

Dilemmas cafés: A guide for facilitators



UK PARTICIPATORY
RESEARCH NETWORK



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



CONNECTED
COMMUNITIES



E · S · R · C
ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL

What is a dilemmas café?

A **dilemmas café** involves people coming together to discuss several dilemmas experienced by participants. A dilemma is a choice between alternative courses of action, when it is not clear which is the right one to choose. A dilemmas café may be on any topic, e.g. science, parenting, social work. This guide focuses on ethical dilemmas in community-based participatory research (CBPR). Ethics is about matters of rights, responsibilities, harms and benefits.

Aims are to raise participants' awareness of ethical challenges in CBPR; encourage collaborative dialogue, including critical listening and questioning; stimulate learning through hearing about different ways of seeing and understanding issues; explore a variety of recommendations for action.

What happens? In a facilitated gathering of 15-40 people, three people in turn present a dilemma from their own experiences. Participants choose a dilemma to work on, and join a table with the presenter of their chosen dilemma and a facilitator. They tease out, discuss and record the issues. After 30 minutes, participants either move tables and tackle a different dilemma or remain at the same table. Presenters and facilitators stay at their tables and brief new participants on the earlier dialogues. Depending on time, there can be two or three rounds of dialogues. After this participants reconvene in a large group to share insights and learning.



Preparation

Timing – allow 2.5 to 3 hours for a café

Choose a theme/title and advertise the café – e.g. 'Dilemmas café: Using dialogue to explore ethical challenges in community-based participatory research'. Describe the event to encourage a range of participants – e.g. members of community organisations, academics, students and other researchers.

Seek presenters - In the publicity invite volunteers to contact you if they are willing to offer a dilemma. In addition, you might approach people you know, whom you think might present a dilemma. Ensure you have three presenters whom you have briefed in advance and who are prepared to speak for 5-10 minutes. In a café about CBPR, you might choose an academic, a student and a community-based researcher.

Seek table facilitators – identify people in advance to act as table facilitators to ensure the dialogues run smoothly.

Room layout – set up the room with three round tables or clusters of oblong tables/desks joined together. Tables should seat between 5-12 people. Place sheets of flipchart paper or paper tablecloths and coloured pens on each table. If there are more than 36 people, set up more tables. Each table should have a facilitator, but they may not all have a presenter.

Refreshments – ensure plenty of drinks and snacks are available.

Example of briefing to presenters

Three people present a real dilemma that they have experienced in the past or are experiencing in their current research. Each person speaks for a maximum of 10 minutes, with the following brief:

- Briefly describe who you are.
- Briefly describe an ethical dilemma that you have experienced in the past or are currently experiencing in connection with doing research. A dilemma occurs when you are in a situation where a difficult choice has to be made and whatever you do will be challenging - somebody may get hurt, some bad consequences may occur, or somebody's rights may be infringed.
- Describe the background to the situation: where did it happen, what was your role, who else was involved, what events led up to the dilemma.
- If you are describing a past dilemma, say what actually happened, and how you felt about that. If you are describing a current dilemma, say what you are struggling with now and how this makes you feel.

Note - Choose a dilemma that you are comfortable to talk about. If there are other people involved and the dilemma is sensitive, then make sure you don't give people's real names. We will ask participants to keep the identity of people and places anonymous.

Facilitating the café

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

1. Welcome participants, explain the theme, format and aims of the café. Depending on the size of the group, invite people to introduce themselves or undertake a brief warm-up exercise.
2. Ask people to follow the Chatham House Rule. This is designed to provide anonymity to speakers and to encourage openness and sharing of information:

Participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Presentations of dilemmas (30 minutes)

3. Invite the three presenters in turn to describe their dilemma (5-10 minutes each).

Ground rules for the table dialogues (5-10 minutes)

4. Invite participants to choose one dilemma to work on initially, and say they will be invited to join the table with the presenter of that dilemma. Roughly equal sized groups are preferable.
5. Explain that each group has a facilitator to maximise dialogue based around three questions:
 - a. Are there any further factual questions you would like to ask the presenter to clarify the situation (only factual questions - don't get into the discussion at this point) – maximum 5 minutes.
 - b. What are/were the key issues at stake in this dilemma?
 - c. What are/were the possibilities for resolving the dilemma?
6. Each table has flipchart sheets to record key points. Group members should feel free to write/draw on the paper.
7. Ask people to follow the café ground rules (these are based on variations of the principles of World Café and Socratic Dialogue):
 - Listen carefully
 - Respect and build on the contributions of others
 - Own your contributions ('I think ...')
 - Ask questions
 - Link and connect different ideas
 - Listen together for deeper questions and insights
 - Write, doodle and draw on the paper

8. Say you will ring a bell or clap your hands after 30 minutes and ask people to move if they wish. Invite people to take more refreshments and go to their tables.

Small group dialogues at tables (60-90 minutes)

9. Round 1 (30 minutes)

Facilitators encourage the group to work through the three questions listed in section 5 above.

- a) Any further factual questions?
- b) Key issues at stake in this dilemma?
- c) Possibilities for resolving the dilemma?

10. Ring the bell for the changeover - facilitators and speakers remain at their tables, others change tables if they wish. Invite people to take more refreshments.

11. Round 2 (30 minutes)

- a) Facilitator summarises main points from the previous group (referring to the flipchart if useful).
- b) New group discusses key issues - adding to/building on the previous group's ideas (adding to notes already on the flipchart).
- c) Possibilities for resolving the dilemma?

12. Ring the bell. Now people can move tables again for a third round, or, if time is more limited, end the small group dialogues and move to the plenary discussion.

Feedback in plenary session (30 minutes)

13. Feedback and discussion – going round each table in turn, ask for brief, focused feedback from table facilitators about what key issues and possibilities were discussed. Ask participants to add to this. Ask presenters what they feel they got from the process. Then initiate overall discussion of what people have learnt about ethical issues and how to tackle them, and about this process as a method of exploring ethical issues in CBPR. Refer to the ethics guide, cases, and other resources on the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action website for further information, www.durham.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice/ethics_consultation

Participants' reflections on the value of a dilemmas café

"Being able to share with others honestly about key issues in research that are seldom talked about"

"Bringing different perspectives together and preparing for the unexpected"

"Meeting and hearing from other researchers and practitioners in a positive environment of equality. Was useful to use real examples"

"By sharing my dilemma I felt supported and acknowledged"

Useful background on dialogical methods:

The World Café method, www.theworldcafe.com/

Socratic Dialogue, <http://sfcp.org.uk/socratic-dialogue-2/>

This guide was compiled by Sarah Banks (Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, Durham University). Thanks to Sue Shaw, Phil McNaghten, Philip Robinson, Candice Satchwell, Helen Atkin, Tina Cook, members of Durham Citizens' Panel and others who have participated in dilemmas cafés. Publication funded by Durham University ESRC Impact Acceleration Account.

For further information contact: Sarah Banks, s.j.banks@durham.ac.uk

Published by Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, Durham University, UK, November 2015, socialjustice@durham.ac.uk | www.durham.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice/