A Personal Description of Small Group Facilitation

by

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Abstract

This thesis contains a description of my personal experience as a facilitator of a small goal-setting process known as Discovery and a self-evaluation guide for group facilitators. The story also includes a detailed description of the ongoing process of self-evaluation in between and during the seven-week sessions. The analysis outlines five growth themes extracted from the story, time, facilitator focus, ambiguity, self-talk, and skills. Also included in the analysis chapter is a description of the interaction between anxiety and the five themes. The self-evaluation guide, developed from the story and the participant's feedback, is for neophyte group facilitators who have previous knowledge about group facilitation skills and group process.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge Robert who supported me in so many ways; Alan and Pat who bridge the distance; Natasha and Kyera who understood; my participants who made this all possible; and Dr. James Foster, my supervisor, whose gentle guidance carried me through.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Carol Cluetisi who showed me a phenomenal form of facilitation; Irene Robinson who taught me the importance of community building; and in memory of Jazz who was always the ideal group member.

Table of Content

Chapter 4: Small Group Facilitation Story

List of Tables and Figures

Chapter 1

Counsellor training may dedicate as little as one half-credit course to the study of group counselling, providing the student with only minimal exposure to this complicated and diverse counselling method. I believe that group counselling is an effective vehicle for change. I began this inquiry with the intention of extending my knowledge and experience of the group process so that I would be better prepared to function as a group facilitator.

I believe it is important to explore group facilitation because, "it is abundantly clear that, as time passes, we will rely on group approaches ever more heavily" (Yalom, 1995, p.512). In addition, I believe that through the process of conducting groups and self-evaluation I, as a group facilitator, will improve my skills.

This thesis provides a detailed story of how the exploration of my skills as a group facilitator evolved. I have designed the thesis to allow the reader to encounter the events of my story as I experienced them. It begins with a literature review and a description of why I chose to study group facilitation skills, followed by the methodology. This format provides a description of my process and sets the context for my personal story.

After a detailed description of the context, I have attempted to share an in-depth portrayal of my personal experience of facilitating a small group goal-setting process entitled Discovery. I utilized the description format for two key reasons. First, so I could immerse myself in the data and re-experience my facilitation through the process of living, telling, reliving, and retelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Second, because I believed that this process would allow me to thoroughly evaluate and improve my group facilitation skills. I followed my description with an analysis of the themes that emerged.

I then coded and analysed my description. I believe that I learned a great deal by evaluating my facilitation after each session. This evaluation and subsequent analysis led to the development of a self-evaluation guide that other neophyte group facilitators might be able to utilize. I included this guide in a final reflection in which I take one last look at my experience.

To provide a context for this study, I will include some background information on group therapy, the justification for this study, and some clarifying information about facilitation. Joseph Hershey Pratt, who is commonly recognized to be the father of present-day group therapy, commenced the use of group therapy in 1905 (Yalom, 1995). Small group therapy has grown over the last century and is prevalent in today's society. Individuals may join diverse groups that exist for a variety of purposes:

> Eating disorders groups, cancer support groups, groups for victims of sexual abuse, for AIDS patients, for the confused elderly, for individuals disabled by panic disorders or obsessive-compulsive symptoms, for patients with chronic schizophrenia, for adult children of alcoholics, for parents of sexually abused children, for male batterers [sic], for the divorced, for the bereaved, for disturbed families, for married couples, for patients with myocardial infarct, paraplegia, diabetic blindness, renal failure, bone marrow transplant-all of these are forms of group therapy. (Yalom, 1995, p. xi)

The existence of so many groups and purposes greatly increases the chance that counsellors, will encounter groups. Wiggens and Carroll (1993) argue that "[c]ounselors in diverse settings are expected to work with groups as part of their everyday duties" (p. 24). Considering my past experience and future prospects, I believe I will continue to facilitate groups as part of my career.

What does it mean to be a facilitator? *Facilis*, the Latin root of facilitate, means 'to make easy' therefore facilitator may be defined as one who makes an action or process easier: one who helps bring something about (Bentley, 1993). Bentley expanded the definition of facilitation to include "empowering people to take control and responsibility for their own efforts and achievements"(p. 28). In addition, a small group facilitator must promote effective communication among members to help members reach their own goals in the group (Gladding, 1999). Both my personal experience and the information that I have acquired by researching this skill have led me to believe that group facilitation is a complex task.

Despite the intricacy of group facilitation, "little has been done to identify the requisite skills and an appropriate training format for preparing counselors to function as leaders of small, person-oriented groups" (Pearson, 1985, p. 150). In addition, there is "little definitive research as to what constitutes the ideal group therapist" (Aronson, 1990, p. 15). It appears that little research has been conducted that is specific to development of group leadership skills.

"Studies which have been conducted either focus on a few specific skills, on general leadership characteristics, or on content analysis of skills used in groups, rather than on the broad range of leadership skills necessary for effective group work practice" (Rivas & Toseland, 1981, p. 161).

A recent study continues to echo the lack of guidelines for group facilitators. "If counselors are to deliver effective services, perhaps educators and trainers should look at counselors' perceived and (translated) actual needs in leading groups" (Wiggens & Carroll, 1993, p. 24). Not only is there a lack of guidelines but also missing in the research is information about personal experience in group facilitation. Conyne (1998)

discusses the "absence of concern given in the professional literature to personal experience in group leadership" (p. 246). Even though group facilitation is a significant component of counselling, a comprehensive search of the literature has uncovered only minimal research that addresses small group facilitation. Morrell (1982) concluded:

> The first leadership experience of an aspiring group counselor can be fraught with anxiety and uncertainty. Even if the counselor is skilled in individual intervention. The mere numbers in a group provide enough complexity to dampen even the most confident of spirits. The great responsibility placed on the group leader, coupled with the scarcity of specific, practical directives; highlight the need for methods and materials that both guide and gauge leader progress. One suggestion to alleviate this difficulty would be to place greater emphasis on self-evaluation skills. (p. 209)

This study follows both Conyne's (1998) and Morrell's (1982) suggestions. I designed it to evaluate my facilitation skill, to investigate the essence of being a group facilitator, and to consider that experience with the intention of improving my skills. In addition, I have expanded Morrell's stated need and developed a tool for beginning facilitators to use to evaluate their own skills.

To complete this introduction I have defined the terms I used. I realize that throughout the thesis, I use terms that are specific to group counselling and I believe that it is important to clarify the meanings.

Terminology

Brainstorming: Brainstorming is a process to stimulate thinking through the generation of ideas in a non-judgemental manner. This process facilitates creativity and open participation and is often used in decision-making and problem solving.

Confrontation: Confrontation is challenging the member to look at the incongruity and inconsistency between their thoughts and actions

Discovery: Discovery is a group goal-setting process.

Facilitator: For the purpose of this paper facilitator, therapist, and leadership will be used interchangeably and will refer to the individual responsible for facilitating, managing, or leading through the various skills and techniques.

Group: A group is a gathering of two or more people who meet in face-to-face interaction, interdependently, with the understanding that each belongs to the group and for the purpose of reaching mutually agreed goals.

Here and now: Here and now, sometimes called "here and now awareness", is a term associated with Gestalt therapy. It refers to the present or the fictional place between past and future. Gestalt therapy focuses on the present: the past becomes important only to the extent that it influences the present.

Hot seat: A term used in Gestalt group therapy to designate the place where the individual sits who is engaging in self-exploration or "work". The therapist confronts, interprets behaviour, and challenges the individual in an attempt to promote self-understanding. The rest of the group remains in the background but can provide support and insight for the individuals.

Immediacy: Immediacy is a form of openness and self-disclosure. The individual using immediacy identifies a feeling or event that is occurring in the session. He or she draws the group's attention to the incident and generates a discussion.

Journal: A journal is a log where members record their reflections and reactions to the events of each session.

Modelling: Modelling is demonstrating expected behaviour. The facilitator shows the members how to do something rather than telling them.

Norm: Norms are specific expectations about the group members' behaviour that should or should not take place

Personal Agenda: Personal agenda is one's own needs, wants, and beliefs that influence one's interactions.

Reflection: Reflection refers to a process of deliberate contemplation of a particular event.

Self-disclosure: Self-disclosure is sharing personal information about one-self with the group. The information may include feelings, thoughts and/or past experiences.

Self-governance: Self-governance is to establish and maintain one's own personal boundaries to ensure self-protection.

Summarizing: Summarizing is reviewing the important elements that were discussed or occurred.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the thesis content and includes a brief description of group counselling, facilitation, and justification for the study. In addition, it includes a definition of terms. The following chapter includes a review of the literature related to this study.

Chapter 2

<u>Literature Review</u>

The nature of this study encompasses a variety of areas including group counselling, facilitation function, leadership styles, facilitator characteristics and skills, reflection and self-evaluation. A comprehensive search of these areas uncovered extensive information in the first five categories but limited information in group facilitator reflections and self-evaluation.

The first section of this literature review contains a history of and discussion of the efficacy of group counselling. The second section provides a simple description of facilitator function and moves into six different descriptions that are more complex. The third section outlines different leadership styles and reviews the literature about facilitator characteristics. The fourth section is a discussion on group facilitator skills.

Since I will be reflecting on my own facilitation, the fifth section includes four articles, which discuss reflections by experienced group leaders. The final section includes an overview of an article that describes the benefits to using a learning record (a reflection journal) as a means of assessment in counselling. It also outlines the existing self-evaluation guides for group facilitators.

I searched extensively for a story on small group facilitation but found none. Therefore, I am unable to include a review of other neophyte facilitator's stories.

<u>Group Counselling.</u>

Although human beings have always gathered in groups that consist of strong and enduring relationships, group counselling is a product of the twentieth century. In 1905, Pratt, a physician, organized twenty patients with tuberculosis into weekly group sessions that served psychological purposes (Yalom, 1995). Through these sessions, he was the

first to identify the positive influence of mutual support that was found in groups and, additionally, healing effect that groups can have on the individual (Vander Kolk, 1985). Since then, different strains of group therapy have emerged through founding theorists such as Adler, Lazell, Moreno, Freud, Sullivan and Rogers (Yalom, 1995). Presently, groups exist in numerous settings and serve a variety of purposes such as educational, employment, therapeutic, self-help, support, cooperative, task, and focus. Even though group work has only a brief history, today it is used in many settings.

Group counselling is an effective counselling strategy, which provides a trusting and respectful climate. The members have opportunity to practice intimacy and self-disclosure, which they cannot do alone. Group understanding and variance of perceptions enable the members to feel a sense of belonging and closeness. Group counselling enables the counsellor to witness the interpersonal skills of each member amongst a variety of personalities. This is difficult to observe in one-on-one counselling (Bufe & DeNunzio, 1998; Trotzer, J. 1989; Vander Kolk, 1985).

<u>Group Facilitator Function</u>

This section includes a review of the literature that describes the purpose or function of a facilitator. Clawson, Bostrom, and Anson (1989) provide a basic description of facilitation. "The essential characteristic of facilitation is to help make an outcome easier to achieve" (p. 549). Starhawk, 1987; Schulte, 1999; Casey, Roberts, Salaman (1993); Cohen, Ettin, & Fidler, J.W. (1998); Reagan-Cirincione, P (1994); and Hawkins (1999) are a few recent authors that offer more complex viewpoints.

Starhawk (1987, p. 268) writes about another perspective. "Responsive leadership is the art of wielding power-with in ways that foster freedom". She distinguishes power-with as influence that is overt, acknowledged, evaluated, challenged and balanced, and is

not destructive, oppressive, or covert. Starhawk sees a responsive leader as someone who responds to a group's needs and never forgets that power and responsibility go together.

While Starhawk (1987) focuses on power, Schulte (1999) considers attitude as the facilitator's purpose. He believes a facilitator needs to be the positive attitude model for a group. In addition, the facilitator must have a sense of humor, a genuine aspiration to help others, be assertive, sensitive, and patient. He comments that "[t]he facilitator's job is multifaceted. He or she is expected to help the team accomplish its goals by overseeing the group decision-making process, and at the same time help the team develop as a working unit" (p.14).

Casey, Roberts, Salaman (1993) describe the basis of facilitation as teaching because the leader is facilitating learning. This learning includes change and growth. The facilitator does what he or she judges as functional toward the goal of group learning. "First the facilitator takes in what is happening to both the group and him or herself. Then the facilitator makes sense of the information and finally the leader selects and implements something that will help the group" (p.8).

Rather than teaching, Cohen, Ettin, and Fidler (1998) consider the functions of a psychotherapist as a group leader. They consider facilitation to have three functions. The nurturant function is to ensure that time, place, empathy, and interpretation occur. The protective function is to ensure confidentiality and an assurance of safety. The "representational function involves the therapist's identity as 'meaning-maker' and healer"(p. 119).

Hawkins (1999), Kaner (1996), and Reagan-Cirincione (1994) consider the key function is to monitor the dynamics of the process. This means the facilitator remains

neutral, which ensures he or she can be fair, open, and inclusive. They believe this frees up the members to fully participate in the process and focus on the content.

Leadership Styles.

Another factor about facilitation discussed in the literature is leadership style. Lewin (1994) identified three leadership styles as authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. Authoritarian leaders direct the process because they believe that the group members by themselves are not capable of the insight or behaviours needed for change. Authoritarian leaders see themselves as experts and take sole responsibility for the group. Democratic leaders, also called group centred or nondirective, do not accept full responsibility for the group, but rely on the ability of the participants. Democratic leaders see themselves not as experts, but as people who can facilitate the process. Laissez-Faire leaders see themselves not as leaders but as members of the group. These leaders hold the group solely responsible and let things just happen.

Coghlan and McIlduff (1990) also discuss leadership styles through the discussion of two dimensions of facilitation directive-nondirective and structuring-unstructuring. Each dimension consists of a polar-pair like directive-nondirective. There is no more value to either and the space between the two is a continuum. Directive is how things are done and structuring is what is done. I believe this correlates with Lewin's categories. A directive structuring facilitator would be an authoritarian, a nondirective unstructuring facilitator would be a Laissez-Faire leader, and a democratic leader able to move along the continuum. Coghlan and McIlduff suggest that "skilled facilitators are able to use structure in a manner which is appropriate to the agenda, issues, and objective of a given group. Simultaneously, they move along a continuum of behaviour which can be described in directive-nondirective terms" (p.28).

Carl Rogers (1980), a skilled facilitator, represents the democratic style. "I trust the group, given a reasonably facilitating climate, to develop its own potential and that of its members. For me, this capacity of the group is an awesome thing" (p. 44). Rogers (1970) expands on trust, he believed that the group is able to see the unhealthy components, to concentrate on them, to get rid of them, and to move on. This trust acknowledges the wisdom of the group. Rogers explains that he will use structure but only if the members are part of the decision to implement. In addition, Rogers describes how spontaneous directives are also effective. This method shows Rogers' skill to move along the continuum.

Coghlan and McIlduff add to the movement along the continuum by describing facilitation stages according to experience. In stage one, beginning facilitation, the "facilitator is concerned with survival and is overtly conscious of role, predetermined goals, and relies heavily on structured experiences and formal interventions" (p. 27). In the second stage, facilitators have more trust and base their responses or interventions on their own experiences. In the final stage, facilitators are more aware of other responses and interventions. They use "the directional flow of what happens in the group as the determinant for responses. All three stages overlap and the effective facilitator has the flexibility to move back and forth as given situations require" (Coghlan and McIlduff, p.28).

Group Facilitator's Characteristics.

Fiedler (1961) studied leadership effectiveness traits, which he defines as a consistent quality that promotes group productivity. Using Assumed Similarity Between Opposites Scores, Fiedler conducted a series of studies with different groups to identify

leadership-effectiveness traits. He determined through this study that leadership-effectiveness traits do exist.

Cronshaw and Ellis (1992) tested the relationship between self-monitoring and leader emergence. Self-monitoring is "the ability to perceive variations in the needs of groups and alter their behavior to respond more effectively to these needs" (p. 115). The two characteristics that self-monitors possess are adaptability and social perception. Cronshaw and Ellis found that self-monitors might have a kind of social intelligence that allows them to monitor and adapt to situation. A second study by Cronshaw and Ellis (1991) determined that social cues need to exist in the group for self-monitors to emerge as leaders.

Corey (1995), Schulte (1999), and Trotzer (1989) provide a list of characteristics for effective facilitators. Their lists include an enthusiastic attitude, being emotionally present, self-confidence, self-awareness, the ability to assert themselves, a sense of humor, authenticity, courage, flexibility, and creativity. They see these characteristics as a strong basis for effective group leadership. However, Corey points out that many people possess these qualities, but facilitators need to know how to use them effectively in group counselling.

Facilitator skills

What are the skills that a facilitator uses? The literature provides several different answers. Yalom asserts that, "the group therapist's job is to create the machinery of therapy, to set it in motion, and to keep it operating with maximum effectiveness" (Yalom, 1995, p. 106). The facilitator must shift between being group process oriented and observing group members' individual process. The underlying important factor is a strong relationship between the therapist and group members. The facilitator's attitude

must emanate "concern, acceptance, genuineness, and empathy" (Yalom, 1995, p. 106). Once the foundational relationship is maintained, Yalom believed the three basic tasks of a group therapist are to form and preserve the group, to shape the group into a therapeutic philanthropic system, to initiate and edify the here-and-now.

In order to implement the three basic tasks Yalom (1995) suggests the use of different skills. For the first task, formation and preservation, the facilitator must use skills that stop or block behaviors that threaten group unity. For the second task, shaping the group, the leader needs to use skills of modeling and social reinforcement. These skills assist the group in creating group norms that will move the group to becoming an agent of change. For the third task, activating and illuminating the here-and-now, the leader steers the group to focus on the present and what is happening within the group by verbally attending to the group process (Yalom 1995).

Instead of distinguishing three tasks, Gladding (1999) and Corey (1995) utilize Edwin J. Nolan's overview of Group-Leadership Skills to highlight over twenty skills. They believe facilitators need to know what skills are at the centre of leading a group. They emphasize that the use of the following twenty-two skills must be timely and appropriate. (See Table 1)

Leiberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) divided facilitation into four leadership skills; emotional stimulation, caring, meaning-attribution, and executive function. For emotional stimulation the leader utilizes "confrontation, challenge, exhortation, and self-disclosure" (Polcin, 1991, p.10) to promote disclosure of deep feelings and discovery of values and beliefs. For caring, the leader expresses "warmth, acceptance, genuineness,

Table 1. Facilitation Skills

SKILL	DESCRIPTION	AIMS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES
Active Listening	Attending to verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication without judging or evaluating.	To encourage trust and client self-disclosure and exploration.
Restating	Saying in slightly different words what a participant has said to clarify its meaning.	To determine whether the leader has understood correctly the client's statement; to provide support and clarification.
Clarifying	Grasping the essence of a message at both the feeling and the thinking levels; simplifying client statements by focusing on the core of the message.	To help clients sort out conflicting and confused feelings and thoughts to arrive at a meaningful understanding of what is being communicated.
Summarizing	Pulling together the important elements of an interaction or session.	To avoid fragmentation and give direction to a session; to provide for continuity and meaning.
Questioning	Asking open-ended questions that lead to self-exploration of the "what" and 'how" of behavior.	To elicit further discussion; to get information; to stimulate thinking; to increase clarity and focus; to provide for further self-exploration.
Interpreting	Offering possible explanations for certain behaviors, feelings, and thoughts.	To encourage deeper self-exploration; to provide a new perspective for considering and understanding one's behavior.
Confronting	Challenging participants to look at discrepancies between their words and actions or body messages and verbal communication; pointing to conflicting information or messages	To encourage honest self-investigation; to promote full use of potentials; to bring about awareness of self-contradictions.
Reflecting Feelings	Communicating understanding of the content of feelings	To let members know that they are heard and understood beyond the level of words
Supporting	Providing encouragement and reinforcement.	To create an atmosphere that encourages members to continue desired behaviors; to provide help when clients are facing difficult struggles; to create trust
Empathizing	Identifying with clients by assuming their frames of references	To foster trust in the therapeutic relationship; to communicate understanding; to encourage deeper levels of self-exploration.

(Nolan, 1978, cited in Corey, 1995,p. 71-72 & Gladding, 1999, p. 84-85)

SKILLS	DESCRIPTION	AIMS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES
Facilitating	Opening up clear and direct communication within the group; helping members assume increasing responsibility for the group's direction.	To promote effective communication among members; to help members reach their own goals in the group.
Initiating	Taking action to bring about group participation and to introduce new directions in the group	To promote effective communication among members; to help members reach their own goals in the group.
Goal Setting	Planning specific goals for the group process and helping participants define concrete and meaningful goals.	To give direction to the group's activities; to help members select and clarify their goals.
Evaluating	Appraising the ongoing group process and the individual and group dynamics	To give direction to the group's activities; to help members select and clarify their goals.
Giving Feedback	Expressing concrete and honest reactions based on observation of members' behaviors.	To offer an external view of how the person appears to others; to increase the client's self-awareness.
Suggesting	Offering advice and information direction, and ideas for new behavior.	To help members develop alternative courses of thinking and action.
Protecting	Safeguarding members from unnecessary psychological risks in the group.	To warn members of possible risks in group participation; to reduce these risks.
Disclosing Oneself	Revealing one's reactions to here-and-now events in the group.	To facilitate deeper levels of interaction in the group; to create trust; to model ways of making oneself known to others.
Modeling	Demonstrating desired behavior through actions	To provide examples of desirable behavior; to inspire members to fully develop their potential.
Dealing with Silence	Refraining from verbal and nonverbal communication.	To allow for reflection and assimilation; to sharpen focus; to integrate emotionally intense material; to help the group use its own resources.
Blocking	Intervening to stop counterproductive behavior in the group.	To protect members; to enhance the flow of group process.
Terminating	Preparing the group to end a session or finalize its history.	To prepare members to assimilate, integrate, and apply in-group learning to everyday life.

(Nolan, 1978, cited in Corey, 1995,p. 71-72 & Gladding, 1999, p. 84-85)

and a real concern for others" to facilitate group trust and support (Lieberman et al, 1973, p.238). In order to implement the meaning-attribution function the leader employs clarification, interpretation, and explanation to help the group members comprehend the group occurrences. The last role is the executive function and the purpose is group management. The leader implements pacing, blocking, managing time, giving direction, as well as setting norms and limits to effectively manage the group (Liebermann et al, 1973; Polcin, 1991).

Schulte (1999) provides a slightly different perspective on the necessary facilitation skills. He utilizes the acronym P.O.I.N.T. to represent Plan-Observe-Intervene-Nurture-Teach. Schulte (1999) emphasizes the importance of good planning; this includes setting group norms through a team agreement and determining meeting structure. Observation includes noticing oneself, the team dynamics and progress. This observation is ongoing and includes being aware of emotion, attitude, openness, trust, respect, participation, cohesiveness, as well as verbal and nonverbal communication. The facilitator intervenes to refocus the group, to encourage individual participation, block domination, to motivate through clarification, to resolve conflict, to redirect, to confront negative behaviour, to gain consensus, and to guide decision-making process. The leader needs to nurture the group by remaining attentive to the group's growth and development through team construction, honoring achievements, and giving recognition. "The team facilitator is the consummate teacher .... The lesson taught is whatever is required by the team-either before it begins a task or to redirect it when it is struggling" (p. 31). Schulte states that a good leader implements all the skills of P.O.I.N.T.

Stockton, Morran, and Nitza (n.d.) describe one more skill called "processing". This skill is intended to help members make meaning of their experience and to use that

information to make meaningful changes in their lives. First, the facilitator selects a critical incident to process. Next he or she guides the group to do an in-depth examination of a critical incident that happened in the session. After that the facilitator helps the members make meaning of the incident and finally he or she helps, the members apply this new understanding towards change.

