

The Wellcome Trust and public engagement with bioscience

**Wellcome Trust/BBC Open House
debates.**

Sarah Bronsdon



The Wellcome Trust

- An endowed charitable foundation, established 1936
- To foster and improve research with the aim of improving human and animal health
- ~ £500m annual spend



The Wellcome Trust Aims

- Knowledge base
- Resources
- Translation
- Public engagement

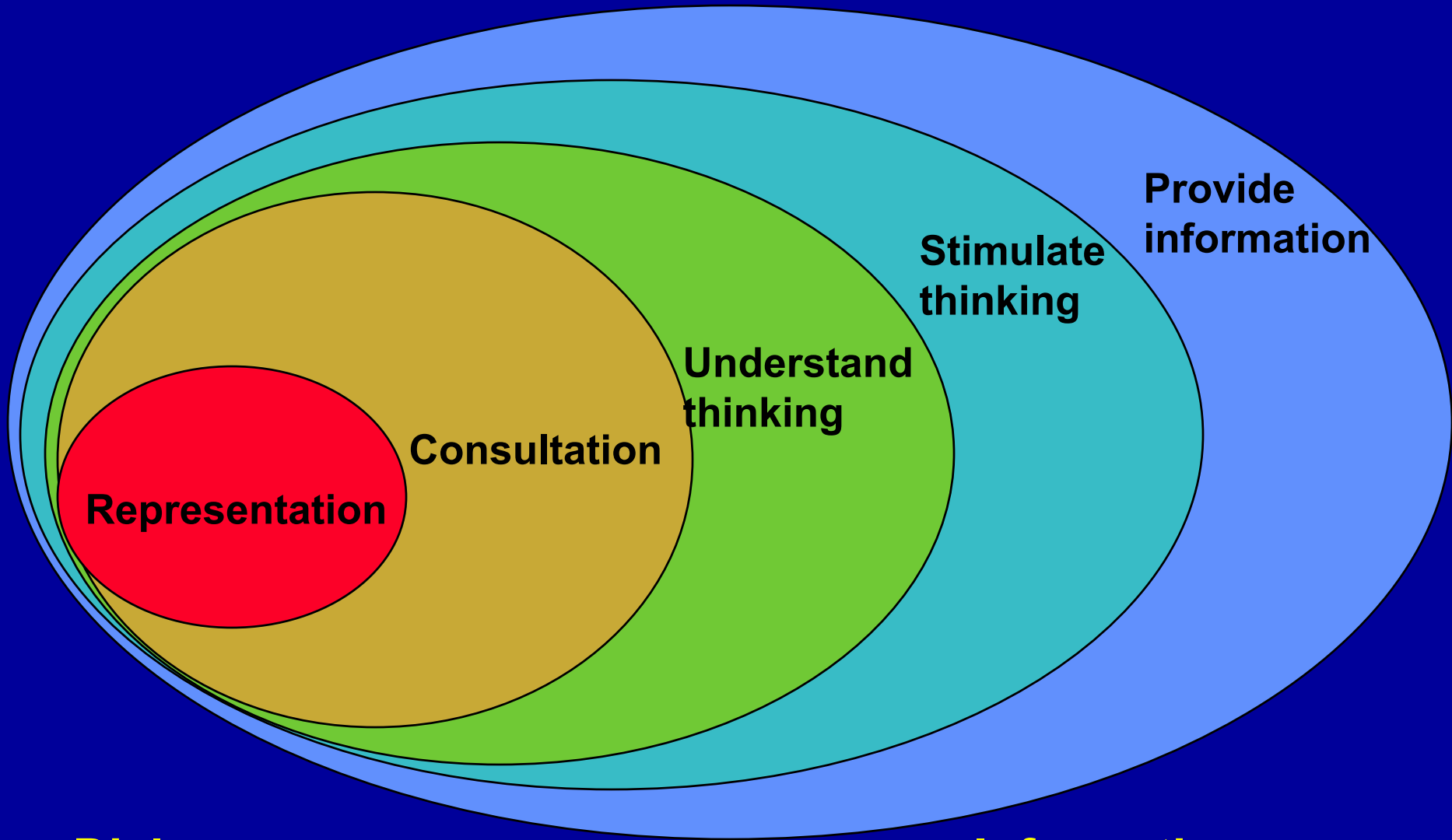


Medicine, Society and History

- Consultation and Education
- History of medicine
- Library
- Bioethics
- Exhibitions
- Publishing (Tropical Medicine Resource)



