



# Collaboration

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# Harnessing and Managing Difference

*Relevant conference theme: concepts and methods*



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# Harnessing Difference...1

The point of collaboration is to combine different skills or attributes



## Harnessing Difference...2

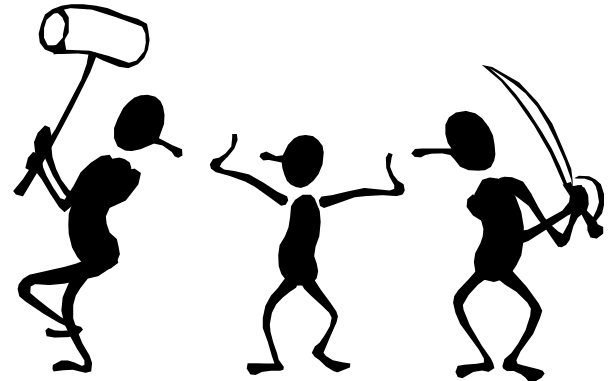
These may be

- disciplinary strengths, such as combining the skills from sociology, biology and statistics
- personal attributes, such as combining the attributes of someone who is task focused and someone who is a good people manager and so on...

# The Challenge

Collaborators do not just come with desirable differences

Some differences get in the way of collaboration and must be managed for the research to proceed



# Managing Difference

The differences to be managed are often personal, i.e. so-called personality clashes

But they may be intellectual, e.g. different epistemologies



Whether a particular difference is desirable or  
undesirable

(and therefore to be harnessed or managed)

depends on the particular collaboration.



For example  
Multiple epistemologies

may be the difference to be **harnessed** in one  
collaboration,

but the difference to be **managed** in another.

# Methods for Harnessing and Managing Difference... 1

Recognising difference is a first step. There are existing methods covering differences in:

- personality
- cultural norms
- mental models
- emotional intelligence
- team role skills
- epistemologies.

These need to be compiled into useful toolkits.



# Methods for Harnessing and Managing Difference... 2

Dialogue methods are also likely to be useful.

An existing compilation is:

McDonald, D., Bammer, G., Deane P. 2009 *Research  
Integration Using Dialogue Methods*, ANU E-Press;  
[http://epress.anu.edu.au/dialogue\\_methods\\_citation](http://epress.anu.edu.au/dialogue_methods_citation)

(see separate digital poster)

# Methods for Harnessing and Managing Difference... 3

Nevertheless...

There is still much work to do on developing and compiling methods for harnessing and managing difference.

# References

Bammer, G. 2008 'Enhancing research collaboration: Three key management challenges' *Research Policy*, 37, 875-887

Bammer, G. 2013 *Disciplining Interdisciplinarity: Integration and Implementation Sciences for Researching Complex Real-World Problems*. ANU E-Press.

<http://epress.anu.edu.au/titles/disciplining-interdisciplinarity>

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