<u>Group Leaders Reflections</u>

Conyne (1998), Starak (1988), Kottler and Forester-Miller (1998), and Conyne, Harvill, Morganett, Moran, and Hulse-Killacky (1990), discuss the reflections of veteran group leaders. Conyne surveyed forty Association for Specialist in Group Work members with short open-ended questions. He designed these surveys to elicit qualitative accounts from the leaders. Conyne found that personal benefit was the predominate reason to become a leader. He also found that most of the group leaders expressed the biggest learning from their errors was to more carefully measure the impact of their responses. The advice these leaders would give to other group leaders is to trust the process and be true to oneself.

In Starak's (1988) article, he shares his thoughts as a group leader. As with Coyne, Starak says he participates in groups for personal benefit. Starak believes that therapeutic groups exist because individuals fail to allow close meaningful interactions to emerge naturally. He cautions group leaders about the difficulty of being a follower, becoming exhausted, being too revealing, believing they are superhuman, and playing the cheerleader game. Starak emphasizes the importance that group leaders maintain intimate contacts, outside the group, to remind themselves that they are human. Finally, Starak believes that "[a] good group leader will allow the client to become stronger than him- or herself" (P.108)

Kottler (1998) includes the voices of well-known group facilitators. One common theme was that each leader became interested in group work by first being a participant. They were impressed by the power of change they witnessed. One facilitator stated that over the years she has learned to stay in the present when facilitating. In words reminiscent of Conyne's findings, she emphasized that she learned to trust the process and her skills. Another facilitator shares the sense of exhilaration experienced by watching group members learn, grow, and change. The same facilitator emphasized the importance of acknowledging diversity. Another leader describe her growth from a dominant leader to becoming more like a gardener. She saw herself as a part of a miraculous process, not a designer.

The above three articles provide reflections from prominent group leaders and Conyne, Harvill, et al. provide an account of four nationally known group experts' views on what is effective group leadership. One key point in this article stated:

> If group leaders can consistently exhibit high levels of facilitative responses, serve as a model to the group, function as a director of the communications, and be a catalyst to move the process on, the consequences would be demonstrated by changes in member behavior, attitude, cognition, and/or affect. (p.33)

A final point from this article is that "[e]ffective group leadership require the ability to self-critique efforts and initiate a feedback process leading to self-improvement" (p.33).

Self-Evaluation

As mentioned in the above section it is important for group leaders to be able to self-evaluate. Pates and Knasel (1989) write about the Royal Society of Arts in Counselling Skills use of a learning record as the main vehicle of assessment because it is

"a means of recording experience, encouraging reflection, and offering the potential to assess learning and ownership of interpersonal skills as the basis for self-assessment" (p.122). They comment that the process of reflection done while completing the learning record is central to the learning:

> The act of writing down what you have been doing imposes a discipline on you to think about it and, as any teacher of writing will confirm, the act of writing itself often helps to clarify and make explicit thoughts that otherwise remain tucked away and unexpressed (1989, p.124).

Morrell (1982) highlights the need for methods that both guide and gauge group leaders because of the complexity of group facilitation. He suggests one effective way to accomplish this is by putting greater emphasis on self-evaluation. Morrell believes that,

> self-evaluation would be applicable in group work for two reasons: (a) the change in behavior of both individual and group counselees depends on the facilitation of a skilled therapist; (b) the increased number of interactions in a group setting makes effective supervision more difficult and structuring more desirable (p.209).

Morrell provides an extensive outline for group counsellors to follow. This outline consists of ten categories that help the leader to create session goals, evaluate if goals are accomplished, and to raise awareness of group dynamics. Morrell contends that the outline assists the group leader to clarify and specify their performance. He clarifies that further research is necessary to determine if the outline is effective.

Corey (1995) developed a self-evaluation guide for students. His list is very extensive it encompasses the twenty-two group-leadership skills previously mentioned. The leader reads the brief description of the skill and then rates him or herself on a five-point scale ranging from high degree of competence to extremely low degree of

competence. Following the description each skill has a series of questions that pertain to that particular skill. One example is

Active listening. Hearing and understanding, and communicating that one

is doing this.

1. How well do you listen to members?

2. How attentive are you to nonverbal language?

3. Are you able to detect incongruity between members' words and

    their nonverbal cues?

4. Are you able to hear both overt and subtle messages?

5. Do you teach members how to listen and to respond?

6. Do you focus on content to the extent that you miss how a message

    is delivered? (p.31)

Corey (1995) recommends that a counselling student complete this self-evaluation three times throughout his course. He also provides a guide for summarizing one's strengths, improvement areas, and areas one chooses to explore more fully. A final recommendation by Corey is to compare self-ratings with ratings of group members and supervisor.

Fuhrman (1978) describes adopting a teacher self-evaluation technique for one-on-one counsellors. The self-evaluation process Fuhrman describes entails the counsellors assessing their gut reaction, stating justification for their rating, listing changes they would implement, rate the changes, writing goals, and reviewing goals. Fuhrman used this technique with counsellors in training. She reported that the trainees gained confidence in their abilities, and developed reliable self-evaluation skills.

Bernstein and Lecombe (1979) state that with in one-on-one counselling, "the counselor's ability to function as their own supervisor is also viewed as essential... counselor self-evaluation is considered a worthwhile training outcome" (p.70). In their article, Bernstein and Lecombe describe a trainee self-evaluation process where the trainees view a videotape of themselves counselling and answer nine reflective questions about their intentions and behavior. The authors argue that self-evaluation leads to counsellor self-autonomy and increased attention and intention to the counselling sessions.

Regardless of the theoretical background, group leadership is usually considered a multifaceted skill. Unfortunately, little research exists on when to use various leadership skills (Polcin, 1991). Wiggens and Carroll (1993) expressed the need to determine what are the actual needs in leading groups. Rivas and Toseland (1981 p.161) found "defining the skills necessary for group leadership was somewhat problematic.... little research has been conducted that is specific to development of group leadership-skills". Pearson (1985) writes that, "Little has been done to identify the requisite skills and appropriate training format for preparing counselors to function as leaders of small person-oriented groups" (p. 150).

Policin (1991) reviews the contributions of Lieberman, Yalom and Miles(1973) regarding guidelines for group facilitators but Policin stresses how the research has not expanded on their suggestions. Policin expands on this research by suggesting prescriptive use of leadership functions that take into consideration group dynamics, group leadership characteristics, characteristics of clients, and the clinical setting nature. Policin considers Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles' four leadership functions: emotional stimulation, caring, meaning attribution, and executive function and their implementation

during the various group stages. Policin prescribes effective use of particular functions and specific times. He concludes that, "the group counseling literature has not paid enough attention to these functions" and "the area of group counseling is in critical need of empirical studies documenting the effectiveness of different leadership functions" (Policin, 1991, p.14).

Wiggins and Carroll (1993) conducted two surveys of 2,360 counselors who regularly lead groups as part of their work. In the first survey, Ninety school counsellors "completed a self-evaluation of perceived competencies and subsequently formulated a self-improvement plan" (1993, p.24). The second survey involved 2,270 group leadership workshop participants who answered quantitative questions and provided clarifying comments. Wiggens and Carroll found the major concern was "handling the interaction variables within the group" (1993, p. 26). They recommend that leaders need to know how to make groups interactive in the here and now. They suggest that graduate students take a minimum of two group courses that teach generic skills and that there should be more opportunity for supervised practice.

Rivas and Toseland (1981) conducted a study with the intention of providing new ways for skills training in group work. Rivas and Toseland write that previous studies, which "have been conducted either focus on a few specific skills, on general leadership characteristics or on content analysis of skills used in groups rather than on the broad range of leadership skills necessary for effective group work practice" (p.159). Therefore, they designed a research study with Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) seniors. Six seniors were group leaders for ten one hour sessions. A measurement scale based on Shulman's work was adapted to measure group skills. The results showed a gradual improvement of

skills. The leaders reported increase in skill awareness, in self-confidence, and in ability to work with groups.

This chapter provided a review of the literature that is relevant to this study. Through the process of researching and writing this chapter, I believe that I not only have an understanding of the literature but I am also better prepared to facilitate a small group. The following chapter begins the story of my experience as a researcher.

Chapter 3

Method

This chapter provides a description of the process that I engaged in to complete this thesis. I started with a description of how I came to do a thesis and my reasoning for selecting a combination of Qualitative and Quantitative Research. These descriptions provide a conceptual framework for gathering the data and demonstrate the intent of the study. I have also included a description of the participants, Discovery procedures, after-meeting procedures, ethical considerations, and research considerations. This chapter also provides an account of writing the story, obtaining participant checks, and completing the coding and analysis. The final component in this chapter is a description of how I developed the self-evaluation tool.

As I entered the Master's program in counselling, I knew I wanted to complete a thesis because I believed it was not only a necessary, but also a fulfilling route to take. I had also decided that my topic would be group counselling. I was passionate about group counselling and this passion grew out of my personal experience with this effective vehicle for change. Through a series of meetings with professors and discussions with classmates, I narrowed my topic down to my group facilitation skills. Ultimately, I wanted to become a better facilitator and I expected that focusing on my skills would help to enhance my abilities. I struggled to identify a method of research that matched my desire and a methodology that complemented my beliefs. I decided to facilitate small group sessions and I knew that throughout this research process I would reflect and evaluate my facilitation. I wanted to scrutinize my experience as the facilitator and I expected that this analysis would enhance my potential. In addition, I hoped that I would discover effective self-evaluation methods.

Qualitative Methodology

As I contemplated conducting this research, I considered what I was trying to do. I wanted to understand how to be an effective facilitator. Qualitative research is conducted to understand social life and construct meaning. I wanted to get to know my facilitation; to not only see it but also explain it from my perspective. I hoped to uncover my subjective meaning of facilitation.

I saw my role as researcher as very intentional I wanted to experience being a facilitator and then reflect on my experience and articulate the meaning I attached to it. I considered this a personal inquiry and realized that my social reality about facilitation would differ from others and would change as I engaged in this research and thereafter. I knew my motives as a researcher were to gain information and understanding of facilitation, and to improve my facilitation, but I did not know my reasoning or motives as a facilitator. I believed by closely observing my experience over seven sessions I would gain a better understanding of my motives and the meaning I attached to facilitating.

I wanted take an idiographic approach, provide a thick description of my facilitation. I intended to provide an autobiography of my experience that was rich in detail. I wanted the reader to grasp the feel for my reality by reading about the concepts, the skills, the emotions, the decisions, the moments, and the turmoil of my facilitation. I hoped to capture the essence of facilitation as opposed to developing defined dimensions of it. I could immerse myself in the data and discover the meaning of my experience rather than uncover specific information from many facilitators.

I wanted to understand my facilitation and, once I had completed my on-going analysis, qualitative methods could guide my extraction of themes. In addition, this study was

personal face-to-face interaction that I wanted to consider holistically (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Neuman, 1997).

<u>Narrative Methodology</u>

After deciding to use qualitative research, I began to preview the methodologies within this paradigm: This is when I discovered narrative research, the study of the ways that human beings experience the world. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe narrative as a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience. I began to comprehend that, as I move through the research, narrative would mean engaging in a process of telling and retelling. As Connelly and Clandinin (1986) point out, narrative is more than a story; it is the deliberate telling and retelling of one's experience through the process of reflection. This was vital because I believed that this reflection and retelling would enable me to gain a deeper understanding of my facilitation. I expected that this narrative research process would result in my deeper awareness of facilitation and concurrently an enhancement of my facilitation. One of the benefits of adopting narrative methodology would be that I would focus on the process of facilitation and develop a rich source of data.

I felt that a narrative was an effective method for me to complete a document that would allow the reader to live vicariously through my experience. I would incite the reader to look where I had looked and see what I had seen. What I wrote would not necessarily be his or her truth, but I hoped it might resonate with the reader in an instructive way. The reader could perhaps reconstruct the story by combining his or her memories with my story and would experience a sense of authenticity. Therefore, I hoped my story would operate as a vehicle by which the reader would learn something

essentially human, by understanding my facilitation as I had lived it (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Grounded Theory

I chose grounded theory to build a guide for self-evaluation from my narrative. Grounded theory is the discovery of theory from data. In this research, I did not believe I would discover theory from the story, but I hoped to discover themes that would lead me to self-evaluation strategies. Through grounded theory, I would code and analyse the completed story to extract themes. I considered that these themes would become guides to potential categories of self-evaluation and would generate effective questions to promote self-reflection and evaluation (Turner, 1981).

Purpose

Once I had decided on narrative methodology, the next natural step in my thesis development was the creation of my purpose. The purpose of this study was to complete a story about my personal experience as a facilitator of a small goal-setting group process known as Discovery with the intention of designing a self-evaluation guide for group facilitators. More specifically I would use my story and the feedback I received from participants to construct a self-evaluation guide for group facilitators.

Participants

Through face-to-face requests, I was able to get five female graduate students in counselling to participate in the study. Because these women had completed a course in group counselling that had familiarized them with group facilitation skills, they were informed participants. All the participants were female because the only male group counselling student declined to participate.

In order to alleviate any group pressure to participate in the study, I met individually with each participant before commencing the study. Each participant signed a written consent form (see Appendix A & B) acknowledging her willingness to be taped and participate. During this initial meeting, I provided the women with written information on: group member debriefing, videotaping procedures, consultation (Appendix C), group guidelines (Appendix D), Discovery questions (Appendix E) Discovery information, study purpose (Appendix F), and journal reflection guidelines and procedures (Appendix G). In addition, during this initial meeting I answered any questions and gathered information on the times and dates they were available. Once I had met with each participant and correlated the times and dates, I notified the participants of the first meeting. In addition, I informed the participants that I had five participants, which would enable the study to continue if anyone elected to discontinue their participation.

Discovery Procedure

The purpose of Discovery is to help individuals implement their goals. Group members are encouraged to share ideas, help one another to grow and change through open honest discussions. During the process, the group leader models empathy, unconditional positive regard, confrontation, and immediacy. It is also the intent that as the meetings advance the group participants will practice the leader-modelled techniques. During the Discovery process, each group member takes a turn as the focus member for the majority of a meeting. Before a meeting, the group determines through consensus which member will be the focus member. The focus member comes to the meeting with a specific goal or dream she has selected. Once each group member has participated in a group check-in, the group focus shifts to the focus member. The group facilitator asks the

focus member a series of questions. The group engages in the process by expanding on the questions, offering ideas, and supporting the focus member. Once the focus member has answered all the fourteen questions, the group ends the session with a checkout. The checkout time is an opportunity for the group members to reflect on their learning through participating in the process.

For this study, there were seven sessions. The first session was an introduction in which members could learn about the process and have the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had about the process. During next five sessions, each member took a turn as the focus member. The final session was for closure. Each session was two and one half-hours in length. I held the sessions at the University Counselling Centre on Friday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 with the exception of one session that was held on a Sunday from 2:00 to 4:30 and another held on a Wednesday from 7:00 to 9:30.

Each of the fourteen questions has a specific purpose and intent. The purpose of the first question "What is your goal or dream?" is to get the focus member to discuss what he or she wants to change. The intent behind this question is to have the focus member complete a positive statement that specifically describes the goal. This question may have spin-off questions that help the focus member to critically analyze this change. While answering the first question, the focus member utilizes a cognitive process.

The next four questions, "What is your payoff or reward?" "What do you want from this goal?" "What is in it for you?" and "What is the purpose of this goal?" are intended to get the focus member to recognize and verbalize desires and benefits. I believe that this starts the imagination rolling with ideas, pictures, and thoughts of what it would be like to achieve this goal. As he or she starts to conceive of the possibilities, the desire increases. This increase in desire helps to increase both energy and effort. The

more benefits that the focus member hears and accepts about the goal then the more reinforcements they have available to make it happen. These four questions are almost repetitive; this encourages the focus member to explore different aspects of her or himself and to become open to new possibilities. The intent is to push the focus member to explore emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of their goal.

This sixth question, "What are your fears and possible obstacles?" continues to encourage discussion of emotions. Another question the leader or a group member may ask at this time is "Why have you not accomplished this goal before?" The purpose behind these questions is to press the focus member to express openly and honestly, what he or she perceives is in the way- what is stopping him or her. At this point, I have witnessed the focus member address emotional issues, irrational beliefs, and/or negative self-perceptions. The previous questions allow the focus member to establish the desire or reason why it is worth moving through. It is the intent of question six to assist the focus member to work through the major block. The group provides the support and the safety as well as the confrontation, immediacy and encouragement.

Question seven "What are you willing to give up?" is based on my belief that when one wishes to fit something new into one's life, room needs to be made for it. To make this room the person must give up something else. This may be tangible or intangible. Typically, group members have decided to symbolically let go of shame, fear, anger, or other concerns. In addition, group members may choose to save money rather than spend it, or stop watching television to create time for exercise.

The eighth question "Are you committed to this goal?" is intended to encourage the focus member to make a decision: will he or she do it or not. The focus member

expresses his or her commitment in front of witness both verbally and in writing. This commitment is an integral part of the process.

Question nine; "What do you need to accomplish this goal?" requires the focus member to think about how this goal will happen. This has more of a behavioural orientation. The intent is to shift the group process to a brainstorming session. Now the focus member is aware of his or her wants, the other group members may contribute ideas on how to accomplish the goal.

The intent of the tenth question "How can the group members help you?" is to encourage the focus member to acknowledge that this is not a solitary task and to receive the group support. They accept that they have the right to ask for help. This fits into the philosophy that humans are relational and need to be interdependent. Stating the ways group members can help allows the focus member to practice reaching out for self-benefit.

Question eleven; "Do you have a role model that will help you accomplish this goal?" gives the focus member an opportunity to recall someone who may be an inspiration to them. The focus member may see characteristics or skills in the role model that he or she needs to succeed. In addition, the focus member may trace the role model's footsteps and find a means to the end.

The twelfth question asks the focus member to "describe a picture of you once this goal is completed". This question moves the focus member into the future with a positive image of accomplishment. This creates a clear mental picture of having already achieved the goal: walk, talk, and act as if it already exists. This is what athletes do when they visualise themselves winning the race before they even begin racing.

The intention of question thirteen "Create a plan" is to build preparedness. It is an opportunity for the focus member to devise concrete realistic steps to proceed with once he or she leaves the session. The focus member may ask the group to assist him or her to make the plan. The brainstorming by the group can help to strengthen the plan and to keep it with in the realm of attainability.

The fourteenth question "What is your affirmation to keep you well and focused?" empowers the focus member to develop an affirmation to keep him or her focused on the goal. The focus member may place this affirmation in a visually strategic location and/or repeat it regularly. In my experience in Discovery, the group has assisted in the creation of the affirmations. These affirmations have always been positive and are usually short and to the point.

<u>After Meeting Procedure</u>

After each meeting, I reflected on my internal dialogue, external behaviour, and any other observations. Within twenty-four hours, I watched the videotape of the session. While I watched the tape, I took careful notes about what I did and thought as well as how I felt. Afterwards I recorded my reflections based on my notes. In addition, the group members reflected on my facilitation and were free to make other observations. The group members had received instructions pertaining to the presentation of their feedback. I suggested each entry be framed in a sentence format of "when you did this ... I felt that ..." My intention was to provide each member with the opportunity to share openly her thoughts and impressions without her being overly concerned about my reception of what she said. Four days after each session, I collected the group participants' journals and reviewed each one. I did not share the journals with other group members. I extracted information from my reflections and each participant's reflections

and evaluated my facilitation. I determined what I wanted to keep, change, or add for the next session.

Ethical Consideration

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants I assigned each woman a fictitious name. Each member used the fictitious names as an alias for her journal. In order to protect confidentiality of what the woman said in the session, I focused my story on my facilitation skills not on the personal content revealed in each session. I was the only person to view the videotapes with the exception of one member who with group permission viewed her own session. I provided each participant with names of two counsellors available through the University Counselling Centre whom she could meet with if she needed debriefing after a session. I informed the participants that I could keep the videotapes under lock and key for the period of the research and for five years at which point I would destroy them. During a July meeting with my thesis supervisor and internal reader, I was informed that I should destroy the videotapes after one year.

Research Considerations

I considered some aspects of the research that would confine the information that I gathered. Since I derived the data from introspective reports, the study was limited by my ability and the participants' ability to honestly report our feelings and thoughts.

A further limitation would be both the group members' and my ability to focus on my facilitation skills, and not on the content of the group session. Considering the Discovery intention, group members may miss the leadership behaviours that I exhibited. Instead, the women might have focused on the focus member and the Discovery process. Even though I reviewed the videotape, I could also have been distracted by other variables and may have missed some aspect of my facilitation.

I restricted the number of group participants to six, including myself. The study is therefore limited to the insight and feedback on group process, which a relatively small group can provide versus that of a larger group of eight to twelve participants. Certainly, the results of the study cannot be applied unilaterally. As well, I have limited the number of meetings to seven when, in practice, group sessions would generally last a minimum of six to eight sessions, or as long as participation demands.

In this study, I only examined my experience as a facilitator, and used one particular group process. I have not extended the findings of this inquiry to other group types or to other group facilitators. As a result, the self-evaluation procedure developed in the study may only be useful as a guideline for other neophyte facilitators.

Writing the Small Group Facilitation Story

Once I had completed facilitating all seven sessions, I began the process of rewriting my experience as the facilitator. I decided to present the story in chronological order. I started by re-watching the video of the first session. Next, I gathered my reflections on the session and began writing the experience in story form. To ensure confidentiality, I focused intently on my experience and not on any of the women's' experiences. I found an enormous amount of data regarding group dynamics, individual behaviour, and the Discovery process that I chose not to include. I was conscious of my purpose to write about my facilitation and I intentionally focused on only my experience.

Richardson (1994) describes writing as a way of knowing, a method of discovery and analysis. I found that the process of retelling my facilitation was in itself a method of inquiry. As I wrote, I developed new understandings, and I was able to identify some of the intentions behind my actions. I agree with Richardson that self-narrative is an evocative form of writing that is highly personalized and revealing. I learned a great deal

about my facilitation and about myself. I attempted to meet the literary criteria of coherence, verisimilitude, and interest as opposed to providing absolute accuracy on specific content or event. I focused on telling how I felt, what I did, and what I learned. I ensured that I was the other in this narrative (Richardson, 1994).

In addition, I am aware that I struggled with the fact that each member would read this story. I became conscious of my internal dilemma that it was my story and not the whole truth and that the other women's perspectives would ultimately differ from mine. A large part of my thinking revolved around wanting each woman to agree with what I had written. However, I also was aware that total agreement was impossible. I resolved to recognize that I was writing only from my perspective.

Participant Checks

I conducted participant checks once I had completed the first draft of my story. I gave each participant a copy of the sections that related to her. This included the session when she was the focus member and any information I alluded to from her journal responses. After each participant read her section, she contacted me and granted her permission for me to include the section as I had written it. I was willing to remove any sections that a particular member felt was unrepresentative of what she had said or that she was uncomfortable with. No requests for such deletions were made.

Coding and Analysis

After completing a story about my personal experience as a facilitator of a small goal-setting group process known as Discovery, I went through the process of coding the story. I read the story from beginning to end and then I methodically reviewed each sentence. As I read the sentences, I discerned what I believed was the basic content. I then wrote a code in the right hand margin. Kvale (1996) describes coding as "[l]ong

statements are compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what is said is rephrased in a few words" (p. 192). Some code examples I used are: feelings of anxiety; internal versus external; time pressure; task focus; silent member. After I coded each page, I reviewed the codes and clumped the similar ones together in categories such as: time factor; closed versus open; decision; anxiety. From these categories, I determined themes. At this point, I wrote the final chapter of my personal story analysing what I had discovered according to the themes.

