2.1 Deciders and Deliberators

Purpose

This first activity, using either the online game *@Stake* or a tabletop version, asks participants to role play the points of view of different stakeholders in their community. It requires participants to "put themselves in someone else's shoes" and articulate that person's concerns persuasively. The activity encourages dialogue and empathy for diverse perspectives.

Learning Goals

Participants will:

- Analyze the point of view of a specific stakeholder with regard to an important community issue
- Build a persuasive case for that point of view and present it to others
- Evaluate the positions presented by other "stakeholders" through group dialogue ("deliberate")
- Appreciate the potency of multiple points of view and personal stakes in a community issue, and the advantages and disadvantages of public exchange

Time

@Stake Digital

- Gameplay requires 45 minutes.

@Stake Tabletop

- The framing questions portion will take an hour to prepare.
- Gameplay requires 45 minutes.

Supplies

@Stake Digital:

- Access to the internet
- Mobile devices or computers for all players

@Stake Tabletop:

- One *@Stake* deck of cards for every 4 to 5 people, created by the facilitator (See also below.) *(Heavyweight cardstock that can be written on both sides is best. A scissors or a paper cutter will be needed to cut up the cards in the deck).*
- One writing utensil per participant
- One piece of scratch paper per participant
- About 50 beans (or other small "countable" objects that can serve as game tokens) per table.

Deciders and Deliberators, *continued*

Facilitator Preparation

Digital Version: The facilitator can simulate the game for themselves ahead of time by going to the https://atstakegame.org/play on multiple devices (both computer and mobile device, for example) and creating a separate player profile for each device.

Tabletop Version: The facilitator must create several decks of cards ahead of time. To determine the number of cards needed, decide how many different "roles" you want to create and how many rounds of the game you will have time to play. See also requirements for Activities 2 and 3 so all cards can be cut out at once. The role cards and other materials can be found in this document here. Facilitators can customize the roles for the local context.

Introduce the Activity to Participants

Begin with several short, open-ended questions to get participants thinking about how many different points of view there might be in a community regarding a single issue of public importance:

- In your community, do you think most people think the same way about various public or social issues, or do you think there might often be two very different positions (splitting the community in half)—or more often *a lot* of different points of view?

- In your community, are there several people who generally stake out major positions on public issues? Generally, who are they? *(Perhaps a government official, a religious leader, a school teacher, an activist of some kind)*

Launch the Activity

Tell participants that they are now going to play a game in which it will be their job to be one of those very persuasive public "voices." To win the game, they must convince others that their position is the correct one. But the catch is, they will not be able to choose who that person is or what their point of view is.

Their first task is to come up at least ten issues that matter to their community and require some short- or long-term action. These issues might be challenging and even contentious. It's ok if they pick fictional issues,

or issues that were problematic in the past but have now been resolved. Ask participants to brainstorm a lot of ideas while one of them writes them all down on the black/white board. Then collectively they should pick the top ten. Examples might be:

- The public school has no running water and no working latrines, so it's hard to get parents to send girls to school.
- The public health center has no ambulance, even though it's supposed to.
- A lot of teenage boys are drinking and doing drugs and getting girls in trouble.
- A lot of refugees have spilled into the community recently and there's no place for them to live.

Each of the selected issues should then be written on its own card or Post-It note for use in the game.

Instructions for Online version of *@Stake*

If all participants have access to a computer or mobile device, instruct all participants to go to https://atstakegame.org/play and enter their name and click the "Next!" button. One of the participants or the facilitator should select "Start new game" and select a Stakeholder deck. Once a stakeholder deck has been selected, the participant or facilitator must share the room code with the other participants. The remaining participants select "Join a game" and enter the room code and click "Join game". The game will then begin.

Instructions for Tabletop version of *@Stake*

One participant must volunteer to be the first "Decider." If no participant volunteers, designate one. Give each participant scratch paper, a pencil or pen, and three score tokens (such as beans). The Decider receives two additional bonus tokens for his/her role.

