference session and reacting defensively to a question from the audience. <Name> then told a story about facilitating a group which included a challenging person for him.
We discussed the benefit of debriefing after facilitating and getting the learning from situations.

We then identified that we were running out of time and decided to continue our conversation at our meeting on Tuesday 13th – Monday 12th and concluded the meeting.

Action points

<Name>to invite others to Global Learning website tour on Skype at 3.30pm Canberra time.

<Name> and <Name> to get the site ready and to give a tour.

Appendix O Meeting Initiation Transcript 11-12 Dec05

Narrative in online relationship development

Report: Yahoo! Messenger meeting 11-12 December 2005

Singapore: 2.00pm - Monday 12th

South Australia: 4.30pm - Monday 12th

NSW and ACT, Australia: 5.00pm - Monday 12th

NZ: 7.00pm - Monday 12th

Chandler: 11.00pm - Monday 12th

Huston and Chicago: 12.00am - Sunday 11th

Eastern US: 1.00am - Sunday 11th

London: 6.00am - Sunday 11th

Groningen, The Netherlands: 7.00am - Sunday 11th

Agenda

Short welcome

A round where everyone can check-in

Discussion on the group culture

Discuss and tell our stories

Share our experiences

Plan for further action

Completion

Present

[Names deleted]

Apologies

[deleted]

TRANSCRIPT

<participant1>: Not sure that I can voice chat on the mac

<participant 2>: Great - we have txt ok so far

<participant 3>: I'm just checking how I can get voice. It doesn't come as an option for me and my Mac.

<participant 2>: Yeah I'm not sure it's available on Mac yet

<participant 2>: I'll turn my voice off for now I think

<participant1>: You can always talk to yourself:)

<participant 2>: Ah yes - the best form of intelligent conversation!

<participant 3>: <Name> and I are in the same room and can talk to each other via that great medium - air (with vibrations)!

<participant 3>: Is <Name> able to join us?

<participant 2>: Great! Now I'm not sure exactly who's coming as I seem to have confused the dates in setting up the meeting

<participant 2>: I can see that <Name> is online but the words Idle aer next to his name

<participant1>: One of the troubles of synchronous working across different time zones

<participant 3>: I see idle next to <Name>'s icon as well. Who should invite him?

<participant 2>: I have heard from <Name> in Singapore and he said he has trouble getting through his workplace firewall - so he may possibly join.

<participant 2>: I have apologies from <Name>

<participant 2>: <Name>

<participant 2>: <Name>, <Name>

<participant 2>: That's so far I think - i was double checking

<participant 2>: I will assume we are the group - unfortunately small but probably due to the fact that I put the dates out.

<participant 3>: As per Open Space - whoever turns up is the right number

<participant 2>: Yes!

<participant 2>: Well welcome <Name> and <Name>to our chat-based session

<participant 2>: The proposed agenda for today is:

Short welcome

A round where everyone can check-in

Discussion on the group culture raised

Discuss and tell our stories

Share our experiences

Plan for further action

Completion

<participant 3>: Thank you for your welcome. How should we start?

<participant1>: Fine by me although my typing is slow-ish

<participant 2>: I can do slow typing well too

<participant 2>: I thought I might start with a few words from a Chicago-based storyteller Izzy Towinsky, whom I interviewed this time last year

<participant 2>: His approach to storytelling is famous for its audience engagement

<participant 2>: Or we could do something else what do you think?

<participant 3>: Do you type your story or copy and paste it? We could connect by Skype?

<participant 2>: I'm up for that, would it work for you guys in the same work space?

<participant 2>: I've got my scribbled notes in front of me

<participant 3>: Let's keep going like this until we get a Skype connection to you.

<participant 2>: Are you keen Steve? I need to shift a few plugs won't take a moment or two

<participant1>: Skype says you are offline at the moment - yes I'm keen

<participant 2>: Ok I'll switch over

<participant 3>: Stephen, <Name> and I could Skype from the same computer if you are able to be available. Will this work for you?

<participant1>: In which case choose my account

<participant 2>: Yes

<participant 2>: Shall I host the conference or one of you?

<participant 3>: We have you online and we'll try to invite you

<participant 2>: great

<participant1>: I'll try

<participant 3>: We have got an error so will quit Skype and re-launch.

<participant 2>: Ok

<participant 2>: Possibly more Skype wrestling?

<participant 3>: We are aiming for doing it on a computer that has a public microphone so we can both talk. My computer has a headset microphone.

--- At this point we shifted to Skype ---

Appendix P Telephone Conference Report 2-3Dec05

Narrative in online relationship development

Report of our Freeconference meeting 2-3 December 2005

Singapore: 6.00am - Saturday 3rd

South Australia: 8.30am - Saturday 3rd

NSW and ACT, Australia: 9.00am - Saturday 3rd

NZ: 11.00am - Saturday 3rd

Chandler: 3.00pm – Friday 2nd

Huston and Chicago: 4.00pm - Friday 2nd

Eastern US: 5.00pm - Friday 2nd

London: 10.00pm - Friday 2nd

Groningen, The Netherlands: 11.00pm - Friday 2nd

Agenda

A short welcome

A round where everyone can check in

Discussion on our latest email conversations

A discussion on our culture and any ground rules we need

Discussing the stories we have and how we can research them

Plan for action

Vignettes (if time is available)

Closure

Present

[Names deleted]

Apologies

[Names deleted]

MEETING

The meeting was opened with a story that came from a Storytelling and Facilitation workshop at the Australasian Facilitators Network Conference on 27 November 2005. A suggestion was made to could put our names on a piece of paper in front of us to help us get to know the names of everyone in our conversation.

From the latest email conversations we discussed what online facilitation means for each of us: A group of people not in the same place coming together for a purpose. Generally with something they either have to do or produce within a certain time frame either online, using telephone or web. Getting more and more requests for working in online situations and online training. Have become aware of the process through applications of online facilitation. Company re-organized in a global way. No longer able to work face-to-face. Have been doing a lot of online facilitation and building up what works and what doesn't work. Tends to be easier around audio conference and the simplest online chat often is good technology. Interested in learning how to engage people in the context of a very big company trying to get things done. Come from seeing facilitation as a fundamental part of e-learning. Eliciting participation and interaction a key. Clarifying difference between facilitation and training and how to make the story aspect an accepted part of that. Experienced through learning environment – facilitation as a style of training or a way of delivery. How might we change how we use a story, or debrief it, or discuss it in online asynchronous communication. Interest in online facilitation from university teaching, facilitation training and computing perspectives – any assisted group that is using a computing network or the internet. Focused on what do people do with the technology tools, how do people get together and organize themselves and co-operate with each other.

We discussed and identified a difference between training and facilitation being the intent. Training intent is seen to do with developing capacity as a primary intention – to develop particular skills and knowledge. The intent of facilitation is seen as more to do with accomplishing a group task of some kind. A real problem is that the term facilitation can be misused to describe a style of training that is more interactive and 'facilitative'.

A trainer's intent tends to be more focused on specific outcomes or learning objectives that are usually tied to assessment. A facilitator is less involved in content and more intent on providing a process for the group to find and achieve its own outcomes.

A good example was given between facilitating risk management and after action reviews and training project management in a 'facilitative' way.

Group norms and culture

We then moved into discussing some group norms and culture for our group

Confidentiality

Each of us to bring any areas of confidentiality to the awareness of the wider group as and when they occur.

A suggestion was made that we could use the Chatham House rule as needed:

Participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed; nor may it be mentioned that the information was received at a particular meeting. (2001, Geneva Centre for Security Policy)

Perhaps suggesting beforehand that this story, plan or report etc is "held under the Chatham House Rule" or similar.

Care of data collected

Any data created or collected in the wider group processes can be accessed and used by anyone in the group. If an individual or sub-group creates or collects data in an individual or sub-group process and someone from outside that sub-group wants to use it then they need to negotiate directly with the individual or sub-group members involved.

Spelling doesn't count

To assist speed when some are writing, and remove a burden, particularly with numbers.

Dealing with difficulties

If an issue comes up that people believe is going to prevent us, or seriously delay us, getting to our goals that we as a group are willing to stop at that point and discuss how it shall be handled.

That we hold an intent to be transparent about what we have observed.

Issues can be raised with the wider group via the medium we are using or contacting Stephen as a point of call.

Our Stories

We talked about distinguishing between audio and written stories. A preference was raised for stories around facilitation. Also an interested in keeping open to stories about groups, family, teaching and leadership that would inform facilitation. Open to stories told and written by other people, any challenging situations and stories about facilitating groups that didn't go well.

Discussed about us getting lots of emails technology and using a chat tool. Yahoo! messenger, MSN, Paltalk.

We discussed creating a plan with audio stories, text stories, pictorial – storyboards. Perhaps telling the same story by audio, by writing and by pictorial storyboard to contrast the difference between the three types of online medium. We discussed some of our stories in development. Possibility was then raised of creating/ using a discussion forum for the group to use.

Discussed potential outputs, possibility of publishing our stories and the copyright issues when telling someone else's stories.

We then considered the possibility of doing structured rounds of storytelling or a more open approach. We then talked about how we might introduce a story and a warm-up for the audience. Possibility of using an Open Space approach and discussion forum to create themes.

We discussed some of the group participation differences identified between different parts of the world. We then discussed about the Skype meeting. We then talked about how we might go about presenting what we have covered today to the wider group. Discussed benefits of using MSN, Yahoo Messenger, Yahoo has a Mac Version and MSN has a shared whiteboard that might be useful. Possibly an online flipchart substitute. Discussed how storytelling can be useful for the facilitative situations we face in out. Discussed creating yahoo-group or archive for our story group.

Action Points

Suggestion made to create a map with everybody's name, picture, city and time zone.

Suggesting a first round of storytelling and then moving into a more open approach.

Potential dates for when people would like to tell their story and what media would you like to use and the title of the story.

Suggest a yahoo forum for our story group.

Find out if there's a Mac version for MSN and whether it is still supported.

Have a 2nd Freeconference.com meeting 16-17th December.

Have a text based chat tool meeting 9-10 December.

Appendix Q Telephone Conference Report 16-17Dec05

Narrative in online relationship development

Report: Freeconference meeting 16-17 December 2005

Singapore: 6.00am - Saturday 17th

South Australia: 8.30am - Saturday 17th

NSW and ACT, Australia: - Saturday 17th

NZ: 11.00am - - Saturday 17th

Chandler: 3.00pm - Friday 16th

Huston and Chicago: 4.00pm - Friday 16th

Eastern US: 5.00pm - Friday 16th

London: 10.00pm - Friday 16th

Groningen, The Netherlands: 11.00pm - Friday 16th

Agenda

Short welcome

Check-in round

Tell our stories and share experiences

Completion

Present

[Names deleted]

Apologies

[Names deleted]

MEETING

<Name> spoke about a story. There were 5 in the session and we discussed our facilitation stories. It was interesting to see how similar they were in terms of the outcome of the facilitation. <Name> talked about some of the questions that were asked that helped him understand what had happened.

  <Name> mentioned that the people at WebIQ have offered to support us by providing their system and support for our group to use and it will provide a useful place for us to collect all our data and discussion in one place.

Action points

<Name> to write up report on meeting.

