



# Developing Deliberative Practice:

The impacts of  
deliberation

A KETTERING FOUNDATION REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If people attend and participate in a deliberative forum and then go home unchanged in their views about the norms of community politics, without thinking much about the forum or trying to learn more about the issues discussed, without discussing it with people they know or getting in touch with people they may have met at the forum then it is impossible for forums to have an impact on community politics. Thus, the purpose of this research project was to empirically analyze the immediate connections between participating in deliberation and the impact participation has on attendees.

The primary method employed by the project was to conduct pre- and post-surveys at deliberative forums. The pre-survey is given at the beginning of each forum and the post-survey was conducted approximately three weeks after each forum. A total of 211 participants completed the pre-survey in the first two rounds of data collection, with 174 of these completing the post-survey (resulting in a response rate of 82 percent). In addition, information about the forum and the moderator was collected from forum organizers and moderators. Three sets of forums organized by different deliberation centers were included in the project: three forums on smoking policy conducted in Kansas by the Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy at Kansas State University; five forums on ensuring financial and health security conducted in South Carolina by the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development; and eight forums on responses to global warming to be conducted in New Jersey by the Leadership in Public Affairs program at The College of New Jersey.

This project was designed to measure short-term outcomes of participation in NIF-style deliberative forums and to correlate those outcomes to various types of inputs to, and design choices made in preparation for, the deliberative process. The goal was to systematically discover answers to four questions of increasing importance.

1. What kinds of backgrounds and level of preparation did participants bring to forums? In general, the participants were white non-Hispanic or African American, highly educated, somewhat evenly split along gender lines, with a wide variety of incomes, and very slightly conservative politically (although with a wide diversity of views). They were a fairly civically engaged group with more than two-thirds of them having attended at least a few meetings on public issues within the last year. More than a quarter had attended deliberative forums in the past but only one-third had chosen to read the background materials (issue book) in preparation for the forum under study.
2. To what degree did participants adopt the norms of deliberation as a result of being part of forums? About 80 percent of the attendees participated in the forum deliberations and two-thirds felt that they had learned more about the issue even though most considered themselves knowledgeable at the outset. Statistically significant differences before and after the forums were found on key deliberative norms: belief in majority agreement, understanding the views of minorities, and reaching consensus in the directions expected by deliberative theory. Only agreement to disagree failed to show a statistically significant difference after the forum experience.

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3. What did participants think and do at and shortly after forums? Most participants tried to learn more about the issues after the forum. A very large majority (87 percent) of participants indicated that they discussed the forum with family or friends after the event. Almost half of them obtained contact information from someone they met at the forum and, by three weeks after the forum, about a quarter had followed up and actually contacted another participant. Thus, forums do lead to changes in attitude and behavior by participants, which lays the groundwork for connecting them to community politics.
4. Most important, how did differences in inputs, such as preparation, participation, adoption of norms, diversity, and moderator quality, relate to the immediate action responses of participants? Statistical tests of the relationships between individual inputs and results indicate that the inputs most likely to result in an impact on the participant's subsequent behavior were the diversity of viewpoints expressed at the forum, participation in the forum itself, and positive evaluations of the moderator. Inputs that had little to no impact on later behavior were participation in previous forums and reading the issue book. These results have important implications for the design of the forum experience.

## ***FULL REPORT***

### **DEVELOPING DELIBERATIVE PRACTICE**

The project poses two questions:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between deliberative forums and community politics?
2. Under what conditions do convenors, moderators, and participants come to understand public deliberation as a political act, or as a part of a political process?

Each partnering organization is studying some aspect of these questions. The Leadership in Public Affairs program at The College of New Jersey is looking at the immediate connections between participating in deliberation and the impact participation has on attendees. If people attend and participate in a deliberative forum and then go home unchanged in their views about the norms of community politics, without thinking much about the forum or trying to learn more about these issues discussed, without discussing it with people they know or getting in touch with people they may have met at the forum then, it is impossible for forums to have an impact on community politics. The present study examines the narrow but absolutely necessary connections between what happens at the forum and how that influences the short-term thoughts and actions of participants. Moreover, it examines which aspects of the design choices that are made about forums (moderator quality, issue book writing, including a diversity of viewpoints, and so on) relate most strongly to positive thought and action outcomes after the forum. The results of studying these relationships will allow forum organizers to invest their limited resources in ways that maximize the connection between the choice work at forums to the hoped-for action in community politics afterwards.



## PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES

This project was designed to measure short-term outcomes of participation in NIF-style deliberative forums and to correlate those outcomes to various types of inputs to, and design choices made in preparation for, the deliberative process. The goal is to systematically discover:

- What kinds of backgrounds and level of preparation participants bring to forums.
- To what degree participants adopt the norms of deliberation as a result of being part of forums.
- What participants think and do at, and shortly after, forums.
- Most important, how differences in inputs, such as preparation, participation, adoption of norms, diversity, and moderator quality, relate to the immediate action responses of participants.
- How forum organizers can improve their processes to optimize the positive impact of forum participation on the resulting thoughts and actions of participants.