← Public impact on research policy



Dialogue



Information



BBC /Wellcome Trust Open House

- **Blame it on your genes?**

- **Aim: to explore new approaches to dialogue.**



Linked elements

- **BBC TV programmes**
- **BBC Web site**

- **Open House debates**
- **Follow-up radio discussions**
- **Science centre activities**



Our approach to dialogue

- **Integrate diverse lay, policy & expert testimonies**
- **Not ‘educational’**
- **Explore grey areas: personal responsibility for health**
- **Move away from traditional lecture format**

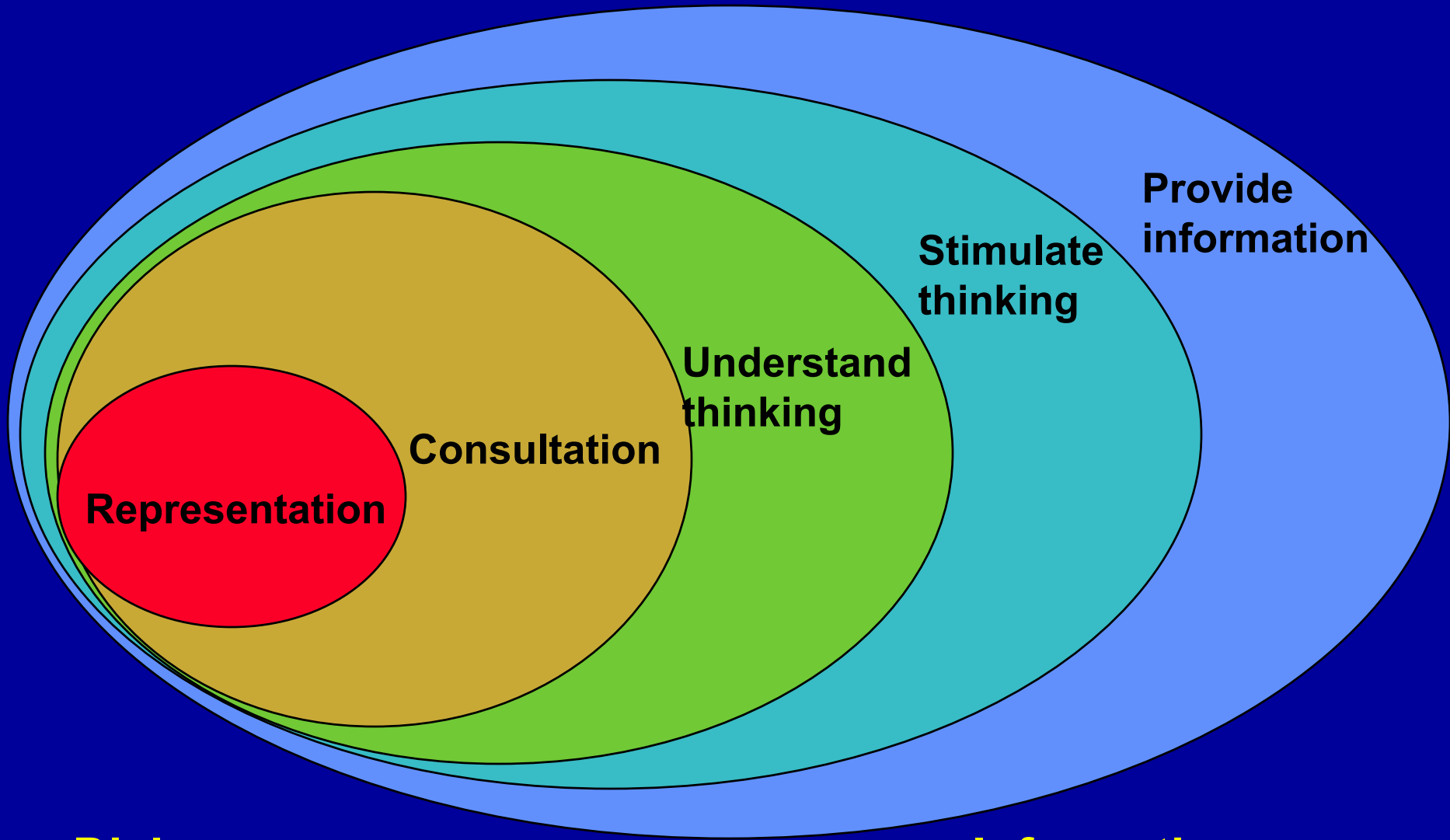


Our approach to dialogue...

- **Schedule audience discussion**
- **Coin flip games/role play**
- **Video clips**
- **Various perspectives: patient, ethics, carer, geneticist, twins, parachutists, policy**



← Public impact on research policy



Dialogue



Information



Evaluation

- **BBC audience data radio and TV**
- **BBC web site data**
- **Events - independent evaluation**



Who came?