Appendix R Yahoo Report 9-10Dec05

Narrative in online relationship development

Report: Yahoo! Messenger meeting 9-10 December 2005

Singapore: 6.00am - Saturday 10th

South Australia: 8.30am - Saturday 10th

NSW and ACT, Australia: 9.00am - Saturday 10th

NZ: 11.00am - Saturday 10th

Chandler: 3.00pm - Friday 9th

Huston and Chicago: 4.00pm - Friday 9th

Eastern US: 5.00pm - Friday 9th

London: 10.00pm - Friday 9th

Groningen, The Netherlands: 11.00pm - Friday 9th

Agenda

Short welcome

A round where everyone can check-in

Discussion on the group culture raised in the Freeconference meeting

Discuss and tell our stories

Share our experiences

Plan for further action

Completion

Present

[Names deleted]

Apologies

[deleted]

TRANSCRIPT

<participant 1>: Hi <participant 2> ready?

<participant 2>: Hi <participant 1>, yes - arriving...

<participant 1>: Who's coming this time?

<participant 2>: <Name> has just sent me an email to say she won't be able to make it

<participant 2>: <Name>has sent her apologies

<participant 1>: Too bad

<participant 2>: From the few emails I've received I think it may be you, me and <Name>

<participant 1>: Ok

<participant 2>: I wonder if we're the only two?

<participant 1>: So far it looks that way.

<participant 2>: <Name> did say that he hadn't tried messenger out yet, but I'm sure he would have emailed by now if he was having trouble

<participant 1>: Do you have any other way of contacting people?

<participant 2>: I have emails and postal addresses

<participant 1>: Do you think sending an email might help?

<participant 2>: Perhaps I'll send a quick courtesy one to see if he's having any trouble otherwise I will assume we are the group

<participant 1>: Ok

<participant 2>: Done!

<participant 2>: Well welcome <participant 1> to our first chat bases session

<participant 1>: Thanks

<participant 1>: Glad to be here

<participant 2>: The proposed agenda for today is:

<participant 2>: Proposed agenda:

Short welcome

A round where everyone can check-in

Discussion on the group culture raised in the freeconference meeting

Discuss and tell our stories

Share our experiences

Plan for further action

Completion

<participant 1>: Ok

<participant 2>: I thought I would start with a few words from a New Zealand storyteller Margaret Copland whom I interviewed this time last year about her storytelling which tends to focus accross cultures

<participant 2>: What I asked her was - How can you tell that the stories you are creating are having an impact?

<participant 1>: Sounds great

\<participant 2\>: I was interested in knowing how she gauged the audience response and the posability that some of the same things might work online.

\<participant 1\>: Really how?

\<participant 2\>: I didn't really know what she might say, but I was very curious to get a inside view on her experience

\<participant 2\>: She said "Well, there are a few indicators that I use when working with an audience".

\<participant 2\>: "The eyes light up, some people smile, there may be silence or it may feel that there is a long engaging pause in people's bodies. People are breathing deeply, they or their heads may be leaning forward. I can feel the energy within myself.

I know when my stories are received because I get a sense of relief within myself. It feels like I can take my foot off the gas, I've got them and I am filled up with joy."

\<participant 1\>: Funny I was thinking about my own interior response also but I am not sure that is always an accurate pointer to the audience.

\<participant 2\>: Yes - I thought they would be interesting words for us to dwell on - we do have an internal experience - maybe there's a way to use it in our group

\<participant 1\>: I am sure it is one indicator.

\<participant 2\>: I agree, shall we do a round of to and check-in with each other

\<participant 1\>: Ok

\<participant 2\>: I'd like to know what's happening in your world and share a bit of mine

\<participant 2\>: Who should go first?

\<participant 1\>: Ok, Today we signed the contract for selling our house. It has been on the market for 9 months and we are quite relieved. We have been working on a book for Jossey-Bass and this is the final blitz. We had a IAF board meeting about this time last night.

\<participant 1\>: I guess I would.

\<participant 2\>: Great

\<participant 2\>: Busy time for you

\<participant 1\>: Yep

\<participant 1>: what is happening with you?

\<participant 2>: yes I had a meeting a few hours after the IAF one organised by Carla our regional rep. She mentioned the ACT meeting to give some a better understanding about the IAF and it's structure

\<participant 2>: I made a plug for the journal to go in the next regional newsletter

\<participant 1>: good

\<participant 1>: I've been thinking about sending something after the book is done.

\<participant 2>: I am/ was a little dissapointed in the turnout today an I think I should be concerned - so I'm felling something there

\<participant 2>: I have a christams bbq later today with some people I built a website for early last year - nice to be invited

\<participant 2>: I am also helping Dale Hunter with referencing and images and things for her chapter in the upcoming IAF Book - another connection there

\<participant 2>: Had my parents over for dinner last night and my older brother and it was really nice to hear my father tell some stories from our childhood - he's often quite reserved and it really warmed my heart

\<participant 1>: nice

\<participant 2>: I could probaly share the story

\<participant 1>: ok that would be great

\<participant 2>: My brother and his friend who were 13 at the time really wanted to go to a Split Enz concert (they're a kind of soft rock band, quite famous in NZ)

\<participant 2>: Antony's (my brother) friend David (the kid accross the street) weren't allowed to go acording to David's dad without a parent and David's dad certainly wasn't going to be it!

\<participant 1>: ok

\<participant 2>: Arnold (My Dad) saw the gleam of hope fade in the young boys as these words were spoken...and they hung their heds in disappointment

\<participant 2>: Arnold (my dad) took pity on them and said "oh I'll take them"...

\<participant 2>: So the two boys went off to the concert with Arnold and David's younger brother Andrew

\<participant 1>: :D

<participant 2>: It was a great concert, and Andrew (the younger brother, who was 11) told Arnold that "This is the bestest concert I've ever been to Mr Thorpe!"

<participant 2>: "Oh" said Arnold, "How many concerts have you been to?"

<participant 2>: "only one, and it's the bestest concert ever!" said Andrew...

<participant 2>: This was the punch line during dinner and it it was just great

<participant 1>: :))

<participant 1>: nice story

<participant 2>: yeah - Antony (my brother) is now 37 so it was nice for him to see as an adult what his dad had done

<participant 2>: anyway that's me checked in

<participant 1>: Ok

<participant 2>: Do we need to discuss anything raised in our group culture so far?

<participant 1>: Well I am concerned about participation

<participant 1>: this time increases my concern

<participant 2>: yes - it's become a very small group

<participant 1>: yes and then there was one.

<participant 2>: I wonder what would make a difference?

<participant 1>: I wonder two things. I am not sure people see why this is important or perhaps remember why it is important.

<participant 2>: Does a challenge need to be raised about people's accountability for participation?

<participant 2>: This is certainly an issue in many online situations I've experienced

<participant 1>: I would first look communicating why we are meeting

<participant 1>: Why it is important for the participants

<participant 1>: I would ask about the times. Are there better times for people?

<participant 2>: possibly too short notice?

<participant 2>: I'm guessing but the time of year is possibly a factor

<participant 1>: perhaps - we could schedule things further in the future.

<participant 1>: I am more flexible this month as I am at home all month. Next month may be more of an issue.

<participant 1>: we are moving

\<participant 1\>: office and home

\<participant 2\>: yes - no small feat

\<participant 1\>: no panic yet

\<participant 2\>: that's good

\<participant 1\>: may be stupidity

\<participant 1\>: rather than calm

\<participant 2\>: we might get to see \<participant 1\> under pressure

\<participant 1\>: not a pretty sight

\<participant 2\>: I wonder if I emailed everyone whom I haven't heard from and surveyed their reasons - keeping it light hearted and inquisitive, curious in the interests of exploring online participation

\<participant 1\>: Exactly what I was going to suggest.

\<participant 1\>: It would be interesting to hear responses.

\<participant 2\>: I've heard from \<Name\>, \<Name\> and \<Name\> and know that \<Name\>, \<Name\> and \<Name\> have tended reasons. It would be great to collect the other's experiences because I'm sure they ar very rel\<Name\>nt

\<participant 1\>: this is all about priorities. What would it take to move this up in people's priority list?

\<participant 2\>: Yes - even of people identify that it's not a high priority it would be interesting to find out why and what it is in relation to. And if it is a high priority, what is holding them back.

\<participant 1\>: right and as you say this happens often in online groups - I've heard that the drop out rate of e learning is about the same as correspondence courses up around 80%

\<participant 2\>: Great, I'll take that up an email survey on participation as an action point

\<participant 2\>: Yes I've heard similar

\<participant 2\>: infact Ive quoted similar

\<participant 1\>: must be true

\<participant 2\>: I'm getting consious of time - and that it's after 12am your time

\<participant 1\>: yes

\<participant 2\>: I did want to explore some stories while we're here - did you have a story that you wanted to share

<participant 1>: I would not mind leaving it here. I've gotten something out of it. I enjoyed your story. I have two.

<participant 1>: One was shared at the IAf Conference in Germany.

<participant 1>: The other is about email.

<participant 2>: oh great

<participant 2>: Perhaps we could add them to the agenda for the meeting on Monday-Tuesday?

<participant 1>: Pace

What I mean by spirit, in this sense, is the event when something happens to a group that occasions an image, a feeling of awe (the simultaneous precognitive experience of fear and fascination), and an act of will and leaves a kind of residue.

<participant 1>: I was a team leader for a community development project in a village called Pace in Mississippi. Pace is about 10 miles from where the three civil rights organizers were killed 10 years earlier. If you have seen the movie "Mississippi Burning" it was about these murders.

<participant 1>: The village was mostly black with a few rich white farmers. Members of both communities supported the idea of the project but there was tension. On the third day about 100 people were sitting in a large hall waiting for the plenary to begin. As the starting time passed and then an hour and then an hour and a half, we became more and more restless. We sang songs and told jokes.

<participant 2>: yes I've seen the movie it was very moving

<participant 1>: One of the white rich farmers and a black teacher came into the hall and to the front of the room. They explained that a dilapidated building owned by the farmer and collapsed and killed the high school aged niece of the teacher. The girl had taken off from school to attend the consultation. She died on her way to the meeting. Silence filled the room. Images ran through my mind and a jumble of emotions ran through me: remembering the beautiful young woman, fear that an already tense situation could become dangerous, sorrow for the mother, concern about the rest of the group, a picture of the old buildings in the block long business district and many others.

<participant 1>: The aunt then said that the funeral was to be held on the coming Saturday. It was to be attended by members of the community only. The girl's

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family were together and doing as well as could be expected. The farmer had taken a tractor and destroyed the rest of the old building. She then said that the girl's mother wanted the consultation to go on. It was too important to be stopped.

In this tragedy something magical had happened.

<participant 1>: The next story is more a reflection about email

<participant 1>: Email

<participant 1>: I am lazy and somewhat socially inept. I am shy and find social interaction difficult. I have moved dozens of times, leaving places, leaving friends, leaving meaning and going to an unknown place. I quickly develop surface relations and quickly recover from leaving friends. I seldom make in-depth friends.

<participant 1>: I have spent much of my life in meetings where everyone speaking is using a language I don't understand. I am comfortable in silence and alone. I have grown to appreciate all of this about me and feel little need to change. Those who want me to be friendlier do not bother me. I even pity them and their superficial noise.

<participant 1>: On an ordinary day, I sit in front of my computer, open the email and begin to delete all of those things I don't want to read. One morning there is a note from someone I hadn't heard from in 20 + years. I am horrified. Ghosts stand around the computer.

<participant 1>: I fear I haven't left all behind.

