

Appendix 2. Dialogue methods for research integration and the broader field of dialogue

While it is beyond the scope of this book to provide a summary of the broader field of dialogue, we do point interested readers to key references and show how our work relates to that field. There are three key aspects of the broader field. First is a literature that aims to develop theoretical foundations for dialogue more generally. Key references here are Bohm (1996), Isaacs (1999, 2001), Roberts (2002) and Yankelovich (1999). These references underpin Franco's approach to dialogue, which informs the work we present here. In particular, Franco (2006:814) points out:

In contrast to debate and persuasion, participants in a dialogue do not attempt to validate particular propositions or find weaknesses in them. Rather, participants listen to find strength and value in another's position and work together towards a mutual understanding (Yankelovich 1999). According to Bohm (1996), the word 'dialogue' comes from the Greek 'dialogos': logos means 'the word' or the meaning of the word, and dia means 'through'. Dialogue involves the suspension of judgment or pre-conceptions, an equal participation in the conversation by the parties, empathetic listening, and the mutual probing of assumptions (Roberts, 2002). The goal of dialogue is to jointly create meaning and shared understanding between participants (Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 1999, 2001; Yankelovich, 1999; Roberts, 2002).

Franco (2006), whose interest is in dialogue as a problem-structuring method, sees dialogue as one element in a typology of different conversational forms. He differentiates between debate, persuasion, dialogue, negotiation and deliberation. While these were useful distinctions to draw, we found that they were not completely applicable to our considerations of dialogue as a method for research integration. Certainly, we agree that a formal debate, strong advocacy and classical win-lose negotiation are unlikely to provide strong integrative tools. There are, however, forms of negotiation and deliberation that fit our definition of dialogue—namely, to 'jointly create meaning and shared understanding between participants' (Franco, 2006:814). In particular, we include principled negotiation, which involves each 'side' stating their interests and a formal process seeking a fair resolution of differences based on mutual respect and understanding. Furthermore, deliberation processes based on democratic principles can arguably also fit in a description of dialogue methods.

Dialogue can be used for multiple purposes, of which our use as a method for research integration is only one. These purposes can be wider than research and

integration. In terms of the former, dialogue is useful in a diversity of contexts from setting policy to relationship counselling. In terms of the latter, we have already mentioned Franco's use of dialogue as a way to help groups systematically approach problems, as each group member will conceive the given problem differently. We provide two other examples. In Western intellectual thought, dialogue was first associated with the Greeks, particularly Socrates and Plato. For them, the key issue was 'reasoning through rigorous dialogue as a method for intellectual investigation intended to expose false beliefs and elicit truth' (Tarnas 1991:34). In the 1990s, Bohm (1996:vii) wrote about the use of dialogue as a process 'which explores an unusually wide range of human experience: our closely held values; the nature and intensity of emotions; the patterns of our thought processes; the function of memory; the import of inherited cultural myths; and the manner in which our neurophysiology structures moment-to-moment experience'. He went on to argue that '[i]n its deepest sense, then, dialogue is an invitation to test the viability of traditional definitions of what it means to be human, and collectively to explore the prospect of an enhanced humanity' (Bohm 1996:vii–viii). For those interested in dialogue more broadly, the references listed here provide some of the rich veins they can explore further.

A second key aspect of the broader field of dialogue is the literature on deliberative democracy. This is a theory or movement in political science, with deliberative democracy being defined as 'an association whose affairs are governed by the public deliberation of its members' (Cohen 1989:17) or, more broadly:

Deliberative democracy is a conception of democratic politics in which citizens or their accountable representatives seek to give one another mutually acceptable reasons to justify the laws they adopt. The reasons are not merely procedural ('because the majority favours it') or purely substantive ('because it is a human right'). They appeal to moral principles (such as basic liberty or equal opportunity) that citizens who are motivated to find fair terms of cooperation can reasonably accept. (Gutmann and Thompson 2001:137)

Deliberative democracy can be contrasted with the more familiar approach of representative government in which democracy is realised through citizens voting for their elected representatives. Advocates of deliberative democracy point out that informed citizens, engaging in structured deliberations of important issues, produce a form of democracy that is more valid, and more constructive, than simply voting at elections. It is also differentiated from approaches that 'take fundamental rights as givens, and locate them as restraints on democratic decision-making (such as natural law conceptions and constitutionalism)' (Gutmann and Thompson 2001:137).

