

Emerging Opportunities and Challenges in Dialogue and Deliberation¹

May 14, 2010 Webinar

Comments and Reflections

- I think these are skills that are needed to work together to explore issues and resolve conflicts. I think we do ourselves a disservice to see this as a male / female issue. This gives us an out rather than a charge.
- I think it is valuable to maintain a certain level of distance from elected people to reassert the power of direct democracy. People need to reinstitute their listening for building relationships not to make a point
- [This notes feature is] Useful for heckling! Ben
- Nice crowd here. ;-)
- Tim @intellitics
- Sandy / How's the baby, Tim?
- Asleep. All well. ;-)
- Welcome, LaVerna! What do you do at Stanford?
- Ben / Interesting that political applications are not in top three, and yet practitioners are activists/organizers...
- Sandy / Yes - many in our field work outside government to affect change in communities and around issues. We'd like to see that change!
- Ben / The education and planning applications are policy oriented, I imagine. But not so much advocacy-oriented, yes?
- Linda Blong/ I had to step away for a moment so maybe this was asked, but I think it is worth discussing what language like activism or organizing means for us.
- Larry Schooler/My background in journalism and moderating dialogue, trying to insure inclusivity and equity among participants, has informed my work in D&D
- Obvious that this community is indeed left of center politically - will relate to challenges. Steven in Austin
- co-mentorship - great! (old guy :) Steven
- Again, classic baby boomer activism DNA
- Larry Schooler/As a newer person, I feel like I'm adding an element of inclusivity for people my age (32) and younger in NCDD processes.
- Linda/Lots of new interest in working at a distance is obviously big.

¹ Please note that the only edits made to this file were removal of tech-related comments, minor spelling corrections and minimal edits to content where it was evident two people were typing at the same time and may inadvertently have typed over one another. Additional submissions sent by email during and after the webinar are included as an addendum.

- Linda/ also interest in exploring the interface with community organizing.
- Linda/I like the co-mentorship way of looking at things!
- yes, great idea! Steven (old guy:)
- Linda/I am not seeing it. But those that are working on undergrad and community college work are seeing this much more.
- Ben / "Like regrowing the carbon-based economy." Love it! Have to add that analogy to my repertoire!
- Steven/ Framing issue of language.
- Kim/ Yes, the culture uses very academic language and pacing.
- I think it would help to aim at problem-solving to pull people in.
- Steven/ Yes, Kettering paper says so. (Sandy's)
- Kellie Beckman here, I am a new personal coach and I believe that the best change starts from within. Ultimately where I am headed is what I call "coaching for social change". I am still learning what that means. Overall, however I see a lot of parallels in the conversation it takes to achieve balance with oneself, and with each other (one on one, one to many, many to many etc.) I am working to develop the ability to have and facilitated those conversations.
- Linda/Yes! so much about who invites and leads.
- cknicker/ Whites never have
- Imagine Austin!
- Keepin' it weird! (Ben)
- Kim C/ In Hartford, people of color I know say that they are tired of race as the frame for issues. Old, tired topic.
- Larry/Imagine Austin and keeping it weird indeed, Ben! Vicki, are you here? Where are you based in Austin?
- Larry, give your Austin ID.
- cknicker/ Will we be able to get a contact list of who all is participating?
- Beth/ Hi cknicker, folks would need to tell us that is ok to share their info, our privacy policy does not let us just provide that. What we can do is send a note to everyone with the evaluation and ask them if it's ok to share their contact info with other participants. Would that be ok?
- cknicker/ Yes Beth, please follow thru on providing a means for us to follow up with one another.