<participant 1>: The murders were very much in the minds of all of us from outside the community.

<participant 2>: Wow! my heart is filled, I'm still taking in the first story - I've been in rooms like that. and then your second one is like poetry

<participant 1>: thanks

<participant 2>: My thinking for this session was that the storyteller could then interview the audience

<participant 2>: what is the storyteller interested in knowing about the audience

<participant 2>: and then to have a space for the audience to interview the storyteller

<participant 1>: I think that could be really interesting. It might be interesting for the audience to share stories of similar experiences.

<participant 2>: yes, I had a few memories sparked

<participant 1>: I am sure they would add to the whole experience for everyone.

<participant 1>: This might be a way of creating community online

<participant 2>: yes - I've never been to Mississippi, but have seen predudice and racism here in NZ and in Australia and in Texas and in Fiji and a few other places I'v had a glimpse of

<participant 2>: I think it may somehow be the key to participation too

<participant 2>: i like your idea of creating community online - I've not thought about our group that way - it's liberating

<participant 1>: When we lived in Japan we experienced it with our oldest son. He went to preschool in a Japanese school. He one day came home one day crying. We asked what had happened. He said he was selected as the demon in the school play because he was white.

<participant 2>: You also mentioned stories about facilitating in India that sparked my curiosity

<participant 2>: Oh your poor son

<participant 1>: It might be interesting for participant to see themselves helping build community.

<participant 1>: The teachers had no idea what they were doing.

<participant 2>: yes - I know what you mean

<participant 1>: I'll try to think of a Facilitating in India story.

<participant 2>: well maybe I don't exactly know what you mean but I might know a similar story

<participant 2>: and I think they both touch the same deeper humanity in us

<participant 1>: This is an important aspect of hearing and sharing stories.

<participant 2>: I think a depth of sharing will call forth a depth of hearing and this may attract a depth of participation

<participant 1>: I like that

<participant 2>: Upon reflection, I was thinking that perhaps there needed to be only two at this time and place for me to learn that perhaps bigger may not always better and that the depth is actually available with two - small and deep

<participant 1>: I think this is a good experience but I am not sure the size is necessarily important.

<participant 1>: I want to find ways to touch deep dimensions of our collective thinking.

<participant 2>: Great!

<participant 1>: That is one dimension of facilitation that needs work.

<participant 2>: I wonder if what the two of us have achieved today will ripple out through the group - thus the work of the two impacts on the whole

<participant 2>: well early today for you

<participant 1>: I would hope so. This should work at a couple of levels. We are changed and that should have some small impact. If the transcript is shared that might help people understand.

<participant 2>: Yes - I wonder how we can share in a way that will be enrolling for Monday-Tuesday

<participant 2>: I think, if you agree, I will put the transcript in an attachment rather than having it through a downloadable link

<participant 1>: I think that is good

<participant 1>: The two things that came up were the stories and our reflection on them and the concern about participation.

<participant 2>: Yes - perhaps I could create, via email with you, a summary of what we have discussed and call for responses

<participant 1>: sounds right to me

<participant 2>: great

<participant 2>: In terms of completing this meeting...

<participant 1>: yes, I am ready to complete

<participant 2>: I know it's getting late at our end

<participant 1>: both ends you must be approaching lunch

<participant 2>: yes - I would like to take the essence of what we have covered into our next meeting on Monday...

<participant 1>: Ok any suggestions?

<participant 2>: In closing I would like to acknowledge the stories that we have begun to share, the peole in our stories, and the relationships we are begining to forge in our work today.

\<participant 1\>: I would like to acknowledge these things also

\<participant 2\>: For those who are reading this transcript, the invitation is open to you to join in creating our community online. Participate, explore and take any leadership you need to take us forward.

\<participant 1\>: thaks very much for this opportunity

\<participant 2\>: Thank you \<participant 1\>

\<participant 1\>: take care \<participant 2\>

\<participant 2\>: Take care \<participant 1\>, chat to you on Tuesday

\<participant 1\>: ok bye

Action Points

Create an email survey on participation

Suggest process for post-stories reflections

Share the summary and transcript from our meeting and call for responses.

Appendix S Yahoo Report 13-14Dec05

Narrative in online relationship development

Report: Yahoo! Messenger meeting on 13-14 December 2005.

Singapore: 2.00pm - Wednesday 14th

South Australia: 4.30pm - Wednesday 14th

NSW and ACT, Australia: 5.00pm - Wednesday 14th

NZ: 7.00pm - Wednesday 14th

Chandler: 11.00pm - Wednesday 14th

Huston and Chicago: 12.00am – Tuesday 13th

Eastern US: 1.00am – Tuesday 13th

London: 6.00am – Tuesday 13th

Groningen, The Netherlands: 7.00am – Tuesday 13th

Agenda

Short welcome

A round where everyone can check-in

Discuss and tell our stories

Share our experiences

Completion

Present

[Names deleted]

Apologies

[Names deleted]

MEETING

We discussed the confused dates in setting up the meeting, the participation survey and getting straight into our stories. A suggestion was made and we shifted from text to voice chat. There was a strong echo and turning off the hands free solved this problem.

We discussed a process of one person telling their story, and then questions being asked by the audience and then the storyteller asking questions of the audience.

<Name> posted his story in the chat text. I am lazy and somewhat socially inept. I am shy and find social interaction difficult. I have moved dozens of times, leaving places, leaving friends, leaving meaning and going to an unknown place. I quickly develop surface relations and quickly recover from leaving friends. I seldom make in-depth friends.

I have spent much of my life in meetings where everyone speaking is using a language I don't understand. I am comfortable in silence and alone. I have grown to appreciate all of this about me and feel little need to change. Those who want me to be friendlier do not bother me. I even pity them and their superficial noise.

On an ordinary day, I sit in front of my computer, open the email and begin to delete all of those things I don't want to read. There is a note from someone I hadn't heard from in 20 + years. I am horrified. Ghosts stand around the computer.

I fear I haven't left all behind.

We then began with some questions for <Name>. <Name> talked about the impact that the story had had on her. <Name> clarified between the two stories that were captured in the Yahoo meeting on Friday-Saturday 9-10 December. There was the one in Pace Mississippi and this one posted today.

<Name> said that she really related to the story and felt more connected to <Name> from hearing his story because he had opened up and revealed quite a bit of himself. <Name> said that it was a useful story for us to research. <Name> said that from reading <Name>'s story he saw something of the man behind the message and that there were many layers to the story.<Name> made an interesting observation that it's a part of facilitation itself to have the courage to expose oneself in such a way that others are given courage to expose themselves or share their thinking. <Name> said that a particular line that had drawn his focus. "I am comfortable in silence and alone." This struck a cord as something that men like to be – comfortable in our silence. <Name> identified from a women's perspective that when she read the same line she had wanted to joke around with <Name> and draw him out more. <Name> said that in the silence it was about listening. <Name> talked about others needing him to speak in order for them to feel more comfortable – people who want to make him friendlier.

<Name> said that as we have been talking about the story together she can see it with new eyes and understand more what <Name> meant by silence in terms of listening.

We then discussed the process and how it would be useful in either audio and text formats. <Name> suggested the idea of 2 or 3 stories that we could talk about simultaneously.

<Name> talked about some stories at the Europe IAF conference. Mary Ellis Arthur asked What is an experience that was a very positive experience in your facilitation? And 8 very powerful stories emerged – it would be interesting to explore them as a group of stories.

<Name> told his worst facilitation about facilitating a rather charged family meeting at a Heart Politics community gathering. There were several issues from past gatherings that he was unaware of and he hadn't been to any of the family meetings at two previous gatherings he had attended. <Name> felt like he had lost control of the meeting and someone else ended up taking over the second half of the meeting. After telling story, <Name> and <Name> asked questions. <Name> came to see a lot of learning in telling his story. I saw new light in it. He saw that the person who took charge in that meeting as really wanting to help achieve its purpose. An ally rather than someone to struggle against. <Name> developed a new relationship with his experience of that meeting.

It was interesting - <Name> had had a similar facilitation experience and then told that story about working with a coalition of telecom companies. We identified the importance and need for self preparation and the opening set of rituals starting the group. These are an important dimension in helping groups come to decisions.

<Name> was reminded about a similar experience about a visitation training pilot that turned into a facilitated discussion about issues around visitation. Issues with visitors and equipment breaking were more important to the students than the training that was planned. It turned into an hour long discussion about what issues they had being trying to bring to the director as no one was listening to them.

<Name> talked about collecting the secondary issues around training that may come into play during training. He introduced a process he uses called an Audience Analysis and offered to email it around.

We then talked about the possibility of setting up a yahoo group and discussion forum possibly using iMeet.

<Name> said he had trouble using yahoo groups as it was truncating messages. Particularly in from IAF e-groups.

Action points

<Name> to email Audience Analysis sheet

<Name> to write up report

Appendix T Yahoo Transcript 13-14Dec05

Narrative in online relationship development

Report: Yahoo! Messenger meeting 11-12 December 2005

Singapore: 2.00pm - Monday 12th

South Australia: 4.30pm - Monday 12th

NSW and ACT, Australia: 5.00pm - Monday 12th

NZ: 7.00pm - Monday 12th

Chandler: 11.00pm - Monday 12th

Huston and Chicago: 12.00am - Sunday 11th

Eastern US: 1.00am - Sunday 11th

London: 6.00am - Sunday 11th

Groningen, The Netherlands: 7.00am - Sunday 11th

Agenda

Short welcome

A round where everyone can check-in

Discussion on the group culture

Discuss and tell our stories

Share our experiences

Plan for further action

Completion

Present

[Names deleted]

Apologies

TRANSCRIPT

Text Chat - <participant 1>: hi <participant 3> and <participant 2>

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Hello!

Text Chat - <participant 3>: Welcome, I think we may be the group - most likely as I have created some confusion around the times and days

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I was confused

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Again, there were 3, LOL

Text Chat - <participant 1>: There seems to be some desire to have longer notice also

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I think I've learnt what the cost of a mistake like that may have on participation

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I agree

Text Chat - <participant 1>: It is a pretty complex issue

Text Chat - <participant 3>: The survey has been useful I believe

Text Chat - <participant 1>: yes

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I believe this is all part of the process. And, yes I thought the survey was a great idea!

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I think the survey will help to continue to provide a focus on what we want to have happen in this process.

Text Chat - <participant 1>: yes, <participant 3> are you going to pull it together?

Text Chat - <participant 3>: Just changed color - <participant 2> when <participant 1> and I met on Friday-Saturday we were just getting into two great stories that <participant 1> had brought forward

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Yes, I read them.

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Very interesting.

Text Chat - <participant 3>: In terms of what we might do tonight - I thought we might start with our stories

Text Chat - <participant 2>: text or chat?

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I have voice but have never used it on Yahoo.

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I thought text but am open to voice chat, what do you think <participant 1>?

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I guess I expected text

Text Chat - <participant 2>: ok

Text Chat - <participant 3>: perhaps we could do some of both?

Text Chat - <participant 1>: ok

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I just spoke, could you hear me?

Text Chat - <participant 3>: My thinking is that one way would be to let the teller choose

Text Chat - <participant 1>: no

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I did not hear you

Text Chat - <participant 2>: then, let's stick to text :)

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I think we need to each click on the voice icon on our menus for it to work

Text Chat - <participant 1>: my icons say i am sending voice

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I can type - I just thought it may be helpful for you <participant 3> to help facilitate the call and use voice since there are 3 of us.