The primary method employed by the project is to conduct pre- and post-surveys at deliberative forums. The pre-survey is given at the beginning of each forum and the post-survey is conducted approximately three weeks after each forum (primarily by mail although participants are offered the option of completing it online). A total of 211 participants completed the pre-survey in the first two rounds of data collection, with 174 of these completing the post-survey (resulting in a response rate of 84 percent). In addition, information about the forum and the moderator are collected from forum organizers and moderators. A complete set of the template documents used in the project is shown in the appendix.

Three sets of forums will have been included in the project by its completion:

- Three forums on smoking policy conducted in Kansas by the Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy at Kansas State University. These forums provided 38 complete sets of results from participants.
- Five forums on ensuring financial and health security conducted in South Carolina by the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development. These forums provided 56 complete sets of results from participants.
- Eight forums on responses to global warming conducted in New Jersey by the Leadership in Public Affairs program at The College of New Jersey. These forums provide 80 complete sets of results. Specific hypotheses to be tested with the complete dataset include:
  - Short-term outcomes of forum participation will include increased adoption of deliberative norms (political tolerance, respect for minority views, less desire for consensus), increased interest in and discussion about the issue, increased perception of knowledge about the issue, and personal networking with other participants. Little opinion change on the issues discussed will be observed. General satisfaction with the forum experience will be high.
  - Inputs highly correlated with outcomes will include the diversity of views held and expressed within the forum and the demographic diversity of participants.
  - Inputs moderately correlated with outcomes will include the experience of the moderator and participant evaluation of the moderator, the strength of the participant's opinions on the issues, and the length of the forum.
  - Inputs showing little or no correlation with the outcomes of the forum will include use/readership of an issue book, previous forum experience, level of civic engagement, and socioeconomic status of the individual participant.

The body of this report provides analysis of a subset of these hypotheses.

## RESULTS

The presentation of results in this report focuses on the following six tables, which move from descriptive summaries of participant characteristics to simple bivariate analyses of selected hypotheses.

**Table 1** summarizes information about the backgrounds of participants in the first two rounds of data collection. It should be noted that many of the participants in the Kansas forums were college students and that the topic of the South Carolina forums drew many participants of retirement age. This uneven mix skews these results. For example, the overall average age in the sample is 48 while the average age of participants in the Kansas forums is 25. Also, the large number of respondents in the lowest income category (item 4) can probably be attributed to the response of college students. It is expected that the participants who will attend the third round of data collection (global warming forums) will reduce the impact of these current differences in subsamples.

In general, the participants in the first two rounds of forums are white non-Hispanic or African American, highly educated, evenly split along gender lines, with a wide variety of incomes, and slightly conservative politically (although with a wide diversity of views). They are a fairly civically engaged group with two-thirds of them having attended at least a few meetings on public issues within the last year.

### TABLE 1 SURVEY RESULTS: BACKGROUNDS

1. Average age at the forums: 48
2. Are you:
  - 78% White, non-Hispanic
  - 02% Hispanic
  - 20% African American
  - 00% Native American
  - 00% Multi-Ethnic
  - 00% Other
3. Indicate the highest level of school or college you have completed:
  - 00% Have not completed high school
  - 02% High school degree or equivalent
  - 49% Some college
  - 49% College degree or higher
4. What was your total household income last year?
  - 30% \$0-\$20,000
  - 11% \$20,000-\$40,000
  - 23% \$40,000-\$60,000
  - 13% \$60,000-\$80,000
  - 11% \$80,000-\$100,000,
  - 08% \$100,000 or more
5. Are you:
  - 50% Female
  - 50% Male
6. In general, do you consider your political views to be:
  - 07% Strongly liberal
  - 22% Somewhat liberal
  - 35% Middle of the road
  - 33% Somewhat conservative
  - 04% Strongly conservative
7. During the past twelve months, how many meetings have you attended about an issue facing your community or school?
  - 32% attended many meetings
  - 38% attended a few meetings
  - 09% I attended one meeting
  - 21% I wasn't able to attend any meetings

## TABLE 2 SURVEY RESULTS: FORUM PREPARATION

8. Have you attended a forum run by this organization in the past?

24% Yes

74 No

02% I don't remember

9. If written background material was provided to you for this forum, did you have the opportunity to read it?

29% I did not receive any material.

39% I received material but did not have the opportunity to read it.

32% I received material and was able to read it.

10. I consider myself to be knowledgeable about the issues to be discussed at this forum.

19% Strongly agree

45% Agree

25% Neither agree nor disagree

06% Disagree

04% Strongly disagree

11. A person should be encouraged to express their views publicly even when most people don't want to hear what they have to say.