- cknicker/ testosterone
- Steven/ Women mesh better. That is why there are so many more in the field. Traditional men are left out for sure. "Liberated" men have come to the field to join the women.
- Ben / I'm in CT, but my mom lives in Austin, nr 2222
- Barb S I have a concern when we think of this as a distinct field and have students major in it. This is a tool that can be used within the context of many fields. I think we need to be careful of creating more silos when the world is networked and think more about building capacity across all fields.
- Barb S The job of the professional is to bring balance to the "feminine" desire to connect and fully explore and the "masculine" desire to come to action and decision. We need relationship to bring all of the minds together in the room to solve complex problems and be able to act effectively both together and alone. We need both and we have to make this point very apparent for D&D to be a useful tool
- Larry/I work at the city of Austin, the Community Engagement consultant/director here; I live and work downtown, and Ben, I know where your mom lives
- Ben / You probably know some of the same people too. Know about LAMP? The theatre scene?
- Kim C/ To get diversity, choose a shared problem to solve. Don't frame just a topic - that's too vague.
- Larry/I sure do--I spoke to LAMP at UT! The seniors group? Ben / yes! I've spoken there twice too. On sustainability.
- Larry/Awesome--great group! I have been to a few theatre events here--Zach Scott especially
- Ben / Larry--email me to connect: ben.roberts@charter.net Big coffee party gp in Austin, I hear. They might welcome your D&D skills.
- Craig/ this discussion of D&D being more comfortable with women has a corollary point...I think there is a general lack of skill in conversation...many people aren't practiced in conversation skills...and this probably creates a gender variance
- Martin - another point, I bring in about 10-15 students each semester through an application process to train them to be facilitators. I always have many more women apply than men, and subsequently many more women accepted into the program. Next semester, for example, I have 15 coming in, with 4 men, which is pretty typical.
- Larry/Ben, that's an interesting thought. Do you know who's involved in Austin?
- Ben/ I can find out for you. No D&D people specifically, as far as I know.
- Ben / Stephen needs to change his last name to Roberts!
- Kim C/ I feel like we're not addressing the main issue in group gender
- communication: people defer to men - style is not so much the issue.

- Ben / And well they should! ;-)
- Kim/ Oo, maybe you shouldn't come to my meeting, Ben! ;-)
- Ben / Maybe that wasn't so funny.
- Ben / what's with the cheerleader graphic? And the lipstick?
- Martin - I've heard the same "too much process not enough results" from business leaders. Business leaders typically are more results oriented, and need to be convinced that the process, while taking longer, will eventually lead to more sustainable results. So this isn't simply a male-female thing.
- Caroline: Hi Ben-- the pictures are taken from prior NCDD meetings. these seemed to have "feminine" connotations, perhaps unintentionally
- Ben / Indeed. Seemed ironic for this crowd especially.
- Steven/ Land and transportation issues may have more men direct stakeholders. I believe this may be true in terms of participation -- not the practitioners.
- Kim/ Yes, exactly. Define by task and goals and the conversation will bring in a greater diversity of people.
- Ben/ yup!
- Steven/ Depends if process is well-designed; less impatience if design is understood and well constructed.
- Steven/ "Collaboration" was seen as potentially loaded for conservatives as a frame. Hard to believe but true.
- Ben / "collective" is also a bad word for them
- Class/Race/Gender define experience and
- Kim C/ I'm a little frustrated that so much of this conversation just reinforces stereotypes. We've focused only a little bit on the methods that get people focused on common interests and circumvent all that.
- Kim C/ I'm frustrated with that, why is she only asking men all the time?
- Sandy / Maybe more men have raised their hands using the technology. Also, we wanted men's response to the gender Q's.
- Kim/ I'm not raising my hand because she is asking only men.
- knicker/ Mars and Venus: Men focus on problem solving; Women on the context of the subject.
- Kim C/ nice Mars and Venus stereotypes keep getting in the way of addressing the problem. It's a bad stereotype because it's been over reinforce
- cknicker/ Kim, research on nature and nurture frames these points.