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I can hear <participant 1>

Text Chat - <participant 1>: i can't hear anyone I hear that some one is trying to talk.

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I heard you say you are getting static <participant 1>.

Text Chat - <participant 2>: <participant 1>, I can hear you typing.

Text Chat - <participant 1>: my mic is all the way up and so are my earphones I just heard <participant 3>

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I can hear <participant 2> very well

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I'm getting feedback....must be my settings.

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I'm just sorting out my plugs

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I can hear <participant 2>

Text Chat - <participant 2>: That's a bit annoying....I can hear myself repeat everything....an echo....

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I turned down my earphones

Text Chat - <participant 2>: <participant 1>, please turn off your hands free and I'll see if that is causing echo...

Text Chat - <participant 1>: ok just turned them off

Text Chat - <participant 1>: It could be mine

Text Chat - <participant 1>: <participant 3> are you there?

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I am lazy and somewhat socially inept. I am shy and find social interaction difficult. I have moved dozens of times, leaving places, leaving friends, leaving meaning and going to an unknown place. I quickly develop surface relations and quickly recover from leaving friends. I seldom make in-depth friends.

I have spent much of my life in meetings where everyone speaking is using a language I don't understand. I am comfortable in silence and alone. I have grown to appreciate all of this about me and feel little need to change.

Those who want me to be friendlier do not bother me. I even pity them and their superficial noise.

Text Chat - <participant 1>: On an ordinary day, I sit in front of my computer, open the email and begin to delete all of those things I don't want to read. There is a note from someone I hadn't heard from in 20 + years. I am horrified. Ghosts stand around the computer.

I fear I haven't left all behind.

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Wow, I found that to be a very powerful story.

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I have a Q.

Text Chat - <participant 1>: ok

Text Chat - <participant 3>: ok

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I agree, there are lots of layers to the story.

Text Chat - <participant 1>: <participant 2> you are cuting out

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Ok, my voice just went out

Text Chat - <participant 2>: on Yahoo, not mine :)

Text Chat - <participant 1>: yes

Text Chat - <participant 1>: she did

Text Chat - <participant 2>: great self observations here!

Text Chat - <participant 2>: yes.

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I think this is great, as I hear our discussion and re-read the story, I understand it better and relate to it a bit differently.

Text Chat - <participant 1>: my analytical side

Text Chat - <participant 1>: 8 am

Text Chat - <participant 2>: 12am

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I am

Text Chat - <participant 2>: You go ahead, plz

Text Chat - <participant 1>: yep

Text Chat - <participant 2>: you are cutting out

Text Chat - <participant 1>: you are cutting out

Text Chat - <participant 1>: oops

Text Chat - <participant 2>: telepathic delays :)

Text Chat - <participant 1>: :D

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Thanks for sharing what you are reflecting on. I was just going to ask what your "take aways" were.

Text Chat - <participant 1>: good question <participant 2>

Text Chat - <participant 2>: I like that term, spontaneous allies....

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Bring lots of hot chocolate :)

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Great idea.

Text Chat - <participant 1>: I had a similar experience and came to realize that the major problem was I did not believe that I could do it.

Text Chat - <participant 2>: you cut out

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I find I'm laughing and nodding as you're saying this

Text Chat - <participant 1>: hi <participant 2>

Text Chat - <participant 1>: our feeling guilty

Text Chat - <participant 2>: LOL

Text Chat - <participant 3>: fantastic

Text Chat - <participant 1>: lol

Text Chat - <participant 2>: :))

Text Chat - <participant 2>: how many people responded to survey so far?

Text Chat - <participant 2>: any word from the Singaporians?

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I'll just have a look

Text Chat - <participant 1>: ok

Text Chat - <participant 3>: Yse I've heard from <Name> and <Name> this week

Text Chat - <participant 2>: neat-o

Text Chat - <participant 3>: <Name> has been on vacation and is now bask and <Name> has been travelling and following the discussion

Text Chat - <participant 1>: great

Text Chat - <participant 3>: So I'm hoping to encourage then to step in more and introduce themselves

Text Chat - <participant 1>: That would be good

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I suspect they are self-conscious about using English as it is a second language

Text Chat - <participant 3>: but I don't have any evidence to back that up - just a hunch

Text Chat - <participant 1>: This is easier to deal with face to face and via voice

Text Chat - <participant 2>: (:|must go to sleep soon zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

Text Chat - <participant 1>: yes my work calls

Text Chat - <participant 1>: <Naaaaaaammmmmmmeee>

Text Chat - <participant 3>: ok

Text Chat - <participant 1>: That is good

Text Chat - <participant 1>: We've heard some stories. It might be good to write them up

Text Chat - <participant 1>: We've discussed them

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I've been summarising the meetings so far...

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I'm happy to continue and summarise this one, email it yo you <participant 1> and <participant 2> and then post to the group

Text Chat - <participant 1>: LOL

Text Chat - <participant 3>: with your additions, corrections etc

Text Chat - <participant 1>: sounds good

Text Chat - <participant 1>: looking forward to reading it

Text Chat - <participant 1>: good night sleep well

Text Chat - <participant 1>: best

Text Chat - <participant 3>: I wonder what would really work best?

Text Chat - <participant 2>: thanks. goodnite.

Text Chat - <participant 3>: ok great

Text Chat - <participant 3>: thanks <participant 2>, <participant 1>

Text Chat - <participant 1>: bye

Text Chat - <participant 3>: Good night <participant 2> - sweet dreams

Text Chat - <participant 2>: nite

Text Chat - <participant 2>: Chandler out.

Text Chat - <participant 3>: goodnight

Appendix U Yahoo Transcript 1Feb06

Narrative in online relationship development

One-on-one Yahoo! Messenger meeting 1 February 2006

NZ: 7.30pm – Wednesday 1st

Proposed Agenda

Yahoo chat with stories

Test audio

Possibly test Skype if time

Present

[Names deleted]

TRANSCRIPT

<participant 1>: Hi <participant 2>, <participant 1> here. I am on line - I still have to work out how to appear online to you!

<participant 2>: Hi <participant 1>,

<participant 2>: yes I have you in my list but it shows up grey as though you're off line

<participant 1>: i think i have to use the stealth function - will try it tomorrow

<participant 2>: ok!.. How are you today?

<participant 1>: Very good thank you! It has been a great day! How are you?

<participant 2>: I'm doing ok - though my dad's had a rough day and feeling dizzy and we're a little concerned about him

<participant 2>: He's had heart surgery about 10 years ago - so whenever he's unwell we do worry

<participant 1>: Oh no, it is hard when our parents get ill. And scary too sometimes, I feel it that way.

<participant 2>: my mum's a nurse and she is always a bit too fatalistic for me sometimes

<participant 2>: She's taken him off to the doctor so he's in good hands

<participant 1>: I hope he gets better. my Dad is 82 and he had a bypass at 80.

<participant 2>: wow, that's impressive - mine's 75 this year

<participant 1>: I am pretty proud of my Dad,

<participant 1>: i think he is a great man and a fabulous friend

<participant 2>: They're special people Dads I reckon - my mum always gets jealous because we all seem to like him better than her!

<participant 2>: well those are her words

<participant 1>: I can understand that, as a MUm

<participant 2>: not necessarily from us kids

<participant 1>: I had to do a lot of self facilitation to view my Dad differently

<participant 2>: yeah - I have too - There was a psychodrama session that I did that really helped I must admit too

<participant 2>: I got to step into my dad's shoes as a young man and realised the pressures that were on him growing up

<participant 2>: I began to see him as more human after that

<participant 1>: Yes and providing for a family is not so easy,

<participant 1>: My Mum was the key person in our family and when she died,

<participant 1>: we got a chance to see Dad as he really is - be with him

<participant 2>: that's really beautiful

<participant 1>: it is lovely and for you, those shoes of your Dads, how does it feel for you facing the future?

<participant 2>: well - yeah I think I've been clucky for about 30 years now and would love to be a father

<participant 1>: mmm - it is pretty special being a parent

<participant 2>: Many people have said I'd be very good at it from seeing me with their kids

<participant 2>: I'll be the happiest man alive when it finally happens

<participant 1>: I like to know you are keen to be a father,

<participant 1>: We need good fathers for our tamariki

<participant 1>: we need good role models for our boys

<participant 1>: the best opportunity to facilitate is with children

<participant 2>: Yes! they are great in the moment coaches

<participant 1>: Absolutely

<participant 2>: I've just had a message from <Name> from our group - she says to say Hi. She's doing some late night emails - I think its 11:50pm in Arizona

<participant 1>: How nice! Has the yahoo e group started up yet (your research group)

<participant 2>: yes it's there but I haven't started anything much on it for 2006. I've got a posting in draft with a bit of a summary and suggestions for what to do next in the process.

<participant 2>: I ran a session remotely at the Midwest Facilitators Network conference in Chicago last week and have been a bit slack since then

<participant 1>: I have been on and still yet to post something - I thought I might post the story I posted on Zencom.

<participant 2>: That would be great

<participant 1>: can you tell me about your conference?

<participant 2>: yeah it was pretty good.

<participant 2>: I used Skype and video conferenced into the room at Chicago - which was a first for me!

<participant 2>: <Name> from our research group was one of the organisers of the conference was there and <Name> joined in on the session from Arizona

<participant 1>: Yeah, what an achievement - how exciting

<participant 2>: I did a little talk about the background and some of the things we have done/ tried so far and then <Name> and <Name> spoke about their experiences

<participant 1>: you were talking about your research?

<participant 2>: Pretty much about how I came to start the project, contacting people, the countries people are from and a bit about what types of conversations we've had so far

<participant 2>: And then we had about 30 mins of question time and <Name>, <Name> and I tried to answer them

<participant 2>: I think there were about 16 in the room at Chicago and <Name> and I online

<participant 1>: which group of people was at the conference?

<participant 2>: They were mostly independent facilitators, university and business consultants from Chicago and nearby.

<participant 1>: I get a sense from my reading the USA is far ahead of us in online facilitation

<participant 2>: I'm not so sure yet!

<participant 1>: Most of my reading is around tertiary teaching so it is not about facilitation. It is such a broadly interpreted concept

<participant 2>: I do really think we do have something special down here

<participant 1>: MMm- and facilitation as I know it through Zenergy (process) seems to be really in the air at this point in time

<participant 2>: tertiary teaching is certainly an area that promotes facilitative learning as facilitation

<participant 1>: And I have reframed myself as a facilitative teacher

<participant 1>: and articulated that with those who are training as teachers - we have the conversation and it is a good dialogue usually

<participant 2>: That's great - you're a champion. I think it's good to have facilitative learning and it's also important to have the 'group facilitator' role clear in people's minds as something a little different - and the Code of Ethics is a great help

<participant 2>: particularly when I meet the occasional people who have become sceptical because of their experience of facilitated processes that didn't go well

<participant 2>: Anyway I think the work you're doing is great

<participant 1>: thank you! I am impressed with what I have been reading about your work in online facilitation - you have been doing it for some time now?

<participant 2>: Well I've been involved through my University mostly in a research team creating a multi-site digital whiteboard and a bit of teaching

<participant 2>: and a self confessed chat junkie too

<participant 2>: My brothers and sister were overseas for many years and we would use different tools to chat and catch up - bit like teenagers on the phone

<participant 1>: Ah! it is great to keep in touch! I hope to use these tools more for that. <participant 2> - i intend to run a chat session with a group of students for the first time this semester

<participant 1>: it is a trial for me

<participant 2>: I guess you're starting in 3-4 weeks?

<participant 1>: It will be during their professional practice. I want to focus on the goal I set for myself for this project

<participant 1>: which was establishing and enhancing relationship and inspiring involvement

<participant 1>: rather than requiring involvement!

<participant 2>: Aaah yes...I can remember struggling to get my students to do their reading between classes

<participant 2>: In the Globalisation paper I taught on we had an online assessment that was based on them creating a research-based output from their discussion

<participant 2>: it was fascinating to see the different ways the groups created their final output

<participant 1>: PP is so busy and stressful and at the same time a mid practice chat is a way to connect with each other which is relaxing and fun. It will take place during mid march - date not known yet

<participant 1>: that sounds interesting

<participant 1>: What types of things did they create?

<participant 2>: There was a scenario given to them

<participant 2>: They were famous NZ wine makers wanting to go global and needed to workout how to do it essentially to make recommendations based on global trends

<participant 2>: some were very creative and had company production, marketing, distribution, promotion and financial plans co-ordinated

<participant 2>: others went to a franchise style

<participant 2>: others became more global wine brokers specialising on all NZ wines

<participant 1>: I was thinking along the lines of them telling a story

<participant 1>: something about a lesson they taught

<participant 1>: it could be a real success or a challenge or both

<participant 2>: yeah - well I had a few arguments with the team as the assessment was 'final output' focused

<participant 2>: the students did talk about what they learned and the process and the team dynamics in a reflective assessment - unfortunately it was only 5% of the overall

<participant 2>: However it was mostly a political conversation and I was the new kid on the teaching team

<participant 2>: and being part-time also had a reducing effect on my suggestions

<participant 1>: It sounds familiar!

<participant 2>: yes, I thought you would understand

<participant 1>: My chat would not be an assessed task

<participant 1>: It would be an opportunity to get together online. Take time out of school and reflect on the PP to date

<participant 1>: I thought a Successes and Story telling session would attract them on

<participant 1>: Would you like this event to be included in your research as an out come of it (as a co researcher).

<participant 2>: I think it would be really attractive - I'm sure story is a critical aspect of PP.

<participant 2>: It would be great if it could be included

<participant 2>: I was also thinking of what advice can be drawn from the group

<participant 2>: I'm sure many would like to help/ learn from the planning of a session

<participant 1>: that is a great idea! I could put the question out to the group!

<participant 2>: I'm sure there's 17 people who would live to give some feedback on a plan or offer some suggestions etc - whatever areas you need or would like some contribution to

<participant 1>: sounds good to me - i will sort it. What would you need from the reseach perspective?

<participant 2>: I would be interested in the direct comments from students and how it enhanced their PP or otherwise.

<participant 1>: OK and do I need to get any clearance at your end or my end to use the comments

<participant 1>: I would need to get their permission and I imagine go through the college clearance system

<participant 2>: I'll see from my supervisor - I'd assume that they would likely be asked to sign a consent form for their comments to be used. Alternatively if it's

your own reflection/ summary of what student's suggests it would be ok as far as I can see.

<participant 1>: Ok, I will check at my end too.

<participant 2>: That's great - I can easily provide details of ethics approval and contacts. It may also mean more to those participating too - to see that their experiences are valued.

<participant 1>: I am looking forward to it all. it will be fun on all sides! I will need to sign out <participant 2> shortly as I have a a call to make to UK.

<participant 2>: Ok - Now next time we will try some of the voice, and other voice and other options to do with the tools. So that you get to learn all the things too.

<participant 1>: Ok, that would be great. i am away for a week in chch so i will need to organise a time after the 10th

<participant 2>: I've really enjoyed our conversation

<participant 1>: thank you, me too! I am learning so much, it is very exciting for me!

<participant 2>: After the 10th is very good with me too.

<participant 1>: I will need to think about the best time after that fro me - have you any preferences?

<participant 2>: Evenings seem to work well for me, or Mondays and Fridays during the day.

<participant 1>: OK, how about I check it out and email you tomorrow?

<participant 2>: That would be great, there's no rush though.

<participant 1>: I need to sort it for my senior brain! so I will sign out now and be in touch. thanks <participant 2> - have a great week and weekend ahead

<participant 2>: You too, bye for now

Appendix V Yahoo-Transcript 27Jan06

Narrative in online relationship development

One-on-one Yahoo! Messenger meeting 27 January 2006

NZ: 7.30pm – Friday 27th

Agenda

Login to messenger

Test chat with stories

Switch to audio

Present

TRANSCRIPT

<participant 1> (7:32:53 p.m.): Hi <participant 2> is this the way to text chat?

<participant 2> (7:33:10 p.m.): Hello yes!

<participant 2> (7:33:20 p.m.): Well done!

<participant 1> (7:33:39 p.m.): thank you! that is a nice photo!

<participant 2> (7:33:58 p.m.): Yes, last summer at Heart Politics

<participant 2> (7:34:06 p.m.): before I grew a beard

<participant 2> (7:34:53 p.m.): now I'm going to see if I can add you into my contacts

<participant 1> (7:35:01 p.m.): I am impressed! You could be out on the town looking cool with a beard

<participant 2> (7:35:44 p.m.): I just got tired of shaving

<participant 2> (7:36:16 p.m.): and all the professors at Uni had one so on one level I thought it would be the in thing

<participant 1> (7:36:45 p.m.): summer Holidays- you said you had a story about heart politics. sounds as if it was really thought provoking

<participant 2> (7:37:50 p.m.): Yes at the winter gathering I facilitated the Parents-Children's meeting and Wow! it was full on.

<participant 1> (7:38:30 p.m.): I can imagine. I have 1 granddaughter of 4 and she is a power house in herself

<participant 2> (7:39:14 p.m.): It was a pretty charged meeting with different parents having different styled of parenting and I eventually lost control of the meeting I was finally glad when it ended

<participant 2> (7:40:40 p.m.): So I talked about it with the story group and that turned what was a 'bad past experience' into new learning and then I went back this summer to hold the children's programme again

<participant 1> (7:40:58 p.m.): And what happened this time?

<participant 2> (7:41:05 p.m.): It was really successful

<participant 1> (7:41:25 p.m.): what did you do differently?

<participant 2> (7:43:35 p.m.): I had a lot more ownership of the process, I was more grounded. More experienced (I hadn't even been to one of the the Parents-Childrens meetings before). I did a lot more work beforehand with other's on the holding team and met them before the gathering and talked about what I had as a vision for how it would work

<participant 2> (7:45:26 p.m.): It freed me up and we tried a few new things - as the meeting started we had all the parents hold their arms up and the children made a snake weaving in and out of the parents

<participant 1> (7:45:56 p.m.): What is the "it " that freed you up?

<participant 2> (7:46:48 p.m.): Being grounded in the purpose is what I'd call it

<participant 2> (7:47:04 p.m.): mostly for myself

<participant 1> (7:47:36 p.m.): Your purpose, was that related to your vision and how did you come to the vision?

<participant 2> (7:49:16 p.m.): I talked to <Name>, who was one of the holding group team and to **** who had volunteered to be one of the 'kid keepers' - that's the term the children use.

<participant 2> (7:50:37 p.m.): The main difference is that I came from "this is what I want for the children's programme" and working with others from there rather than "what does everyone else want" and I'll help to "co-ordinate that"

<participant 1> (7:52:36 p.m.): so you demonstrated a clear purpose in yourself and then the parents and children were aligned with that? did you need to do anything to get their commitment other than have purpose and passion (it sunded like there was passion and i think purpose and passion are essential ingredients for facilitation)

<participant 2> (7:53:25 p.m.): yeah, nice reflection - I like that passion - It resonates well

<participant 2> (7:54:21 p.m.): The parents were concerned about many of the specific details and didn't want to miss parts of the other activities that were going on

<participant 2> (7:56:09 p.m.): I had said that children are going to still be 100% parent's responsibility and that they needed to make decisions for their child. Some one said "Oh, so we're not going to discuss the hard questions like how many sugars in their drinks and how many hot chocolates they're allowed.

<participant 2> (7:56:49 p.m.): And I simply said no we're not going to talk about that - you decide for your child.

<participant 2> (7:57:16 p.m.): And no-one complained and they did just that

<participant 1> (7:57:56 p.m.): the big questions for kids??? your story highlights for me too for clarity before the facilitation - Roger Schwarz highlighted that for me. the big and interesting question for me, is how much it is my passion and how much it is the participants. I get very excited about what I am doing! I don't want to lose the key need of the participants

<participant 2> (7:59:23 p.m.): yeah, So I would see myself in the role of a facilitative leader in the sense that I was involved in holding the children's programme and involved in decision-making and content

<participant 2> (7:59:40 p.m.): rather than a facilitator of the meeting

<participant 1> (8:00:08 p.m.): that fits well with Roger's definition.

<participant 2> (8:00:15 p.m.): the children's programme was fantastic and all the children want to come back

<participant 1> (8:00:55 p.m.): You could have a life long job there!

<participant 2> (8:01:38 p.m.): Yeah I loved it, I learnt stuff for myself too, and a few of the parents thanked me for holding their children so some of the feedback from the children was excellent

<participant 1> (8:02:15 p.m.): children are tough and fair critics! What were your greatest learnings?

<participant 2> (8:02:20 p.m.): There were 19 in all ranging from 4years up to 16.

<participant 2> (8:03:04 p.m.): I was worried at first that I wouldn't be able to connect - so getting to know their names first worked well.

<participant 1> (8:04:06 p.m.): A big mission - have you heard of the term tuakina teina? that is not quite correct - a close rendition

<participant 2> (8:04:44 p.m.): tuakina teina - certainly new, I'm curious

<participant 1> (8:06:25 p.m.): as i say, not quite right - i would need to check my spelling - the Maori value placed on older children mentoring and advising and teaching the younger children and using the relationship proactively to initiate and enhance learning. i recall seeing it in operation almost naturally at HP when i was there in 2000.

<participant 2> (8:07:38 p.m.): Yeah - one of the older girls (15) enjoyed it so much want's to run the programme next winter

<participant 2> (8:08:20 p.m.): There was a distinct point where I noticed I had switched from questioning mode into a getting present with mode

<participant 2> (8:09:09 p.m.): have you been to heart politics many times?

<participant 2> (8:09:30 p.m.): It was my 4th gathering

<participant 1> (8:10:15 p.m.): only once - I hope to have more time this year to go. I realise it is a wonderful community and provides me with hope for the future.

<participant 2> (8:11:00 p.m.): yeah it is a very specal place

<participant 1> (8:11:20 p.m.): Your story resonates with me as I have a story which links with the notion of purpose. would you like me to tell you now?

<participant 2> (8:11:43 p.m.): yes! please

<participant 1> (8:12:46 p.m.): It was not recent and it was incredibly challenging i have not forgotten it. i was cofacilitating a one day part of a conference of a community organisation

<participant 1> (8:13:36 p.m.): i was the support facilitator really. the lead facilitator had negotiated the purpose with the organisation

<participant 2> (8:13:57 p.m.): ah...

<participant 1> (8:14:28 p.m.): the lead facilitator had to take one hour out and go to court. i was in a huge room with aobut 80 people!

<participant 2> (8:14:47 p.m.): wow...

