

ChoiceDialogues and Deliberative Polls: Two Approaches to Deliberative Democracy

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When policy makers or the media want citizen input on subjects as diverse as health care, immigration, or foreign policy, there are traditional methods available to them: polls, public hearings, focus groups. But those methods only allow limited citizen thought and engagement, and the top-of-mind opinions they gather can be very misleading if people have not really made up their minds. To move beyond polls and focus groups and to engage representative samples of citizens in a completely different way, practitioners of “deliberative democracy” have created a number of techniques in which participants move from initial raw opinions to more considered judgment on vital questions.

In this article, two leading practitioners, Steven Rosell (of ChoiceDialogues) and James Fishkin (of Deliberative Polls) respond to questions about their respective approaches to deliberative democracy. Both programs seek to find a better way to narrow the gap between leaders and citizens, and to enable citizens to participate and reach judgment on important issues in a timely fashion, so as to inform decision making.

In methodological terms, both approaches also recognize the limitations of polls and focus groups on issues where people have not yet made up their minds. Before people work through an issue, top-of-mind opinions are highly unstable, and polls and focus groups (which take a snapshot of these opinions) can be misleading. ChoiceDialogues and Deliberative Polls seek to address this limitation by giving participants the time and support to learn about an issue and to move from raw opinion to more considered judgment. In both approaches, this involves giving participants (1) an opportunity to

talk with fellow citizens, (2) a safe space in which to hold the conversation, (3) balanced information that reflects input from experts who have competing views on the subject, and (4) a structured way to receive and work through the information.

In methodological terms, both approaches recognize the limitations of polls and focus groups on issues where people have not yet made up their minds.

The two programs work with representative random samples of the population to enable inferences to be made about how the wider population would resolve the issue; they use quantitative before-and-after measures (confidential questionnaires) to measure changes in the views of participants.

ChoiceDialogues and Deliberative Polls build upon this common ground in distinctive ways, as shown by the exchanges given here.

Program Overview

What Is a ChoiceDialogue?

Rosell: The ChoiceDialogue is a new research technique based on the work of Daniel Yankelovich and myself on how people make up their minds when confronted with difficult issues, moving from top-of-the-mind, unstable raw opinion to thoughtful and stable judgment; and on the role this plays in the governance process. This method was developed to help the public and leaders resolve so-called gridlock issues.

Conventional theories of public opinion hold that information is the key to helping the public reach thoughtful and stable public

judgment; leaders, experts, and media transmit information to the public, and the public absorbs this information and makes up its mind accordingly. The assumption is that as the public becomes better informed, it makes better decisions and settles unresolved issues. This assumption holds up well enough when issues are simple and solutions are technical, not value-laden. However, where values conflict and people must make hard choices, empirical research shows that information is only a small part of the process whereby they make up their minds.

For controversial issues, a critical role is played by beliefs, values, emotions, and personal experience in addition to information. When members of the public make up their mind on issues of this kind, a complex psychological process of “working through” takes place, in which information is often the *least* important element.

ChoiceDialogues compress into a single eight-hour day a learning process that ordinarily takes place over months or years, or not at all. When conducted with a representative sample of “regular” citizens (no experts, no advocates), these targeted ChoiceDialogues provide both a basis for anticipating how the broader public will resolve issues once they come to grips with them and insight into how best to lead such a learning process on a larger scale.

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The key features of a ChoiceDialogue are:

- A dialogue-based format that focuses on mutual understanding and learning, rather than debate or instruction. Participants are briefed on the ground rules of dialogue. They are encouraged to bring hidden assumptions to the surface and to seek out common ground rather than accentuate differences. (As they are told, one does not “win” a dialogue.)
- Distilling an issue and ways of approaching it into a series of three or four *values-based* choices or scenarios. These choices are presented in a tested workbook format along with

key background and the pros and cons of each approach. Written from a citizen perspective but based on input from a range of experts with differing views, the workbook focuses the discussion and allows participants to cover a great deal of material in a single day.

- A series of one-day dialogue sessions with randomly selected cross-sections of the public (no experts, advocates, or official representatives). Each dialogue involves about forty participants, and each project includes at least three dialogues (often many more). Sessions are always held on weekends to enable workers to attend, and participants receive a small honorarium to ensure low-income participants can attend. As the dialogues proceed, we compare those who attend with the characteristics of the population and adjust recruitment to ensure the overall sample is representative.
- Professional facilitation to ensure that participants deal with wishful thinking and come to grips with the trade-offs (often painful) that solutions may require.
- Ensuring that status distinctions are left at the door. We have found that experts’ best contributions to the process are made in advance, in ensuring that the material presented to participants in the workbook is technically accurate and balanced. The workbook then becomes a common starting point for all participants. Once the dialogue begins, however, it is important that experts not participate directly. This is because we have found that participants tend to defer (or at least play) to the experts, and a more or less convincing performance from a given expert can have a disproportionate effect. Expert participation in the dialogue also undermines a basic ground rule for effective dialogue: all participants treat each other as peers.

In the real world, people shape their opinions and judgments by interacting with one another rather than by talking with experts or through deliberation alone. By replicating this social learning process in microcosm, ChoiceDialogues enable inferences to be made about the choices the wider population might make on an issue, once they have a chance to work it through.

What Is a Deliberative Poll?

Fishkin: Deliberative Polling¹ is an attempt to harness social science to better consult the public. It attempts to realize two democratic values, representativeness and deliberation.

Deliberative Polls offer a picture of what public opinion would be like if the public were more informed and more engaged in a particular public policy or political issue.

Two basic questions can be asked about any form of public consultation. Who participates in the process? What kind of opinion is represented in the process? Deliberative Polling is based on a distinctive combination of answers to these two questions. As compared to self-selected forums or samples of convenience, it employs scientific random samples. Compared to the snapshots of an inattentive public typically offered by conventional polls, it assesses informed public opinion produced through a balanced process of informative discussion that we call deliberation. In this way, the Deliberative Poll attempts to represent everyone in a given population—through a statistical microcosm empowered to think about the issues in question under favorable conditions. Of course, a lot depends on precisely how the “favorable conditions” are realized.

At its core, a Deliberative Poll is a survey of a random and representative sample of respondents, both before and after they have had a chance to deliberate. An ordinary poll offers a representation of public opinion as it is—even if that representation reflects no more than the public’s impressions of sound bites and headlines on the issue in question. A Deliberative Poll, by contrast, attempts to represent what the public would think about the issue if it were motivated to become more informed and to consider competing arguments.

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But why go to all the trouble to conduct Deliberative Polls when a conventional poll can also solicit opinion from a good statistical microcosm—that is, a scientific random sample? A great deal of public opinion research has established that the public is often not well informed about complex policy or political matters. Only a small percentage of the population can answer even the most basic questions. Other researchers have shown that policy-specific information can lead to dramatic changes of opinion under experimental conditions.

The low information level among the mass public should not be surprising. Anthony Downs coined the term rational ignorance to explain the incentives facing ordinary citizens. If I have one vote in millions, why should I spend the time and effort to become well informed on complex issues of politics and policy? My individual vote, or my individual opinion, is unlikely to have any effect. Most of us have other pressing demands on our time, often in arenas where we can, individually, make more of a difference than we can in politics or policy. From the standpoint of democratic theory, this lack of effective incentive for individual citizens to become well informed is regrettable but also understandable.

A second difficulty is that many of the opinions reported in conventional polls may not even exist. They may be what Philip Converse, in a classic study, termed “nonattitudes” or phantom opinions. Many respondents, rather than answer “don’t know” (when they don’t), are more inclined to pick an alternative almost randomly. Even those opinions that are not quite nonattitudes may be very much top-of-the-head in that they reflect little thought or sustained attention.

Among methods of consultation, the Deliberative Poll is the most ambitious in aspiring to get informed opinion from a scientific random sample. There have been about thirty-five Deliberative Polls around the world, in the United States, Britain, Denmark, Australia, and Bulgaria. In the United States, some have been local or regional and some national. There have also been three online Deliberative Polls conducted by the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, in conjunction with public television’s “The Newshour with Jim Lehrer.” The most recent took place during this presidential election. The online version uses voice rather than just text and is based on a sample being provided with computers. It takes place in weekly synchronous discussions with moderated small groups, with asynchronous answers being distributed in between sessions. The answers have been furnished by competing experts selected by the Newshour. The dynamics of change in opinion in both online and face-to-face versions are much the same. It is those who become more informed about the issues who change their political attitudes. Furthermore, change is not correlated with education or any of the other key demographic variables. In this sense, the Deliberative Polling process is remarkably democratic.

The two key ingredients of the Deliberative Poll are representativeness and deliberation. Representativeness is facilitated by random sampling. Turning to our ability to assess the effects of deliberation, the design includes (whenever financially feasible) control groups who do not deliberate. This allows us to infer that the changes in the sample are occurring because of the deliberation rather than because of events in the wider world that would have produced those changes anyway. The result is a full-blown field experiment.