Afterthought and Self-Evaluation Guide

After a meeting with my supervisor and internal reader, I consider it necessary to view my story from a different perspective. I wrote one last analysis of the story by focusing on my personal needs and addressing shifts that I made through the seven sessions.

Once I completed the analysis, I reread it and began developing the self-evaluation tool. I realized that my learning occurred through the process of reflection. I did not have a checklist that I marked off. Instead, I contemplated my actions and analyzed my facilitation. I believe that this rigorous evaluation process was the reason for my learning. Therefore, I decided that I wanted to create a self-evaluation guide that generated self-reflection and analysis.

I also realized that with each theme I went through a process of understanding. I started with one perception, I moved through different ideas and strategies and I ended up with a different view. Therefore, I designed the self-evaluation tool in an attempt to generate the same process for whoever uses it. For example, the time section starts with time management and planning, then moves into the influence of time and strategies to reduce time anxiety, and ends with trusting that there is ample time. I went through this

same process. I knew that I did not want to tell the beginning group facilitator the process. Instead, I wanted to provide questions that helped the facilitator come to his or her own perspective. I recognize that I went through this process and other facilitators will have different experiences. Therefore, the self-evaluation tool I designed is intended to enhance the individual learning process through questions that encourage self-analysis and reflection.

The purpose of this study is to complete a description about my personal experience as a facilitator of a small goal-setting group process known as Discovery with the intention of designing a self-evaluation guide for group facilitators. This chapter covered the methodology of this study. It included both a description of the approaches utilized for gathering the research and the method employed for running the small goal-setting group. In addition, I covered the methods I utilized to accomplish my intended purpose. The following chapter is includes a story of my experiences with group, with Discovery and a detailed description of my facilitation.

Chapter 4

Small Group Facilitation Description

This chapter includes the description of my experience as a group facilitator. I begin with a story that includes my beliefs, experiences, thoughts, and feelings regarding groups to provide a better understanding of my perspectives and any biases that I may have brought to this study. Following the Personal Story, I provide a description of my experiences and the theoretical framework of the small group goal-setting process entitled Discovery, which I utilized during the group sessions. I follow this with a detailed description of the seven sessions that I facilitated.

Personal Story

Osborne (1990) states that the qualitative researcher's presence is unavoidable in the formulation, determination, collection, and interpretation of the data. The way I envisioned my research process required that I was not only present as researcher but also as the participant. Therefore, I believed it was vital to articulate my assumptions and biases through a process of self-reflection. In the following section, I have attempted to put into perspective how my interest in group counselling has developed.

I have the ability to recall my experiences and to reflect on the meaning of the moments that make up my life. This section is abundant with my personal reflections. While writing this section, I became aware of the importance of community to me. I discovered community through groups and that discovery has generated my passion for group facilitation. It is my intention to share what I bring to this issue through a description of my personal experiences so you will discover who I am and what I value about groups.

At the age of six weeks, I developed eczema over my entire body. It has stayed with me all of my life. Eczema is a skin disorder that presents itself in the form of redness, itching, and oozing vesicular lesions that become scaly and crusted. At times, I felt as if my skin was on fire, the pain was so intense. Gradually the eczema spread to my hands and feet. Perhaps, because it was hard for others to touch me and me to touch them, I have felt separated from others, including my own family, and myself.

My family, a supportive unit, provided me with a strong upbringing that prepared me to stand alone in society. Through adolescence and early adulthood, I strove to become an independent adult woman. I perceived independence to mean doing it all by myself and not relying or asking for help from others. I spent many hours alone berating myself for not being good enough. I believed that reaching out to others was a sign of weakness and that total independence was an important strength. Fortunately, over the last fifteen years, exposures to different perspectives have shattered these beliefs and I have developed new convictions.

Over twelve years ago, I gave birth to my first child. This event changed my thinking about the value of independence. For the first time, I felt an over powering connection to another human being, which I knew would never be severed. I believe this started my questioning. Is anyone totally independent?

Through my employment experiences, in the human service field, I started to doubt the importance of individualism. I witnessed the value that adolescents placed on their peer group and how debilitating the loss of connection with friends was for them. I also noticed how teenagers with strong extended family connections appeared to better "manage" their day-to-day lives. I pondered the value humans placed on relationships. To me, it appeared to be very important.

I also noticed that, when I took the time to listen to, and interact with the adolescents, they were more open to my influence. I started to see that having a relationship with a teenager increased my effectiveness: the connection between us helped him or her to listen to me. This led me to believe that they wanted to have the relationship with me, and would flex a little if they felt it would keep the connection strong between us. At this point in my life, I started to value relationships and I realized the quality of my work was contingent on the relationships I built with adolescents and colleagues.

Three years ago, I returned to university and, at that time, I was introduced to concepts that fundamentally changed my perspectives on individualism and community. Through my undergraduate major in First Nations Studies at Malaspina University College, and my contact with Co-Salish, Nuu Chuh Nulth, and Cowichan communities, I was exposed to a diversely different culture. I recall an elder's comments that, to me, reflected the value of community. What I learned was that you demonstrate friendship by asking for help, and your wealth is measured by what you give not by what you have. These were foreign but somewhat pleasing messages.

Through my academic studies, I examined the roots of western society and continued to deconstruct the beliefs and values of independence. The university courses walked me back in time to examine the colonizing mindset. I saw the roots of my beliefs and the deconstruction helped me to become aware of their irrationality. I no longer accepted the hierarchical paternalism rampant in my European descent. I felt as if a jackhammer had destroyed my beliefs. I turned to the First Nation community hoping to discover a new foundation. At this time, I was asking, what do I believe, where is my

community, and who are my community members? The devastating answer was, I do not know.

With a feeling of emptiness and a sense of isolation, I began to long for the communal interaction that I witnessed within the Co-Salish, Nuu Chuh Nulth, and Cowichan communities. A classmate invited my family and me to a potlatch and in utter amazement I witnessed the community come together to honour and acknowledge each other. Beyond their recognition for each other, they also honoured my family and me. They welcomed us, fed us, explained to us, and publicly acknowledged us with gifts. The intensity of feeling I experienced at that time, was difficult to explain but echoes now as a communal respect that broke through the barriers and touched my soul.

One Nuu Chuh Nulth professor shared his beliefs that all beings have the same origin and therefore we are all connected. This connection incorporates plants, animals, and humans. At this point, I realised that it was impossible for me to be independent, as I have unbreakable connections to everything. I began to look for something to substantiate my new concept. My teacher honoured me with a drum and I shared the energy of the deer that gave up its physical existence. I witnessed the dance of energy between the trees as the wind moved over all of us. I became aware of the many invisible connections that formulate my co-existence. At this point, I stopped striving for independence and took on a new goal of defining my community.

Gradually I found a community. This process began with me because I had been cut off from myself. Through my experience with eczema, I had taught myself how to disassociate from my body and live in my head. Therefore, my first challenge was to rediscover my own community of body, mind, and soul. I was able, through self-

reflection and group counselling to rediscover myself and learn some techniques to come closer to finding balance between my mind, body, and soul.

After bringing myself closer to balance, I began to reach out to others. I turned to people from the group, the healing communities, friends, and family. Gradually some of them extended their hands to meet mine and I saw the beginnings of a circle forming. I could stand in that circle with the spirits of the animals and my drum and remember my connection to those from the past and future. I felt a sense of belonging and support. I knew that reaching out was love for me, and for those around me. It was powerful, comforting, and real but most of all it felt congruent.

My new sense of community was tested in my fourth year of undergraduate studies. Somehow, the communal learning ceased and it felt like everyone was out for themselves. I felt lost. I realised that community takes work. I learned that community building is a constant process, and I saw that someone must take on the role of a community builder. I questioned how community is built. I watched one wise woman take consistent action. She constantly connected her community. As a spider spins a web of silk, she spun silk between members and worked to mend broken threads. She facilitated community and I learned a great deal from her.

Now as I turn and look around me, I see many individuals in society today floundering alone. They struggle to prove their individual strength and something keeps them from experiencing the joy of community. They maintain relationships sometimes with personal satisfaction, and other times with pain and displeasure. As I see, listen to, and feel their pain I wonder, would they benefit from a group experience as I did? Could they rediscover a lost sense of community by participating in a group? While I believe that one solution does not fit all, I also believe that a group experience can help many.

My next step was to actively move things to another level in my process of building community. I organized and facilitated regular group meetings for individuals who were searching for community. I witnessed numerous benefits, which increased my confidence in the power of group healing. I found that when individuals self-disclose in a group they acknowledged their own vulnerability. As long as they feel safe and accepted by the group, they are enabled to overcome their fear of being ashamed. In addition, I have seen group members learn how to give empathy and compassion. In a group, people can learn how to support each other and demonstrate the intrinsic act of giving.

Because of my experiences, I have concluded that people have a basic human need for interactions and connections with others. Not only do people need to belong, they also want to feel needed and useful. In a society that values independence, people are less and less likely to experience deeper interactions within groups. I believe a group can be a microcosm of society with members being diverse in perspectives and experience. Positive group experiences may help to break down the fallacy of independence and help individuals to become interdependent.

As a result, I am passionate about groups because I believe they help to revitalize a communal spirit. I want to improve my abilities to facilitate groups so I can take an active role in community building. Through the examination of myself as a group facilitator, I believe I will enrich my skills and illuminate my life. Ultimately, I hope this communal fire will be contagious and others will catch the strength of interdependence.

Discovery

Once I completed my personal story, I began to consider how I would conduct this research. I intended to facilitate a small group using a process I call Discovery. In this section, I provide a description of how I developed Discovery. I also discuss my

experience with Discovery, and identify similarity between Discovery and six group therapy models.

My first introduction to the idea of Discovery, a group goal-setting process, occurred five years ago at a workshop. Carol-Lee Heffernan was the workshop facilitator and she talked about her experience with Mastermind. She attributed the idea to Hill (1960). Hill suggested Mastermind as a brainstorming session for businesses. To him it was a group process to generate ideas to help the participants with their business.

After the workshop, I contacted Carol-Lee and she agreed to share her Mastermind information. This information included a series of instructions regarding group numbers, structure, norms and guidelines. Also included was a framework to define one's purpose. This framework included questions, instructions, and a wheel of life tool. This tool consisted of seven sections: career, social, mental, physical, spiritual, financial, and family. I gathered three other people, and we met regularly for approximately ten months. Afterwards, I joined a woman's group that consisted of six members including myself. We followed the Mastermind process for approximately one year. Once the group had disbanded, my husband and I started two separate groups. These groups lasted approximately three months until my husband and I moved.

During the two years that I experienced Mastermind, I began to modify the original information I had received from Carol-Lee Heffernan. I added questions, changed some questions, and adjusted the question order. As I prepared for this thesis, I incorporated my modifications and created a different framework that I entitled Discovery.

<u>Theoretical Similarities.</u>

After examination of different group theoretical perspectives, I have found some similarities with Discovery and the following theoretical perspectives: Adlerian, Person-Centred, Gestalt, Existential, Reality, and Behavioural. I will discuss the commonalties I believe exist between each perspective and Discovery.

I discovered some key concepts in Adlerian group theory that are evident in the Discovery framework. Similar to Adlerian theory, Discovery is based on the idea that "[w] e must know what types of movements this individual must make to reach his goal" (Adler, 1928, p. 20). This is evident in the process implemented in Discovery. The focus member spends the two hours investigating and experiencing the movement needed to implement change. Discovery is a group process because as Adler (1964) wrote "[s] social interest is the true and inevitable compensation for all natural weaknesses of individual human beings" (p.31). This social interest enables the group members to make the group a safe place to look at one's life-style and to learn from each other. During the checkout I have frequently noticed that other members would comment on how they learned something from the focus member as the process unravelled. The final similarity that exists between Discovery and Adlerian groups is that " the leader acts as a role model by suggesting an attitude of caring, so other group members can later assume the role of helping fellow participants" (Vander Kolk, 1985, p. 38). On the first night of Discovery, the leader demonstrates the process. In subsequent meetings, the group members begin to implement the skills the leader has modelled.

Discovery also shares commonalities with Carl Rogers' Person-Centred Theories. In leading a Discovery group, I have seen, "participants feel a closeness and intimacy" (Rogers, 1970, p.9) with each other as they live through the Discovery process. After

witnessing Discovery participants complete and implement changes in their lives, I believe and trust in the inner resources of the person. In addition in the Discovery process, I have seen "[l] title by little, a sense of genuine communication builds up, and the person who has been thoroughly walled off from others comes out with some small segment of his actual feelings" (Rogers, p.8). A key factor in Discovery and Person-Centred groups is respect. The facilitator is able "to respond to the other person in such a way as to let him know that you care for him and that you believe in his ability to do something about his problem (Carkhuff, 1971, p.17). The Discovery process builds on people's strengths and maintains a positive focus.

There are significant parallels between Discovery and Gestalt group therapy as well. Gestalt, like the Discovery process, concentrates on one individual at a time. The focus member is on the "hot seat'; everyone in the group concentrates on that person. Both have the client take responsibility for growth. Perls (1969) referred to this process as the aim of Gestalt therapy. While the group may assist in the process, ultimately the focus member must make the changes. The Discovery framework fits with the Gestalt concept that "awareness per-se-by and of itself-can be curative"(Perls, 1969, p.17). As the focus member proceeds through the Discovery process, their self-awareness level escalates and they become ready to choose to commit to the goal or not. In addition, both the Discovery and Gestalt processes stay centred on the here and now, "because if you are in the now you are creative, you are inventive" (Perls, 1969, p. 3). Both ask how and what questions instead of why, and ask the group member to work on a specific problem. Both Gestalt and Discovery share a humanistic, existential approach to helping people become more self-aware and able to achieve maturity. The overall purpose for both

groups is "to promote the growth process and develop the human potential"(Perls, 1969, p. 2).

Discovery also shares similarities with Existential Group therapy. In both groups the "[l] eaders shape norms not only through explicit or implicit social engineering but also through the example they set in their personal behaviour" (Yalom, 1995, p. 114). Through the Discovery process the focus member obtains a sense of hope that his or her goal is obtainable. Existential group therapy states, "The instillation of hope is crucial in any psychotherapy" (Yalom, p. 4). Both groups ask questions like "who am I and where am I going". The group becomes a place to face fears and see life as a journey. These two group therapies share outcome intentions, that is, the group members will be more aware of themselves and the choices they have in regard to growth and development. These members will become more self-determining and will find new meaning in all aspects of their lives. Similar to Existential, the Discovery process may be applicable to a wide range of individuals because it deals with members in a holistic way (Gladding, 1999).

Reality therapy in groups has some core beliefs that match the Discovery process. The commonalities come through clearly in the method of making a positive plan to do better, to get a commitment to follow the positive plan, and the use of skilful questioning. A major component of Discovery is to create a plan and provide an opportunity during the process for the focus member to make a commitment to the plan. Like Reality Therapy, Discovery "assists group members in making value judgements about their behaviours and in deciding on a plan of action for change" (Vander Kolk, 1985, p. 244).

Similarities between Discovery and behavioural counselling in groups also exist. "By identifying goals, both the client and the group can be active and informed participants in the process of treatment planning" (Rose, 1977, p. 76). In Discovery, all

group members are free to contribute suggestions. This is congruent with the idea that "one may not need to know the causes of the presenting problem. One simply understands the presenting problem" (Vander Kolk, p. 119) and implements the process for change. This is evident in the makeup of the questions. In Discovery, the reason for the need for a change is not the focus, although the process enables it to come up if necessary. There are also similarities in the belief that groups provide a more accurate assessment. Lazarus (1966) points out "that many facets of a problem which elude the scrutiny of even the most perspicacious therapist often become clearly delineated during or after intensive group discussions" (p. 210).

While Discovery shares commonalties with all six theoretical frameworks, I see Existential Theory as its philosophical foundation. The leader facilitates the group members to assist the focus member to raise his or her self-awareness, personal responsibility, and the handling of his or her anxiety. The core belief is that once people are aware and recognize their ability to take responsibility for their life and make choices, they can chose to implement their own growth and change. The Discovery method relates closely to Gestalt. The focus member is in the 'hot-seat' and required to focus on a specific goal. As in Person-Centred and Adlerian Group Theory, Discovery is conducted in a group because the members experience learning from others, a sense of belonging, closer contact, and being congruent with others. The Reality and Behavioural Theories correspond to the creation and implementation of a positive plan.

This next section provides a detailed description of my experience as I facilitated the seven group sessions for this thesis.

February 18th: The first session

After a restless night checking the clock at least once an hour, I woke up with a start just before the alarm. I started facilitating today and there was no way I was going to be late. I had packed everything last night so I knew that today I had plenty of time. I made a mental note of all that I needed for my undertaking and reassured myself it was in my red backpack. I felt anxious as I headed out the door.

Once at my destination, I picked up all the equipment I needed plus my cup of tea. I reeled over to the centre and dumped my gear. I felt hurried as I continued on my trek to pick up the multi-directional mike. On my way back, I suddenly thought about a new battery for the mike and almost panicked. After consideration, I decided to rely on the existing battery and hoped that it would last.

Back at the counselling centre, I began setting up the equipment. One group member arrived and chatted as I worked. Inside I felt frantic but outside I hoped that I looked composed. I turned on the camcorder and mike, told her it was on, and received her nod of recognition. I needed to check that everything worked, so I removed the tape and headed upstairs to a VCR. It was in use and as time was now pressing, I had to trust that the equipment was working properly.

Gradually the other members arrived. I believed I was prepared but I also felt, very nervous and under scrutiny. I took my seat and became aware of both the tightness in my chest and shakiness in my voice. I tried humour and laughed to ease my discomfort. I had placed my agenda on the table in front of me. I felt secure having it there and took comfort in moving into the first carefully planned task. Like a soldier following commands, I stood and walked the five meters to turn on the camera and then I informed the group that it was filming.

With a sense of awkwardness, I returned to my place in the circle of chairs. I admitted to the group how nervous and excited I felt. My objective was to rid myself of anxiety and the technique brought me some comfort. I quickly focused on my safety sheet (agenda) and saw that 'clarification' was next. In a taut didactic style, I identified the numerous roles I was playing-classmate, researcher, and group facilitator. As I dominated the discussion, I thought about getting the women talking. Therefore, I asked an open-ended question about the research journals. As the group conversed, I noticed the camera, became self-conscious of my image, and forgot about the group. Suddenly, I became aware of their clever ideas about word processing programs, hot mail, and backing-up discs. A confirmation that a group will see, hear, and think of more than one person ever can. Abruptly, I became conscious of time and ended the discussion by stating my decision.

I continued my lecture covering the topics on my list as the group members sat listening. I was not comfortable taking control but with mild humour, I attempted to give the appearance of respectful leadership. Inwardly I was taut, apprehensive, and concerned with my time and task objectives.

With the administrative details completed, I then told them I wanted us all to engage in an icebreaker. I mentioned their option to not participate; yet, I was already out of my chair commencing the activity. I announced in a jovial manner that I wanted to play too. There was more laughter as I inadvertently pointed my rear end to the camera lens as I bent to receive my mysterious title on my back. The game commenced as we all stood practically shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle. I remember thinking, this was not how I planned it, but everyone was laughing and interacting so I did not interrupt. I gave clues

to help people find answers. The icebreaker was a delightful interaction in which I participated as an equal.

After everyone had guessed their pre-selected fictitious identity and sat down, I continued with the next task. One member interrupted and told me she did not know everyone's name. I felt foolish at my blunder and attempted to joke it away, and then without admitting my mistake, I directed them to introduce themselves by giving their name together with an adjective that began with the same letter. The last member had difficulty finding an appropriate adjective. One member offered suggestions and I jumped in with mine, only to be informed that I was using the wrong letter of the alphabet.

Another member appeared apprehensive about the group and Discovery processes. I thought she might be feeling uncomfortable and I wondered whether I should comment. However, another member acknowledged the discomfort by gently teasing her so I began to discuss group guidelines. Since task was my priority, I quashed the discussion by giving instructions. Once I had my say, I invited group opinions. Because I felt somewhat relaxed on this single occasion, I ended the discussion with consensus taking. I used silence and eye contact as I scanned each member ensuring agreement with the guidelines.

A common theme throughout this session was: I told them the way it was for me, asked them what they thought or wanted, answered questions, invited more questions, and moved on. This nervous technique ensured that all my tasks were completed. Thinking I had covered it all, I sat back in my chair and invited questions. I scanned the circle and sensed some uneasiness. In a more relaxed manner, I addressed what I assumed was the source of discomfort. These women had never done this before and I believed

they needed more information to ease their anxiety. The women asked questions and I answered. The conversation always returned to me before proceeding to another member.

I sensed some uneasiness from the same member as before, but I decided not to address her discomfort. Instead, I shared my experience with Discovery, and I used humour to relieve the tension. Another asked a procedural question and I felt challenged. My response was to deflect the question to the group. I became defensive and forgot to probe or ask for clarification.

Now it was time to decide who would be the focus member next week. I did not want to influence this decision so I asked who would go first. There was silence. Apprehensive with the group's quietness, I interjected and shared ideas based on my previous experience of determining the next focus member. Slowly members began to express their desires and two members volunteered. They told me to flip a coin and the decision was made.

Shortly after, I abruptly decided to end the discussion because I was aware that time had elapsed. This arbitrary decision neglected the group's mood. Immediately after ending the conversation, I thought of a new topic. Unfortunately, as I started to speak I had an edgy feeling. I wanted to pull the words back, but instead over-explained to clarify and cover my discomfort. The group responded positively and never verbalized any irritation. I ended with words of gratitude and excitement because we had all survived the first session. Group members discussed going for breakfast but I declined their invitation. After they left, I systematically packed up the equipment and put the room in order. My weariness surfaced as I began to wonder what they were thinking.

February 21st : An unexpected problem

I woke stressed and exhausted because, in contrast to my usual sleep patterns, I struggled to fall asleep for hours. In the middle of the night, I worried what the group members were going to say. Would they criticize and would they return? Throughout the day, I wondered what else had kept me awake. I really wanted to talk to someone about my role and what I was doing. I wanted feedback. I felt uncomfortable analyzing myself. I needed someone to listen to me, to nod and respond. I started telling people that I felt stressed at not being able to talk about my facilitation and the research. I could not go on with sleepless nights. Fortunately, a new idea surfaced; I would add to my methods a discussion with a mentor.

February 22nd : A solution

After a second troublesome night sleep, I approached my thesis supervisor and expressed my urgent need. He agreed I needed a mentor. We decided that I would contact my practicum supervisor to be my mentor. This individual had no contact with the participants and was not involved in the thesis. As I left my thesis supervisor's office, I gradually began to relax.

Next, I met with my practicum supervisor and I timorously asked him if he would be willing to discuss my facilitation. He questioned how I would use the information we discussed. I explained that it would become part of my weekly review and assist me in making adjustments in my facilitation. I envisioned the weekly procedure in the following way: facilitating the group, self-reflecting, watching the video, getting group members' feedback, and talking to him. From my perspective, he would be someone with whom I could process my thoughts aloud. He could add his perspective and provide another lens. I informed him that I would not be discussing group content or individuals

but I would stick strictly to discussing my facilitation. He agreed and that was all I needed.

The participants anonymously handed in their research journals in sealed envelopes labelled with their fictitious names to the counselling centre's receptionist today. She placed them in my box. I eagerly skimmed them and felt considerable relief. I felt confident that what I was doing was working and that what they were saying matched how I felt. It was confirmation that I was on the right track. I knew my mistakes before they pointed them out. The bonus was everyone wanted to return.