Structures and processes characterise deliberative democracy, and dialogue is central to both. Indeed, two of the dialogue methods discussed in this book—citizens’ juries and the consensus conference—are detailed in *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook* (Gastil and Levine 2005). In many of the methods, lay people are presented with information and opinion by experts and key stakeholders in the domain under deliberation and, through facilitated discussion, integrate these inputs to develop a position (sometimes but not always a consensus position) to convey to decision makers.

A useful typology of methods is provided by Button and Ryfe (2005), who suggest that deliberative processes be classified by populating the cells of a 3x3 matrix, with the axes of the matrix being: a) who initiates the deliberative process (a civic association, a non-government organisation or a governmental organisation); and b) who participates (by self-selection, by random selection or by stakeholder selection). Thus, a neighbourhood association is an example of self-selection into a civic association, a deliberative poll is an example of random selection by a non-government organisation, a citizens’ jury is an example of random selection by a government organisation, and deliberative locality planning is an example of stakeholder selection by a government organisation.

Rationality and impartiality are central to deliberative processes (Elster 1998) and all methods of deliberative democracy use dialogue to enhance both of these features. Rationality is enhanced through the combining of expert inputs and lay people’s exercise of judgments, along with discussion to tease out and balance the arguments canvassed. Impartiality is enhanced as people make clear the basis of their understandings and judgments, through discussion test them against those of others and reflect on the similarities and differences in various players’ positions.

The third key element of the broader field of dialogue is a range of compilations of dialogue methods and tool kits available. We list a number of these below and have discussed some in Chapter 2. We use many of these methods in this book, but we present them in a new way: as methods for research integration. As outlined above, we have looked at these methods to see if they are useful for integrating differences that are essential components of collaborative research.

We conclude this section by reiterating that not all dialogue requires a ‘method’. The methods we present here are useful for structuring interactions and synthesis in groups that are large enough for the normal implicit rules of conversation to be less effective than when only two or a small number of people are involved. They can be useful in achieving broad understanding, as with the methods we describe for integrating judgments, as well as when synthesis of a particular aspect of difference in the research is required, as in integrating visions, interests, values or world views.

Tool kits that include dialogue methods

Canadian Rural Information Service, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2002, *Community Dialogue Toolkit*, Canadian Rural Information Service, <<http://www.rural.gc.ca/RURAL/>>

Carson, L. and Gelber, K. 2001, *Ideas for Community Consultation: A discussion on principles and procedures for making consultation work*, NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Sydney, New South Wales.

Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria 2006, *Effective Engagement Toolkit*, <<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/wcmn203.nsf/childdocs/-D15064A59E496FC8CA2570360014FEF8?open>>

Keating, C. 2002, *Facilitation Toolkit: A practical guide for working more effectively with people and groups*, Department of Environment, Water and Catchment Protection, East Perth, Western Australia.

National Land and Water Resources Audit and ANZLIC—The Spatial Information Council 2003, *Natural Resources Information Management Toolkit*, National Land & Water Resources Audit, <<http://www.nlwra.gov.au/national-land-and-water-resources-audit/natural-resources-information-management-toolkit>>

Start, D. and Hovland, I. 2004, *Tools for Policy Impact: A handbook for researchers*, Overseas Development Institute, London, <http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/Tools_Policy_Impact.html>

Urban Research Program, Griffith University 2006, *URP Toolbox*, Urban Research Program, Griffith University (previously the *Coastal CRC's Citizen Science Toolbox*), <<https://www3.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/>>