- **Age range and ethnic mix reflected UK population demographics**
- **Still strong representation of ‘converted’**
- **51% working full or part time, 15% studying, 26% retired**
- **Also invited policy makers e.g Human genetics commission**

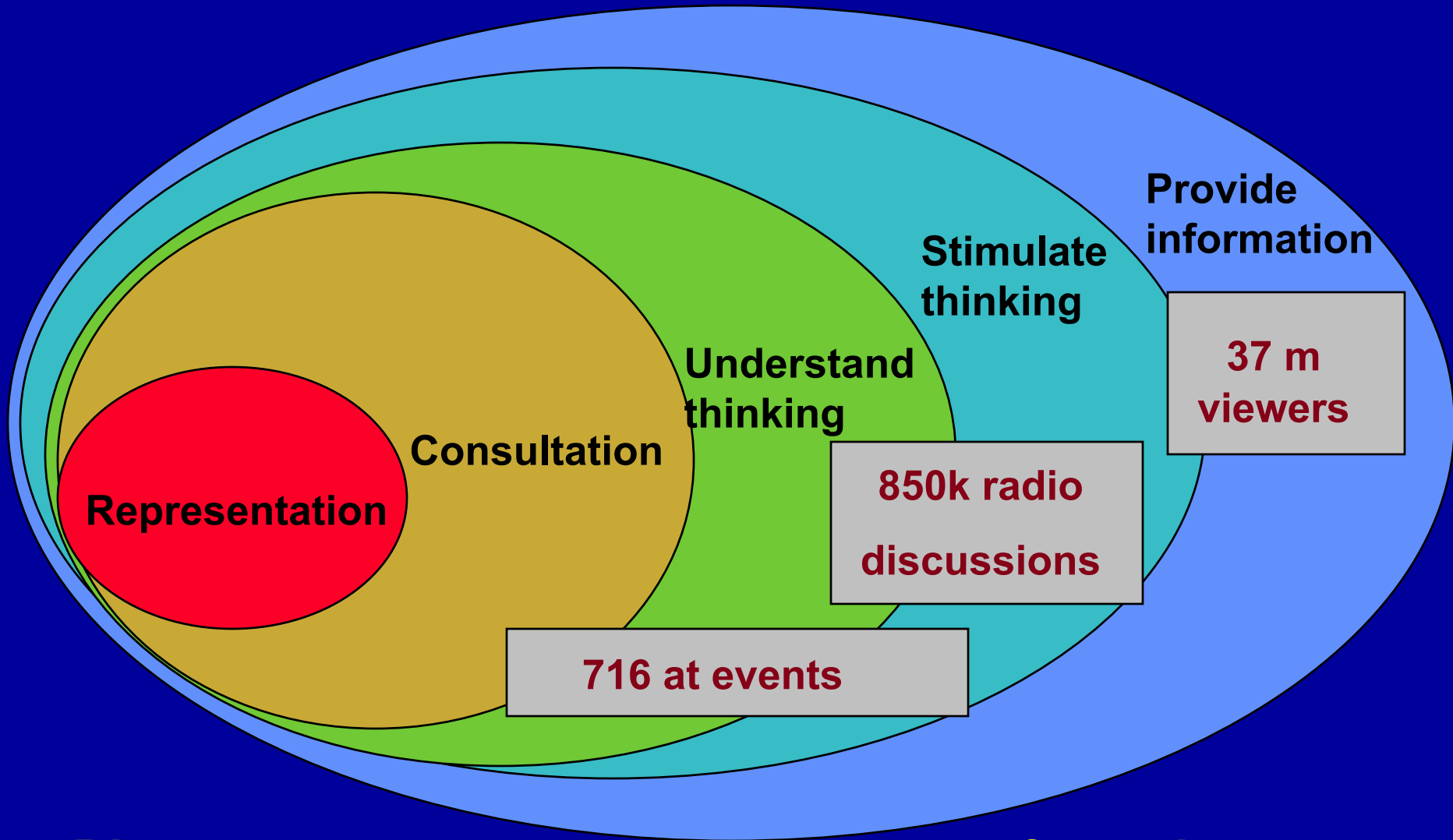


Was it really dialogue?

- We approached it
- We hugely extended audience reach for discussion of biomedical issues
- Hybrid approach very useful one: web, tv, radio, debates, activities



← **Public impact on research policy**



Dialogue



Information



Was it really dialogue...

- **Who really listened to what the public said? Policy makers came. Public better equipped to be heard in future?**
- **Address direct policy questions?**
- **We learned about compromise, and how to do dialogue better!**