February 24th : Learning from the feedback

I reread the feedback today. It was great to read Diane's comment about my facilitation being excellent. I realized how stressed I had been feeling about the feedback. I welcomed the good news. She commented on my blunder about introductions and I felt good reading her words. That was a big assumption on my part that I will never repeat. I found it interesting that my openness to share my experience with Discovery made Diane trust my abilities. I learned that my focus on task helped her to relax and created a feeling of safety. This tells me to prepare thoroughly for every meeting. Diane mentioned my sense of humour and commented that my inclusion into the icebreaker created an egalitarian exchange. Giving a choice of participation created a sense of empowerment which is what I intended to do. When I let go of the power, this member felt empowered.

From this response, I want to remember to let go of the power of the group, not to hang on to it all the time. I want to own up to my mistakes in the moment rather than joke them away. I feel more confident that being task focused the first session was okay and that it helped to show competence.

Betty commented on how clarification about the different hats helped to set the tone for the group. This again tells me preparation is important because I had thought that through before hand. Betty described feeling reassured when I covered the ground rules. This made me question if ground rules create safety. Betty commented on my directing the group not to discuss the session content with others. I remember feeling uncomfortable enforcing this factor, and yet she saw it as appropriate leadership.

I learned from Betty that it is important for her that I keep the hats clear, that I maintain safety, and that she is building trust in me. In addition, I learned that self-disclosure, sharing, and clarification brings reassurance. Again, I feel that I need to be willing to share the power and model the qualities I want from the women like honesty, vulnerability, and respect.

Ellen also commented on the importance of self-disclosure and she stated she would have liked more information. I assumed that this was in reference to when I cut off the conversation. I did not understand one of her comments but her last comment about looking forward to the small group was hopeful.

From Ellen I learned that it might be facilitative to take the time and genuinely request or wait for more questions so that the group has plenty of opportunity to get the information they feel they need. The use of silence and unhurried waiting allows for crucial process time.

Anne also commented on self-disclosure and how it made her feel better. It seems to me that my self-disclosure around the Discovery process happened when I was feeling more relaxed. I believed this was facilitative. This was something I had not planned. I am unsure about Anne's identity but her comment around wanting more understanding may relate to the times in session that I suspected one member's unease. I chose not to

respond. If Anne is this member, she tells me in her journal she was feeling vulnerable at these times. It may have been more facilitative to acknowledge the vulnerability, which may have sent the message that I saw her feelings and respected them.

From Anne I learned that my thoughts are worth listening to and mentioning a concern, that I felt more than once, may be facilitative. I also learned that as a group facilitator I must recognize that the group members are building trust and confidence in my abilities and that this may be an ongoing process.

Carmen positively highlighted my clear expectations and how I allowed the members to contribute. She mentioned that my use of humour and eye contact was encouraging. Her comment on my definite idea about handing in the journals was not a surprise. I had already realized that I had cut off the discussion and neglected members' contributions. It raises an interesting contradiction though. I believe I did this for the sake of time management and she expressed her appreciation for not prolonging the meeting.

From Carmen I learned that when I think I am cutting her off she may be feeling interrupted. Therefore, I must be cognizant of my actions and be honest about my intentions.

Overall, after vigilantly reviewing my reflections and reading the participant's comments, I believe it is important to be prepared and consider my possible assumptions ahead of time. I want to release the power to the group, describe how I am feeling, and address what I pick up in the group members by gently drawing them out. I want to relax around time and trust that we will do what we need to. I want to pay attention to the process to create a balance between task and process and allow for silence. I am excited about tomorrow. I really enjoy Discovery and though I am apprehensive, I believe things will go well.

<u>February 25th : Session two</u>

This time both the anticipation and the unknown interrupted my sleep and I woke

filled with nervous energy. My feet hit the floor moments after I opened my eyes. Having

completed my morning routine, I grabbed my backpack, which I had packed the night

before, and once in my car I begrudgingly drove the speed limit. At my destination, I

collected the equipment, took it to the centre, and marched through the process of setting

things up. Ready to roll, I busied myself while wishing the starting time would arrive.

With all members present, time moving on, I turned on the camera, and informed the

group that it was taping.

As I eagerly returned to the chair that I had designated as mine, I joined in the

conversation. One member joked about picking on the focus member and I paused and

lightly, remarked "no picking". I acted to protect, to set rules, yet my comments were

gentle. Another woman made a casual enquiry and I threw the question out to the group.

Once the women achieved consensus, I pretended to disagree but then quickly endorsed

their decision.

In an attempt to ease my nerves, I followed, "Good Morning", my official group

opening, with a candid expression of my excitement and anxiety. I diverted to the agenda,

my guide, placed reassuringly in front of me. I began to cover the pre-selected tasks with

a broad explanation and a question to the group. I responded to one member's

clarification request and rapidly gathered only partial approval through limited eye

contact.

I guided the group into the check-in stage and asked how they would like to

proceed. For a moment, I was comfortable with silence but I quickly became anxious and

filled it with detailed explanation. Determined to shift the power to the group, I

stubbornly waited for someone to act. After a brief moment that seemed like an eternity, one woman began. I watched her and once she was done, I shifted my gaze downward. I wanted each member to freely decide when to speak without my influence. After the fourth woman's check-in, I again revealed my feelings and then read a passage from a book. With the reading hanging unexplained, I began the Discovery process forgetting that the fifth member had not checked-in. One member quickly pointed out my mistake, which I tried to cover by suggesting it was part of my foolproof plan.

I listened like a reprimanded schoolgirl as the fifth woman checked-in and I responded to her genuine inquiries by returning the responsibility of the decision to her. Even though I wanted her to feel empowered, I felt ambiguous about my leadership; I was not clear, when it should be my way, her way, or even their way. I wondered whether I responded too quickly. I shifted in my chair and this initiated a pattern that continued throughout the session. I moved constantly, crossing and uncrossing my legs, moving forward, leaning backwards, placing my hands over my mouth, and running my fingers through my hair. I pondered if all this movement might have somehow affected the group.

As the fifth woman spoke frankly to the other members, I sat wondering if I should address her comments. However, I remained inactive. Covertly, I continued to scrutinize, but due to my lack of action, I missed the opportunity to ease the tension that hung in the air. As my discomfort rendered me speechless, I wished that I could get out of here. As she continued, I forgot my dilemma and found a more comfortable topic to acknowledge. She was now discussing something I wanted to encourage, so I joined in the conversation.

Once her check-in was complete, I addressed the topic of self-governance only because ultimately this was my research project. At this moment, I wore the researcher hat and ethical considerations motivated my actions. With this hat on, I did not provide a facilitating reply to her response. She expanded on her anxiety and I said that her anxiety was good. I was brief because I was eager to start Discovery.

When I asked the first question, I leaned forward with intensity. At first, I saw only her, but with time, I acknowledged the others. With her permission, I invited the group to contribute, but unfortunately offered the women no guidance. In a feeble attempt to stop from leading the discussion, I sat on the edge of my chair with my hands covering my mouth. When I did speak, I began the exploration process hoping that I would demonstrate how it should be done. For me it was a push and pull between getting her to establish an affirmative comprehensive goal and getting the others to participate in a manner I deemed proper. I kept her focused, constantly pulling her back to the question. Just as I thought she had found her goal, another member interposed. To me this was an inopportune interruption. Snatching back the lead, I attempted to address any uneasiness I suspected was lingering in the others. I hoped to show the women a respectful way to present a personal opinion. I filled my comments with qualifiers so that the focus member felt empowered enough to reject or accept my concern. She rejected it.

My awareness of time caused me to glance at the clock. My next quick look was around the group and I noticed that one woman was quiet so I selected a moment and invited her to participate. As I shifted to face her, she began to talk. Once she was done, I clarified her statements. I briefly orchestrated the discussion.

I began to see the discussion as the movement of a talking stick (an object that signifies the exclusive right to talk to whomever possesses it). I symbolically clutched the

stick. I specifically selected someone to give it to and I took it back. I passed it to someone else. I hesitated to hold it with open hands; supporting it while letting it go because I was a regulator and I governed the next step. Finally, I clarified the intention of the first question. The focus member found the answer and I received her permission to move on.

I continued to maintain control and temporarily kept the stick exchanging between us. Remembering my place, I reluctantly held out the stick for others to take and one woman snatched it from my hand. I suspected what she was saying was inappropriate so I waited for a pause and invited another member to join in. This allowed another perspective to be heard and me to regroup. I was concerned that the focus member was not following a procedure. I was hesitant to mention it but I decided it was necessary because her unwillingness impeded the Discovery process. However, my uncertainty was evident in my directions to her. The focus member resisted and I found myself retreating because my discomfort skyrocketed, rather than entrusting in my ability to lead.

Returning to the question, I invited others to get involved. At times I sat back watching the twig move back and forth, assessing whose agenda was being served, waiting for an effective thought for me to contribute. As words sprung into my mind, I would move forward and upright; my eyes alert, like a cat ready to pounce. A brief pause and I would intervene and block, but this time I protected the focus member from someone else's issue. The persistent member continued her personal quest by interrupting another member but oblivious to this I returned to the questions. Waiting was the obvious next step so I sat, comfortable with the silence confident that inspiration would guide me.

It came as I thought I should ask the next question. I did. I listened, reflected, clarified, challenged, and used humour. I reminded her of a past pledge. I watched each

woman, the interaction, and time. I encouraged contributions and was astounded by the wise comments. Everything was flowing, but all of a sudden, I felt lost, unsure of what we were doing. Bewilderment set in and I frowned. I lunged for the talking stick, secured possession, and halted the discussion. I openly expressed my confusion and requested each member to share her perspective on what we were doing. This was effective. It exposed personal agendas and I had time to compose myself.

Frustration rose up; we were taking too much time. I mentioned this. I believed the focus member was obstructing or protecting herself but possibly, she simply did not understand. Confusion persisted so I utilized a different tactic. I recapped and moved on. She moved with me, but I was disappointed to learn she saw nothing new. I could sense something new, a need for concreteness. As this idea simmered, I stopped my narrow focus on her and widened my perspective to encompass the whole group. One woman was consistently silent which I found unsettling. I had no idea what to do, so I ignored her. Suddenly the camera stopped.

Simultaneously my mouth dropped and I halted. Think. The videotape has run out. Another tape? At home. One here? No. Another camera? Here? Yes. I bolted out of the room. I found another camera and a blank tape. I returned, changed cameras, pressed the record button, and sat down. I waited for an opportune moment and then brought the group back to focus. I apologized, stated this will never happen again, and continued.

The need for concreteness returned to my mind. With the imaginary talking stick securely under my arm, I considered the focus member's needs and deviated from the prearranged order of questions because I concluded that flexibility was necessary. I invited the group in and then I leaned back and briefly became an observer. However, I

stuck to my assertive style and I did not hesitate to jump in to block inappropriate comments and to redirect the group to the current questions.

Time, an always-pending pressure, came to the forefront and with facilitative authority, I interrupted the discussion to demand extra time and was not surprised to receive agreement. The focus member made a request of the group and I barely heard each response as the sound of a clock ticked only in my ear. Time a priority, I rushed her through the last questions with a critical, directive, and hurried style. I felt an urge to confront her but instead I asked permission to challenge. This technique was ineffective because I lost the chance to mention something that I suspected she was unaware of: it disappeared like a tear in the rain. Discovery was over for today.

I attempted to relinquish the lead by asking the group for direction on check-out. Again, I was conscious of time, I fought silence and offered suggestions. Fortunately, the group agreed to a round of check-out. I relaxed and I deemed myself a member not a facilitator. I took my turn and lost words in an overwhelming sense of emotion. I felt vulnerable and genuine as I expressed respect to the focus member. She took her turn and we gently moved to who would be the next focus member.

February 29th : Processing the feedback

Today I finally received the group member's feedback. I felt timid as I cautiously read each one but I was thrilled to see words of acknowledgement and recognition. However, the words I focused intently on, were the ones of slight criticism. My intense desire to develop my skills magnified the comments that indicated potential improvement areas. I struggled. I know that I had asked for feedback but I felt challenged not to feel insulted or hurt by what I read.

Anne confirmed my inclination that acknowledging members' anxiety in a respectful manner creates safe environment. She also mentioned my self-disclosure of anxiety and questioned my motives. I felt surprised; I never considered that this could be perceived as inappropriate. However, as I read Anne's ideas I could see how the members wished to build trust and confidence in my abilities. Sharing my natural nervousness might have been counterproductive. Anne also commented on the balance between the focus member's self-governance and the challenges from the group. I was conscious of the group's ability to influence and thought that I must be aware this. To accomplish this I must serve as a buffer between the group and the focus member, when I deem it necessary. That will be a big job!

Anne's last comment concerned my use of metaphors. I felt bewildered and I wanted to know more. I began to question if opening a dialogue between the research participants and me, through the computer discs, would help to uncover more information. I decided to check with my supervisor.

Carmen also commented on my openness during check-in and I realized that it was important to her that I project confidence. She mentioned a circumstance in the session when she was surprised I did not intervene. Immediately, I searched my memory in an attempt to discover when this could have been. As I contemplated, I considered that it related to the balance I discussed around Anne's comments. I believed Carmen felt I waited too long to buffer and I thought, how do I know when I need to intervene. I believed it required judgement and I realized each of us would have a different insight. She also suggested debriefing group tension and I realized I had not noticed any group tension.

Carmen mentioned the Discovery process and questioned my hurriedness through the last section. I am aware that my time concerns overruled my emphasis on the last section. Her interpretations made me question whether two hours are long enough. Do I value some questions more than other ones? How come in the past two hours seemed ample? I believed that Carmen expressed her high regard for my facilitation because she felt secure that I would keep things in control. I found this interesting and I wondered if everyone wants me to be in charge.

Diane's comments in some ways contradicted some of the above two. When I was open, she felt closer to me. This echoed loudly. Whatever I did, each member would receive it differently. Diane stated that my lack of intervention empowered her and made her feel trusted. Again, she had a different appreciation. Diane acknowledged my personality traits and skills that facilitated the process so I felt validated. She confirmed that mirroring, challenging, clarifying, managing, openness, effective intervention, and non-intervention are powerful. I planned to continue to use these strategies.

I believed that Betty confirmed the importance of staying in the present when facilitating. In addition, I considered that she acknowledged the value of the first seven questions and recognized how I ensured that a foundation for change was built. I found that Betty also commented on the balance between group challenging and my intervention. I thought that she perceived it as appropriate and recognized my intent to maintain safety while providing space for growth. I was interested when Betty mentioned how my flexibility demonstrated respect. I believe this is vital to creating trust and comfort in a group. I was pleased to read Betty's comment about my acknowledgement of one member's anxiety. This substantiated my earlier thoughts and magnified the importance of immediately addressing member's feelings.

I believe that Ellen acknowledged my respectfulness and mentioned her desire for more direction. I remembered seeing this during the session and thinking that she is unsure about her role. Her comment stimulated me to think what is the role of each member. Ellen presented yet another perspective regarding challenging and protecting. I smiled as I read this because I thought how many different ways could this be seen. However, she suggested another tactic. I could remind the group about self-governance and let the focus member halt the process if she felt too pushed. For me this idea was inspiring because it meant I did not have to try to read the focus member's mind. In addition, this strategy would gently identify my concern to the group members. Finally, Ellen mentioned time and her desire for more of it. This resonated with me. Ideally I would like to have unlimited time, but I recognized that this was not an option for this group.

March 5th : Permission

I e-mailed my supervisor and sought his perspective about opening the journals up for interactive dialogue between the participants and myself. I told him that I felt this might help to uncover the unknown quadrant. I informed him that I planned to respond to the participants by typing on their individual computer disc. I received his approval via e-mail.

March 8th : Meeting with my mentor

I just finished a thought-provoking meeting with my mentor. I commenced the session with a description of Discovery. I expressed my concern about the role of the group. I told him how the word clarity kept coming up: clarity of my role, what we needed to do, how I said things, and the process. He used the word explicit. This resonated with me; I had not been explicit with the group about their role because I was

not sure how they fit. I knew how to work the Discovery process and what I wanted for the focus member was change. I trusted that the Discovery process would assist the focus member to create change. However, what was the group's role? I originally planned to demonstrate the Discovery process to the group but this left them out like a Greek chorus. I knew now what I needed to do; I would be explicit on the purpose of each question.

In addition, I briefly mentioned to my mentor that the members' reactions were so different. I told him how I found each response thought provoking and informative, but that their perspectives were so diverse that I could not please all of them. I shared with him that I wanted to play a song for the past focus member, and I worried about the members' reactions. He ended our session stating that "Maybe I needed to be clear on why I was doing it." As I pensively left his office, I realized I needed to be very clear and explicit about my intentions. In addition, for self-preservation I needed to be extremely comfortable about my actions because I had set myself up for scrutiny. I needed self-clarity and confidence to deal with the feedback. This meant a great deal more thinking about what I was doing and why.

March 9th : Preparation

I responded to each participant, beginning each entry with the same explanation paragraph. In the middle, I replied directly to the participant commenting on her account and asked any questions I had.

After methodically reviewing both the journal reflections and my reflections, I created a list of things I wanted to change: more non-verbal connecting with the group members; more eye-contact; clean up my check-in; pause when a member questions me and process before I answer; more open body language; encourage group involvement; link or connect things; clarify group members' roles; help member's experience their

feelings; improve the session ending; and accept the process. I gradually formulated an agenda.

I boldly decided to play the song I had selected for the last session's focus member. My intentions were diverse. This was the first song I heard after the session and the words corresponded with what the focus member had said. I hoped it would provide her with an emotional connection to her goal and become another motivator for change. In addition, I intended to use it to bring the group into an emotional state hoping to foster intimacy. Songs commonly bring affect to the forefront. I wanted these women to get emotionally closer and I believed that the song would help. As I was creating the agenda, last week's focus member appeared at the centre. After a brief explanation, I obtained her permission to play the song.

In addition, I followed through on my decision to clarify the purpose of each Discovery questions. This was to make the group's understanding of their role clearer. I also typed eight cues in capital letters at the bottom of my agenda: eye contact, process before answering, honour emotions, here and now, open body language, link, ending, and relax. These were important aspects of facilitation on which I needed to focus.

I made a sign for the door that read "Group in session do not disturb." I had created an agenda and printed it. I had already set up the room including; arranging the furniture; setting up the equipment; bringing in Kleenex; testing the video, mike, and CD player. As I arranged the furniture, I kept three things in mind. One, I was video taping this so each chair had to be within view of the camera. Two, I was examining my facilitation so I needed to sit in the chair that squarely faced the camera. Three, I wanted each chair to form an even circle so that each member was equally a part of the group. Because of these three reasons, I dedicated extra time to meticulously arranging the

furniture and I stipulated my seat by setting my papers on it. It was dark when I left the centre. I felt prepared.

<u>March 10th : Session three</u>

I pressed the record button and cued the group that the camera was recording. I ambled over to my seat in the circle, which I had meticulously arranged and felt confident. I was quickly deflated as I realized that I had not placed extra paper and a pen with the agenda on the table. I reached out and moved my trusty red backpack beside my chair. Everything I needed was in there. All the women were talking while I impatiently waited for a pause. When the pause came, I started the session.

Conscious of my goal to reorganize check-in, I let it flow. Each member spoke and I respected silence, hoping to facilitate individual choice of turn. Even though I did not tell them, I was feeling nervous and vulnerable; I sat anxiously waiting to play the song and worried about their response. Because I felt apprehensive, I requested permission to play the song but failed to grant time for consensus. I felt clumsy as I stretched my finger over to the CD player to start the music. The group members continued to talk and I felt annoyed. I refrained from asking them to stop talking and to listen.

I sat back in my chair watching these women, anticipating emotion and connection. I wanted this to be a group experience, however, most of the members were looking down. I smiled and searched for one pair of eyes hoping to see a spark of intimacy. Everyone was listening, but I wanted to sing. I noticed periodic glimpses of eye contact from two members yet, I felt surprised by my intense desire to politely turn away. Intermittently, I would run my fingers through my hair allowing the music to override my

thoughts. At the end of the song, I turned off the CD player and casually cued this week's focus member to start.

With all five senses engaged, I listened attentively to the focus member as she expressed her desires for the day. I wrestled with a pressure that I sensed in her words. I felt discomfort, but I moved forward; it was time to for me to perform. I saw only her, and felt solely responsible. I believed she wanted something specific from me, yet I had no idea what it was, so I remained silent but still focused on her. I let her talk it through and the laughter she generated was a relief, a chance to breathe and change directions. I finally recognized the pressure she had placed on me and I chose not to continue to accept it, as this was a group process.

I felt relieved as I requested permission to open it to the group. Once the focus member granted permission, I took a moment to be explicit. I nervously explained the purpose of the first question. Even though this was what I had previously decided to do, I felt anxious. I was implementing something new and I was unsure how each member would respond. In my discomfort, I over-expounded my clarification. I did not hear or detect any group complaints so I continued the Discovery process, observing from a pulled back position in my chair.

I watched as one woman verbally engaged with the focus member. I started to suspect a personal agenda creeping into her words and I felt alarmed. I judged that she was not following the Discovery purpose. I automatically intervened, stated what I assumed. Even though she agreed, I was conscious of a tightening in my chest; I was unsure of my direct intervention.

We continued and I persistently slid back and forth in my chair. I would lean forward to hone in on the focus member to challenge, clarify, and summarize what she

was saying, then backwards to observe the group, to wait and watch. I was always prepared to pounce and interrupt because I did not completely trust individual abilities. At times, I noticed one of the women would say something effective and I would think that I should have thought of that. As we proceeded through the questions, I informed the group by expanding on the purpose of each questions. I regularly returned the discussion back to the questions in order to keep the group focused.

I believed that the focus member wanted to know what the group members were thinking. She mentioned the women's lack of comments and I sarcastically blocked any responses. I felt powerful and gloated that I had an audience. However, my triumph was short lived as thoughts of doubt emerged. This was a group process and I was taking centre stage. I compared individual accomplishments and kept score. I wondered if it was time to let the group do the work. I needed to invite clarity, summaries, and feedback from the other women to somehow facilitate their involvement. Suddenly I discovered a new position in my chair; I sat on my hands. Was this an attempt to block myself from grabbing for the talking stick?

I stopped holding myself back, and reopened the conversation between the focus member and myself. I slid forward in my chair and attempted to probe, question, and challenge her. Confusion surfaced, and I felt overwhelmed. I invited the other women to contribute. However, a new idea came to me, so I seized control and isolated the interaction between us. Because I had become judgemental and made assumptions, I backed off and requested the others to participate.

With the focus member's change and growth predominate in my mind, I brought what I believed was her struggle into the room by modeling how to overcome her obstacle. Another member took hold of the talking stick and facilitated the process as I

non-verbally engaged the focus member. The moment expanded to three of us working together. This was short lived because my modelling encouraged each woman to consecutively engage the focus member alone. I watched and internally fought thinking how do I fit in this, where is my place, what should I do. Yet as I questioned myself, I knew my place was to watch, and I was to do nothing. Reminded of my a recurring theme in my life of feeling left out, I realized being the facilitator in this group gave me a role, and not interacting brought up insecurities. This was my personal issue and I battled to suppress it so I could continue to facilitate.

Temporarily forgetting my disquiet, I focused myself to identify what the focus member had accomplished in those moments. With my peripheral vision, I was aware that each woman was forward in her chair and apparently engaged. I released the stick and watched. Unfortunately, I became concerned about the time. The session was close to ending and we were only half way through the questions. I stated the dilemma to the group and invited their suggestions. I reminded myself that I was there to coach the group not solely the focus member.

Each woman took her turn and provided her perspective. I listened as one woman stated a task for me to complete. Again, I felt pressured to perform. I believed I must complete what she requested, but considered this a tall order. Previous experience with pressure helped me to decide not to accept it, even though this was what she wanted. After everyone spoke and we achieved consensus I called an end to the Discovery process for this session.

