Deliberative Dialogue:
Changing the PD Discourse

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Like many of you, I yearn for authentic, civil, productive discussions that create and accelerate meaningful change. I simply want to flee when discourse becomes hostile and polarizing or professional dialogue elicits discord and wheel spinning rather than collaboration. This frustration with the state of both political and professional discourse prompted me to seek another way to talk and a different way to act.

Deliberation is a highly structured discussion process moderated by a facilitator in which a group, faced with a difficult problem, weighs the costs and consequences of various options for action. Deliberative dialogue builds the group's capacity to think, talk, and act together as they grapple with tough choices. A facilitator guides participants in developing a shared understanding of critical issues in order to decide on a course of action (Figure 13.18). Unlike rancorous debates, deliberation encourages listening for deeper understanding. Indeed, under facilitated discussion, participants discover that their individual values and concerns overlap with those who hold very different perceptions.

A facilitator uses or develops a discussion guide framed around three or four general approaches, each reflecting a different diagnosis of the problem or conclusion about what should be done. For your initial work with faculty, you might want to experiment with published guides such as ALA's “Who Do I Trust to Protect My Privacy?” (Appendix 13B), which frames one aspect of digital ethics. Other relevant topics for deliberative dialogue that you can create based on this model include evaluating a filtering policy, responding to a challenge to materials, or weighing curricular options.

You will guide your faculty through a discussion of each approach, during which participants see new possibilities, as well as potential costs, consequences, and trade-offs for different courses of action. As the trained and neutral moderator you are a professional leader, helping participants fully understand the impact of various approaches as well as empathetically listening to the experience and circumstances of others. When participants recognize that their most favored approach may inadvertently affect others in negative and unacceptable ways, they learn to take a more inclusive stance. By joining together to peel back an issue, the group reveals the “problem behind the problem,” ensuring that one person’s solution is not another’s curse. Deliberative discussions foster greater understanding, inform decision making, and will help your faculty find common ground for action. And, they let people disagree without being disagreeable.
Figure 13.18: Moderating a Deliberative Forum

A deliberative discussion:
- Gives each approach a fair hearing;
- Examines the costs and consequences of each approach; and
- Provides a space for trust and respectful listening.

The discussion timeline:
- Welcome, Charge, Ground Rules, and Personal Stake (15% of time)
- Deliberate three or four approaches for equal amounts of time (65% of time)
- Personal and Group Reflections (20% of time)

The moderator’s tasks:
- Understands the issue in order to present the overall problem neutrally and each approach in turn.
- Keeps track of time.
- Recruits a recorder who will summarize what people say on a flipchart that everyone can see.
- Makes sure that no person dominates the conversation and everyone participates.

Asks a starter question to turn the work over to the group, such as:
- How has this issue affected you personally?
- When you think about this issue, what concerns you?
- What is appealing about this option or approach?
- What makes this approach a good one—or a bad one?
- How did you come to hold the views you have?
- Lets the group work on the issue by sharing knowledge and perspectives with each other.
- Raises perspectives that the group is avoiding.
- Zeros in on tensions by probing trade-offs.
- Asks what differing viewpoints and positions would mean to everyone if they became policy.
- Listens carefully for shared concerns where people might work cooperatively or in a complementary fashion.

Leads final reflection:
- Considers how people’s thinking about the issue has changed.
- Determines if a shared sense of direction or purpose (common ground for action) has emerged.
- Consider tensions, what people were really saying, and what they are still struggling with as a group.
- Weighs which tradeoffs people are willing to make to move in a shared direction.
- Discusses what was learned and what people will do with what they learned during the forum.

Along with the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) Teacher’s Forum that helps educators integrate deliberative dialogue into K-12 classrooms and the Democracy Imperative that focuses on higher education, the American Library Association Center for Civic Life is com-
mitted to building the capacity of librarians to learn these skills. In my own journey in search of more productive civil discourse, I have learned how thoughtful decision making, moderated by an inclusive leader, can solve difficult problems. When colleagues are able to listen to perspectives that are very different from their own and work through the emotions that tough decisions raise, they can make better decisions, participate in and own solutions to common problems, and learn together with civility and mutual respect.
# Who do I trust to protect my privacy?

## What concerns people about privacy?

When asked about their privacy concerns, people responded that privacy is a right necessary to human dignity and individual integrity - a right they consider personal and individual. They often judge privacy within a family and especially between parent and child differently.

Many commented on the gossip culture that pervades media and affects our concept of privacy. Others expressed fear that partial and misinformation will result in them being misjudged. Several people revealed that they use new technologies to learn more about others to protect themselves. At the same time, they recognize that these same new technologies heighten their awareness of privacy implications.

Some say privacy is a lost cause because we no longer know how to protect it. Others question, “What are you trying to hide?” A number were willing to trade privacy for convenience and convenience for security. Still others believe that the marketplace is the source of innovation in security and privacy protection technology and it also has a vested interest in privacy that secures the integrity of financial data.

## Approach 1: the marketplace

The government has a responsibility to provide for public safety which includes identity protection and to secure the rights necessary to a free society.

### Actions to Implement
- Purchase security measures
- Use spending to reward business that respects privacy
- Use public opinion, boycott against intrusive business
- Adopt and distribute strong company privacy policies and procedures

### Supporters Would Say
- Innovates to protect privacy
- Keeps up with new threats
- Is motivated to please customers
- ID theft threatens profits

### Opponents Would Say
- Targeted marketing is invasive
- Data mining is profitable
- Susceptible to government pressure
- Public has limited leverage

### Tradeoffs
- Savings through targeted sales
- Escalating security expense

## Approach 2: the government

### Actions to Implement
- Set up an office like Canada
- Use courts to enforce checks/balances
- Enact comprehensive legislation that protects privacy
- Publicize existing privacy laws and regulations

### Supporters Would Say
- HIPAA, library, financial, and other confidentiality laws protect privacy
- Privacy implied in First Amendment
- Protecting rights is a government role
- Clarifies public value for public servants

### Opponents Would Say
- No universal definition of what's private
- Susceptible to demagoguery
- Cannot keep up with changing threats
- Always tempted by secrecy

### Tradeoffs
- Public safety & national security
- Complex bureaucratic rules

## Approach 3: my self

I, myself, recognize that privacy values are individual and varied and that no one cares more about my needs than me.

### Actions to Implement
- Monitor personal credit, stay informed
- Join privacy organizations to demand transparent processes
- Pay cash, avoid EZ Pass
- Opt out of participating in data collection when possible

### Supporters Would Say
- “Who will watch the watchers?”
- Privacy desires vary among individuals
- Individual carelessness is main threat
- I'm the only one who can detect/correct errors or theft

### Opponents Would Say
- Too hard, too much work
- Public is lazy, won't demand privacy
- Individuals powerless and ignorant
- Can never be sure you're safe

### Tradeoffs
- Time, effort, and inconvenience
- No one to blame but self

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