<participant 1> (8:15:03 p.m.): Not a problem for me in my work and ....this turned out rather differently

<participant 1> (8:15:38 p.m.): We had sent the programme to the community managers for them to view before the day

<participant 1> (8:16:26 p.m.): <Name> and I facilitated the purpose and culture and then i began with an Appreciative inquiry about the organisation

<participant 2> (8:16:52 p.m.): You're good with that

<participant 1> (8:17:09 p.m.): Half way through it the manager came up and said they were not happy with what i was doing!

<participant 1> (8:17:29 p.m.): thank you for the compliment!

<participant 2> (8:17:57 p.m.): I was remembering your session at the AFN conference in Wellington

<participant 1> (8:19:11 p.m.): I was initially horrified and then calmed myself a little to say it was what was asked for and if it was not working what did they want to happen?

<participant 2> (8:19:41 p.m.): sounds like a tense moment

<participant 1> (8:21:06 p.m.): <Name>! the leader who was very sharp made suggestions and I attempted to do what was wanted for the rest of the morning (big mistake! and big learning)

<participant 2> (8:21:23 p.m.): aah yeah

<participant 1> (8:22:13 p.m.): At the lunch break <Name> came back and came up with lots of suggestions. he had posters and processes and all sorts and suddenly i had the aha!

<participant 2> (8:22:48 p.m.): how would you describe it?

<participant 1> (8:24:06 p.m.): a bit like when you said you felt grounded! I knew in every part of my body(not mind) that the next step was to offer an OPEN SPACE for the remainder of the day!

<participant 2> (8:25:17 p.m.): oh wicked! how did that go down? and what was the sensation like? - 2 questions there

<participant 1> (8:27:36 p.m.): I think they realised they had to give it a go as there was nothing else. the managers were contradicting each other about what we should do, half the people had walked out! They decided to give it a go! i had an

initial panic thinking - I will never go to a facilitation again without my open space resources!!

<participant 1> (8:28:04 p.m.): and they were not needed!

<participant 2> (8:28:15 p.m.): that's cool...

<participant 1> (8:29:12 p.m.): I facilitated the process, we had a cruisy afternoon and the groups were intensely involved and evaluations were great!

<participant 1> (8:30:30 p.m.): So, back to purpose! one learning for me was that the leaders and managers can decide a purpose without true consultation with those who will be involved!

<participant 2> (8:31:04 p.m.): yes - they can be shifty

<participant 1> (8:32:19 p.m.): i had two personal learnings - the first was I needed to hold onto my role as facilitator earlier than i did. i colluded with the managers - acutally i collapsed!

<participant 2> (8:33:21 p.m.): yes, sounds very similar to my first session at Heart Politics where I essentially became a nodding mute

<participant 2> (8:33:45 p.m.): I had a term for it on my master class

<participant 2> (8:34:30 p.m.): I called it 'catatonic' - where I felt like I was paralised from the neck down

<participant 1> (8:34:37 p.m.): That sounds exactly like i felt and probably looked!

<participant 1> (8:36:03 p.m.): the second learning was to ask and trust the particpants! go to them and ask what is needed! and thank the lord for open space

<participant 2> (8:36:29 p.m.): what a wonderful story

<participant 2> (8:37:05 p.m.): Appreciative Inquiry is such a wonderful gift, I wonder why the manager wouldn't go there and Open space a blessing too

<participant 1> (8:37:52 p.m.): thank you! interesting how it links in with your story - the power of a clear purpose and the problems with a fluffY. I think they were doing something to the particpants. they decided they needed this work.

<participant 2> (8:42:06 p.m.): I wonder if the catatonic phase is quite a common experience.

<participant 2> (8:42:51 p.m.): It seems like a baptism by fire - that being the group's fire

<participant 1> (8:43:54 p.m.): I think it is common as it is about diverse people and there will always be conflict, I like Rogers work because he starts with the premise of conflicting situations and views and moves from that place

<participant 1> (8:44:29 p.m.): the problem for me is that i like to get it right all the time

<participant 2> (8:45:08 p.m.): Me too - I always thought it was a Gemini thing

<participant 1> (8:45:22 p.m.): libra too

<participant 2> (8:45:53 p.m.): I really enjoyed meeting Roger Schwarz

<participant 1> (8:46:44 p.m.): I have really taken on some of his key messages - not new messages just said in a fresh and new way which works for me

<participant 1> (8:48:30 p.m.): I am focusing this year on creating dialogue rather than debate and my family is great to practice on! Also the use of questions and assuming someone will want to offer a different position to my suggestion

<participant 2> (8:48:30 p.m.): <Name> and <Name> and I went to dinner with him a couple of hours after the Auckland Workshop - it was nice - I learnt a bit about South Carolina and it was nice to hang out a little with him.

<participant 2> (8:49:13 p.m.): Yes there is a real distinction between dialogue and debate - and I agree about family

<participant 1> (8:49:24 p.m.): You have had (made/taken) some great opportunities recently with gilbert also

<participant 2> (8:49:52 p.m.): yes I feel blessed some days

<participant 1> (8:50:45 p.m.): Yeah! We seem to have come to a close in the conversation - what do you think?

<participant 2> (8:51:20 p.m.): We've done well I'd say - 1 hr and 20.

<participant 1> (8:52:28 p.m.): really? wow, that is so cool. thanks for the opportunity. I will be using this tool with my daughter when she is overseas. what could we do next?

<participant 2> (8:52:36 p.m.): I've really enjoyed our meeting - we were going to to audio and a few other things - perhaps we could make another time to focus on those?

<participant 2> (8:52:55 p.m.): Where is she going?

<participant 2> (8:53:57 p.m.): I was thinking that perhaps a session with the three of us try all the things out

<participant 1> (8:54:18 p.m.): She has been working in London for 4 years and is going to Romania for 5 months to support children with speech and language difficulties (voluntary)

<participant 2> (8:54:33 p.m.): I've been doing a few trials with my sister who's off to Canada later this year

<participant 2> (8:54:45 p.m.): Wow I'm in awe

<participant 2> (8:55:06 p.m.): Is her whole family going? or just her

<participant 1> (8:56:13 p.m.): I am too. She is amazing! she is single so it is just her. She does not go until end of March and is not sure what access to the net she will have at this point

<participant 2> (8:56:19 p.m.): You must be so proud. What a contribution to those children.

<participant 1> (8:57:08 p.m.): I wonder about someone else to try with a three way expereience?

<participant 2> (8:58:48 p.m.): My sister said she would like to learn how to do a 3-way conference to learn how to use messenger too.

<participant 2> (8:59:27 p.m.): she said she's available

<participant 1> (8:59:33 p.m.): That would be fun! I would be up for that! when would be a good time ?

<participant 2> (9:00:30 p.m.): I have Sunday evening free, or Mon, Wed and Fri next week?

<participant 1> (9:01:16 p.m.): I can do it on Wed pm of next week

<participant 2> (9:01:58 p.m.): That sounds great to me - does the same time work? or earlier/ later?

<participant 2> (9:02:20 p.m.): I'm so impressed about your daughter.

<participant 2> (9:03:13 p.m.): How does one bring up children to aspire to such wonderful things?

<participant 2> (9:03:36 p.m.): Sorry It's probably a bit off topic

<participant 1> (9:04:50 p.m.): yes the same time works for me. No problem, I love to brag about her. She is pretty cool, travelled through south America for 6 months, learned Spanish, experiences life to the full at every moment, has just done voluntary work in Sri Lanka has travelled to Russia, Asia Europe - Africa is the only continent she has not been too!

<participant 2> (9:05:26 p.m.): wicked!

<participant 2> (9:05:45 p.m.): where do we donate?

<participant 1> (9:06:30 p.m.): www.Justgiving.com (uk site)

<participant 1> (9:07:11 p.m.): oops slightly off but if you google you should find it - Bonnee Harkess

<participant 1> (9:08:19 p.m.): thank you, it will be much appreciated:)

<participant 2> (9:09:11 p.m.): Great, thank you so much, it's been a pleasure chatting and we will do more in the near future...

<participant 1> (9:10:28 p.m.): Thank you, i have really enjoyed it too and feel very excited about using this tool. It was great to hear your story. Very yummy in fact! Talk to you Wednesday unless I hear otherwise.

<participant 2> (9:10:59 p.m.): yeah, I am really honoured that you are involved in the research and really look forward to Wednesday were we will do a bit more...

<participant 1> (9:11:20 p.m.): will do, signing out1

<participant 1> (9:11:21 p.m.): cheers

<participant 1> (9:11:24 p.m.): <participant 1>

<participant 2> (9:11:26 p.m.): Good night for now...arohanui

Appendix W Trainer-Facilitator Feedback

My learnings – <Name>

1. Describe some of the learnings you gained from the online chat experience.

There is enormous benefit in providing a forum for distance students to share experiences when they are on Professional practice. They value the opportunity to connect and dialogue.

The students enjoy hearing each others successes and supporting each other through the challenges. Providing that opportunity is important as they may feel they 'encroach" on each other if they contact during the busy practicum. The distance students want the contact as they feel isolated much of the time.

I experienced the tensions between trainer and facilitator and have more reflection to do about that aspect. The students have an expectation that I will take on a mentoring role. If I want to change that I need to be overt and explicit about my role.

I need to have a techy person on hand for students to call if they are having problems. The students need more guidelines on protocols of chats, more experience with chat rooms and more scaffolding for being a critical friend.

There is also an issue regarding the balance between story telling and being quizzed to answer questions about the story. A minimalist critical friend approach. Perhaps just 2-3 key questions.

2. What did you enjoy about the online chat?

It was wonderful to see the students begin discussing their work, acknowledging each other and themselves and peer mentoring.

As I know the students well and have established relationship it was easy to imagine them there and to participate. Maintaining the relationship.

I was very pleased 8 / 9 accepted the invitation to participate. Those who did not experience significant technical difficulties felt it was worthwhile and would like to see more occurring.

3. What challenges did you experience?

Questions which arose for me: *How do I support and challenge without directing the conversation? When do I become involved and when do let go and trust the process?* I could not help the students with technological problems.

Some students did not prepare well so they were unable to participate so I do need to reinforce that aspect.

4. How would you rate the preparation you had beforehand? 1 poor-10 excellent

I felt I prepared them for the task well. I felt the guidelines were clear. However it was all through written form and some students need practical scaffolding.

As I said previously I would make more opportunities to use the chat room technology so it was not new technology. As I now know what I did not know then, I would introduce the process at the residential school which precedes the practicum in a different forum and make more explicit links to the online chat.

I would spend more time in the residential school working on the critical friend aspect of the process.

5. How would you rate it as a forum for peer support? 1 poor -10excellent

It appears to be a valuable support. At this stage, now that many are in classrooms as practising teachers, I wonder how many of them would use a chat room – I suspect they are more likely to use the internet rather than the college website.

6. Would you recommend the use a chat room forum for a mid-placement meeting for distance students? Why?

I was surprised at the positive response in the feedback and realise this is very valuable. I will continue to develop a structure to enable the students to dialogue meaningfully and professionally during their practice. I don't believe an informal chat would be acceptable to them. I would also like to try other forms – Skype, msn etc.

7. How would you rate the experience overall?1 poor -10 excellent

At least 50% felt frustrated in some way at some point so I would give it a 5. Now I have more information, I can make adjustments.

8. What recommendations would you make for future online chat sessions?

In addition to those I have discussed earlier….

