The Cycle of Deliberative Inquiry: Re-conceptualizing the Work of Public Deliberation

MARTÍN CARCASSON

Department of Communication Studies
Colorado State University
Campus Delivery 1783
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1783
United States
mcarcas@colostate.edu

ABSTRACT: As the deliberative democracy movement continues to gain momentum, the theories and practices that underlie that momentum must continue to evolve, particularly in terms of the connections between deliberative processes and policy expertise. This essay introduces "deliberative inquiry" as a way of re-conceptualizing deliberative practice as a distinct mode of inquiry which produces unique research products that can significantly impact the quality of public discourse and improve community problem-solving.

KEYWORDS: public deliberation, deliberative inquiry, facilitation, polarization, community problem-solving.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) at Colorado State University (www.cpd.colostate.edu), established in the fall of 2006, was developed to serve as an impartial resource to the northern Colorado community. Its mission is to *enhance local democracy through improved public communication and community problem-solving* by providing independent policy analysis, process design, facilitation, and reporting services. It serves as a hub for what I have termed "passionate impartiality" (Carcasson, 2010). The CPD is based on the belief that a diverse democracy requires high-quality communication, a requirement that unfortunately is rarely met in our current political environment. The theory behind the CPD initially drew from the academic fields of argumentation (Crosswhite, 1996; Goodnight, 1982; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Toulmin, 1958), rhetorical criticism (Booth, 2004; Condit, 1993; Zarefsky, 2010), and post-empirical public policy analysis (Fischer, 2009; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Lindblom, 1990; Stone, 2002) and was then complemented by the interdisciplinary work in deliberative democracy and collaborative problem-solving (Briand, 1999; Mathews, 1999; Gastil & Levine, 2005), as well as the challenges to deliberative democracy from critical theorists (Sanders, 1997; Fraser, 1992; Young, 2001). The work of the CPD thus reconceptualises public deliberation by bringing together interdisciplinary theory and practice in a way that hopefully significantly enhances both and strengthens relationships between scholars and practitioners.

This essay provides an overview of the concept of deliberative inquiry that has been developed at the CPD over the seven years of completing projects in the northern Colorado area. I argue that high-quality deliberative practice should be considered as a specific type of research or inquiry entitled "deliberative inquiry" (DI). Overall, DI is focused on helping a
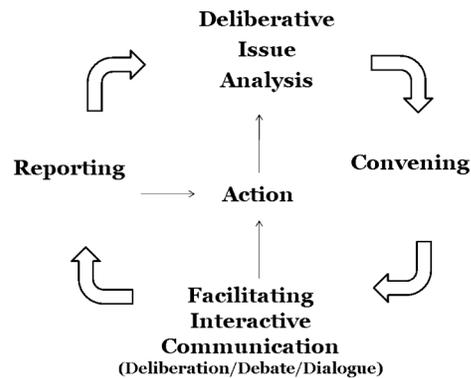
community or organization make better decisions and solve problems more effectively, collaboratively, and sustainably. As the cycle of DI shows (Figure 1), DI combines issue analysis with getting people together across perspectives to talk in innovative ways about the issue, and thus combines research-based inquiry (in terms of examining texts) with engaged, interactive inquiry that brings people together in particular, purposeful ways and draws insights from those interactions. These interactions are critical for multiple

Figure 1: The Cycle of Deliberative Inquiry

reasons. They help create shared understanding across perspectives, and thus support the necessary building of community while working against the misunderstandings, cynicism, and polarization that are too often caused by the prevalence of low-quality political communication. The interactions also support the production of new public knowledge, the honing of key democratic skills and attitudes, and the development of a broader sense of ownership and legitimacy of actions, all of which are essential to community problem-solving (Carcasson, 2009a).

This short essay is a summary of a much broader ongoing project that will hopefully result in a book manuscript by the end of the summer of 2012. I begin the essay by briefly reviewing a typology of methods of inquiry in order to distinguish DI from its more dominant cousins, expert and strategic inquiry. I will then review the four key products of DI that further clarify its particular value, before closing with a review of the phases of the cycle from Figure 1.