After we all checked-out, everyone left and I packed up the equipment. I stopped and reflected. I was feeling sad and detached. I was feeling vulnerable because I had impulsively expressed a desire. It might have been better if I had taken time to process

my intent and sifted out any personal agenda. I was feeling disconnected from the group and I reacted by attempting to create a connection with the women. This week's topic had resonated with me and I felt vulnerable, afraid, concerned, and lost. I sat and examined my feelings.

After some time, I recognized my intense desire to be competent and I questioned how would I know when I had effectively facilitated. Then I wondered what it was that I wanted for the group to accomplish. I did not know.

March 12th : Looking back

I considered the idea that the group is like one body, with the facilitator's role to be more like a floating part. Although it was important for me to be aware of the different parts it was not essential for me to be one specific part. My function was to ensure that someone represents the heart, eyes, mouth, mind, and stomach. It is not my role to always be the mind. I wondered if it was time to shift the leadership part of the facilitation away from myself. As I watched the video, I thought I was doing a great deal of individual counselling and the group was my audience. As a result, I was not facilitating the group; rather I was facilitating the individual. I began to see the group working as a whole. Rather than separating the individual actions, I needed to view the group as a system that encapsulated different perspectives, values, and understanding. That system worked as a whole towards a common purpose. The results would occur because of the whole group; because of every woman's overt and covert contribution.

March 15th : Looking at feedback

I received the members' feedback with less anxiety and more curiosity. As I read Carmen's response, I felt supported in my choice to play the song and to explain the purpose of the questions. I found myself working through my defensiveness as I read her

account of my phrasing for the focus member. I rapidly raced through my memory trying to recall any contradictions. However, I composed myself and considered this as an important point. I reminded myself that the goal must come from the focus member. I must be cautious not to put my words in her statement. As I read on, I appreciated Carmen's observations that I let the focus member lead and that I clarified only when necessary. I realize that I projected my belief that each session belongs to the focus member and she is in charge of the Discovery process.

I felt recognized for my work when Ellen commented on my new contribution to this session. I became pensive when I read Ellen's comment that I did most of the work. I believed that her perspective was that the members did not contribute, not that I over-controlled. Previously I had not considered that viewpoint. I contemplated that there were other dynamics that influence the process. Ellen brought to my attention the time factor and this impelled me to consider the schedule. In my experience with Discovery, two hours was plenty of time, however, in these sessions two hours seemed too short. I reconsidered the two-session idea; splitting the focus member's time into two sessions. The first seven questions one week and the second seven the next. I knew this was not an option for this group so I wondered how to remove the time pressure. The word 'trust' echoed in my head. I needed to trust that whatever we finished was all that was meant to be done.

I felt inspired by Betty's comment on the wisdom of the Discovery process. She reconfirmed my concern that the members may find it difficult to observe my facilitation while concentrating on the focus member. I felt enlightened by the idea that a person's lack of ability to recite her goal by memory may be significant, so I decided to pay attention to that in the future. I smiled as I read Betty's appreciation of my metaphor

about putting our suggestions out to float in the air and the focus member's right to grab those ideas or not. Betty described the discussion at the end of the session as candid and this surprised me. After contemplation, I agreed it was honest but not necessarily productive.

I felt understood as I read Diane's comments. She acknowledged my intentions and recognized my efforts. I found myself agreeing with her descriptive words that I was unobtrusive, unhurried, and persistent. I felt inspired by the idea that the goal was to help the focus member have valuable insights. In addition, I agreed with Diane's concerns about sidetracking and completion of the questions. I agreed that it was important to complete the process if the focus member deemed it so, but neither the members nor I could force it to happen. I felt reassured with Diane's acknowledgement of my competence, honesty, and commitment to personal growth.

Anne reiterated my thoughts around intention and this resulted in my continued questioning. If I did that, what would be the purpose? I felt unsettled when I read Anne's comment regarding my analogies because I felt that the comments reached beyond the session. I feared that I would second-guess my behaviour around Anne. I recognized that I became defensive with each word I read. Once I ceased reacting and acknowledged my initial hurt, I changed my direction of thought. I believed Anne's words were honest and frank reflections of what she was thinking. I had a choice. To receive them and learn, or reject them and feel hurt. In the end, I preferred the former. I learned that as a facilitator I needed to provide balance in my explanations with frank comments, analogies, and concrete statements.

<u>March 15th : Processing with my mentor</u>

During my meeting with my mentor, I described my observation of my position in the chair. I described how I leaned either forward or significantly back. He questioned me on how differentiated I am, how separated I am from the process. I wondered how separated can I be if I am part of the process. This is interesting. Is it a facilitator's responsibility to separate herself from the group process? If so what does that mean? He questioned how much of an expert stance I was taking in the group. I responded with the realization that I had been facilitating the Discovery process not the group. I had made sure the task was done, not that the group did the task.

We also discussed the fact that these people came together to do my research project, which was for me to facilitate. However, I wanted them to take ownership of the group. We queried if this were possible considering the prearranged agreement. How can I expect them to facilitate the model, if they are not sold on it, or they expect me to facilitate it?

I continued with my concern about the group involvement. I did not want them to be an audience I wanted them to work the Discovery process. How could I facilitate that? One idea was to hand over the questions to someone else. Another was to bring them into the process sooner. A third was for me to stop responding, turn to a group member, and elicit her reaction. Finally, I could notice my language and see if I needed to shift from an expert position to an egalitarian stance.

As I left my mentor's office, I felt confused, my head rattled with unanswered questions. What do I want the group members to do? How do I want them to participate? What do I hope they will get out of this? Would it be useful to have them discuss how they feel about the group? Can there be a sense of community? What is community? How

do I know I have successfully facilitated the group? Am I hoping for more than is possible in this situation and time-frame? I lacked the answers and I felt tired from all the questions. I decided to leave it for today.

March 19th : Getting ready

I came in early to create the agenda and set up the room. I decided to provide the purpose of the questions in written format (see Appendix H) so I did not have to tell them. To address my time concerns, I decided to add a schedule to my agenda. I calculated the total allotted time for Discovery as ninety minutes. I allocated a specific amount of time for each question.

My reminders this time were: genuine permission; neutral position; let the group do the work; facilitate group engagement; body language; acknowledgement; and time management. All of these areas came from the group's reflections, my reflections, and my mentor meeting. I had noticed in the past that I had asked the group for permission but simultaneously given the message that I had already decided. Therefore, this time I wanted only to ask when I truly meant it and ensure I received each member's permission. I had noticed last time that I was in extreme positions in my chair. I wanted to experiment this time and to see if my position in the chair affected my facilitation.

During the last session, I had also felt that I was working the process more than the group. I wanted to facilitate group engagement and let the group do the work. I suspected that their body language would indicate their level of engagement. I wanted to acknowledge each member's contribution in order to encourage more participation. I anticipated that this day's focus member would want to complete the process, so I also wanted to manage the time accordingly. By the time I had set everything up, I scarcely had enough time to have lunch before the session started.

March 19th : 2:00 p.m. Session four

At this session, one member was absent. I took my chair in the circle and commenced the discussion with authority. I had decided to take the first check-in spot without revealing my thoughts and feelings. I stated that I wanted to play a song. This time I was sincere in asking permission from each woman and waited for unanimous consent. Once received, I started the music and remained aloof to their reactions. As the song played, I utilized the time to find a neutral position in my chair. After I turned off the CD player, I was adamant that I would wait for another woman to speak. I sat silent, but within seconds, I felt obligated to state that I was finished.

One woman eagerly volunteered to go next. As she shared her elaborate description of a personal experience, I forced myself to remain attentive. Although I doubted part of what she was saying, I still experienced joy as I listened. In order to cover my doubt, I sat on my hands and nodded while I enjoined myself to avoid judgement. Once she was done, another woman complained about the room temperature. I resented this interruption, but I resigned myself to waiting and listening to the dialogue as the thermostat was adjusted.

As the woman returned to the room, she requested permission to ask questions during the check-in process. This time I nodded to encourage her request, hoping it would realign our direction. I felt no obligation to provide an answer so I redirected the decision to the group. Two members indicated ambivalence and another expressed her preference. I interpreted everyone's nods as agreement to the one woman's preference, so I stipulated who would check-in last and we moved on.

Another woman disclosed an experience that weighed on her heart and I felt both powerless and empathic as I listened to her. She shared distinctly different information to

complete her check-in, which shifted the focus away from her emotions. I felt unsure and remained inactive as the next woman used only two words to check-in. I battled between my desire to draw out more information and my determination to respect her choice. In subsequent conversation, I realized that I was about to be complimented on my facilitation. However, I did not want them to single me out because I was afraid that they might perceive me as an expert, so I diffused this discussion. My goal was to be an equal and not an authority figure.

I declared my decision to try something new. I told them I would let them ask the questions, and I nodded to the woman on my left to begin. I instantly noticed her surprised expression as she laughed a refusal. I laughed too and while I was accepting her refusal, she quickly agreed to comply. At this point, I changed my style; I became passive and observed the process. I barely contributed, staunchly removing my input and replacing it with quiet examination.

I found myself wanting to jump in, but used an imaginary string at the top of my spine to hold me back. I wanted to concentrate on all members and the group dynamics not just on the focus member. I stuck with my plan to let the group do the work, despite my awareness of the focus member's struggle. I accepted the pauses and let the questioner dominate. I waited and waited and waited. Internal frustration grew as I witnessed the Discovery process deteriorate. I finally conceded and stated my thoughts directly to the focus member, but because I was not attuned to her needs, my remarks were not effective. Returning to my resolve to remain passive, I became uncomfortable, worrying that the group would become leaderless.

I noticed the clock and referred to my schedule. I had miscalculated. Once I recalculated, I realized it was time to move on. I increased my involvement and for the

first time this session, I shifted the discussion to the purpose of the first question. However, I only partly connected because I was still trying to remain passive. I suggested it was time to move on and signalled the next woman to ask question two.

On a few occasions, I made suggestions to the focus member, but most of my concentration was on the group process. I watched the women: what was happening, who was doing what, and who was saying what. I was aware that one woman sat forward in her chair watching and listening to the focus member. Another woman sat back in her chair with her arms and legs crossed. I felt concerned. I shifted my attention back to the focus member and I thought that someone needed to increase the interaction with the focus member, to challenge her, to probe, to keep her focused. However, I remained steadfast to my goal to be passive. If I did it then the group would not, so I waited.

I wanted to assist the focus member in obtaining new awareness. I struggled as I concluded that the other women were not accomplishing this. My sense of responsibility to her took over, so I concentrated on her. I challenged what I deemed irrational beliefs and she shocked me as she left the circle for some tea. She avoided the challenge by leaving. As she stood apart from the circle, I wondered whether my concern for the group's engagement was impeding her growth.

As we progressed through the questions, I experienced uncertainty. I felt insecure about my relationship with one of the women. I became self-conscious because I worried about her disapproval. I guarded my conduct. As I looked at her, I wondered if I were sensing something now or if my discomfort was the result of her prior journal comments. This was a distraction so I decided to dismiss my concerns and focus on the session.

Conscious of time I forced the group on task. However, I continued to feel conflict. I wondered how do I manage the group and the task simultaneously, how can we

all be active together, and can I facilitate that? I listened to one member talk and felt impatient, concerned about the time. I recognized my contradiction. I wanted group engagement, but when it occurred I worried about time. I held back my participation and sat watching.

With all the questions asked and answered, the Discovery process was completed. The focus member had what she needed-a goal, fuel, vision, plan, and affirmation. Yet, I wondered if this were enough for her, did she find anything new, and had I sacrificed quality for completion and personal growth for group engagement?

I stated my intention to regain facilitation and suggested we have two rounds of check-out: one to complete the Discovery process, and the other to discuss the group process. They agreed so I took my turn, expressed my sentiments, and acknowledged the focus member's efforts.

During the second check-out, I listened to one woman's concern regarding her group participation. As she mentioned this, I thought this is not a problem for me and I quickly asserted my opinion. I also wondered if she wanted me to curtail her behaviour and I questioned if I wanted to do so. Unfortunately, I reacted to her without thinking. I did not stop and consider this an opportunity to address group interaction. Instead, I only considered my personal position and was not a group facilitator.

As I listened to a discussion about the time factor and the Discovery process, I sat in awe. I perceived that the women were defending all of the question's usefulness. It seemed as if together they were taking some ownership of the group and making decisions on how things would happen. I summarized what they said and the group reached a consensus. It was almost as if each one put her rubber stamp of approval on the

process. Somehow, I felt like a midwife who merely assisted each woman as she gave birth to the idea that the Discovery process was sufficient.

Once everyone left, I recognized my feelings of concern. I questioned whether I had sacrificed the focus member's growth for the sake of the group process. I reflected on my change in facilitation style and I thought that perhaps I had acted too drastically. My goal was to let the group do the work, but I found it very difficult to manage the group dynamics and the Discovery process. Part way through the session, I became overly concerned with completing the Discovery process. With completion the top priority, I forced the process and impinged on the opportunity for the focus member to get in touch with her emotions.

My experience raised questions for me. Is competent leadership having confidence in what I do while still remaining open? Is competency finding a balance between watching and participating, shifting between bringing things to focus and letting them flow? I speculated that the group wanted me be more active. It appeared as if the more I attempted to turn the responsibility over to the group, the more they wanted me to lead.

Last week I was so fretful that I dominated the group session. Therefore, I deliberately changed my facilitation style to avoid squashing opportunities for the women to participate. However, I believe I overlooked some key dynamics. Last week, I thought focus member wanted me to work her through the Discovery steps keeping her challenged and focusing on her emotions. Even though I felt discomfort, I chose to perform. Unfortunately, I missed considering the effect her request might have had on the group dynamics. Maybe the other members chose not to participate or she was not open to their involvement? I had fooled myself into believing that my actions stood alone.

However, the women made their own choices so the facilitator is not the sole influence on participation.

As I reflected on the session just completed, I came to believe that I unnecessarily altered my facilitation. I reacted to the third session and attempted to manipulate the women's participation in the fourth session. My style today was to passively demand their participation, rather than to actively invite it. I went overboard in my goal to make this a group process.

March 21ˢᵗ : Feedback confirmation and contradiction

As I read Ellen's feedback, it confirmed my realization concerning my passive facilitation. My actions demonstrated a lack of clarity and boundaries, which proved frustrating and confusing for her.

I was not surprised to read Betty's preference that I ask the questions. Having only one person asking the Discovery questions, keep things in focus. I learned from Betty that the women may vicariously struggle with the focus member or they may personally struggle with the goal. Their lack of participation might be the result of these internal struggles. Again, as I read Betty's journal, I was reminded of the pressure I felt about time. I considered the idea that a majority of the members including me seemed concerned by the lack of time. I wondered how I could eliminate this distraction. I felt encouraged by Betty's final comments regarding the calibre of my facilitation.

I read Diane's comments regarding my passivity. It confirmed my belief that I missed many opportunities to challenge. As I read her words about my failure to check-in, I was reminded that everyone is different. Some saw me as forth coming so I adjusted and then others saw me as open so I adjusted again. I began to believe adjusting was the problem.

I felt surprised as I read Anne's comments. She appreciated my facilitation style this session. Again, I found this a contrary perspective. However, this time I decided to disagree. I recognized as I read Anne's explanation of my analogies that I was letting it affect my style. I reminded myself that I could not change her interpretation. As I read Anne's thoughts about my different treatment of group members, I raced through my memory to verify or refute it. However, I quickly stopped and contemplated her suggestions. I decided that there is nothing wrong with treating different individuals differently, and being conscious of my assumptions and biases would only improve my facilitation. Therefore, I greatly appreciated what I read, and I decided to keep her words in mind.

Anne's final comments seemed to question my tendency to include the group in decision-making, and suggested to me that I demonstrate my expertise rather than reach consensus. However, I wanted to let the group make the decisions and I did not want the group members to perceive me as an expert. Yet, I considered whether there were times when a quick decision on my part might be appropriate.

March 23rd : Plan of action

Due to scheduling, I was not able to meet with my mentor this week. After setting up the room and recording equipment, I contemplated on both my reflections and the journal responses. I decided that for tomorrow's session, I would take a more active role as the facilitator. I considered the actions that I wanted to implement in the next session. First, I would keep the discussion focused on the Discovery process. This meant reminding the group what question we were on and requesting that the focus member repeat her goal. Second, I determined to alleviate the time pressure by asking the

members to remove their watches. My intention was to help them forget about the time and concentrate on Discovery.

I also planned to ask the focus member whether her priority was to complete all the questions or cover each one question thoroughly, with the understanding that she might not finish them all. Her preference would then guide my questioning. In addition, I intended to inform the group that we seem to have chosen kindness over growth. I would encourage them to use more confrontation.

Some other changes that I would implement were to make connections between members' comments, to offer encouragement, and to summarize those comments. In addition, I wanted to point out when the focus member demonstrated the obstacle and/or fear that blocked her from attaining her goal.

As I prepared my agenda for tomorrow's session, I felt confident and determined. I knew what I wanted to implement, and I had a vision of my facilitation style. Again, I added a reminder section in capital letters. I wanted to observe members body language, to keep things focused, to use blocking, linking, and summarizing. I also wanted to take time to think about my actions and make a conscious choice to act or not. I placed everything in its selected spot and smiled as I locked the door. I was ready.

March 24th : Session five

Something felt different as I walked back to my chair in the circle. I perceived that the women were doing more than talking, they were enjoying each other. I felt as if I was joining a group of comrades. In a relaxed manner, I waited, smiled, and listened as I watched. I used humour, another friend, to gently gain the women's attention. I called the first step of check-in and I watched them chat. At one point, I reminded the women of our task by mentioning that the focus member would go last. I noticed a natural moment for

my turn and after briefly checking in, I started the CD player. I felt comfortable as the familiar music flowed and I remained nestled in my chair. Today I was not interested in making eye contact or in receiving a reaction from the previous focus member. I was unsure why. Instead, I chose to get lost in the song.

Unexpectedly, one woman beside me motioned for the Kleenex. As I passed the box, I noticed that someone was quietly allowing her feelings to surface. I felt surprised and pleased; to me this was unforeseen but welcome. I witnessed another woman move her chair closer and place her hand on the emotional woman's knee. I felt uncomfortable so I requested that she move back. As she did move, I sensed that my appeal was not welcome. I was aware of my trepidation, but soothed myself with the thought that I was enforcing a norm to respect each other's physical space. I firmly believed that it was my responsibility to monitor boundaries and I had managed to handle it without it becoming an issue.

I felt full of respect and comfortable as the focus member checked-in. I showed my attentiveness by listening, observing, mirroring, and welcoming pauses. For a moment, I became distracted, because I felt uncertain about the woman I had told to move back. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that her hand was blocking her face from my view. I decided not to be concerned and returned my attention to the focus member. At one point the group engaged in laughter and I used this moment as a transition point. I knew the focus member's sentiments did not reflect her chosen goal, so I suggested that check-in was over and polled the group for permission to move on. I remembered reading in some of the women's feedback that they wanted more direction from me. However, I wanted to be consistent in inviting each woman's perspective. I realized that I valued that action because I believe that it builds a sense of belonging and

worth in the group. I hoped it would foster individual engagement. This realization felt good. It was as if I had repaired a crack in my cement foundation. It strengthened my beliefs.

I summarized the last session's discussion about the importance of the whole Discovery process and trusting that the time needed would be there. My intention was to update the member who had missed the previous meeting and to confirm my perception of the discussion. Even though I ended with a question to the group, my previous concerns about one woman caused me to look to her for an answer. By looking at her, I invited her perspective, hoping to appease any discomfort she might have been feeling and to reassure her that I valued her input. A short discussion followed and the women appeared to reach a mutual understanding with each other.

I felt bold as I followed our common agreement with a challenging invitation for all of them to remove their watches. However, I felt deceptive as I glanced at the clock visible only from my chair. One woman refused but, even though I felt disappointed, I would not and could not force obedience. While the other four removed their watches, I stole a moment to reflect. I recalled that the non-compliant member never appeared overly concerned with time. I reassured myself that four out of five watches out of sight was sufficient.

I felt some hesitation as I considered the next task on my agenda. I knew I needed confidence so I straightened my back, raised my shoulders, and took a deep breath. I wanted to challenge the whole group about saving and protecting the focus member at the expense of growth. However, I feared that I would be judgemental and pushy. With some courage in my chest, I stumbled around with my words in an attempt to convince all of them. I felt vulnerable and began to wonder if they were feeling defensive. One woman

spoke and I felt relief as she eloquently supported my ramblings. I learned from her which behaviours she felt would work. I concluded that my lecture about what they should not do was judgemental and disrespectful. In contrast, her presentation of what they could do was respectful and more effective. After she completed her courteous thoughts, I inquired how the woman for whom I felt concern was doing. I am not sure if this woman provided an honest reply, but I felt relieved that I had openly identified my concerns.

My final point of business was asking the Discovery questions. I suggested that the focus member decide who was to ask the questions. She left the decision with me and, without hesitation; I stated I would ask them. In that moment, I believed that the group wanted me to ask the questions and so did I. With all my planned business addressed, my shoulders relaxed as I listened to the focus member's description of her goal. I acknowledged her struggle. Intrigued I witnessed as one woman questioned her and I felt a group alliance as we worked towards clarification. I was aware that one question jumped ahead in the process, but I permitted it and later gently guided the discussion back to the first question. Again, humour entered the circle and I felt it flow naturally. I balanced between watching and listening, guiding and directing. I was able to shift my concentration between the focus member and the group. I scrutinized how the focus member received other member's points and I remained ready to buffer or redirect if necessary. I felt calm and acted naturally.

I was impressed as I witnessed a snowball of knowledge build as the discussion moved among us. One woman's opinion shed a different light on things. I battled between supporting her point and protecting the focus member. I settled on protection, but chose to acknowledge her contribution. I made room for exploration and balanced it

with respect. I confidently invited another woman to share her thoughts. I saw the opportunity for me to add to the knowledge by challenging and addressing the focus member's previous awareness. I observed two members work together supporting each other's perspective and enlightening the focus member. I was relaxed in the middle of my chair.

The focus member raised a topic. I felt apprehensive as I became concerned for a different member, worried that she may feel sensitive to this issue. This raised my awareness of her silence so I wanted to solicit her participation. I felt perplexed because I had no idea what to do. Should I speak to the silent member in an attempt to invite her in or should I ask her a question? However, I did not feel comfortable with my ideas so I shifted back to the focus member. Concentrating on the focus member, I identified a potential issue, but I decided not to interrupt the present discussion. During a natural break, I drew attention to the Discovery process with the intention of keeping the group on task.

My comfort level was high; I was confident and relaxed. I observed the exploration of ideas and the active women's contributions. Gradually, I again became sensitive to one woman's silence. I gently invited her participation and welcomed with amazement her new thoughts. Just as I started to ask a focusing question, one woman asked it. I was thrilled; I believed we were working together. I could not help but think that we were a group of women accepting and supporting our likenesses and differences, all with the intention of assisting the focus member. I glanced at the clock and felt relieved that I was aware of the time, but not worried about it.

One woman challenged and I wondered if this was helpful for the focus member or was it to appease the challenger or both. How could I separate personal agendas from

ideas? I am unsure what prompted me; nevertheless, I intervened and saved the focus member. I reiterated her perspective, received her agreement, and brought the group back to the Discovery questions. As we safely moved through the process, everyone contributed. I watched, supported, and safeguarded. I observed each member's facial expression and body posture, and I assumed that each woman was as pleasantly engaged, as I was.