Everyone else is dealt a **Role card** at random. The front of the card (Role Title) should be visible to everyone. The back of the card, which has the participant's hidden agenda and bio, is private and should be kept hidden. Only the participant who holds the role card should read it.

Place three tokens in the center of the table as the first "pot." Participants must then present their cases to try to win the pot. The Decider takes charge of the "clock" (watch, timer, or phone) and selects an issue from the list for round one.

1. **Introduction:** The round begins with each participant introducing him or herself "in character"— sharing the name of the role (NOT the bio and agenda written on the back of the card).

2. **Brainstorm:** The Decider announces the issue for the first round and begins timing one minute. Each participant must then use this time to consider a proposal in line with their bio (and point of view) to help solve the issue. (Participants may use their note sheets to organize their thoughts.)

3. **Pitch:** After the minute is over, the Decider asks participants for their proposals. Starting with the participant to the Decider's left and moving clockwise, each participant has one minute to explain their role/bio to the group and pitch their proposal to the Decider. It is the Decider's responsibility to monitor the time. If a participant wants more time to make their proposal, they may pay one token to the pot for an extra 30 seconds.

4. **Deliberate:** After each participant has had the opportunity to pitch their proposal, the Decider leads a follow-up discussion with the group. Participants, (including the Decider) may ask one another for details about any proposal, offer counter arguments, or ask for changes to any proposal. It is the Decider's responsibility to monitor the time. After 90 seconds, the Decider should announce the winning proposal. Again, participants

may pay an extra token to the pot to gain an extra 30 seconds to answer questions, ask questions of their opponents, or rebut the opposition. It may be strategically advantageous for participants to suggest improvements to one another's plans, or ask clarifying questions based on their agendas (see Scoring Agenda Bonus Points below).

5. **The Decision:** The Decider may take roughly 10 to 15 seconds to come to a conclusion and share his or her reasoning.

6. **Scoring and Agenda Bonus Points:** The participant who wins the round earns the pot. However, a participant whose agenda was included in the winning proposal will also win bonus points. Starting with the winning participant, participants reveal their agendas to the table. The Decider says which agenda elements were satisfied by the winning proposal and by each of the other proposals. Bonus points are awarded for each element include in a participant's proposal.

7. **Ending the Game:** After each round, the participant who won the pot becomes the new Decider (or passes the buck) and the steps above are repeated. (Note, only the Decider in the first round receives bonus tokens at the start of the game.) After four rounds, the participant with the most tokens wins.

Optional Rule—Passing the Buck: A winning participant may "pass the buck" to avoid being the next Decider by passing one chip to the participant on his or her left. That participant then becomes the Decider. The new Decider also has the option to pass the buck, but to do so, he or she must give up two tokens. That participant must pass three tokens to the left to pass the buck, then the next participant must pass four, and so on, until a participant elects to become the Decider.

Deciders and Deliberators, *continued*

Debrief and Reflect (both versions of the game)

When the game is over, ask participants to reflect on their successes and failures during "deliberation."

- Was it difficult to argue a position that you don't really "believe in"?
- Did you find that you became more sympathetic with a position by having to argue it yourself?
- What kinds of arguments were the most persuasive?
- Is the role of the Decider desirable or undesirable?

End the activity with several open-ended questions to encourage sharing and reflection. If you are also going to do Activities 2 and 3, you might wait with this discussion until they have had a chance to complete the module.

- Is it helpful or harmful for people/groups with different points of view to express them publicly/in the media? *(Why?)*
- Can listening to other points of view create empathy or does it just lead to more animosity/conflict? *(What does it take for the first to happen instead of the second?)*
- Can we be persuasive in advancing personal agendas while contributing to a common good?
- Are their stakeholders in our communities whose voices are never, or rarely heard? If so, why aren't they?