2. BASIC FEATURES OF SCIENTIFIC, STRATEGIC, AND DELIBERATIVE INQUIRY

In order to quickly situate DI, table 1 identifies many of the key features of three broad forms of inquiry. Each form is not mutually exclusive, but nonetheless the categories help highlight important distinctions. I argue that most current inquiry on public issues is either scientific or strategic. *Scientific inquiry* is a particular sort of inquiry that focuses on rigorously discovering valid information, typically about empirical (i.e. observable and generally quantifiable) issues. It is very useful, but limited in important ways because it tends to avoid values and emotions, since such things are not susceptible to scientific analysis. *Strategic inquiry* is inquiry that focuses on developing evidence or arguments for a particular pre-set point of view, and thus politicizes the inquiry process. At its best, strategic inquiry informs a vibrant marketplace of ideas that supports high-quality decision-making, but unfortunately strategic inquiry often leads to situations where the marketplace is dominated by simplistic, manipulative appeals that undermine the ability for communities to address difficult problems well. *DI* seeks to avoid the problems and limitations of these other forms, while bringing out their best features. Each form of inquiry has particular strengths and weaknesses, thus my argument is not to abandon scientific and strategic inquiry, but rather that communities need to have capacity in all three forms in order to function well. Current capacity in DI is often very low, but steadily developing.

Table 1: The Three Forms of Inquiry

	Scientific Inquiry	Strategic Inquiry	Deliberative Inquiry
Overall goal	Discovery of valid information	Supporting particular points of view, winning arguments	Improving public decision-making and problem-solving, clarifying choices and their consequences
Primary Question	What is?	What evidence is available for my point of view? (or against the other side)	What should we do? What are our choices and their implications?
Primary method	Scientific observation	Strategic research or rhetorical invention	Open ended impartial research, issue mapping, and facilitation of interactive communication
Facts and fact questions	Focus of the work, seeking consensus	Often utilized as ammunition in the broader debate	Used as a common base to start from, but focus is often more on values
Tough choices and tradeoffs	Often bracketed and avoided due to unscientific nature	Often avoided or framed strategically	Often the focus of the research (to uncover and assist communities to work through them)
Common ground	Scientifically valid facts are common ground	Utilized if useful, often ignored, misrepresented, or manufactured	Issues are framed to start at a common point, and process seeks to build additional broad support
Primary audience	Narrow, specific expertise is required to be a part of the conversation, at times targeted to government officials, rarely to the public	Strategic, audience often limited in terms of those that already agree or target audience in the middle, rarely seriously address opposing views	Broad, seeks to connect public, government, and expert sources in the conversation
Scope of involved stakeholders in the analysis and solutions	More descriptive than proscriptive, so may avoid specific suggestions for solutions. When offered, solutions may be narrowly defined in terms of changes privileging governmental solutions.	Often limited by strategic goals and use of blame game or "magic bullet" solutions. Often specifically seek to exclude particular audiences that are opposed.	Broad, based on the notion of democratic governance and inclusion, considers all sort of potential actors (individuals, nonprofits, businesses, groups, and governments at all levels)

A key theoretical point concerning the need to further develop the capacity for DI is the growing prevalence of "wicked problems" (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Wicked problems are a class of complex, systemic, and interrelated problems that inherently involve competing

underlying values and tradeoffs that cannot be avoided. They call for high-quality communication and collaboration to address well. Both strategic and scientific inquiry struggle with addressing wicked problems to the point they can be counterproductive, while DI is designed to address those problems in particular.

3. THE FOUR KEY PRODUCTS OF DELIBERATIVE INQUIRY

In general, DI focuses on much of the same material that scientific and strategic inquiry may focus on, such as defining the problem and its impacts, identifying a range of causes and potential solutions to the problem, establishing criteria for judging the value of solutions, and weighing the positive and negative consequences among solutions. DI, however, has four particular and distinct products that warrant specific attention. By "product" I mean particularly tangible items of information that represent the useful and distinct output of DI, and, as I will show as I walk through the stages in the cycle, are of interest to deliberative practitioners throughout each stage.

3.1 Product #1: The identification and attempted resolution of key obstacles to collaborative problem-solving

This first product of DI is primarily focused on addressing a wide range of troublesome issues, many of which are the result of adversarial politics and strategic inquiry. These barriers function similar to fallacies in argumentation that draw attention away from more important aspects of the issue and tend to make it more difficult for people to communicate productively. So the first step to improve the conversation is to undo the damage done.

For example, one of the big problems with public discourse is that issues are greatly simplified, often as a strategic ploy. People inherently tend to rely on *wishful thinking* when faced with complex decisions (Yankelovich, 1991), and many of the strategies used in adversarial politics tend to take advantage of this natural impulse. We want things to be easy, and they make them seem so. In many ways, deliberation involves complicating issues, but then providing genuine opportunities for participants to work through those difficulties (Kaner, 2007). Some of the particular tactics to address include *magic bullets* (assuming there is one solution to complex problems), *devil figures/scapegoats* (assuming the problem is caused by one individual or entity), or *paradox splitting* (Bryan, 2004) (attempts to resolve a difficult issue by focusing one side of a paradox and ignoring or dismissing the other).

Additional barriers that warrant attention involve the misrepresentation of motives of opposing groups. Indeed, much public discussion involves each side attacking positions that no one actually holds. Deliberative inquirers dig deeper to get past these assumptions, and events are often set up so that people from various perspectives can get a chance to explain their own motivations and learn from each other. Public discussions also often get derailed because opposing sides operate with a different set of facts. Unfortunately, without productive interaction, such separate assumptions tend to live on and are not resolved. DI again seeks out and tries to resolve such questions. Sometimes they can actually be resolved, or sometimes simply identifying the fact question as an open question can improve the discussion. At their best, deliberative practitioners can play important roles as "honest brokers of information" to rehabilitate the value of facts in our decision-making processes, while understanding their limitations.

In sum, this first key product is focused on helping communities get past the barriers that often arise due to an over-reliance on strategic inquiry and the misinformation it causes. It is clearly a very difficult task that can often test one's impartiality, but one that a local organization that has developed a strong reputation and a commitment to improved communication can take on and make significant, positive impacts.

3.2 Product #2: The identification and working through of tough choices or tradeoffs

The second key product of DI is perhaps the most important, at least in terms of a key aspect of democratic decision-making that is not adequately addressed by scientific or strategic inquiry. The work that has been completed in the "deliberative democracy movement" for the last 30 years in organizations such as the National Issues Forum, Study Circles, and Public Agenda already tends to focus on these concerns and the "choice work" they require. The Kettering Foundation's David Mathews (1998) and Public Agenda's Daniel Yankelovich (1991) have often written on the importance of surfacing and working through tradeoffs, and considering all the consequences, positive and negative, of our preferred actions.

Briefly, tough choices or tradeoffs are inherent to most public decisions, and simply involve judgments that must be made between various values. Authors have referred to them in a number of ways—including tough choices, tensions, tradeoffs, value dilemmas or conflicts, competing interests, policy paradoxes, etc.—I use these terms interchangeably while generally favoring the term "tough choices." Michael Briand captured the thinking behind the focus on tough choices when he wrote:

> Because the things human beings consider good are various and qualitatively distinct; because conflicts between such good things have no absolute, predetermined solution; and because to know what is best requires considering the views of others, we need to engage each other in the sort of exchange that will enable us to form sound personal and public judgments. This process of coming to a public judgment and choosing—together, as a public—is the essence of democratic politics. (1999, p. 42).

Work in argumentation concerning values is critical here as well, particularly Perelman's insights on value hierarchies. As argued in *The New Rhetoric,* "the simultaneous pursuit of these values leads to incompatibilities, [and] obliges one to make choices" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 82).

Unfortunately, scientific inquiry tends to avoid values and hence value dilemmas, and strategic inquiry tends to obscure or misrepresent them. DI is focused on uncovering them and helping audiences work through them, which, I argue, is a defining feature of deliberative practice. Diverse democracies will inherently be confronted with multiple value dilemmas, and they must develop the capacity to address them productively.

3.3 Product #3: The identification and building upon of common ground

The third key product of DI is the identification and building upon of common ground. Once again, DI is able to produce insights into this critical aspect of collaborative decision-making and community problem-solving much more than either scientific or strategic inquiry. Scientific inquiry tends not to focus on this issue—other than perhaps assuming that building a strong base of empirical, impartial information in itself represents critical common ground—

and strategic inquiry tends to make things more difficult by framing issues and opposing perspectives in ways that exaggerate certain similarities and differences, and thus tends to obscure common ground. DI, on the other hand, focuses to some degree in identifying and helping communities develop clarity concerning their common ground.

Common ground is surprisingly not difficult to identify and develop in communities. A significant amount of common ground exists based simply on geographical proximity and basics of human nature. Most citizens prefer excellent schools, good roads, low taxes, high paying jobs, vibrant economies, healthy environments, and minimal crime. Regardless of political ideology, there is always more that connects than divides a democratic citizenry. However, individuals that have 98% of their opinion in tandem will focus on the remaining 2% they disagree on and think they are worlds apart. Indeed, one of the typical tactics of political strategists is to exaggerate differences in order to gain votes and support, and unfortunately the media often follows suit as well.

In other words, whether citizens focus on their similarities or differences is a matter of framing and perspective. DI, therefore, attempts to cut through the chaff of false stereotypes and get to the heart of the issue. In important ways identifying common ground is closely related to the identification and working through of tough choices. Whereas the two features can be considered opposites—one focused on differences and one on similarities—the fact that many value dilemmas in our political culture are exaggerated results in a situation where helping people identify their actual differences and conflicts—rather than their perceived differences and conflicts—leads to them discovering they have more common ground than they previously realized. For example, opponents may at first see themselves with little if any common ground between them ("I care about national security, they don't"). Moving from that frame to a frame of "We both care about national security and individual liberty, but I rank national security higher, while they rank individual liberty higher" is a move that *both* clarifies tensions and identifies common ground.

3.4 Product #4: The identification of and development of support for action from a broad and inclusive range of community actors

The final key product of DI is based on the realization that the problems our communities face will require the involvement of a very broad range of actors from multiple sectors, across private, public, and non-profit lines, both in terms of engagement in the process of inquiry—to be able to understand the issues from multiple perspectives and allow voices to be heard—as well as in terms of action. Once again, scientific and strategic inquiry fall significantly short on both counts. Scientific inquiry tends to narrow its focus to particular actors, either individuals—see the volumes of research on the individual pathologies of poverty, for example—or the governmental, particularly the federal level. Said differently, scientific inquiry, when focused on public policy, tends not to imagine broad possibilities for action, primarily because breadth does not fit well with rigor and validity. Strategic inquiry will focus on whatever range of actors is most beneficial to their point of view, which is often rather narrow as well. Since strategic inquiry is not particularly focused on convincing opposing sides, it rarely involves consulting them for their viewpoints. Advocates may frame particular actors as simple solutions ("elect me and I'll solve the climate crisis"), or focus on the blame game, which also inherently narrows the scope of problem-solvers ("if we get rid of the evil oil

companies, the climate crisis will be solved"). Blame-based solutions typically ask very little of most, because they frame problems as caused by a few (often either victims or victors).

DI, on the other hand, specifically seeks to engage broad audiences, particularly going beyond the usual suspects and empowering new audiences previously detached from "politics." DI begins with the notion that difficult problems will require a broad range of actors to understand and to address them. It connects to developing notions of democratic governance and public acting. As explained by Harry Boyte:

> Governance intimates a paradigm shift in the meaning of democracy and civic agency—that is, who is to address public problems and promote the general welfare? The shift involves a move from citizens as simply voters, volunteers, and consumers to citizens as problem solvers and cocreators of public goods; from public leaders, such as public affairs professionals and politicians, as providers of services and solutions to partners, educators, and organizers of citizen action; and from democracy as elections to democratic society. Such a shift has the potential to address public problems that cannot be solved without governments, but that governments alone cannot solve, and to cultivate an appreciation for the commonwealth. Effecting this shift requires politicizing governance in nonpartisan, democratizing ways and deepening the civic, horizontal, pluralist, and productive dimensions of politics. (2005, p. 536).

A focus on a broad range of potential actors, particularly citizens as problem-solvers and co-creators of public goods, develops somewhat naturally from a perspective that seeks to identify and work through tough choices and develop common ground. Such choices are not clarified unless a broad range is engaged, and then when citizens realize there are no easy solutions and that their "opponents" hold reasonable views, a shift to considering their collective role in solving problems often results.

3.5 Summary of the four key products of DI

These four key products just reviewed work together to support deliberative practice and work toward the ultimate goal of increasing the capacity of local communities to make better decisions about difficult issues. Another way to think about these products is as specific forms of "public knowledge" that can be created when citizens interact productively. One last key distinction between the three forms of inquiry merits comment here. The end product of DI is never a definitive opinion or recommendation (hence the cycle, not a linear process). The goal of DI is to clarify choices. The best a deliberative inquirer or any expert can do will be to more fairly lay out a set of options, each with their own distinct value set supporting it, and the ultimate decision will depend on the values in the community.

4. THE CYCLE OF DI: THE FOUR KEY TASKS

I return now to Figure 1 to walk through the four key tasks related to DI. As explained in the introduction, the cycle was developed specifically to bring together a set of academic traditions primarily connected to rhetorical studies, argumentation, and public policy and deliberative efforts that have been performed by a growing number of practitioners in recent years. The cycle represents an extension of my earlier work that focused on the need for deliberative practitioners to develop more focus and capacity on what occurs before and after deliberative events in order to increase their impact and to address key criticisms (Carcasson & Christopher, 2008; Carcasson, 2009b). Due to space constraints, a full explanation of these

tasks cannot be provided here, but I hope to provide enough to give readers a good sense of how they work together.

4.1 Task #1: Deliberative issue analysis

The first task of deliberative practitioners is to analyze the issue and the situation in order to determine if the issue would benefit from DI and identify key features that will be critical to the remaining tasks of the cycle. At a basic issue analysis level, deliberative issue analysis involves researching issues, positions, and community voices in order to develop the best possible framework and process design for deliberation. Said differently, this analysis is focused on building a clear map of the issue and then identifying how best to frame the issue for deliberation, rather than persuasion (Friedman, 2007). At this stage, the analysis utilizes basic research techniques such as referencing books, articles, newspapers, web pages, message boards, and interviews with various stakeholders. At times, open-ended surveys may be utilized to gather specific perspectives on the issue from key stakeholders. Overall, deliberative issue analysis should include a wide variety of sources both in terms of perspective and in terms of form (such as expert information, activist information, public opinion, etc.). Analysts must be particularly careful to go beyond simply summarizing the dominant voices to help ensure broader inclusion, which is critical for supporting ongoing concerns for addressing power imbalances that should be addressed throughout the cycle.

Borrowing from Gastil's (2008) framework for the basic features of deliberation, deliberative issue analysis would focus on information relevant to the "analytic" aspects of deliberation: creating a solid information base, prioritizing the key values at stake, identifying a broad range of solutions, and weighing the pros, cons, and tradeoffs among solutions. Beyond all these issue analysis basics, however, DI would also focus in on the four key products of DI. When initially beginning a project on an issue, discovering these aspects begins to set the stage for the deliberative work to follow. All the major practitioner organizations already do various forms of deliberative issue analysis, particularly when developing backgrounders or issue guides to support deliberative forums, such as the process of "naming" and "framing" promoted by NIF. Deliberative issue analysis, however, could certainly be developed to a much greater extent, particularly in order to take more advantage of relevant scholarly traditions, situate itself more within the academic world, and to respond more effectively to theoretical criticisms of deliberative practice.

For example, a group of scholars in public policy and planning led by Frank Fischer (2009) and John Forester (1999) have applied argumentation theory to the work of deliberative democracy more directly. Their work combines rigorous empirical analysis with subtle understandings of narratives and normative values, all the while being cognizant of the unbalanced power relationships than inherently impact deliberative work. These authors discuss the "argumentative turn" in policy science, which led many of them away from a detached, scientific view of policy studies to one that realized policy will always involve judgment, and thus must always involve an inclusive public in important ways. A closer examination of the contributions of their work, as well as the scholarship in argumentation and rhetorical criticism, to deliberative practice is certainly warranted.

4.2 Task #2: Convening

The second task in the deliberative cycle is convening, which at the most basic level involves deciding who should be brought together to discuss the issue, and how to go about bringing them together. A wide variety of opinions and methods exist with the deliberation field concerning how to convene, though clearly more attention needs to be paid to this important step. Convening is a critical task for deliberative practitioners to live up to their ideals of inclusion and equality, and to address some of the criticisms of our work, particularly from diversity scholars and activists who believe democracy by discussion would inherently favor powerful voices and exclude those on the margins. The work of Jim Fishkin is important here, particularly his analysis of the difficulties of balancing the need for full participation, deliberation, and equality, which he terms the trilemma of democratic politics (2009). Practitioners too often focus on how many people attend, rather than who attends, which is a key limitation of much deliberative practice.

Similar to the situation with deliberative issue analysis, there is a great deal of related work being done in this area that would be useful for deliberative practitioners to be aware of and incorporate into their repertoire. I am much less connected to these areas, but have begun to examine work in community development, social movements, community organizing, and conflict management on stakeholder analyses. Much of the work done in these areas, however, is primarily from a strategic perspective—how to mobilize an audience toward your own point of view—rather than from a deliberative perspective. Borrowing key concepts from these literatures but then adapting the ideas to fit the deliberative mindset will be useful as we move forward.

4.3 Task #3: Facilitating interactive communication

The third task within the deliberative cycle is by far the most well known by practitioners, and simply involves process design and bringing people together to discuss issues in some specific way. Obviously, there are volumes of work on what deliberation is and how to facilitate deliberation and public engagement (for a review, see Gastil & Levine, 2005), and I will not rehash that work here in any degree. The main point is that improving the conversation and moving forward will almost always necessitate bringing people together with good process. High-quality deliberative issue analysis could perhaps improve the conversation on its own, but cannot replace real people engaging each other face to face (or, increasingly, online).

The primary "news" I present in this section is a broadening of the scope of deliberative work. I originally used "deliberating" as the label for the third task, but ultimately moved to "facilitating interactive communication" to indicate a focus both on the importance of facilitating and interaction. In a way, "interactive communication" may seem redundant, but in our polarized, mediated society, communication is often unilateral. Many have the opportunity to "express themselves," but the degree of listening, learning, and interacting is likely rather low. Interactive communication, therefore, emphasizes that the communication will involve participants actually engaging each together, particularly across perspectives.

In addition, the broader term allows me to include debate and dialogue alongside deliberation under the umbrella of interactive communication. Inspired by a presentation by Pete Bsumek and Kai Degner at the 2008 NCDD conference in Austin, I agree that deliberative practitioners are often overly "anti-debate." We should certainly be opposed to unproductive

forms of debate, and unfortunately most forms of public debate are unproductive, but we need not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Deliberative practitioners, I would argue, need to rehabilitate, not simply reject, debate, and thus include debate within their community toolkit.

Overall, therefore, I see debate, deliberation, and dialogue as three primary interactive communication tools for communities to address problems, and each has their place in the discussion. The three are also not mutually exclusive, so we can talk about combinations such as deliberative dialogue and deliberative debate. The relationships between these three forms of interactive communication warrant more examination. Each in some ways could be framed as useful before or after the other. For example, if stakeholders are particularly polarized, dialogue would be useful before debate or deliberation. If the relevant facts are unclear and the public uninformed, a well-framed and moderated expert or activist debate may help clarify issues before a deliberation. If a deliberation exposes misunderstandings and distrust between participants—or if certain audiences refuse to even engage in deliberation due to fear or perceived disrespect—a dialogue may help move the conversation forward. Likewise, if a deliberation results in specific policy ideas of unclear merit, a debate between experts or activists concerning the outputs of the deliberation may be interesting. Overall, returning to the broad overall point of the cycle, the goal should be to improve the conversation in substantive ways each time people are brought together. Depending on the issue, the situation, and the participants—and the state of the four key products—various forms and combinations of debate, deliberation, and dialogue may be used. In all cases, having a passionately impartial entity dedicated to high-quality processes can be critical to community capacity for all three forms.

4.4 Task #4: Reporting

The final task within the deliberative cycle involves the analysis and reporting of what occurred during the first three tasks, particularly the third. Similar to convening, this is a task that many deliberative practitioners are familiar with, but we nonetheless lack clarity or overall understanding of the various techniques used. I believe further developing this task will significantly improve the quality of DI. Developing this skill is also closely connected to many of the academic traditions mentioned during the first task, as well additional traditions such as ethnography, discourse analysis, and small group communication. I would argue that much more is going on during forums than we realize, and the more we can understand how to capture, analyze, and then present all that is happening when citizens interact, the better. In particular, capturing and reporting what is unique about a deliberative forum should be a critical focus of deliberative practitioners (Carcasson, 2011).

There are many reasons why deliberative practitioners should take their reporting function seriously. Reports from deliberative forums provide a competing source of information to the products of strategic inquiry that dominate our political conversations. There are very few places citizens can go for information that is not purposefully biased, so the more deliberative practitioners can build up a record and establish reputations for useful, fair information, the better.

Returning once again to the four key products, reports are the culmination of their discovery and development. Key barriers that arise could be highlighted, and potentially even resolved before publication of the report if possible. Tough choices, common ground, and potential broad stakeholders could be discussed to expose a broader audience to the

possibilities. True to the notion of the cycle, all this information would then be utilized to feed back into deliberative issue analysis once again as we begin to consider how next to move the conversation forward.

4.5 Summary of four key tasks of the deliberative cycle

As shown on Figure 1, the deliberative cycle involves the four key tasks of deliberative issue analysis, convening, facilitating interactive communication, and reporting. Ideally, the tasks should all flow together to continuously improve the quality of public communication, and thus hopefully the quality of community problem-solving. Figure 1 also shows "action" situated in the middle of the cycle, with arrows from both facilitating interactive communication and reporting pointing toward action, and an arrow from action pointing back up to deliberative issue analysis. The point here is that action is not technically part of DI, which again is focused on providing insights on the choices communities may make on important issues. Clearly the connection between deliberative talk and action is an essential issue for deliberative practice, and much of deliberative practice is designed specifically to spark productive, collaborative action. The degree to which deliberative practitioners are involved in the action varies considerably based on various processes and practitioner styles. Finally, the arrow going up from action to deliberative issue analysis is included to signify the fact that the cycle does not stop with action, but rather that action may change some of the dynamics of the problem. Borrowing from John Dewey's notion of democracy as a way of associated living (1916), the cycle assumes the conversation must always continue. Of course, communities improve when that conversation is of higher quality.

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, I briefly shift focus to highlight the role of experts within DI. A key aspect of the cycle is the possibility for productively bringing together experts and the public on critical public issues, though not necessarily at the same time. Experts can play critical roles particularly during the first and fourth stages, but are also used in some processes during the third. During deliberative issue analysis, experts are used to help provide a clear map of the issue and improve understanding of the problem and the consequences of various actions to address it. Expert research is utilized, but experts can also be used to vet background information developed by deliberative practitioners. During the reporting stage, experts can again react to key themes derived from the public deliberation, and assist in moving forward on the key products. Depending on the issue, experts may also actually be the most useful stakeholders to convene for a particular pass around the cycle, particularly if the state of the research is murky or opposing perspectives tend to operate from incapable sets of facts.