My mood changed as we moved into the fears and obstacles question. I became serious, as if a sign stating: "Lets get down to business" was printed on my forehead. In my judicious attempt to effectively guide the group, I stated the intention of the next question. I felt supported by the other women and hoped that we were unveiling the focus member's fears. Suddenly, one woman interjected and I felt puzzled. What was that? I did not want to dismiss her but I honestly did not like what she did. Very firmly and almost through my teeth, I asked if she was uncomfortable with my direction. She denied any discomfort and continued with her inquiry. Without acknowledging how interruptive this was, I attempted to continue to pursue the focus member's fears. Another woman supported my attempt, she recommended that I engage the focus member directly and I followed her advice. I composed myself and ignoring any doubts, prepared to speak. I worked hard to challenge the focus member, but quickly realized that because of the interruption the moment was gone. I turned the lead over to the focus member, but the tense interaction between the interrupter and me hung like a cobweb no one would clean.

We all joined in laughter and we recovered the flow of the Discovery process. When someone contributed, I would support her. At one point, I thought that this is like co-leadership, and I was glad to see the progress. Again, another woman spoke my thoughts. There was much laughter. Once, two women appeared to jump ahead, but I

blocked them, and led the discussion back to the question. As we proceeded to the end of Discovery process, I believed that we continued to connect and collaborate. The focus member's answers came easily. It was as if some small part of her had changed, that she now believed in herself, and truly felt able to obtain her goal.

I causally suggested two rounds for check-out; one for the focus member and one for administrative details. As I listened to the first round, I wanted to shout at the group to stop being so cognitive and let their feelings emerge. I did not yell, as I knew I could not force them and instead I shared words from my heart. In the second round, we discussed details of future sessions and then the church bells signalled time. I triumphantly realized we were done with ten minutes to spare.

After the session, the women chatted and I believed the group was hesitant to leave. In a daze, I gathered the equipment and gradually they dispersed. I reflected on the session and enjoyed my feelings of success. I felt that we had moved the focus member to a new understanding of herself and that she had grown. I believed she would accomplish her goal. I perceived that in this session, I had facilitated well. I balanced between keeping the focus and letting things flow, encouraging others to contribute and adding my thoughts. I took the lead at appropriate times and ensured comfort by safeguarding the boundaries. Only one thing concerned me, and that was my cranky retort to one woman when I perceived her contribution as disruptive. I resigned myself to remember that it was only a one-minute interaction in a two-hour session.

March 28th : Reading the reflections

Diane's words showed me the importance of consistency in each group session. Once I established a pattern of playing a song for the previous weeks focus member it was important to maintain that pattern for every member. I agreed that my facilitation

style is person-centred. This week I asked the focus member how she wanted the questions asked and as in past sessions, I adjusted the framework to match the focus member's needs. I appreciated reading words of encouragement that acknowledge the work I put in between sessions and it reinforced for me the importance of reflecting and making changes for improvement.

I felt justified as I read Betty's comments about my invitation to remove watches as it reduced the pressure we felt about time. I appreciated reading what I considered acceptance of my facilitation style this time. Apparently, it kept the process smoother. I was intrigued with the idea that my facilitation was disappearing into the background. I perceived this as a suggestion that I was improving.

I felt that Anne's comments were similar to Betty's regarding this session's facilitation. I perceived her informing me that the facilitation was more constructive and comfortable this time. I was not surprised to read Anne's comments around my cranky retort during the session. I learned that my response seemed thoughtless. I believed that my action demonstrates my fallibility. I am not always capable of responding appropriately. However, I could have openly expressed my feelings of frustration and apologized for my manner. I realized that Anne was informing me that there are times in the process where I should just make the decision to save time, and not always seek consensus. If I considered when my decisions might be of more value and why, then maybe I could determine when to obtain consensus and when I should decide myself.

Carmen's responses, made me think that asking the one woman to move her chair back not only showed my respect for personal space, but also demonstrated my belief in maintaining emotional boundaries. I felt supported in my actions, but interestingly this support now had less impact on me. I had faith in what I had done. Carmen drew

attention to the decision making process and suggested that Discovery is not a consensus process. I felt amused. The more I tried to hand over control the more the group wanted me to keep it.

I felt confused and surprised as I read Ellen's reflections because I had no idea how to respond. She accepted her feelings of disconnection, which reminded me that I am incapable of knowing all that each member brings to the session. Not everyone is going to be happy to be there every time. I believe that I did suspect her mood during the session, but I chose to address it only once. This was an excellent reminder to me not feel responsible for any member's mood

March 29th : Ponderings with my mentor

Today with my mentor, I discussed my concept of community. I processed my understanding of community as a place where one can have autonomy, but still feel a sense of belonging. My mentor cleverly helped me to reflect on whether the group's concept of community may be different from mine. He suggested another understanding of community where people would save and support each other, rather than challenge because they fear being outcasts. I wondered whether acceptance is important to the group members. If it were, would it affect their willingness to challenge each other? How as a group facilitator can I foster acceptance of diversity? How does dissension and conformity exist together with respect? Possibly, it is my role to acknowledge individuality and vicissitude. If I model and draw out the diversity, perhaps the members would feel more able to express diversity. Is facilitation community building? I want it to be that! I remembered a quote on a poster that caught my eye. The essences of leadership: "A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions,

and the compassion to listen to the needs of others." I am beginning to see how this is true.

March 30th : Getting ready

I came to the centre after all the staff had left and went through my routine of setting up the equipment and room. By this time, I even knew which plants I needed to move and where to place the garbage can. I turned on the camera and talked to myself as I sat consecutively in each chair. After that, I removed the video, went to the unoccupied room upstairs, and played the tape to ensure proper lights, sound, and camera angle. Once I was confident that everything was in its place, I turned off the lights closed the door and taped on my signs. I walked across the hall and familiarly positioned myself in front of the computer. I was ready to create the agenda for tomorrow.

I read over my reflections and found again my desire to be clear, explicit, and concise. I saw this as a pattern for me. When I was uncomfortable or stressed about what I was saying I would ramble on. I wanted to demonstrate competence and confidence, not get caught in explanations that hinted at uncertainty and doubt. In my reflections, I read another desire, to stop masking my intentions. I wanted to model authenticity and I believed I needed to stop denying my purpose. If someone called me on what I was attempting to do, I needed to simply say, "Yes that is what I am doing".

The next goal I read was to observe the group members and attempt to identify their personal agendas. I felt a strong desire to block member's personal issues. As I wondered why, I became conscious of a new question. Did I believe that members struggled with eliminating their issues and had a hard time seeing the deeper issues? I recognized my assumptions and continued to ponder my views. Were some members hesitant to share their views afraid they may be putting their issues on the focus member?

What role did I need to play when I perceived personal problems or opinion? I sensed that I was best equipped to block, rather than draw attention to the member. The Discovery framework that they had agreed to focused on one member at a time, calling attention to issues. I was not sure if there was time within this framework to identify other member's issues as they arose. Therefore, I decided that for tomorrow's session, I would only block group member's personal concerns, not challenge them. However, I would continue to identify and challenge the focus member.

In my reflections, I read a reminder to provide support to group members with the intention of encouraging their input. I wanted to build on what they said and ensure that I addressed the suggestions they raised. However, I also recognized my need to balance between blocking their personal agendas and encouraging their perceptions. I decided that when I deemed their input to be free of judgement I would support them using non-verbal cues, verbal acknowledgement, linking, and summarizing. I knew it was important for me to allow different perspectives, and to remember that their perspective was not wrong because it was at variance from mine. This felt like a challenging task, but it was something I wanted to accomplish.

One last thing that I identified was the possibility of calling on silent members when I felt actively engaged, confused, or frustrated. Maybe a silent member might provide a different perspective that I was unable to see and that this would benefit the group. However, I wondered how to do this respectfully. One way would be to say nothing, yet I worried that the active members would carry on. Another possibility would be to request the more active members to stop and without pinpointing one member invite the quiet ones to contribute. I remembered a strategy I used during the second session. I

simply told the group I was confused, asked if we could stop for a moment, then asked each member to describe how she saw the situation.

This agenda was much shorter as I had less of a need for a safety sheet. I only had a few administrative tasks and five statements as cues: invite diversity, stop and process check, deflect sidetracks, watch for personal agendas, and surrender to differing perspectives.

I realized that tomorrow was the second to last session, which filled me with mixed emotions: gratefulness, relief, and melancholy. I had learned so much. I enjoyed the group interaction, and I took pleasure from witnessing the focus members' growth. I knew that I was tired and looked forward to decreasing the hours spent on this research. However, I was also aware of my sadness that this would all soon be over. I gathered my belongings and before I left I confidently glanced towards the group session room. Tomorrow would be fine.

March 31st : Session six

As I arrived at the centre, I was aware I was running out of steam. Over the last eight weeks, I had dedicated a great deal of energy, not only to this research, but also to school and my practicum. This meant that I would have to bolster my energy for this session. I sensed something different about the group members, almost a feeling of artificiality. Was this because this was a research project or was it because of the group dynamics, or both? I thought that I sensed some resentment amongst the members. It was obvious that some members were interacting socially outside the group and other members were left out. I wondered if this was one of the sources of the tension that I detected. Somehow, before and during check-in, things seemed taut, like a child required to listen to her parent's advice.

The focus member had notified me she would be late, and once she arrived, I stated that the camera was on. Again, I felt a sense of artificiality, as I commenced check-in and listened to the women's seemingly strained words. Was it my imagination or did the women say little and leave out any personal information? Fortunately, I had a secret that lifted the weight from my spirit. The song I would share. First, I spoke honestly and then in light-hearted manner I turned on the CD player. I wanted to laugh and play as I listened to what I considered a meaningful and spirited song. Once the song finished, I smoothly moved the discussion into the next stage by turning to the focus member and gently asking her how she was doing. This signalled that it was her turn.

Once the focus member checked-in, I changed my demeanour, gave brief instructions, including an invitation to all women to remove their watches. I quickly asked the first question, and then I observed. I waited, giving her room to say what she needed. I reassured her not to hurry and I continued to absorb her words, tone, and movements. I was aware of how quiet the group was, but I welcomed the silence because I was tired and unsure. Finally, I suggested a word to clarify the focus member's statement and the other women commenced their interaction. I welcomed their ideas and viewpoints. I checked in with the focus member asking her if she needed more exploration. I ensured that she was the leader, and that I was the facilitator. Again she expressed concern about time and again I patiently reassured her that time was not a problem. I truly believed that she was anxious, as this was new and different for her, and I wanted her to know that I trusted her abilities.

I nodded, listened, and when necessary I drew things back to the focus member. I observed one woman as she shared a concern that was unfamiliar to me. Remarkably, the action somehow slowed and energy appeared. To me each spoken word lasted the length

of a sentence and in someway became visual. Not only could I hear the sounds, but I could also see the sound waves as they left one woman's lips, and wavered through the air like heat waves rising off blacktop on a scorching hot day. I gradually followed the swell of sound as it rippled towards the intended recipient. I saw in amazement what appeared to me to be transparent shield in front of her. It acted like a protective filter for the approaching words. With time slowed, I had endless moments to question how the focus member was receiving these thoughts and are they helpful? As I asked the questions, the answers appeared. I witnessed her transparent shield allow only a portion of what the other woman had said to filter through. I sat in awe, wondering if my eyes were toying with me.

This added dimension continued and enabled me to scrutinize the women's words and the focus member's reception. Somehow, I was able to build on the things she accepted, and to reiterate the things she questioned, and dismiss the things she rejected. At one point I eagerly shared my perspective and not only witnessed her reject it, but also saw another member support her rebuff. I nodded to acknowledge my respect for her decision and we continued. I repeatedly mentioned the question we were working on and regularly invited the other women to share their thoughts. Together we laughed, challenged, reflected, and probed. In keeping with my decision to block personal agendas I deflected some words of doubt. I watched both the whole group and the individuals within. I noticed one member's lack of verbal contribution, so during a pause I invited her involvement. I felt justified as I witnessed the other women greet this quiet one's words with a nod. I felt a sense of collaboration; we were building, supporting, adding, subtracting, and working together. In the last five minutes, everyone had contributed in different ways.

Gradually, I became conscious of a pattern exhibited by the focus member. She countered every benefit with a fear. Still witnessing in slow motion, I waited to see if she repeated this pattern, and she did. I remarked on this hoping she would stop. We all moved onto the next question. However, I watched her face and still perceived pain and sadness. At that moment, I made a decision and suggested that we deviate from Discovery. I believed she needed to address her fears first and this need was blocking the process. She agreed, and so did the group.

One woman started talking about possible fears and obstacles and again the motion slowed. I witnessed the words leaving her mouth and dancing through the air to the focus member. I waited with anticipation to see how she received this. I concluded that these words would not harm her. It seemed that she was accepting some ideas as I detected her willingness to be open. A hush entered the room as the members recognized that emotional space was essential. The focus member reflected and silently considered the words. She then described her thoughts and feelings. The group members responded with more inquiries and showed their support. I was amazed at the intense interaction that was happening. Everyone was contributing and the focus member was absorbing just what she needed and while she wrote it down, we all waited.

I noticed she had misspelled a word and drew her attention to it. My concentration was on her and she saw something new, which amused all of us. Once the laughter subsided, I suggested that the group was not exploring her feelings, which initiated an intense examination of them. Remembering her use of word pictures, I asked her how does it look and feel. At that moment, I became aware that we were all pulling together as a team. She was facing her feelings and they were not that scary anymore. Her voice

became louder; I knew she felt stronger, so I asked her to summarize what had just happened.

I observed everyone as a contribution was offered, but I was not sure if the problem mentioned belonged to the speaker or to the focus member. As I was unsure how the focus member was receiving this, I decided to block. I took the lead by moving to the next question. Another woman added her suggestion, which I acknowledged with a nod. I suspected that the focus member was moving back to her childhood and I intended to keep her in present. I told her: "I'm not going to let you go there". However, she asserted herself and went back anyway. I quickly realized she was leading. I backed off and scanned the group. All of the women were intently watching. I assumed from their body positions that they were completely captivated. The focus member expressed emotions that engulfed her and burst out of her with intensity. I recognized the need to stay with her, to let her feel it. She owned her feelings and acknowledged her new awareness.

As we moved back to the questions we had skipped, I felt impressed by a noticeable change in the focus member. She sat assured, confident in who she was, and I realized I no longer needed to protect her. She had completely lost her anxiety and possessed the strength to do her own blocking. I had to go to the washroom so for the first time I left the group. As I returned I sensed that the focus member and I felt lighter, indeed the whole room felt lighter. We finished the last of the questions easily with lots of laughter and ended the session with the focus member repeating her goal one last time. From my perspective, she had changed.

As we moved into check-out, I felt my exhaustion again. The check-out appeared to be genuine and once it was all over, I turned off the camera. I watched the group members discuss lunch plans and felt a sense of reprieve once they all left.

April 3rd: The group member's thoughts

I appreciated reading Ellen's words of praise and was pleased that she felt more connected this week. She addressed a point around controlling group members and I believed that this was something I had not addressed well throughout the six sessions. If I were to go back and do this facilitation over again, I believe that I would be more active with controlling members. This time I blocked and deflected, but I never openly commented on their need to control. I believe that I hesitated to do this because these people were not only group members and research members, but they were also classmates and women I consider friends. I believe now that it is difficult to be a facilitator to a group of friends and, in the future, I would hesitate to encourage friends to participate.

Diane pointed out the value of music and how it enhanced the process. It was rewarding to read her thoughts on the benefits of using a song. She seemed to share my views on building community, nurturing intimacy and empowering the members to openly reflect on their fears and beliefs. It was encouraging to read Diane's belief that I managed the process more meticulously this time. She saw my flexibility as impressive noting that I demonstrated my awareness and skilfulness by adjusting the process to fit the focus member's need. She affirmed my decision to draw out silent members and I believe she valued and approved my behaviour.

Again, it was interesting to read Diane's comments on what distracted her through this session. I had never considered a preoccupation with hunger and it reminded me again that there is no way I can ever know all the influences within a group. I assumed that Diane's last few words hinted at a belief that I was already questioning. As each focus member goes through the process, do the group members relate to the growth? I

wondered if learning and change also occurs for those observing. I know that I have often felt that way.

As I read Betty's words, I considered how strongly they represented where she was and I struggled with keeping her role in the group this week anonymous. If I did that would it hinder my ability to emphasize key points so, with her permission, I resolved to discuss her experience as the focus member. Betty was excited that she had grown on Friday, which corresponded with my belief. Betty remarked on the benefits of my decision to reassure her during the early stages of the process. It was good to read that Betty valued moving to her fears. This confirmed to me that flexibility is essential.

Betty remarked that my guidance gave her both the permission and the safety to go where she needed to go. She felt assured that I had the courage to face her fears with her, which made it safe for her. Betty commented that my sensitivity to all her cues alerted her to new awareness of herself. She stated that once she had faced her fears the answers to the subsequent questions were obvious.

I felt puzzled as I read Anne's words suggesting that I lead the focus member. I felt that I had guided her by noticing the change of intonation in her voice and repeating the words she emphasized. I acknowledged that her viewpoint was different from mine. As with Ellen, Anne drew attention, not for the first time, to my management of member's actions. She would have preferred me to block this behaviour more. I had already decided to change my strategies with controlling members. I appreciated Anne's insight that each of us has our own style. This is why groups intrigue me because each member brings diversity.

Carmen's reflection on the check-in was very different from mine. Carmen added another perspective. Her description of check-in included the word "smoothly" that

suggested she did not feel the tension I had described. Again, I read a potential concern about me leading the focus member, and I wondered if she felt led during her turn. I agree that leading is potentially dangerous and I wondered if I was not being open to these comments. As I processed this information, I felt that it was not leading but brainstorming. I believed that I had adjusted approach in response to previous comments about leading. I felt confused and unsure so I briefly reviewed the videotape and decided that I would continue to keep the pitfalls of leading in mind, but I would not adjust my style for now because I did not feel that what I was doing was detrimental.

Two members had commented on their concerns about the last session. I had suggested-and the group had agreed-that we would use the last session as an opportunity for each member to briefly reflect on her goal. I had suggested that each member come prepared to share a gift with the others. I explain that the gift should be a meaningful comment. During the discussion, only one member expressed concern, but said she was willing to try to live her concerns. I found it interesting that two members shared in the privacy of the journal that they had concerns. This reminded me that while in the group, members might agree to do something they are not comfortable with, but have second thoughts once away from the group. I decided, as a facilitator, it is my role to provide plenty of opportunity for open discussion and room for dissension. I needed to remember that initial agreement might not necessarily be genuine.

April 5th : The final session

Tonight I will have facilitated the last group session. I am contemplating changing the plan for this evening so that I am the focus member. I felt mixed emotions about this final session. I was confident that the review would flow and that everyone would feel comfortable discussing her goal. However, I was concerned that members would be

uncomfortable with the verbal gift giving. I was not sure what caused this. One idea I mulled over was that gift giving was new and not part of the Discovery process. I judged that they had not reached the level of intimacy required and that gift giving may be inappropriate. This would be on tape and part of a research project, which would make it an unsuitable setting. In addition, I questioned my skills. Would I be able to manage this type of interaction or would it need managing?

On the positive side, I believed that the act of giving is an excellent behaviour to encourage intimacy and community. I have witnessed this exercise as a method to bring closure to activities. I remember times that I have received a gift as an acknowledgement or way of saying goodbye. I thought that meaningful comments would symbolically represent a parting gift, and would be effective in bringing a sense of closure for the members. I remained confused; I was unsure if I should stay with the original plan or change the format.

However, I decided to type up the agenda according to the decisions made last week. This agenda was very brief with notes only to have check-in, play the song, and reminders of each member's goal. I entitled the last section as group closure and noted the statement "The gift I give to you is". I never even considered adding cues to myself as I had done in the past.

I remained perplexed. What should I do? I considered the drawbacks and benefits of changing the plan and asking the group members to lead me through Discovery process. Perhaps it would provide the members an opportunity to reciprocate, because I had helped to facilitate their growth. I wondered if being in this position would enable me to learn more. Certainly, it would underscore my belief in the process. The drawbacks were that there would be no specific closure session and that I would be changing a group

a decision. Finally, I considered that this change might be more welcome and a more natural closure session.

When it is not critical which way I decide, I often use a neutral determinant. I pulled out my trusty decision maker and flipped a coin. I was now ready to begin the last session.

Once everyone had arrived, I took my place and waited. This time the women did not take my cue and I sat watching as the conversation continued. At one point, I took advantage of an opening and requested that we get started. I disclosed first. After I had finished, the group started chatting again so I asked who was going next. It seemed that the women were not only enjoying each other's company, but that they were also hesitant to get started. I wondered if they were concerned about the gift giving. After they gradually checked in, I played the song for last weeks focus member. As the song was playing, for the first time, I started to chew my finger because I felt so apprehensive.

After I turned off the CD player, instead of leaving my schedule on the table, I held it in my hands and informed the group that I had prepared an agenda. I told them that I had flipped a coin to determine if I would follow the plan or try something different. I took a moment to compose myself, and then informed them that the coin toss eliminated the agenda. Instead, I wanted them to take me through Discovery. I asked if anyone objected and nobody did. I arranged five business cards in my hand concealing that one was shorter than the others were. At this point one woman voiced her aversion to being the facilitator so I removed one regular sized card and questioned if anyone else preferred not to facilitate. I told the women whoever drew the short card would be the facilitator. At this point, I became the focus member.

I have struggled whether to include my description of this session. Previously in this story, I have focused only on facilitation. Because I am the focus member, I have decided to share what I learned rather than a detailed description of my experience.

Even though I have confidence in the Discovery process, I felt uncomfortable during the first question. I was reminded that as the focus member I am capable of blocking comments from group members. I did learn that I would feel safer if I knew someone else was also blocking personal agendas. I also learned how valuable it is to have someone else keep things on track.

As the focus member, I obtained a different perspective on the group dynamics. I realized how much more dominant one woman seemed. It was as if she was overpowering to the others and me. In spite of this, the quieter members did sometimes contribute. I learned that the traumatic effect on the recipient of unwanted contributions was greater than, as a facilitator, I realized. I believe that this can easily inhibit the focus member and I must promptly address any controlling behaviours.

April 10th : Final feedback

In my eagerness as a researcher, I asked each member the same twelve questions see (see appendix I) in order to receive as much feedback as possible. I designed the questions to elicit information, which I thought was important to my research. I realized that some of the questions were not relevant to facilitation, so I have decided to give the members' responses to just seven of the questions.

The first question asked if the camera affected the members. All members responded that the camera did not affect them during the group session. Two members did comment that before the start of the session they positioned themselves so they were not facing the camera.

The second question asked if the members were influenced by the fact that this was a research project. Two members indicated that this motivated them to participate. One replied that it motivated her to continue attending the final sessions. Another member believed the research factor added value and the final member believed this factor did not affect her.

Question seven requested the members comment on any changes, differences, and/or constants in my facilitation. The responses included more relaxed, more comfortable, adjusted style accordingly, straightened posture, and varied degree of involvement and direction. Two members commented that I adapted my facilitation for different members.

The eighth question asked if the members would join another group that I facilitated and everyone said yes. Only one member said she would wait awhile before she would again participate in Discovery.

Question ten asked if they were the facilitator would they do anything differently. Three members said no. One said she would block other members' personal agendas to push the focus member to get emotional. She would have also used a more authoritative style. Another member said she would use more confrontation and encourage focus members to address the emotional elements.

Question eleven asked what actions or behaviours did I do that effectively facilitated this process. Two members mentioned the use of immediacy and person-centred style. Other comments were keeping things on track, clarifying, using confrontation, warmth, humour, and non-threatening manner, inviting in silent members, being respectful, intuitive, flexible, organized, supportive, caring, and relaxed.

The final question asked what were the personal drawbacks and/or benefits to participating in this research. One member was neutral stating their were neither drawbacks or benefits. Another stated that the time she spent was a draw back and professional learning a benefit. Three members believed there were no drawbacks and listed social, personal, or professional benefits.