Most importantly I would have an opening and closing circle (in the form of chat room, or group forum) as per Open Space Technology to enable them to greet each other, get present to each other and have an opportunity to finish at the end. They need to establish connections and re-establish relationship.

I would consider pairs next time for quality dialogue. For example, if there were 8 students, I would have one opening and closing circle chat room, or group forum for all students to greet each other. After the opening circle, each student would then go to a randomly allocated chat room. There would be 4 chat rooms (as occurred in this trial) for pairs to tell their stories. The closing circle would close the process. Those who wanted to continue could do so at their leisure.

9. Would you use a chat room forum on Gradnet on completion of your course?

Yes, maybe, sometimes, not at all

Why?

n/a

10. Were you "inspired" at any point during the chat?

If yes, at what moment did it occur, or how did inspiration occur? If not, how might you or others have been inspired in the online chat?

I felt inspired when I popped in and everyone had started talking about their teaching experiences and were acknowledging and supporting each other.

I was very happy that so many attempted to join in and I was pleased that they responded to the invitation rather than the requirement.

11. If you did this again, how would you improve the session for yourself?

Talk to techy people first

Make it clear about my role although no-one mentioned my role as facilitator.

Pre-teach critical friend skills (overtly)

12. Is there anything you would like to comment on or add?

This group had a strong culture, well established history (1 year) and relationships. There will be greater challenges establishing and maintaining relationships in an online context with groups which have yet to move from pseudo to authentic community.

Appendix X Video Conference Interview

Interview on the Use of Leadership Stories Via Video Conferencing

Interview with <Name> and <Name> on the use of story in the video conference session within one of their leadership programmes

1. What types of participants were involved? (i.e. were they mostly men? age brackets? mostly European descent? etc.).

20 participants were involved. A mixture of men and women ranging from mid 20s to late 40s in age. They are middle managers in a large Australian government agency delivering services all around Australia some in the city and some in remote communities. They were mainly European descent Australians but there were also people from Australian aboriginal, South Asian and Caribbean backgrounds

2. Were they logging into a particular video conference system?

The video conferencing system was owned and operated by the government department from dedicated meeting rooms in their offices around Australia. Participants logged into a virtual conference room on the department's IT system and saw themselves on one screen and all the other sites on another screen. I don't know the name of the system.

3. What kinds of stories were told?

The structure of the story telling process was given to you in the email where I told you of this event. You can you that material to answer some of these questions (also below).

The most effective stories in my mind were ones where the story teller was relating their own experience of dealing with a challenge in their leadership environment and their own personal development in the here and now or very recent times. Others told powerful stories from their

past of several years. These stories often involved a third party who had a significant impact on the story teller as a person who demonstrated leadership and particular values in their behaviour. Some of these stories also had a living or travelling in another culture flavour to them.

4. What were the general responses to hearing others stories?

Fully focused listening and attention. People offered feedback at a later stage in the process that they were fully absorbed and engaged in the story and the value of the lessons to the story teller and to themselves (the listener). It triggered more openness, trust and personal disclosure.

5. What were the general comments on the process used?

Here's a section of the minutes of the video conference

Leadership Stories

Team TRI: The story dealt with a team members personal issue resolution. The leader asked various questions and listened to their responses to help with their problem. It was discovered that it was a confidence issue regarding turning 30. The leader then told "I know what you are thinking" story was able to relate with the issues. Using the leader's own experience, the leader was able to connect with the team member and empathise with them. Using this method, communication and trust developed which improved both their working and personal relationship.

Positive outcomes: building of personal trust; active open listening; people's perceptions & personal perceptions can be different.

Issues noted: relating and identifying with them can be difficult; understanding and listening is required

Team DODO: The story was an example of facilitating with multiple agencies with different personalities to a common outcome. The leader was placed in a difficult and challenging position where they were required to negotiate between the agencies and present a best option to all. Through planning and constant communication, a general agreement was created. All agencies benefited from the processes and the leader was able to implement the project with minimal resistance.

Positive outcomes: better organized meetings; goal setting and action planning; negotiation skills; all agencies agreed with the outcome.

Issues noted: Selling an idea to all involved; Relating to other leaders within the other agencies; Compromising; and Liaising.

Team Giraffe: This story was of a personal nature. The leader reflected after the course and on previous experiences within their team. Prior to the course, the

leader had various responsibilities to uphold in a large team. The team had various influences affecting it that was causing some concerns. These issues were functioning as a team, low moral and motivation and there was some concern from senior management. The leader decided to develop an action plan to address these issues and "sell" these ideas to upper management. The leader presented these ideas also to the team which received the ideas well. Dealing with one issue at a time, the team improved and began to show major developments. Work was being completed on time, the team members are happier and upper management is seeing a large improvement in the team deliverables.

Positive outcomes: concerns were highlighted; issues were addressed; listening- both management and other team members; honesty from the team; solutions motivated; planning; goal setting; team influenced planning; happiness in the team; and team members enjoys working in the team

Issues: back filling - as staffed left people were not being employed to replace their roles; changes in the branch; no defined roles due to changes; no set priorities from upper-management; selling the team direction upward - convincing upper management for and team direction.

Burning issue: Staff Resources - no additional comments

Performance Assessment: <Name>: - has organized a fortnightly meeting/phone conference to improve the information received by his upper management. As he is in a remote location, his management are not completely aware of the day-to-day work contributions his team members are providing. This meeting is breach that gap.

Professional Development General:

- Making time to continue our leadership program due to work commitments.

- Reinforcing our commitment to ourselves as well as management.

- Reminding management that this course does continue after the residential.

Assessment:

Things that worked well:

1. Having a chair-person. A central facilitator moving the meeting along.

2. Keeping to Agenda;

3. Being able to see everyone;

4. The leadership stories, and the resulting discussions.

Things to improve:

1. Technical issues - ensure that someone at each venue is familiar with the technology and can rectify problems if required.

2. The nominated leaders need to discuss and delegate tasks well before the meeting (1 - 2 weeks?) - do it early not late.

3. Meeting organization and activity need to be visible to all.

4. Respond to emails/contacts promptly.

5. Facilitator(s) must control speaking order, to avoid cross talk.

6. Each conference site should nominate one person as "chair". Facilitators should act as "chair" where possible.

6. What sorts of burning issues we raised by the use of storytelling?

The burning issues were more focused on dilemmas in the workplace but some stories triggered additional incidents for other participants to share.

7. Did the process get a good rank on your 1-5 scale?

3-5. The technology often feels clumsy and people rank this down.

8. Generally what were the suggestions for improvement?

See above.

From Global Learning's point of view we want to build people's capability to coach and facilitate each other to enhance their impact in their current leadership projects

9. Was the 1.5 hours enough time?

Yes

10. <Name>, in your email you mentioned managing the process better to
be more inclusive of those who are at video conference centers by
themselves.

a. How were the experiences different?

They are in a room by themselves which is a different experience than being in a room with a group. We now build in a more structured opportunity for each person to check in and speak to the whole group and how they are feeling and what's happening for them at the moment. After this the facilitator then follows the agenda they may have a less equal distribution of speaking time for each individual.

b. What things are you hoping to try next time to create more balance?

See above. Allow more structure for each person to speak

11. The 4 day residential sounds quite powerful. How much influence do you think the residential had on the success of your?

Very significant. Teams and individuals were committed to each other and researched and prepared for the video conference and managed the process themselves.

12. What relationship aspects had been built-up over the period before the video conference? (i.e. strong trust developed, safety, humor etc.)

The 4 day residential involved much team work personal disclosure, giving and receiving behavioral feedback, 360 feedback, team experiences like creating a short video on getting an A for leadership.

13. What sort of impact did the weekly on online tasks have?

This is mixed and participation tends to drop away each week. Most people say they are too busy. They find it easier to commit to activities where they meet with their fellow team members (face-to-face or video conf) rather than share their experiences online. We ask each person to choose a picture and describes their experience of their week in an online forum. This activity works well but also participation drops over each week from the residential.

14. Are there particular things you would do differently in setting up a similar exercise next time?

We are continually looking for new ways to improve and would appreciate feedback from others. We want people to have a voice and to feel accountable to their group (but not guilty). We recognize that people invest different amounts of energy and have different motivations and clarity about what they want to achieve. We want people to learn the dialogue and conversation skills to explore issues more deeply and assist each other see their situations in new and energizing ways.

15. Any other comments you would like to add?

I would like feedback from other facilitators about things that have worked for them and ways they are making a difference in facilitating story telling to achieve certain goals.

VIDEO CONFERENCE SESSION INSTRUCTIONS

Tuesday - March 28, 2006 5:46 PM

Subject: Story telling using technology

Hi Everyone,

Today we ran a successful storytelling event by video conference with a group of 20 participants in a leadership program for a government department working across Australia. I thought you may be interested in the instructions we used to set up the process.

My learning: The stories were rich and engaging and its a very powerful and reliable way to initiate a dialogue. Facilitators need to manage the process better to be more inclusive of those who are at video conference centres by themselves They need more structured

opportunities to speak as different from centres with large groups who are interacting comfortably)

Here's the web based introduction and agenda to set the process up. (You should also know that these participants attended a powerful 4 day residential 3 weeks ago and have participated in a series of weekly on online tasks over the last 2 weeks.)

Thanks for your responses to the first module [if you are playing catchup on it you can still access the Module One home page via the library archives]. This module on leader as visionary looks at the key areas of your vision and values - what's important to you, and what you aspire to. There are five leadership tasks for this module. This module will finish on 11 April.

Videoconference Tuesday 4 April 1:30pm-3:00pm

Purposes of the videoconference are:

(1) Connect and share progress in leadership development.

(2) Develop leadership storytelling skill.

(3) Experience in managing meetings - in this case a distance meeting.

Your Task in your Learning Teams

Choose a leader who will co-facilitate with leaders from the other two teams. We would recommend a main videoconference facilitator in Canberra. Co-facilitators can be at other sites. Prepare for the event together, using the videoconference

guidelines (in the library). The team of three facilitators to design and run the event as training in meeting management. (Assumption: time available is 1h 30m)

Agenda

1. Welcome and check in. Briefly review videoconference guidelines (5-10 mins).

2. Tell your stories: One leadership story (victories or challenges) from each team. Each team has 20 mins, including time for the leader to facilitate a conversation on "What does this story raise for you?"

3. Burning issues (10 mins). These can agree to be resolved online outside this meeting.

4. Assess success of videoconference with a 1-5 vote and one thing that worked well and one thing to improve, from each meeting place (5 mins).

Check out and complete videoconference (5 mins).

Enjoy the week and we will see you on Tuesday.

<Name> and <Name>

Appendix Y Feedback from Online Facilitation Programme

As part of the programme evaluation participants were asked how did the following *assist you in building online relationships*?

Profiles and photos

A: These were important to me. In the beginning I referred to the photos whenever I read a message from one of the group, and soon I had a mental image of each person. During my week as facilitator I envisaged everyone in a big worldwide circle and brought everyone into my own 'virtual room' and was surprised that I could 'see' faces in my mind.

B: It helped a lot.

C: They are great – there is a sense of this person before beginning. I must update mine though as it is well outdated (unfortunately).

D: Interesting to put a face to the name

E: It helped in the first conversations to see people's profiles on line.

F: Served as a good introduction

G: Important to get an impression- (could be added to through the course, as we realized what else we could say)

H: I found the photos and profiles really engaging. I could look at the faces and get a sense of them talking to me as I read their emails. The profiles gave me a sense of people's life journey, I found I had connections already with most.