- cknicker/ I look for hard data that shows me what I'm up against and then design how to overcome it.
- Ben / Process has been huge in the Coffee Party as an issue. Many people (more men?) want to move straight to advocacy. Others want to work on process. On the other hand, there is a fear of "just talking" and also a fear of "going off and acting without a plan or consensus"
- Ben / "Exciting" would be the word I think of first. Also "wide open" and "undefined"
- Beth C/ I can echo what Beth O and another guest said. Working in state govt. and natural resources for 16+ yrs, I've learned that it's historically a male-dominated field but I've earned respect for the value I can add in situations of competing knowledge and interests. Also, there can be dramatically different personality patterns in different fields. Environmental agencies have introverted-concrete thinking types out of proportion to the general population. The professionals and many stakeholders communicate and process information differently, and I've had to adjust my own methods to meet the needs of the real clients and stakeholders.
- Martin - word or phrase - cautiously hopeful... (doing this work during election years is always tough, too much competition focused more on adversarial politics)
- There are 5 of us in GA so five words: positive, determined, essential, inclusive, transpartisan
- Mattice/where are GA folks? I'm in Atlanta/Decatur
- Athens
- UGA?
- yes, Jill Severn, Margaret Holt, Matt Murphy, Jan Levinson, Sharon Gibson all from Russell Forum
- Hi folks! I had a recent conversation with folks at Fanning about a national D&D opportunity we're trying to bring to GA. We work with Fanning sometimes. Especially, Delene Porter and Louise Hill and Rae. Check us out at www.libs.uga.edu/russell/rfclg
- Will do! I spoke to Jan & Janet at Fanning but also need to reach out to you all per my colleague Taylor Willingham
- we love taylor!
- she and I met at Harwood a few years ago. recently reconnected on AmericaSpeaks project we're working on
- my contact is jsevern@uga.edu
- Tod/worried that D&D will not make a dent on basic power structures
- Craig/ optimistic
- Barb/ Essential
- Sue - the current political moment is one of great opportunity but, again, organizers/initiators MUST make access a priority. This is the only way to make diversity of participants happen. Otherwise, we will continue the tradition of many who are disenfranchised and few -- the usual suspects -- involved. Talking to the choir, you know?
- Amelia/concerned about "fake" D&D being undertaken under the auspices of civic engagement, even when it's not truly CE

- And... the challenge to attract more than just the usual stakeholders. How to reach and draw in, those with real stake in outcomes, who traditionally have not engaged in dialogue.
- True D&D is probably risky for most public officials. They are so careful about scripting what they say. The field of public dialogue is so polluted by spin and deliberate misinformation. I think it is essential to really contract with public officials about how they will deal with diverse opinions, confidentiality, etc.
- Kim C/ I also didn't raise my hand because I was respecting the presenter's request to move on to another topic. It would be more helpful to ask questions of those of us who are frustrated with a lack of focus on problem-solving or those who like a long discussion without a task focus. Dividing it by gender, distracts from the real issues.
- Bruce Waltuck- agree on the gender issue. May be correlations, and perhaps key learnings, but I also have found gender is less important than framing the right questions to attract the widest group, and holding the process open
- Martin - to engage public officials, you need to see things through their perspective and work with them from the beginning, and they have to accept the fact that they have to give up some control. If you really get to talk with them, I've found it not all that difficult to explain the value-added of a more deliberative perspective
- Walt / Neutral convener even better than neutral facilitator
- Barney got frustrated!
- Sfearing / RE opportunity now: New populism allows a framing of limite
- BruceW / on public officials: they often see outcomes as zero-sum, and learn competition style from election process. challenge to open them to WIIFT (what's in it for them) in DD
- Ben/ Uh oh these notes are saved. Better go back and delete my snarky comments!
- Sandy / ha ha
- Mattice/ I'm a practitioner of color and would like to be involved in further conversations.
- Caroline: Hi Mattice! Please feel free to email me after the call: leecw@lafayette.edu

Supplemental Posts Received (emailed to PublicDecisions during or following webinar)

- From Kellie Beckman

Liberated!

The polarization of gender (also race and class) that existed (exists) is changing and I think we are headed toward a balance there. It is no longer necessary to be so polarized or as much so (I'm thinking evolutionarily). The very nature of this kind of process has more parallels with an originally feminine style. I think we will see more of a blend of communication styles in people overall as well as increase in collaboration as the demand for it increases.

Meanwhile, I am sure there is a spectrum of how effectively or ineffectively this is expressed, as we build momentum and standards and understanding of D&D I believe effectiveness will also increase. I believe awareness and inclusivity will follow as momentum grows. It seems to me inevitable that this shift will happen. By which I mean the shift toward a balance of power throughout race, class and gender. I believe as population increases and demand for civility grows, that demand drives and will come through the growth of dialogue and deliberation.