How do you ensure a representative sample, both attitudinally and demographically?

Rosell: We randomly select a demographically representative sample of the target population. With respect to attitudes, we generally ask participants to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of a dialogue that is then compared with polling data from the wider population.

Fishkin: *Representativeness is facilitated by random sampling. A key point is that the research design allows us to compare participants and nonparticipants attitudinally as well as demographically. Participants are invited only after they have taken the initial questionnaire.*

What lessons have you learned, and what challenges do you face?

Rosell: The ChoiceDialogue methodology has been applied to a range of issues at the national, state, and local levels in both the United States and Canada. We have conducted more than seventy-five ChoiceDialogues on a range of subjects, including urban growth, health care, environment, aging, international development, education, social equity, economic development, water, housing, land use, transportation, and governance. Among the lessons we have learned:

- Citizens are pragmatists, not ideologues. The basic question that guides their working through process is not “Does this fit my political framework?” but rather “Will this work?”
- It is not difficult to get people to use the ground rules of dialogue. Participants quickly adopt a constructive, problem-solving approach and enforce the ground rules themselves (the facilitators seldom have to intervene). Participants enjoy

trying a different kind of conversation and by the end of the day almost always express surprise and satisfaction at the amount of common ground a diverse group of strangers has been able to find in just eight hours.

- On almost any issue, a diverse group of participants can usually find agreement on perhaps 80 percent of the questions relatively quickly. Once the common ground has been mapped, it is much easier to address the remaining 20 percent in that context. Even on those areas where there is continued disagreement, participants report they have a better understanding and increased respect for other points of view as a result of the dialogue.
- With the right context, and with the process and materials presented in the right format, citizens can quickly move into a sophisticated conversation about a complex issue. This has surprised both the participants themselves and outside experts who often observe these sessions. The experts sometimes even question whether the participants really are a randomly selected sample of the population; ordinary people are not supposed to be able to have this level of conversation, but in fact they can. We see them do it in every dialogue. What seems to be the key is that the dialogue focuses not on technical detail expressed in the jargon of experts but on values—on the sort of future people want to see for themselves, their families, and their communities with respect to the focal issue.
- The mistrust and cynicism that many citizens express about the political process turns out to be a relatively thin crust, covering a strong desire to be more directly engaged in decisions that affect their future. What most inhibits people's participation are doubts they can make a difference or that political leaders are really interested in their views.
- Follow-up studies indicate that citizens who participate in ChoiceDialogues make real and lasting changes in their views, level of engagement, and connection to critical issues. This research technique appears to build long-lasting social capital among participants.
- At the same time, ChoiceDialogues are not appropriate for every issue. In particular, when issues are relatively simple and technical and raise no major value issues, ChoiceDialogues are neither needed nor appropriate.
- A major challenge we face is developing and strengthening ways to scale up the findings and effects of ChoiceDialogues, both through engaging elected leaders more

effectively and through new media formats. This is discussed later in this essay.

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Fishkin: *There are several challenges for Deliberative Polling:*

- *Finding contexts where the methodology, which is expensive, can be employed, where the key sponsors are open to whatever outcome the public produces. A premise of the process is that the public will do the hard work to grapple with complex policy matters provided they think their voice matters. So the first challenge is to find contexts where their voice will matter because the sponsors or relevant government agencies are open to a range of outcomes.*
 - *The second challenge is to gather and engage the relevant stakeholders in the advisory process that produces the balanced briefing materials and planning for the Deliberative Poll.*
 - *The third challenge is finding an appropriate media partner. All Deliberative Polls (except the online version) have been televised; this adds greatly to the reach of the process and gives a sense of empowerment to the sample.*
 - *A further challenge is engaging both policy makers and the public in a transparent, highly visible process and in a manner that preserves balance and the informative character of the process. We must deal with the media and policy makers at the same time that we deal with the public. Depending on policy contexts, the process has differing target audiences. Sometimes the key target is the mass public itself, particularly before an election or referendum. Sometimes the target is key policy makers, many of whom participate in the process, answering questions from the sample.*
 - *A further challenge is to gain acceptance for random sampling as the basis for selection. It is much easier to do a televised town meeting with a self-selected sample or a group selected arbitrarily but conveniently. The case for serious social science as the basis for representation often has to be made.*
- *The case also has to be made, and remade, for our practice of employing, in effect, a secret ballot at the end. Many alternative processes seek consensus on the main substantive issues. This exposes the participants to social pressure and makes it difficult to study and understand opinion change at the individual level. We also believe that one of the reasons we do not find polarization or groupthink at the small-group level is that we do not push consensus.*
 - *A last challenge is cost. It is always more expensive to recruit a scientific sample and compensate it appropriately than it would be to employ self-selection. In addition, we face the costs of transportation, housing, and food for those events that cover a large distance (national events, for example) or multiple days. (New cost-effective solutions are discussed later, in the section called "Scaling Up.")*

Group Deliberation

Do you consider the discussions within ChoiceDialogue and Deliberative Poll small groups "deliberative," and if so, what criteria do you use to make this statement?

Rosell: ChoiceDialogue conversations are deliberative, in the sense that they are thoughtful and characterized by (1) participants learning from each other and from expert input, (2) weighing difficult choices and trade-offs and the arguments pro and con, and (3) intelligent consideration of complex issues over a period of eight hours. Indeed, as described in the section on challenges and lessons learned, both expert observers and the participants themselves are often surprised by the quality of the conversation. But ChoiceDialogues also go beyond what is usually meant by deliberation to incorporate emotions, personal experience, and complex psychological processes of working through.

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Fishkin: *We consider the small group discussions deliberative in a certain sense. The root of deliberation is "weighing," and the process invites participants to weigh competing alternatives on their merits. There are several aspects of "quality" in delibera-*

tion. First, there is balance; are arguments offered from one perspective answered from another? Second, there is information; do the participants employ accurate information and do they acquire the information they believe relevant to assisting them in the weighing process? Third, are the participants conscientious—that is, do they engage the issues sincerely on the merits rather than, for example, acting strategically? Fourth, how diverse or representative is the group of people doing the deliberation? Random sampling ensures a range of views characteristic of the range of views in the society.

How do you enable participants to reach a considered and informed judgment?

Rosell: Those who change their views are participants who not only absorb new information but also (and especially) take four essential steps:

1. They struggle to align their opinions with their core values.
2. They expose themselves to alternative ways of framing the issue, gaining an understanding of other viewpoints while reserving judgment.
3. They come face-to-face with their own wishful thinking and wrestle with the cognitive dissonance that results from the need to make painful trade-offs.
4. Their thinking evolves through several stages as they take the time to absorb the consequences of their own views.

Our dialogue-based format is designed to facilitate these steps. Changing views involves changing frameworks, and information alone is not enough. People use their interpretive frameworks to make sense of information; they can generally screen out anything that conflicts with their basic assumptions and mind-set. People can look at an event and see very different realities (just think of how viewers assess the presidential debates). That is why the additional steps we've discussed here are so essential. At the same time, information does play a role. As a starting point, all participants receive a workbook that has been prepared with input from experts on the issue who have competing views. Each workbook includes a statement of the issue, relevant background, and up to four values-based choices or choice scenarios outlining how the issue might be variously addressed and the arguments pro and con. We have found that this tested format enables participants to quickly absorb

complicated information and bring it to bear in a sophisticated conversation about the issue.

Fishkin: *First, they have the briefing materials that serve as the basis for discussion. The materials contain more than information. They offer competing arguments, pro and con arguments from different perspectives. They also get diverse perspectives on the issue from the small groups—which are random samples, randomly assigned. In addition, they formulate questions for panels of competing experts or policy makers in plenary sessions.*

Every effort is made for a balanced panel of experts. We have had the benefit of some natural experiments with varying experts on the same topics and have found that substitution of less charismatic proponents of the same position has no discernible effect. The changes really seem to come about from the small-group discussions, but the opportunity to get questions answered buttresses the deliberative process. Also, when prominent experts or policy makers participate (particularly when televised), this gives the participants a sense of empowerment.

How are small groups facilitated (and by whom), and how do you think this affects interaction among the participants and the overall outcome?

Rosell: The small groups are self-facilitated. Each group selects a moderator, timekeeper, and reporter. Different group members take these roles in the morning and in the afternoon. In a typical dialogue, there are four small groups (ten persons each), and each professional facilitator observes two of the groups and intervenes if needed. In our experience, such intervention (to keep participants on topic and in dialogue mode) are very seldom needed. In designing the dialogues in this way, we have made a basic trade-off. Even though the groups might work more easily if we provided a facilitator for each, having them self-facilitated ensures the conclusions really are those of the participants; it affords a strong sense of ownership and accomplishment, and it minimizes any undue influence or skewing by staff facilitators. We believe these benefits outweigh the costs.