Emails

A: Really good - an easy way to send messages - only they don't get collected up as the forum posts do. A combination technology where every email goes to a topic page would be good. I liked the way our comments on the Idiots Guide built up on the email

B: It worked more between facilitators and participants.

C: Could be used to greater effect if there was less to do. I have used emails very effectively as an initial introductory getting to know each other tool and found I connected at a very deep level with another person online in the USA. We then went on to have a number of telephone conversations and develop a strong relationship.

D: Very important to me. Easy and convenient. The people I made connections with are the people I worked with in pairs by email. I think email was important to me because people seemed to use email more and have conversations using email. Our group didn't really have conversations using the forum or blog - we tended to just post our thoughts in isolation.

E: Simple and informal

F: Good way of continuing contact

G: Very important

H: It was hard to get the email conversations going. Getting the balancing right in the mix between task related messages and our feedback and social messages.

Skypeing

A: It was good to hear people's voices, and gain a flowing conversation. Somewhat disconcerting that the technology is fragile and tossed some members off. I imagine that was really much more frustrating for the person being tossed though

B: A very useful and effective alternative tool.

E: Cheap!

F: Great, my favorite toy

G: more important, including the leaving or sending of messages

H: This was really the key to relating to everyone, I really got a sense of being with people using our voices for connection rather than the typing. This was more natural – more like face-to-face.

Blogging

A: Seemed to be similar to the forum and easier, once you got logged on and if you remembered your password for more than 5 minutes, which I found difficult to do!!!

B: It's one of the major tools. If for a long online program, I think each participant can open his/her own blog, to share more resource.

C: It is good to see an emerging theme and a variety of responses. That helps me understand other participants. Their responses provide insights into who they are and helps me relate to them more personally.

E: Fun

F: So, so – too time intensive for me

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G: Good

H: It was fun, I went and found lots of blogs on facilitation and put messages on lots of places I hadn't been to before. I looked at the other participants blogs too.

Storytelling

A: Not my bag, I am sorry - I found this one a challenge

B: Although it was facilitated by myself, I didn't quire get the sense of how it works, and how to work better.

C: I like this forum although I have to learn to be precise and concise! Stories reveal a lot about passions, beliefs, personalities and experiences. They are rich with images and are wonderful opportunities to learn about each other – more of that!

D: I didn't find this particularly beneficial. I found it difficult to just produce a story - maybe if there was more context around the storytelling, it would have been more beneficial for me. I don't think you can force storytelling. I think it is better when it comes naturally as part of a conversation.

E: Got to know

F: I like storytelling, but find it difficult online

G: Entertaining, but I did not contribute here except by reading

H: One story almost had me rolling on the floor with laughter, it got my imagination going. I thought I'd had tough groups… I think we needed more options/ story choices as it was hard for most to think something up.

Video conferencing

A: In other experiences this is a useful medium - but for our discussion I could not get the software to load on my computer.

B: It works better when there's real group task to be fulfilled.

E: Bummer I missed it

G: Missed this

H: I was amazed with what we achieved using the video conference. In an hour we created a blog on the topic and drafted a letter for submission. Having the web page, text chat and video all going at once was exciting. I liked what people had in their background.

THE STORIES THAT WERE TOLD

Tuesday, September 19, 2006 Week 8: Dialog & Storytelling

Hi online facilitators, Ni Men Hao!

It was exciting that we had two group conversations using Skype last week. Our topic for this week is dialogue and storytelling. And this time we are using blog. When I was reading the first post and its comments, I found many of us thought blogging is fun. So this is our time for fun! Thank you to _____ for her wonderful suggestion: "maybe we need to tell our stories - funny facilitation fables!"

Okay, with the new topic and the new technology, let us try this. Please share with the group your experience on "funny facilitation stories". It could be your own experience, or otherwise, anything from other people's experience.

I had a funny story to share...... I was facilitating a group of people from Xinjiang province. These people were Uigurs. They work in pasturing areas as community health workers. You may know that Uigurs like singing and dancing very much. On the first day of the workshop, I facilitated the group to develop code of conduct. Someone suggested that people who "break the low" should be "punished". So the guy who was first punished (he was late to the workshop that afternoon) sang a song. To my surprise, things were getting weird---the "law" was frequently broken and people who were caught happily came to the stage and gave performance. There were even other people volunteered to dance when one was singing. Then I realized that they were having funning with it! When I review the workshop design I found that the schedule was very heavy to them. Too much thinking, talking and writing for them. I hadn't really understood the cultural characters of the participants. They live their lives on horseback, and they are very energetic and active. What I'd been doing was to make them "civilized" by setting up a list of laws! Terrible, eh? No wonder it didn't work!

[Session Facilitator]

Hello there.

I have been all over the place seeking how to make a reply to _____. (Had a good laugh at some very funny stories on one of the other blogs on the site - when you click 'next blog' you find all kinds of interesting and not interesting things). I didn't realize that you can only make a comment, and was trying to make a post. Duh!

Anyway, now I have learned another new thing and here I am. But I can't think of a funny facilitation story. So here are some funny things kids have said about mums (I need to read this to relieve the teenage tension around me at the moment)

Why did God make mothers?

1. She's the only one who knows where the scotch tape is.

2. Mostly to clean the house.

3. To help us out of there when we were getting born.

How did God make mothers?

1. He used dirt, just like for the rest of us.

2. Magic plus super powers and a lot of stirring.

3. God made my mom just the same like he made me. He just

used bigger parts.

What ingredients are mothers made of?

1. God makes mothers out of clouds and angel hair and

everything nice in the world and one dab of mean.

2. They had to get their start from men's bones. Then they mostly use string. I think.

Why did God give you your mother and not some other mom?

1. We're related.

2. God knew she likes me a lot more than other people's moms like me.

My kids feel that I got a few extra dabs of mean, just now.

So this is blogging. Seems to have potential...

warm sun, everyone

___

Thank you _____ for your story. I will ask my daughter these questions and see what she thinks. Ni Men Hao means Hello everyone. In Chinese Ni means you (only one person). When we say Ni Men, it means you (all of you). Tricky, eh?

I have a story to share. I was facilitating a residential workshop for trainee facilitators and it was our 3rd Night. We went to a community do at the local country golf club and bought a few raffle tickets for 5 chickens that were being raffled. Our table won 4 of the chickens (I won 2 from my 2 tickets) and 2 others

won one each. It was kind of embarrassing as we were the outsiders and winning all the prizes. We gave three of them back to the club and took one back to the workshop but left it in the fridge by mistake when we left. We tried to figure it out as there were about 50 people present. Perhaps our group was so aligned that we had entered the Zone so couldn't help winning the prizes.

_____ _____ here. I also had some techy challenges and gave up trying to put in a password. So here I go, I am ANONYMOUS! I think this is 'funny'. I facilitate a 5 day conflict resolution course for student teachers. I have dozens of wonderful posters and whakatauki [Maori proverb] around the room and it is really a great visual environment - unusual for training environments at college. We had one course member who was experiencing personal life challenges and transporting her 'angst' onto other participants. They were responding and using their CR skills amazingly well - being it not just learning about it! After I had a private conversation with this participant, I decided to shift the energy to alleviate the situation and try the laughing meditation from one of the Zenergy books. The students were very dubious so I asked them to just go with the flow. We all lay down on the floor and I started laughing madly and pretty soon some, then most, followed suit. Just as we were right into the swing of it with great gusto, in walked the TEAM LEADER of the programme with an unexpected IMPORTANT VISITOR from another campus!!! They were for a moment rather stunned to see 12 hooting and hollering crazy students on the floor kicking their heels up and rolling around in gay abandonment. They had come in to see the room and the 'nice intimate atmosphere' and were presented with mayhem! After I picked myself up from the floor, as dignified and gracefully as possible, followed by very red faced students - and not all from the laughing, we proceeded to walk as sedately as possible around to view the room. However for the remainder of the day that memory brought back more laughs. I put out the challenge for them to try it at home with family and most had a go so it was worth the embarrassment! Thanks for the laughing meditation _____ - my granddaughter _____ is also very skilled at starting that one off too! It kept her (and me) occupied through a one hour traffic jam in Auckland! Not sure what the other commuters thought though:)

My story: it's not particularly funny, just interesting.

I was coaching a facilitator in training on a course in May. The session was on generating synergy with a group. The facilitator hadn't told the other participants what the session was all about; they were just trusting him to see what they could create. There were 6 people and they got into pairs, and went off to create a painting about what they had learned about facilitation so far. When they brought the 3 paintings back together, they were all in very different styles (one had a kete [basket] showing the shared knowledge in the group, one was focusing on the person-centered approach, and the 3rd looked at the tools available) BUT they all had rainbows in them as a central feature. No one knew what anyone else had been drawing. When the paintings were put together a wonderful rainbow river was created. It was amazing! Synergy in action!

P.S. I was assisting _____ on the course she blogged about - all those chickens, it's true! We must've had a magnetic chicken attraction field around our table!

P.P.S. Reading _____'s note about the laughing meditation reminds me of something I've done with groups for a bit of fun:

Lie on the floor with your heads in a circle and your legs going outwards, and lift your legs in the air. Look inwards, and you can fool yourself that the floor is the ceiling and vice versa, and that as a group you're hanging off the ceiling. Trying is believing!

Hello there,

Thank you for the stories.

I want to share with you a Sufi morning practice to do in a group or alone (much harder). It consists of three sets of laugh going deeper and deeper: first laugh like if you were a Chinese monk at the river, splashing water on a lovely sunny morning; the second laugh I cannot recall [laugh from the crown chakras going down to the base chakra. Follow your laugh with your hand, it helps]; but I do recall the third one: sit on a cloud and look down at our life. Then laugh. Laugh as you look at your life. A deep laugh, slap your thighs, let the laughing tears come to your eyes.

This exercise will help the practitioner to learn detachment. It can be practiced safely every morning.

Cheerio

_____

Ok I will tell a facilitator story.

A friend once asked me if I would run an assertiveness session for her client group...some blind people(she said)...of course I was happy to(I said)....well actually they are quite elderly too(she said)....ok that's no problem (I said).....that's great but some of them are deaf as well(she said).....O h k a y then I guess I can do that(I said)....don't worry we have someone to sign for you(she said)....(Now how you sign to a blind person I wasn't quite sure but ....I am sure we can work something out(I said).....Great, now one last thing, quite a few of them have Alzheimer's (she said)......Right, well it will be interesting then. (I said)

Well as it happened it was one of the more delightful sessions I have run and the group renamed the session, 'Querulous Training.' They had wanted the Assertiveness Training primarily because when they went to the Doctor, they felt that the Doctors generally treated them as stupid, didn't bother to explain things and prescribed medication without providing informing. So as a group they ended up coaching each other on shaking or stamping their white cane at the Quack....if they were going to be treated as stupid, then they decided they may as well ham it up and get fractious and querulous and insist that the young whippersnapper give them their due. The session was a great success and a fabulous learning experience for yours truly.

_____

Hello again, I did tell a story about assertiveness training and left it on the previous post but didn't see it so I hope it's now on this one.

Cheers,

_____

Wow, thanks a lot for sharing this! This was real fun! I all learn from experience, from ourselves and others.

Sorry I was having some emergency in my work last week. Wouldn't do my tasks. I'll try to catch up next week.