Chapter 5

Analysis

In this chapter, I analyse my small group facilitation story. I have completed the process of coding and grouping them by themes. Time is the first theme that I considered and I have outlined my movement from perceiving time as a pressure to trusting that there was ample time. The second theme is facilitator focus. Here, I will explain how I moved from focusing on "task", to focusing on "process" and finally to finding a balance. Next, I discuss ambiguity and I describe how I struggled with the ambiguous nature of facilitating a group and eventually relieved my anxiety by accepting the ambiguity, acting intentionally, and developing confidence in my skills. Self-talk is the fourth theme. I describe how I started facilitating without an internal dialogue and how I progressed to using my self-talk to make decisions about my options and then act accordingly. The last theme is skills and I outline my progression with five skills that I struggled with while facilitating. I end this chapter with a description of anxiety, an integral part of all the themes.

One eye on the clock:

As a neophyte facilitator, I felt excessively concerned about time. At first, I worried whether I had enough time to complete the agenda. I then looked for ways to ensure that I would. I attempted to fight my anxiety about time with extensive preparation and planning. Unfortunately, despite my organization, I still felt apprehensive.

The night before the first session, I woke hourly staring at the clock concerned that I would sleep in but disappointed that I would not get enough rest. In the group the next day, I made time the priority. If something came up that I had not planned, I would dismiss it due to the lack of time. It is evident throughout the first session that time was

on my mind and interfered with my facilitation skills. "Abruptly, I became conscious of time and ended the discussion by stating my decision" (See p.50).

My first attempt to ease my apprehension about time was to be organized. However, despite my careful planning and meticulous preparation, I still felt rushed and I regularly checked the clock during the second session. Checking the clock became an anxiety-provoking act that continued to influence my facilitation style.

The focus member made a request of the group, but I barely heard each response as the sound of a clock ticked only in my ear. Time a priority, I rushed her through the last questions with a critical, directive, and hurried style. (See p.62) When I became aware of time, I would lose the effectiveness of "being in the moment" and I became obsessed with completing the task.

The concern for time expressed by some members increased my anxiety. Their concerns deepened mine. Not only did I consider time regularly throughout the sessions, but I also worried about time constraints between sessions. "Carmen mentioned the Discovery process and questioned my hurriedness through the last section. I am aware that my time concerns overruled my emphasis on the last section. Her interpretations made me question whether two hours are long enough" (see p.64).

Eventually, I began to question how I could eliminate my pre-occupation with time. The most effective way was to plan well. I looked at what factors I could manipulate and I considered "the two-session idea; splitting the focus member's time into two sessions. The first seven questions one week and the second seven the next" (see p.73). I considered this a good idea however;

I knew this was not an option for this group so I wondered how to remove the time pressure. The word 'trust' echoed in my head. I needed to trust that whatever we finished was all that was meant to be done. (see p. 73)

Even though I began to consider my attitude towards time, I still focused on planning. I knew that I could not extend the time so I decided to create a schedule. Jacobs, Masson, and Harvill (1998) recommended that a facilitator create a plan that gives an estimated time for each activity. This way the leader can gauge the group's progress and gain an idea if he or she is spending too much time on one topic. "To address my time concerns, I decided to add a schedule to my agenda. I calculated the total allotted time for Discovery as ninety minutes. I allocated a specific amount of time for each question" (See p. 76). This schedule helped but I remained conscious of our time limits and I facilitated accordingly. Time was an ever-present pressure.

Feedback from the fourth session indicated that most members also wondered if there was enough time. I decided to try another tactic. "I followed our common agreement with a challenging invitation for all of them to remove their watches" (see p.86). At this point in the facilitation, I started to consider that it was our attitude towards time that was creating the pressure. In the fifth session, I did ask the members to remove their watches. My strategy appeared to work because we completed the whole process with time to spare and instead of being concerned about time, "I glanced at the clock and felt relieved that I was aware of the time, but not worried about it" (see p. 88). This was an important growth stage for me as a facilitator. I now trusted that we had ample time to complete the Discovery process in the two hours.

As time was no longer a concern, I experienced a new sense of time. In the sixth session time seemed to slow. I believe that it is important to estimate the duration of

activities and prepare a schedule accordingly, but obsession with time severely inhibits both facilitation and the interaction within the group. As a facilitator, I will accept that I do not have to complete every item on my agenda. I know now that it is easier to relax if I do not pressure myself with time concerns.

Focal points:

The second theme is facilitator focus. I believe that during the beginning stages, I was task focused. As the sessions progressed, I found a balance between task and group process. Although I believe that my original focus had some negative influence on my facilitation, I also believe that in the beginning my task orientation provided structure for the group members and me. As the sessions progressed, I learned to see the group as an entity and trust its healing power. This holistic approach enabled me to implement effective facilitation.

The first agenda I developed was a list of tasks. I considered their completion a high priority. I believed that I needed to complete the activities within a specific time. With emphasis on task in mind, I became oblivious to the group members' needs and opinions. "Since task was my priority, I quashed the discussion by giving instructions." (see p.51). I was determined to complete the tasks. I did not even consider that the group could have completed any tasks. Conyne, Harvill, Morganett, Morran, and Hulse-Killacky (1990) discuss the possibility of beginning group facilitators making this mistake. "[N]eophyte group leaders may view their role as sole therapeutic agent and may overlook the rich therapeutic resources that exist in groups" (p. 49).

One positive aspect of my task-focused behaviour was that it created a sense of structure for both the group members and me. I believe that this helped the members to feel safe and it portrayed my competence. "I learned that my task focus helped [Diane] to

relax and created a feeling of safety . . . . I feel more confident that being task-focused in the first session was okay and that it helped to show competence" (see p.54). My emphasis on task completion was also a safety feature for me. This was evident in my reliance on my agenda.

After the second session, I became concerned with the group's role in the Discovery process. I wanted the group to participate and I believed that if I told them how then they would take part.

However, what was the group's role? I originally planned to demonstrate the Discovery process to the group but this left them out like a Greek chorus. I knew now what I needed to do; I would be explicit on the purpose of each question. (see p. 66)

I believe that this new procedure was my attempt to get the members involved. However, at that time, I did not see the group as an entity and I did not trust them.

During the third session, I became aware of how I controlled the group. "This was a group process and I was taking centre stage. I compared individual accomplishments and kept score. I wondered if it was time to let the group do the work" (see p. 70). I was completing the task, the Discovery process, and not facilitating the group to complete the task. This is the point when I began to consider if I should change my focus from task to group process. In future sessions, I wanted to make sure the group completed the task instead of me. However, I was not sure how to accomplish this so I decided to remove myself as much as possible. Unfortunately, during the fourth session the group was almost leaderless because I was only concerned with the group process. I forced myself to be passive and that the group would complete the task.

After the fourth session, I reviewed my passivity and determined that it was ineffective because I had facilitated neither the task nor the group process. As I read the members' feedback, I started to comprehend that I was not the sole influence on the group process. I did not have all the power. Conyne (1998) discusses the source of power in the group,

> One of the fascinating aspects of group work is that of allowing the group to be the power source . . . what I have learned from this is that the power of the group lies in the group and I am but one member of that group. (p. 252)

I believe it was at this point that I became aware that I needed to trust the power of the group in order to facilitate the group process. Braaten (1998) discusses the same power that I began to see:

> In addition, many group practitioners have learned to trust the healing power of the group itself. Again and again I have experienced that as a total group we truly possess healing power. The group leader is not the only facilitator: group members join in and contribute equally to whatever progress is made. A group, like an individual, has considerable healing and growth power. Learning to trust this power develops gradually throughout one's career as a group therapist and facilitator (p. 190).

I believe that my openness to see the group as a whole and to trust the healing power of the group enabled me to find a balance between facilitating the task and the group process during the fifth session. "I perceived that in this session, I had facilitated well. I balanced between keeping the focus and letting things flow, encouraging others to contribute, and adding my thoughts" (see p. 90). I had learned how to facilitate the group

to work collaboratively. I was effective. Thomas and Caplin (1999) present an excellent analogy that describes effective group facilitation.

> One metaphor that captures the essence of effective group facilitation is that of the spinning wheel. Ideally, a group worker helps to generate initial momentum in the group process, and having done so, allows the momentum of clients working collaboratively to bring shape and meaning to the session. Occasionally, the facilitator intervenes to add a spin to the working wheel, keeping in mind that the lighter touch of the group worker typically encourages great effort by the clients to keep the momentum going. It is the task of the facilitator to sense when the group's momentum is beginning to wane or wander off course and to generate renewed energy or direction without getting in the way. (p. 4)

I believe that, as the sessions progressed, my understanding of facilitator focus changed. I saw myself now as one member of a group and I understood that my role was to generate the initial energy and then to guide the momentum. I also understood that it was the group's role to complete the task not my sole responsibility. With this realization, I felt less anxious. I lost the apprehension of completing the task alone and was able to relax and facilitate the group process by utilizing skills that encouraged collaboration.

The uncertainty of ambiguity:

The third theme that I have selected to outline is ambiguity. I believe that there are times throughout the story when I struggled with the ambiguous nature of the facilitator's role, group member's role, member's perceptions, and unknown variables. As a beginning facilitator, I doubted myself and struggled through a process of adapting and questioning my intentions. Gradually as the sessions progressed, I began to build confidence, separate myself from the members, and consider my reasons for acting. Once

I reached this level of assurance, I felt less concerned about ambiguity and trusted my abilities.

I first began to discuss ambiguity in the second session. I started to understand that I was uncertain about my role. "Even though I wanted her to feel empowered, I felt ambiguous about my leadership; I was not clear, when should it be my way, her way, or even their way" (see p. 58). Another time in this session, I describe being puzzled not knowing whether I should do something. I was aware that there were several different facilitative behaviours and I did not know how to determine what I believed was the correct one.

Not only did I continue to struggle with ambiguous nature of facilitation, but I also became confused about group members' role.

> I had not been explicit with the group about their role because I was not sure how they fit. I knew how to work the Discovery process and that I wanted the focus member to change. I trusted that the Discovery process would assist the focus member to create change. However, what was the group's role? (See p.65)

I attempted to alleviate my anxiety regarding group members' role by providing explicit explanations about ways the members could participate.

At the same time, I became aware of the discrepancy between the different members' perceptions and mine. Their perceptions of me surprised me. However, I somehow knew what Laube (1998) states that, "[h]uman beings are increasingly seen as meaning-making agents, actively constructing interpretations of their experiential world, fitting what is new to what is already known" (p. 228). I understood that each member, including me, would draw different conclusions from the same experience. This is when I began to consider the intent behind my actions. I somehow believed that, if I justified my

actions, I would be right. However, I remained influenced by the members' responses and I continued to try to act in a manner that every member deemed appropriate.

Unfortunately, I still struggled with uncertainty. "Even though this was what I had previously decided to do, I felt anxious. I was implementing something new and I was unsure how each member would respond." (see p. 69). I was uncomfortable because I knew that my action would be understood in more than one way and ultimately I was afraid that the members would judge my facilitation as inappropriate.

When I reviewed the members' journals, my suspicions were confirmed. Group members certainly differed in how they experienced the group. One member did not appreciate my analogies while another welcomed them. There was some disagreement regarding my self-disclosure. One suggested that my disclosure was inappropriate while another found it comforting. Members disagreed on my intervention techniques during one particular session. One felt I did not intervene enough, one felt I intervened too much, one felt my intervention was skilful, another felt my intervention was appropriate, and yet another suggested different intervention tactics. As I read these different opinions, I understood that it was impossible for me to obtain a positive response from everyone all the time.

Unknown variables caused more ambiguity. In the members' journals, I read different descriptions of circumstances that affected members' interaction. I began to comprehend that I would never know all of the variables that influence each member, the group dynamics, and me. I also understood that there is more going on in every session than I can see and feel. Whiteley and Garcia (1996) discuss the facilitator's process of recognizing that the unknown exists. "An important rite of passage in facilitation

involves exploding the myths (and arrogance) that all is as spoken, all is as it appears" (p.48). I learned that things would always be ambiguous because I could not possibly know everything that affected the group.

Because I accepted that ambiguity is part of group facilitation, I realized I needed to establish reasons for my actions and have confidence in those reasons. The group members started to establish their roles and I accepted that I had little influence on their behaviour. I also allowed myself to accept or reject the member's perceptions. I believe that this was a process of separating myself, from the members. I lessened my need to please and influence them and increased my tolerance for their differing views. As I recognized there were unknown variables that influenced both the members and the group dynamics, I concluded that not everything was a result of my actions. This understanding of ambiguity freed me to feel more secure, confident, and relaxed as a group facilitator.

<u>Talking to myself:</u>

I will now elaborate on the fourth theme, self-talk. Described in my facilitation story are some of the thought processes that I engaged in during the sessions. I have also noted when I did not engage in an internal dialogue. The following section provides a detailed description of the different ways I did and did not utilize self-talk to make decisions and to act.

In the beginning sessions, I frequently acted abruptly without careful thought, I considered a situation and decided not to act, or I did not take time to consider the situation. Examples of action without thought are when I self-disclosed without contemplating, or I became anxious about time or task so I ended the discussion without consideration. On three occasions during the first session, I thought that one member was

feeling apprehensive but I decided to do nothing. "I sensed some uneasiness from the same member as before, but I decided not to address her discomfort" (see p. 52). In addition, I did not stop and take time to consider things and this resulted in me forgetting to ensure that the members knew each other's names. During the early stages of facilitation, I did not use my self-talk.

In between group session one and two, I reflected on my facilitation and I decided that I needed to think about what I was doing while I was facilitating. I realized that my thought process was an important part of facilitation. Conyne et al. (1990) describe, "group leadership is largely a cognitive process" (p.50). I was engaging in self-talk but unfortunately not when I was facilitating.

During the second session, I did not use self-talk. I had preconceived goals that guided my facilitation, but I still lacked the ability to effectively contemplate things as they happened. I knew I wanted to empower the group so acted accordingly. I also knew I wanted to model appropriate behaviour, so I did. I believe that during this session, I made some effective facilitative moves even though I acted without thinking.

Again, in between sessions, I analyzed my behaviour and reminded myself that I needed to be aware of my intentions. In the third session, I started to contemplate the interactions that I saw. On one occasion, I gathered the information presented to me. In that moment, I assessed how I was feeling and what I wanted to do.

I listened as one woman stated a task for me to complete. Again, I felt pressured to perform. I believed I must complete what she requested, but considered this a tall order. Previous experience with pressure helped me to decide not to accept it, even though this was what she wanted. (See p. 71)

This was possibly the first occasion when I used self-talk while facilitated. Hines, Stockton, and Morran (1995) define "self-talk as self-reported thoughts, which in turn affect the behaviour" (p. 242). I conversed with myself about what was happening and how I felt. This internal conversation helped me to discern what I wanted to do.

In the fourth session, my self-talk changed again. Before the session, I decided I wanted the group to do the work. Other than instructing myself to take a neutral position in my chair, I did not stipulate how I would engage the group. Instead, I utilized my self-talk to ensure that I stuck to my goal. "I stuck with my plan to let the group do the work, despite my awareness of the focus member's struggle. I accepted the pauses and let the questioner dominate. I waited and waited and waited" (see p.78). During this session, I continually reminded myself that I wanted to remain passive rather than utilizing self-talk to assess the situation and act appropriately. At one point, I began to question my passivity. "Yet, I wondered if this were enough for her, did she find anything new, had I sacrificed quality for completion and personal growth for group engagement?" (see p.80).

In the fifth session, I used self-talk to process after I acted, to dismiss a concern, to invite a silent member's participation, and to scrutinize a conversation for a personal agenda. It was when,

> I witnessed another woman move her chair closer and place her hand on the emotional woman's knee. I felt uncomfortable so I requested that she move back. As she did move, I sensed that my appeal was not welcome. I was aware of my trepidation, but soothed myself with the thought that I was enforcing a norm to respect each other's physical space. I firmly believed that it was my responsibility to monitor boundaries and I had managed to handle it without it becoming an issue. (See p. 85)

In addition, I used self-talk in this session when two members were conversing. I questioned in my mind if one woman's words were valuable or damaging to the other. Questioning was the extent of my self-talk. Whiteley and Garcia (1996) refer to a similar decision making process "[t]he facilitator looks for clues to verify that the desired agenda is being addressed. She or he will make some risky (and often imperceptible) decisions if it is not" (p.31). I had begun to think before I acted but I neglected to make a decision.

In the sixth session, I began to implement the first two stages of the cognitive process of facilitation that Casey, Roberts, and Salaman (1993) discuss, "First the facilitator takes in what is going on, both inside themselves and in the group. Second, the facilitator does something to help the group, i.e. makes an intervention of some sort" (p.8). I observed interaction between members and was aware of the questions or feelings that I had. I would decide if I should intervene and act accordingly. I was engaging in an internal dialogue, making a decision, and acting.

In this description of the theme self-talk, I have outlined many different interactions between thought, decision, and action including: I didn't engage in self-talk at all; I only engaged in self-talk; I used self-talk and acted with no decision; I decided and acted but didn't use self-talk; I just acted; I used self-talk and decided not to act; I acted and thought about it afterwards; and I used self-talk, made a decision and acted. I agree with Hines, Stockton, and Morran (1995) that "group therapists need to think on several different levels at once; they need to ask, What's going on with the individual member, What is happening at the group level," (p. 245). In addition, I consider the cognitive aspect of facilitation one of the more difficult components because ultimately a facilitator should follow the steps described by Conyne et al. (1990)

1.   Recognition of the need to intervene (or not intervene) and of the appropriate group and/or individual process goal(s) to be achieved through intervention.

2.   Generation of plausible alternative interventions for achievement of process goals.

3.   Selection of the most appropriate intervention from among the alternatives.

4.   Communication and application of the intervention in such a manner that it is accurately understood and adequately accepted by the target member(s).

5.   Observation and assessment of group member reactions (outcomes) with appropriate intervention modification and adjustments when needed (this would involve recycling to Step 1).

6.   Facilitation of member processing and facilitation of knowledge or skill generalization in relation to material generated by the intervention.

7.   Evaluation of the overall intervention effort including self-critique. (p. 34)

As a beginning facilitator, I will continue to be aware of my self-talk and I hope to eventually move to a state where the thoughts that I need to be "an effective group leader become automated" Hines et al. (1995, p. 246).

<u>The challenging skills:</u>

The final theme I would like to discuss is skills. Outlined in the literature review chapter is a chart of over twenty identified group facilitation skills (Table 1, see p.15& 16). As I coded my description, I discovered that I struggled with five skills: silence, disclosing one-self, confronting, blocking, and immediacy. In Table 1, silence is defined

as refraining from verbal and non-verbal communication. The aim and desired outcome also outlined in this chart is stated as allowing time for reflection and assimilation, for integration of emotionally intense material, and for the group to use its own resources. During the first sessions, I struggled with silence because I was concerned with time, task, and ambiguity. I would fill in the silence because I believed we did not have the time for it, that we needed to accomplish a task, or that I felt uncomfortable because I did not know what the members were thinking. Once I learned to trust that we had ample time, that I did not have to complete every task, and that ambiguity was inevitable, I was able to accept the silence and see it as a therapeutic tool.

Disclosing oneself or self-disclosure in Table 1 is defined as divulging one's response to an event that occurs in the group. Furthermore, the aim or desired outcome of self-disclosure is to facilitate more intimate interactions, to demonstrate ways of making oneself known, and to build trust in the group. I believe at the beginning of sessions one and two I attempted to appease my own anxiety by expressing my feelings in the here-and-now. My reasoning was not productive to the group because it was solely self-serving. Again, I believe that my anxiety restricted my effective facilitation. However, once I relaxed, I did occasionally use self-disclosure to relieve group anxiety and to attempt to build trust and intimacy.

Confronting or challenging is defined in Table 1 as challenging a member to observe the disparity between his or her words and action, verbal and non-verbal messages, and/or identifying conflicts apparent in information. The aims and outcomes are to raise member awareness and to promote honest self-examination. I believe that I regularly used this skill with the focus member but at times, I would stop or hesitate because I was concerned with the effects my challenging would have on our relationship.

I realize now that an effective facilitator cannot allow relationship concerns to impinge on the therapeutic process. Confronting is an efficient tool that usually results in member growth and I cannot be afraid to use it.

In Table 1, blocking is defined as intervening to stop counterproductive behaviour. The aim or purpose of blocking is to protect the members and to enhance the flow of group process. I used blocking regularly to guard the emotional safety of the focus member. I would assess the incoming message and if I determined it detrimental at all, I would block it. Clark (1995) describes another blocking technique, modification. "Instead of blocking a member's feedback, it may be feasible for the leader to request that the person modify his or her remark to produce a more palatable statement" (p. 14). This technique allows the receiver to hear the potentially productive part of the message because the facilitator teaches the sender to reframe the message into a more acceptable form. In addition, "[m]odification serves as a means to safeguard group members from being subjected to undue pressure as the leader encourages more propitious transactions" Clark (1995, p. 15). I plan to use modification in the future.

Immediacy, the final skill that I will discuss is defined by Hackney and Cormier (1996) as: "a special case of openness and self-disclosure involving ...sharing a particular thought or feeling, as it occurs in the helping session" (p. 64). Carkhuff (1969) describes immediacy as dealing with the situation at hand in the counselling relationship by identifying the hidden feelings and generating discussion about them. " Immediacy is often expressed through sharing and feedback statements-statements that convey to the client your sense of what is happening and your reaction to it" (Hackney and Cormier, 1996, p.65). The purpose is to assist in the development of the relationship, to promote

growth, and to deal with any client transference, resistance, manipulation, and other interpersonal issues.

I believe immediacy first requires the facilitator to be in the here-and-now not to be thinking about past, future, or personal concerns. Once the facilitator is in the moment then he/she is able to concentrate on the events that occur. The facilitator's first role is to experience the immediacy of the relationship. Next, the counsellor disregards the client's specific words. Following that the counsellor should attempt to analyze what the client is doing to impeded the process and then address it.

I recall one circumstance when I should have used immediacy. This was in session five when I reacted to one woman's interruption. Perhaps during check-out or before I could have addressed the effect this event had on our relationship. There were other opportunities when I could have identified interactions amongst members and encouraged a discussion about attached thoughts and feelings. I understand now that immediacy would have been beneficial for group relationships and growth. I have learned that one vital facilitator role is to state the covert and implicit, by using immediacy. I believe my lack of understanding of the skill hampered my ability to do use this skill.

The anxiety influence:

As I come to the end of the discussion about themes, I discovered that in my group facilitation description I see another theme that weaves through each of the five I have presented, anxiety. As a neophyte facilitator it is not surprising that I felt anxious. Duncan and Brown (1996) suggest "that anxiety is experienced by beginning group counselors and can interfere with students' performance at various times" (p. 252). I believe that my attitude towards certain variables would either increase or decrease my anxiety.

I realized that all the themes are interconnected and I struggled to describe the process on paper. I knew that my anxiety level affected each theme and that each theme affected my anxiety level. I also realized that the themes influenced each other. I began to consider the idea that facilitation was the process of being a vessel carrying the group through learning. I thought that effective facilitation required that I was open. I envisioned a container open at both ends and facilitation flowing through. However, this image was not sufficient. I then began to consider a spiral but I was not able to conceptualize the facilitation process with this image. I returned to the idea of a vessel and I thought of a tube that had valves. I saw each theme as a valve. I believed that anxiety was the mechanism that opened or closed the valves. If I was extremely anxious about time, then the valve would close and effective facilitation would not flow through. However, as I relaxed the valve would open and my facilitation was not constricted. I have attempted to draw in Figure 1 how anxiety interfered with my facilitation.