In sum, the cycle of DI provides a model for the work of "passionately impartial" deliberative practitioners to impact the quality of communication and problem-solving in their community. It is important to note that the work of deliberative inquiry will always involve striving for an unreachable ideal. The hope for the cycle is that with practice, study, and reflection, deliberative practitioners can intervene positively on local issues, and with each project build their reputation and skills and thus increase their capacity to make significant impacts, moving our communities closer to a more perfect union.

REFERENCES

Booth, W. (2004). *The rhetoric of rhetoric: The quest for effective communication*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Briand, M. K. (1999). Practical politics: Five principles for a community that works. Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Boyte, H.C. (2005). Reframing democracy: Governance, civic agency, and politics. *Public Administration Review*, *65*, 536–545.

Bryan, T.A. (2004). Tragedy averted: The promise of collaboration. *Society and Natural Resources, 17,* 881–896.

Carcasson, M. (2009a). Beginning with the end in mind: A call for goal driven deliberation. Occasional Paper No. 2, Center for the Advancement of Public Engagement at Public Agenda.

Carcasson, M. (2009b). The cycle of deliberative inquiry. Research report prepared for Kettering Foundation.

Carcasson, M. (2010). Facilitating community democracy from campus: Centers, faculty, and students as key resources of passionate impartiality. *Higher Education Exchange*, 15–26.

Carcasson, M. (2011). Reporting on deliberative forums: Current practices and future developments. Research report prepared for Kettering Foundation.

Carcasson, M., & Christopher, E. (2008). The goals & consequences of deliberation: Key findings and challenges for deliberative practitioners. Research report prepared for Kettering Foundation.

Condit, C.M. (1993). The critic as empath: Moving away from totalizing theory. *Western Journal of Communication*, *57*, 178–190.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Fischer, F. (2009). *Democracy and expertise: Reorienting policy inquiry*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Fishkin, J. S. (2009). *When the people speak: Deliberative democracy and public consultation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Forester, J. (1999). *The deliberative practitioner*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (pp. 109–142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Friedman, W. (2007). Reframing framing. Occasional Paper #1, Center for Public Engagement at Public Agenda: New York.

Gastil, J.. (2008). *Political communication and deliberation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gastil, J. & Levine, P. (Eds.). (2005). *The deliberative democracy handbook: Strategies for effective civic engagement in the 21st century*. New York, NY: Jossey-Bass.

Goodnight, T. G. (1982). The personal, technical, and public spheres of argument: A speculative inquiry into the art of public deliberation. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, *18*, 214–227.

Hajer, M. & Wagenaar, H. (Eds.) (2003). Deliberative *policy analysis: understanding governance in network society*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Kaner, S. (2007). *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons/Jossey-Bass.

Lindblom, C.E. (1990). Inquiry *and change: The troubled attempt to understand and shape society*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.

Mathews, D. (1998). *Politics for people: Finding a responsible public voice* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: U of Illinois Press.

Perelman, C., & Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1969). *The new rhetoric: A treatise on argumentation*. J. Wilkinson & P. Weaver, Trans.). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame.

Rittel, H., & Webber, M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, *4*, 155–169.

Sanders, L. M. (1997). Against deliberation. *Political Theory*, *25*, 347–376.

Stone, D. (2002). *Policy paradox: The art of political decision-making*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Toulmin, S. (1958). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yankelovich, D. (1991). *Coming to public judgment: Making democracy work in a complex world*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Young, I. M. (2001). Activist challenges to deliberative democracy. *Political Theory*, *29*(5), 670–690.

Zarefsky, D. (2010). Plenary address: Reclaiming rhetoric's responsibilities. In M. Smith and B. Warnick (Eds.), *The responsibilities of rhetoric* (pp. 13–24). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.