Fishkin: *The small groups are facilitated by trained moderators. Their task is (1) to facilitate a safe public space where the participants can discuss policy or political issues together, (2) to make sure that no one dominates the discussion, (3) to make*

sure that everyone participates, and (4) to keep the discussions on the agenda that has been set by the briefing document and the dialogue at the plenary sessions.

What observations about “groupthink” or various forms of dominance (of time or topic) do you have regarding small-group work, and what research, if any, are you exploring or would like to explore?

Rosell: The ground rules of dialogue used and enforced throughout the session are designed to ensure that differing viewpoints are heard and that participants try to understand and learn from the views of others (whether or not they agree). Participants also fill out confidential questionnaires at the beginning and end of each dialogue. Together these provisions are designed to protect against groupthink or dominance by individual participants in the process. We would like to conduct more detailed studies of the experiences of participants in these sessions. It would also be instructive to conduct a study comparing the experience of participants in ChoiceDialogues with those of participants in other methods such as Deliberative Polls.

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Fishkin: *We have demonstrated statistically from analyses of small-group discussions in the Deliberative Poll before and after that there is neither a pattern of groupthink nor the pattern that Cass Sunstein terms polarization in the Deliberative Poll.² We think that this is because we do not seek consensus (but solicit final opinions through a confidential questionnaire) and because we have a number of elements of balance in the briefing materials, the plenary sessions, and the moderators.*

Results

What method do you use to determine how and why participant views change?

Rosell: We administer confidential written questionnaires at the beginning and end of each session to measure quantitatively

how views change. We conduct enough dialogues in any project to permit quantitative analysis, and we report only quantitative findings that are statistically significant. Perhaps even more important, we collect rich qualitative data to use in determining how, and especially why, views change (including videotapes of each dialogue, statements by participants explaining how and why their views have changed, notes by facilitators and trained observers, and written work by participants during the dialogues). This qualitative data, as well as the quantitative results, forms a central part of our analysis and of the briefings we give decision makers.

Fishkin: *First, we analyze the representativeness of the sample by comparing participants to nonparticipants. Second, we look at opinion change comparing the responses on first contact to those offered after the weekend. Third, we look to the information items as an explanatory variable to help elucidate the opinion changes. We have a model that relies a great deal on information gain. We also look at our values questions and so-called empirical premises (controversial factual claims about causal connections) and see if there is a tighter connection between basic assumptions and opinions they seem connected to after deliberation as compared to before. These are just a few of our strategies. In terms of quantitative versus qualitative analysis, most of our analyses thus far are quantitative, but we are preparing for some systematic qualitative analyses as well.*

What do we know about the continuing effects of participation on political efficacy? What is the relationship between your program and representative democracy?

Rosell: To be sustainable in a democracy today, any major policy decision (especially on a gridlock issue) needs to meet at least two tests: it must be technically feasible, and it must reflect the underlying values of the citizenry. Citizens cannot and do not expect to furnish the technical expertise; but equally, experts should not and cannot substitute their values for those of the population overall. ChoiceDialogues are a valuable way to bring the voice and values of unorganized citizens into the decision-making process more effectively so as to enable elected representatives to understand the stable preferences of their constituents (as opposed to the unstable, not-thought-through preferences usually measured by polls).

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We have done follow-up studies on some of the dialogues up to a year after the event. These studies indicate that citizens who participate in ChoiceDialogues make real and lasting changes in their views, level of engagement, and connection to critical issues. This research technique appears to build long-lasting social capital among participants.

Fishkin: *We have gone back to the samples months or even as much as a year later. There are considerable effects in terms of the persistence of opinion, political efficacy, and political participation. We even find these effects with the online version. As for the connection to representative democracy, representatives are often looking for an alternative to conventional public opinion polls because they know that the public is not well informed. There is a literature on representation, running from Burke and Madison to Pitkin, that would invite representatives to consider what their constituents would think if they were more informed.*

Can you give an example to demonstrate what you would consider to be a perfect or close-to-perfect use of your model that demonstrates the claims you make?

Rosell: One good example would be a series of twelve dialogues we conducted across Canada on the future of that country's health care system. A more detailed description of this project has been published in the *British Medical Journal*.³ Almost five hundred Canadians participated in these dialogues, which were undertaken for a special government commission established to recommend changes in the health care system. The results became, as one leader of the commission put it, "a rock-solid foundation for our consultations and recommendations throughout." The dialogues showed Canadian policy makers that their latitude for action was broader than polls indicated. One proposal in particular had powerful benefits and appeals for Canadians that were not clear to policy makers beforehand. This project gave leaders insight that guided the reform proposals subsequently developed and now being implemented.