PS I cannot express enough how exciting this is and how useful this webinar is for me. Thanks again :)

- From Kim Crowley

Hi Beth,

Thanks for organizing! I think the shared notes got full or something and would not accept more than a few keystrokes of comment in the last 5-10 minutes or so. I didn't want to comment on mic since the presenter had asked to move on to another topic. I'm sharing my comment now because I think it might lead to worthwhile discussion (task-focused, I hope) in the future:

My comment for the shared notes: "Labels cause division and exacerbate the problem. Focusing on common interests instead leads to cohesion. I'd love to see a discussion on how the Robbers Cave experiments apply in D & D. (*Getting to Yes*, by Ury and others, would also be a great resource to apply.)"

Further context: When we address diversity issues, if we label with externals such as gender or race, we exacerbate the problem. I'm a very process-oriented woman, but I'm frustrated that too many discussions don't aim at solving a problem. Even when the task is reflection and exploration, if the participants don't have a task focus, the group energy is scattered and the discussion never goes very deep into the exploration.

Questions that place us in externally defined groups (such as gender or race) are divisive. Questions like "Do men feel left out of the process if it is seen as feminine?" can be useful, but they come with a powerful side effect. The question immediately pushes people into camps because it defines us by externals rather than by interests and needs. The side effect needs to be managed.

The frame that men want a focus on problem-solving makes me think, "Hey that's my biggest issue, too." But because I'm a woman and that's supposed to be the guys' issue and the follow up question is addressed just to the guys, my voice is put to the back. The implication is that I'm not normal.

Okay, fine. I already know I'm not normal, no biggie for me, but most people strive to be seen as normal. Women and men in the group who don't fit into the stereotype may now be distracted from productive discourse. Some wonder, "Am I normal?" or "Do my experiences matter?" Worse, given that the normal thing to do is to adjust behavior to fit the expectations for "normal," some people may experience subtle pressure to comply or may expect others to comply more closely to the described norm. Regardless, the conversation is very likely derailed from what should be our shared focus: generating ideas on how to make dialogue more attractive based on diverse human needs -- regardless of body type. Instead we are off playing the divisive identity game.

I'm not suggesting that we can never mention gender or race. But we need to take care. Those labels diminish us and oversimplify us. When we use them for frames, we need to move forward to our internal diversity. "Do people who value problem solving get turned off by some of the processes used in facilitated dialogue?" is not only a more inclusive question, it directs people toward finding solutions that

balance and strengthen the group. As a woman, my answer to that question is, "Yes, yes, yes!" instead another let down at being misrepresented because of my gender.

If questions remain in the realm of gender differences, they don't direct us toward shared interests. Instead they imply we have a genetic conflict. Gosh that seems pretty hopeless if that's the case. Genetic conflict by definition is a mostly irreconcilable difference. The primary solutions to genetic conflict are tribal warfare or medication. All other solutions get eliminated immediately because within a genetic frame, they seem useless.

BTW, I'm a middle-aged white woman with a masters degree and I feel like I don't really fit into the monoculture of the dialogue community. It's not that the community isn't welcoming and full of great people. It's not that I don't share so many of the same values. It's just that I look and see that there seems to be a certain uniformity that isn't me. I still plan to join in. I'm not saying there's a barrier to entry. It's just that the lack of diversity to me seems more specific than the demographics used in the survey.

For the record, in my facilitation I pay deep attention to task, process, and especially pacing. I am thrilled at any attention on process out in the real world. In the world of dialogue, I thrilled at attention to problem-solving and product. It's a matter of balance.

Finally, I think the most important gender issue in groups is that both men and women tend to defer to men when men speak in public. This can be objectively observed in groups by counting the number of times each individual gets interrupted and the number of times that person subsequently retains the floor or not. In my observations, groups usually allow men to interrupt women and take the floor a lot more readily than they allow the reverse. The constantly repeated meme that "woman have different styles" is not constructive. This is just a matter of equal application of ground rules -- by the whole group, not just the moderator.

Best regards,
Kim