As depicted in Figure 1 Diagram 1 the time valve is clogged with anxiety because I saw time as a pressure. Once I accepted that I had ample time I began to relax and the time valve started to open allowing the flow of effective facilitation (see Diagram 2). However, effective facilitation was not able to flow through the second valve, facilitator focus because I was consumed with either task focus or group process focus (see Diagram 2). As soon as I found a balance between task and group process focus I realized that anxiety was holding that valve shut. I relaxed and created a pathway for effective facilitation to flow (see Diagram 3). Diagram 3 depicts my anxiety with ambiguity that closes the third valve and Diagram 4 shows by feeling confident and intentionally acting I relaxed and the ambiguity valve opened. In Diagram 4, effective facilitation is stopped because I do not engage in self-talk and this maintains anxiety, which keeps the valve

Figure 1. Valves of Facilitation

ANXIOUS AND CLOSED
Diagram 1
Effective Facilitation

FIRST GROWTH STAGE
Diagram 2
Effective Facilitation

Time   Pressure   Time   Trust

Focus   Focus   Task/
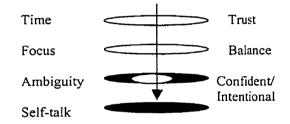   Groups

Ambiguity   Ambiguity

Self-talk   Self-talk

SECOND GROWTH STAGE
Diagram 3
Effective Facilitation

THIRD GROWTH STAGE
Diagram 4
Effective Facilitation

Time   Trust   Time   Trust

Focus   Balance   Focus   Balance

Ambiguity   Ambiguity   Confident/
                                                                  Intentional
Self-talk   Self-talk

FOURTH GROWTH STAGE
Diagram 5
Effective Facilitation

OPEN AND RELAXED
Diagram 6
Effective Facilitation

Time   Trust   Time   Trust

Focus   Task/Groups   Focus   Balance

Ambiguity   Confident/   Ambiguity   Confident/
                        Intentional   Intentional
Self-talk   Engage   Self-talk   Engage

closed. As I began to use self-talk to discern the incoming information and my intervention options I became more relaxed and this final valve opened (see Diagram 5). Once all the valves opened, I was able to use the facilitation skills more efficiently (see Diagram 6).

I believe that I remained closed when I was anxious and open when I relaxed. As I stated previously, when I relaxed about time I opened myself to experience a new time dimension. My ability to release the pressure of controlling the task or the group process enabled me to relax and trust and the result was a collaborative process. Once I found my tolerance for ambiguity, I stopped worrying about the unknown and discovered my self-confidence. As all these valves opened, I was able to free my mind to engage in self-talk and I found a cognitive process to release my anxiety. Finally, once all the valves were open I was able to implement my skills without constriction.

Chapter 6

<u>Afterthoughts</u>

As I come to the end of this thesis, I have decided to take one more look at my description. I have attempted to step back and consider what influenced or motivated me. I wanted to identify my needs, characteristics, and feelings. I also wanted to share the shifts that I made and the new understanding that I gained.

My need for acceptance was predominate throughout my small group facilitation story. I believe that this need existed on three levels. The first level was personal. I come to group counselling with a strong desire to build community. Underlying this desire is a need to belong and receive acceptance. I wanted to be accepted by the group members because they were classmates and friends. I felt that what happened in the sessions affected what happened outside the sessions. When I received disagreement or negative feedback, I adjusted my behaviour accordingly hoping I would receive some indication of acceptance. Eventually I came to recognize that differences are acceptable and the women's opinions did not necessarily mean rejection. In addition, I learned how difficult it is to facilitate a group of friends and remain unaffected by their thoughts and feelings.

The second level was my need for acceptance of Discovery. I created Discovery, it was a part of me, and the women's opinions of it mattered. I wanted them to embrace it and see it as a means to change. This is one reason why I struggled in the beginning to hand over the responsibility of task completion to the group. It was important that I show them how to do it so they understood it was effective. Once they began to concur that this process had merit I stopped trying to sell it to them and was better able to facilitate the group.

The final level was my need for acceptance because this was my thesis. This research, a requirement for graduation, was important to me. I did not want to have to write a series of negative reports. I needed to complete the sessions so I could graduate and I felt that I could not afford to have the women dislike my facilitation or me and drop out of the study. My need for acceptance affected my behaviour. I hesitated to say or do anything that might distress the women because I wanted them to like Discovery and me.

A personal characteristic that affected my facilitation was my internal drive to better myself, which some might call perfectionism. I engage in a repetitive loop of examining what I do and feel, considering ways to improve, and implementing the changes. My endless striving for excellence motivated me to create the best experience for each group member. I constantly wanted each focus member to obtain substantial growth and the other women to be captivated through the process. I longed to be the best neophyte facilitator who wrote an attention-grabbing story that captured the essence of my experience. Not only did I have the normal level anxiety about being a facilitator, I added more because of the internal pressures that I placed on myself.

I have identified shifts that I made around leadership style. I started out as an authoritarian leader who felt completely responsible for the task and doubted the groups' abilities. This style originated from my need for acceptance and my internal drive to do the best. However, I struggled because this style did not match my belief system. I shifted to the opposite end of the continuum and utilized a Laissez-Faire style. As I tried this style, I realized that the group wanted me to lead. I managed to utilize a democratic style in the last few sessions. This style is more comfortable because it matches my belief that the whole group is responsible for the process.

Trust, in the group and my skills, was something that I acquired through this process. I let go of my need for acceptance and released my anxiety about time, focus, and ambiguity. Once I did that, I began to believe that the group consisted of individuals who are intrinsically good and as a collective could provide the support and wisdom needed. I also found confidence in myself as a facilitator. I trusted that I had the ability to lead in a respectful and effective manner.

I considered the issue of control as I reviewed my story and confirmed that I saw this as a means to accomplish my other priorities. When I felt anxious about time, I would take control of the group discussion. If I were concerned about task, I would take charge of the process. When I felt uncomfortable with ambiguity, I would put restrictions on myself.

I suspect that there were times when I adjusted my behaviour according to which member I was relating to. I am not completely clear on the causes of these shifts. Perhaps, I was influenced by what I previously knew about the person. Possibly, I was adjusting to who I felt they were and what I felt they needed. Maybe, I felt more empathetic with the ones who were similar to me. However, I am aware that as I think about each member I have a different feeling. With one member, I feel unsure, another I feel cautious, and with the other three, I feel safe and supported. No doubt these feelings affected how I behaved with each of them.

There is one thing that I am certain of regarding this study, the benefits of reflection and self-evaluation. I know that every time I reviewed my behaviour I became more aware. As I evaluated what I was doing, I improved. I believe that through self-reflection I have learned more about facilitation and myself. I consider this an essential process for myself and I have designed a self-evaluation guide for others to use.

This guide is designed for neophyte group facilitators who have previous knowledge of group process and facilitation skills. I have divided it into five categories and intended it to generate reflection and self-analysis.

Time

1. How could you better manage the time during the session?

2. What planning do you need to complete before facilitating the next session?

3. Complete your reflection on the influence that time had on you while you were facilitating.

4. List some strategies you could implement for the group and yourself that would reduce anxiety created by time pressure.

5. How can you come to trust that there is ample time in the session?

Focus

6. How did focusing on task completion effect your facilitation?

7. How can you shift the responsibilities of task completion to the group?

8. What connection do you see between you trusting in your abilities and you trusting in the group's abilities to complete the task?

9. What do you need to believe and to do so you are able to facilitate collaboration?

Ambiguity

10. Reflect on feelings of doubt and uncertainty that you experienced as you facilitated.

11. Outline your perception of both your role and the group members' roles.

12. How do you maintain confidence knowing that at least one member will disagree or dislike your behaviour?

13. Reflect on the possible variables that influence the individual group members that have nothing to do with you. Consider both in-session and out-of-session factors.

14. What aspects of the group process and dynamics do you have no control over?

Self-talk

15. As you were facilitating how aware were you of the group? Reflect now on how the group was working and what the members might have been feeling.

16. While facilitating, were you aware of what was happening to you? Reflect on this now by recalling your sensations, feeling, and thoughts.

17. Consider possible sources for the things you describe in question one and two.

18. (Keeping in mind the answers to questions one, two, and three) What are some plausible interventions you could implement to help the group learn?

19. Describe any internal dialogue you engaged in while facilitating and determine things in the future you would like to self-talk about.

Skills

20. As you reflect on this session, how did you react to and manage silence?

21. What was your motivation or intention when you self-disclosed? Did it serve you or did it help to relieve group anxiety and build trust and intimacy?

22. If you took away the concern about being liked by a group member or members, when would you have used confrontation?

23. Reflect on the times you used blocking and consider what you could do differently? Can you identify times when you might have asked the member to modify his or her comment instead of you blocking it?

24. Did you miss or avoid addressing things that were occurring during the session? If so draft some possible comments you could have made to help the group process the events.

<u>Anxiety</u>

25. Identify times while you were facilitating when you were, in the those moments free from past or future concerns.

26. Consider times while you facilitated when you felt anxious and speculate the source.

27. Consider times when you felt relaxed and reflect on the difference in your facilitation from when you were anxious.

This chapter included a final analysis of my description, which looked at my unique features. Possibly, I was unable to tease out other needs or characteristics that influenced or motivated me. However, I have stated the things I am able to see today and I am confident that I will see more tomorrow. This self-evaluation guide will act as a tool for me to further engage in self-reflection and evaluation.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

As I came to this final chapter, I struggled to write the conclusion so I reviewed what I set out to do and how I did it. As I looked over my purpose and method, I noticed some procedures that were effective and some that I would change. In addition, I recognized what I had learned about facilitation and the growth areas for the future. I then considered what questions emerged for me and what research I saw happening in the future. First, I will discuss the effective procedures.

One procedure that worked well was reviewing and reflecting within twenty–four hours of facilitating. I wrote about my thoughts and feelings on what I was doing, why I did it, and how it affected the group, the members, and me. This ongoing analysis became an excellent data source for the description, as I was able to capture my experience of facilitation. One of the strongest parts of the method was the description. The process of living, reliving, telling and retelling my story was an excellent procedure to promote learning. The process of writing my story enabled me to immerse myself in the facilitation experience several times. Through this repeated self-analysis and self-evaluation I learned a great deal.

Feedback from the members proved invaluable. Without the member's comments, I would not have grasped the concepts that I did. It was also helpful to receive their feedback between sessions so I was able to consider their perspectives and incorporate changes in the following session.

Discussion with my mentor was an effective addition to my methods. I found that talking with my mentor spurred my learning as he provided different perspectives. This

helped me to consider aspects of the group dynamics and facilitation that I would not have realized on my own.

The final effective strategy I would like to outline is how I isolated the facilitation aspect. I consistently reminded myself that the goal was to write a story about my group facilitation not about group dynamics, process, members, or content. I also kept in mind that the story was from my perspective so I attempted to take ownership for what I was saying rather than speaking for someone else. I believe this procedure helped to sift out facilitation from the complexity of group dynamics.

I realize that I am reflective and engage in self-analysis on a regular basis. I consider that my use of story in this thesis matches my traits. However, I recognize that it would not be suitable for someone who struggles with self-evaluation. In addition, I would not recommend the autobiographical approach for someone who does not feel confident expressing his or her story. I struggled with writing the description because I wanted it to be accepted as accurate by the group. Once I acknowledged that I had to write from my point of view, I wrote with more confidence.

In retrospect, I would change several things in my research. First, I would change the selection procedure. I would select participants whom I did not know because I believe the fact that these women were classmates, acquaintances, and/or friends influenced my facilitation. I wonder whether I would have uncovered the same learning if I did not have social connections with the members. I would select participants who did not know each other to decrease the chance of interaction between sessions. While setting norms with the group, I would emphasize the importance, for research purpose, not to socialize between sessions. In this study, I have no way of knowing if the members' responses were influenced by discussions with each other outside the sessions. In

addition, I would change the member feedback procedure. I would ask the participants to write their reflections within twenty-four hours after each session ends.

Through this thesis, I have learned a great deal about facilitation. I now know that group facilitation is much more than implementing skills and understanding group process. Group facilitation is an act of balancing between task and group process, between contributing and holding back, between planning and trusting, between accepting ambiguity and revealing it, and between being structured and letting the needs of the group emerge. In addition, group facilitation entails training oneself to engage in self-talk, a complex process. A facilitator's internal dialogue needs to be a discussion about what is happening to the group and to him or herself, about possible sources for the events and sensations, about plausible interventions, about selection and implementation of the intervention, as well as a discussion about the group reception of the intervention. I understand now spontaneous self-talk is the ideal but I have learned that self-talk after the event is helpful.

I understand that my story about group facilitation is far from complete because I will continue to engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation. In the future, I want to summarize the events that occur in the group and I want to examine my use of summarization. I will use immediacy in the future. I intend to explore different strategies, such as modification and processing, to encourage a discussion about what is happening in the group. I recognize the importance of self-talk while facilitating and I will work towards granting myself the freedom to utilise self-talk. I hope this will help me to be intentional in the here-and-now. I have no doubt that anxiety will continue to be a part of my group facilitation experience but I understand the predominately negative effect anxiety has on my facilitation. Just as the blood in my body is not permitted to flow

through the closed valves in my heart and carry oxygen through my system. I am aware that when I am anxious I am constricted and I am unable to act as a vessel that carries people to learning. I realize that at anytime the time, focus, ambiguity, or self-talk valves could close. I also believe other valves may exist that I am not aware of. I hope that I am able to continue to discover the pressure that constricts my facilitation and learn how to keep the valves open without thinking about them.

One question that intrigues me is whether my learning would be the same if I facilitated a different type of group other than Discovery. I recognize that Discovery is a structured process and I wonder if I would have struggled so much with task and group process if I facilitated something with less structure. I also wonder if I would have felt so pressured by time. It would be interesting to repeat this method of completing a description while facilitating a different small group and see if the same themes arise.

Another research area for the future would be to test the effectiveness of the self-evaluation guide. I reiterate, many masters counselling programs only require students to complete one introductory group counselling course that covers facilitation skills, theory, and group process. I recognize through reading the literature and personal experience that this introductory course can only be a starting point in my development as a facilitator. I would like to give other group facilitators the self-evaluation guide and see if it helps them to improve their understanding about the complexity of group facilitation and to improve their ability to facilitate. I would also test the efficacy of the self-evaluation guide with other types of group counselling.

As I sit here putting my final thoughts on the last pages, I wanted to take a moment and reflect on the whole thesis process. I arrived at Acadia University eager to do a thesis on group facilitation. I was not so concerned about method or methodology

rather I was focused on becoming a better facilitator. I believe that I lacked the understanding of the whole research process. I valued what I was studying not how I was researching. I also concerned myself with my learning rather than proving or contributing something to the academic realm. I honestly was not excited by what others had done nor was I focused on suggested ways to conduct research. I wanted to learn more about groups and how to facilitate them.

I realize now how my focus influenced my thesis. If I had the opportunity to go back and change how I did things I would first take time to select a research methodology and learn more about that particular method. Now I see that the method is the map and the topic is the destination. I have to know how I am going to get somewhere before I can arrive. Specifically I would have grasped a better understanding of Narrative Methodology. Instead of reading one narrative thesis I would have read more so I had a solid understanding on what to do and how to do it. I see how this knowledge would of changed how I wrote my description.

In this thesis, I finished my original purpose to complete a description about my experience as a facilitator of a small goal-setting process known as Discovery. However, I achieved much more. I learned that both self-evaluation and description are excellent methods to improve one's skills. In addition, I have a new understanding about facilitation and I consider myself better prepared to be an effective facilitator.

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Appendix A

CONSENT FORM
Research Project: A Personal Narrative on Group Facilitation
Researcher: Sue Cook

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is an acknowledgement of your informed consent to participate in this study. If you would like more details about anything included or mentioned here please ask. Please take time to read all information carefully and to fully understand.

This study is designed to provide opportunity for the researcher Sue Cook to conduct seven small group sessions. The focus of the study is on Cook's facilitation skills. Therefore, your contribution in the group session is not under investigation. As stated in the accompanying information under Journal reflections you will be required to maintain a journal on your reflections about Cook's facilitation. Your journals will remain private and will only be viewed in its entirety by Cook.

Once Cook has completed a draft of the narrative, you will be given a copy to look over. You will have the option of meeting with Cook to discuss any suggestions or changes to the content that you have contributed to.

The group meetings will be held at the University Counselling Centre on the dates determined by the group. There will be a total of seven sessions.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project (provided on this page and the five accompanying pages) and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have any further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Sue Cook 542-7185 039048c@acadiau.ca

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   Date

Appendix B

VIDEO CONSENT FORM

Research Project: A Personal Narrative Exploration on Group Facilitation

Researcher: Sue Cook

I _____   give permission to Sue Cook

   (Please Print)

to record the seven group meetings as a part of this research project. I am aware that Sue

Cook will review all seven tapes. I am also aware that each tape will be stored under lock

and key during the conducting of research and for five years after Sue Cook's thesis

defence. The videotapes will be erased at the end of the five-year period.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   Date

Appendix C

GROUP MEMBER DEBRIEFING

Please be reminded that you are encouraged to employ self-governance during group sessions. If at anytime you fell the need for further support around personal issues, you may access the University Counselling Centre on campus. I have informed the two counsellors on staff of this study and both are available if you require counselling services. I will also be willing to provide further community names and resources.

Videotape Procedures:

I will view the videotapes after each session. My purpose in videotaping is so I am able to watch myself as a facilitator. The videotapes will be stored under lock and key during the study and for five years after the study. After the five years, I will erase the tapes.

Consultation:

I have arranged opportunity for anonymous consultation with a counselling professional not involved in this study. If I have any serious concerns about a group member, I will consult with this professional without providing any names. This is a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of each group member.

Appendix D

GROUP GUIDELINES

1.   The group will consist of five participants and on facilitator.

2.   The group is Heterogenous. The one common purpose is the desire to change something in one's life.

3.   The group meets once a week. There will be one session for each participant not including the facilitator. One introductory session and one concluding session.

4.   The meetings will be two and half-hours in duration. With a fifteen minute check-in and a fifteen minute checkout. The facilitator will ask the focus member fourteen Discovery questions within the two-hour period.

5.   The content will be holistic. Each individual is welcome to discuss some or all aspects of their life: career, social, mental, physical, spiritual, financial, family, and emotional.

6.   Commitments are mad by all group members to attend every session, to keep content confidential, to use positive dialogue techniques, to be respectful of selves and others, and to bring concerns regarding the group to the group itself or to the group facilitator.

7.   The role of the facilitator is to guide the process by asking the questions and keeping the group focused. The facilitation purpose is to ensure the safety of all the members, and to model unconditional positive regard, empathy, immediacy, confrontation, and congruency.

Appendix E

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS:

1. What is your goal or dream?

2. What is your payoff or reward?

3. Why do you want this goal?

4. What is in it for you?

5. What is the purpose of this goal?

6. What are your fears and possible obstacles?

7. What are you willing to give up?

8. Are you committed to this goal?

9. What do you need to accomplish this goal?

10. How can the group members help you?

11. Do you have a role model that will help you accomplish this goal?

12. Describe a picture of you once this goal is completed.

13. Create a plan!

   A) Today's date

   B) Date you will start or complete this goal

   C) How often will you review? (Daily, Weekly, Monthly)

   D) Step One is

   E) Step Two is

   F) Step Three is

14. What is your affirmation to keep you well and focused?

Appendix F

DISCOVERY INFORMATION:

The purpose of Discovery is to help individuals implement their goals. Group members are encouraged to share ideas, help one another to grow and to change through open and honest discussions. During the process, the group leader models empathy, unconditional positive regard, confrontation, and immediacy. It is also the intent that as the meetings advance the group participants will practice the leader-modelled techniques. During the Discovery process, each group member takes turns being the focus member. The focus member comes to the meeting with a specific goal or dream they have selected. Once each group member has participated in a group check-in the group focus shifts to the focus member. The group facilitator asks the focus member a series of questions. The group engages in the process by expanding on the questions, offering ideas, and supporting the focus member. Once the focus member has answered all the fourteen questions, the group ends the session with a checkout. The check out time is an opportunity for the group members to reflect on their learning through participating in the process.

Study Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to complete a narrative about my personal experience as a facilitator of a small group with the intention of designing a self-evaluation guide for group facilitators. More specifically, I shall use my narrative and the feedback I receive from participants to construct a self-evaluation guide for beginning group facilitators.

Appendix G

JOURNAL REFLECTION GUIDELINES AND JOURNAL PROCEDURE:

I am requesting that you write in your journal as soon as possible after the meeting as I will collect each journal entry on the Tuesday after the meeting. Please reflect on my facilitation skills. Remember the above stated study purpose. I encourage you to give honest feedback and constructive criticism. I request that you organize your feedback into four sections.

1.   Reflect on my facilitation during the check in process.

2.   Reflect on my facilitation during the first seven questions.

3.   Reflect on my facilitation during the last seven questions.

4.   Reflect on my facilitation during the check out process.

Please frame your comments When you did ... I felt ... You may include any reaction you had to any of my facilitative behaviours. I am giving you permission to suggest what I did that was helpful or not, what you would do differently, what I did not do and any other comments you think of.

Please drop off your journal in a sealed envelope, to the receptionist at the counselling centre before 4:00 on the Tuesday following each meeting. Please do not include your name on the journal. I will review the journal and extract information form it for the study. I will keep the journal as part of the data for this study. I will not share your journal with other group members or anyone else.

Appendix H

PURPOSE OF DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

1. **What is your goal or dream?**
   The purpose is to help the focus member to get a clear and positive statement. Help her to discover what she really wants.

2. **What is your payoff or reward?**   Intention is to help the focus member
3. **Why do you want this goal?**   build a foundation of desire through
4. **What is in it for you?**   Brainstorming and probing.
5. **What is the purpose of this goal?**

6. **What are your fears and possible obstacles?**
   Explore what has stopped the focus member before and to provide varying perspectives. Explore potential obstacles and barriers these may be in the form of emotions, irrational beliefs, and negative self-talk.

7. **What are you willing to give up?**
   Help the focus member to give up the biggest barrier through confrontation, probing and support.

8. **Are you committed to this goal?**
   To witness the commitment.

9. **What do you need to accomplish this goal?**
   The purpose is to support the focus member determine what she needs to make this become a reality. With permission offer suggestions.

10. **How can the group members help you?**
    Listen to what the focus member wants and offer suggestion if she is open to that.

11. **Do you have a role model that will help you accomplish this goal?**
    If requested provide some suggestions

12. **a) Create the plan b) Today's date   c) Date you will start or complete this goal   d) How often will you review? e) Step one is f) Step two is   g) Step three is**
    The intention here is to assist the focus member to develop a feasible realistic plan to get what she wants.

13. **Describe a picture of you once this goal is completed.**
    The purpose is to with permission assist the focus member to describe a vivid image that will help her imagine herself with this goal accomplished?

14. **What is an affirmation to help keep you well focused?**
    Work with the focus member to help create a positive affirmation that she can use to keep her moving towards attaining the goal.

Appendix I

FINAL QUESTIONS

1.   How did having the camera on affect you?

2.   How did the fact that this was a research project influence you to
      participate?

3.   When you were not the focus member, what was it like to be in the
      session?

4.   What have you learned through the process?

5.   What have you learned about facilitation or leadership?

6.   How did you feel about the check in process?

7.   As you reflect on all the session, are you aware of any changes,
      differences, and/or constants in the facilitation? If so what were they?

8.   How would you feel about joining another group I facilitated?

9.   How do you perceive the relationship amongst the group members to be
      now, compared to the first session?

10.   Can you describe if you were the facilitator what you would do
      differently?

11.   What behaviours or action did I do that effectively facilitated this
      process?

12.   What were the personal drawbacks and/or benefits to participating in this
      research?