Fishkin: *The use of Deliberative Polling in the regulation of Texas utilities was exemplary in several ways: (1) the samples were representative, (2) the process of developing the briefing materials and the agenda for the process involved all the relevant stakeholders, (3) there were dramatic changes of opinion, and (4) those results were used in the regulatory process, the "Integrated Resource Plans" filed by the utilities to produce actual decisions that fit the public's considered judgments. Texas became a world leader in renewable energy as a direct result of the eight Deliberative Polls conducted there.*

Scaling Up

How do you plan (if you do) to broaden the dissemination of your program?

Rosell: We are using, and further developing, two basic approaches to scaling up: the first through civic and elected leaders, and the second through an innovative media format.

In most of our ChoiceDialogue projects, we try to engage relevant civic and elected leaders from the outset to ensure that they are aware of the work, and that the findings will be relevant and useful in dealing with the decisions they face. The analysis of the ChoiceDialogue results also focuses on holding a briefing for leaders summarizing what matters most to people on the issue, how positions are likely to evolve as surface opinion matures into more considered judgment, and the opportunities for leadership this creates. In addition, in some projects we have conducted follow-up "stakeholder dialogues" between some of the citizens from the ChoiceDialogues and some civic and elected leaders.

Most recently, we have used stakeholder dialogues to follow up on a series of ChoiceDialogues conducted across California on governance, and in another series conducted in Silicon Valley on housing and land use. These sessions were an unusual opportunity for leaders to work with citizens who have labored hard to reconcile the complex and emotional trade-offs involved in major reform efforts. They also demonstrate a new form of two-way dialogue between leaders and average citizens, quite different from the usual town hall meetings, and present a model that others can replicate. Both the stakeholder dialogues and the briefings that result from the ChoiceDialogues are designed to help leaders hear and understand the voice of the unorganized

For more on Deliberative Polling, see:

Ackerman, B., and Fishkin, J. S. *Deliberation Day*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004.

Fishkin, J. S. *The Voice of the People*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995. <http://cdd.stanford.edu>

For more on ChoiceDialogues and the role of citizen engagement in governance, see:

<http://www.viewpointlearning.com>

Rosell, S. A. *Renewing Governance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Yankelovich, D. *Coming to Public Judgment*. Syracuse, N.Y.: University of Syracuse Press, 1991.

Yankelovich, D. *The Magic of Dialogue*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999.

public, frame issues so as to make sense to citizens, and lead a public learning process around these issues on a broader scale.

As a practical matter, only a tiny fraction of the population could ever participate in face-to-face dialogues, so it is important to develop other methods of scaling up these conversations to include many thousands (even millions) of citizens. The media are the most obvious way to do this, but today's dominant media formats rarely if ever engage people in an active process of working through issues and trade-offs. We have developed a media-based form of dialogue we call "Proxy Dialogue," which shifts the focus from top-down instruction to engagement. Proxy Dialogue gives viewers the opportunity to watch people like themselves working through issues about which they are uncertain. Real people working through real problems and coming to grips with trade-offs form the core of any Proxy Dialogue; identifying with participants, viewers can accomplish some of the

working through themselves. We have conducted experiments with media partners in Canada and California and are continuing the development of this new format.

Fishkin: *The ambitious scheme in the book Deliberation Day outlines a strategy for scaling up the process in local communities and with local partners throughout the country. Purely local events, such as the seventeen Deliberative Polls in PBS's "Deliberation Day" this October, are more cost-effective. The new online version, employing voice rather than text and making computers available to those who do not have them, opens up new possibilities. As access to the Internet becomes increasingly widespread, the cost of the online Deliberative Poll will plummet and perhaps eventually give us a cost-effective deliberative alternative to Gallup.*

ENDNOTES

1. Deliberative Polling is a trademark of James S. Fishkin. The trademark is meant to ensure quality control. All fees from the trademark are used to support research at the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford.
2. Sunstein, C. R. "The Law of Group Polarization," University of Chicago School of Law, The John M. Olin Program in Law and Economics Working Paper no. 91, 2d series, January 3, 1999.
3. See Maxwell, J., Rosell, S., and Forest, P-G. "Giving Citizens a Voice in Healthcare Policy in Canada." *British Medical Journal*, 2003, 326, 1031-1033.

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