44% Strongly agree

40% Agree

17% Neither agree nor disagree

00% Disagree

00% Strongly disagree

**Table 2** presents results on the preparation of participants who took part in the deliberative forums. About a quarter of the participants indicated that they had attended forums in the past, while about a third indicated that they came to the forum having read issue book material in preparation for it. About twice that many (64 percent) considered themselves knowledgeable about the issue to be discussed at the start of the forum. At a more general level, the participants seemed prepared to be tolerant of unpopular views. As item 11 indicates, 84 percent of the forum attendees agreed that people should be encouraged to express unpopular views with almost half the sample strongly agreeing. Table 2 presents results on the preparation of participants who took part in the deliberative forums. About a quarter of the participants indicated that they had attended forums in the past, while about a third indicated that they came to the forum having read issue book material in preparation for it. About twice that many (64 percent) considered themselves knowledgeable about the issue to be discussed at the start of the forum. At a more general level, the participants seemed prepared to be tolerant of unpopular views. As item 11 indicates, 84 percent of the forum attendees agreed that people should be encouraged to express unpopular views with almost half the sample strongly agreeing.

**TABLE 3 SURVEY RESULTS:  
FORUM PARTICIPATION AND ASSESSMENT**

12. How much did you participate in the discussions during the forum?

- 17% Not at all
- 40% Somewhat
- 43% Quite a bit
- 00% I don't remember

HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Remember
13. I enjoyed participating in the forum.	28%	47%	15%	02%	06%	02%
14. I learned more about the issues discussed during the forum.	13%	49%	26%	06%	04%	02%
15. The moderator in my group did a good job in running the forum.	32%	53%	05%	03%	04%	02%
16. The moderator in my group frequently intervened to guide the discussion.	04%	38%	43%	08%	04%	02%
17. There was a diversity of viewpoints expressed in my group during the forum.	17%	57%	11%	08%	04%	02%
18. There were ample opportunities to participate in my group during the forum.	50%	42%	02%	00%	04%	02%

**Table 3** assesses the process of forum participation, using questions from the post-survey. Slightly under one-fifth of the participants indicated that they did not take part in the discussion in the forum. While the vast majority of participants did take part, this is still a significant number of non-discussants in a process designed to involve everyone in deliberations. A series of questions were asked of participants to self-evaluate different aspects of the deliberation process (items 13-18). Overall, enjoyment of the process was high, with 75 percent showing agreement. Almost two-thirds of the participants agreed that

they learned more about the issues during the forum—noteworthy since such a large fraction came in the door considering themselves to be knowledgeable. The approval of the moderators in the forums was extremely high, with only 7 percent of respondents indicating that they disapproved of the job their moderator did. The most frequent response on moderator intervention in deliberations was neutral. About three-quarters of respondents agreed that diverse viewpoints were expressed during their deliberations and more than 90 percent indicated that there were ample opportunities to participate.

**TABLE 4 SURVEY RESULTS:  
ACTION RESULTS FROM FORUM**

<b>HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Remember</b>
19. I would attend another forum like this one.	30%	36%	27%	00%	06%	00%
20. I have sought out additional information on the issues discussed at the forum.	11%	22%	27%	21%	15%	04%
<b>HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>I Don't Remember</b>			
21. Did you obtain contact information from anyone you met for the first time at the forum?	45%	48%	07%			
22. Have you contacted anyone you met for the first time at the forum since the event?	21%	79%	00%			
<b>HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS:</b>	<b>Not At All</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Quite a Bit</b>	<b>I Don't Remember</b>		
23. How much did you find yourself thinking about the forum in the days after it concluded?	04%	55%	40%	00%		
24. How much did you discuss the forum with family or acquaintances in the days after it concluded?	13%	63%	24%	00%		
25. How much have you tried to learn more about the issues discussed at the forum?	34%	40%	26%	00%		

**Table 4** focuses on participant reports of immediate outcomes from the forums. The previously noted satisfaction with the experience compares well with the strong interest in coming back—about two-thirds of the participants indicated that they would attend another forum in the future. Beyond attending further forums, responses indicating that participation had an impact on the attendees' thinking or behavior were measured in items 20 through 25. Item 20 indicates that about a third of the participants said that they have made some effort to seek out additional information on the issues discussed (although some of this may have occurred in the absence of the forums). However 75 percent of the participants reported that they have tried at least a little to learn more about the issue discussed (Item 25). The unanticipated large difference between these two results may be attributable to the difference in wording between the questions, with “sought out” being seen as a more demanding process than “tried to.”

Interestingly, almost half of the participants indicated that they obtained contact information from someone they met for the first time at the forum. Although this may have been for purely social reasons, anecdotal evidence from past forum experience suggests that much of it is with the intent of following up on forum issues with new acquaintances. At the very least, forum participation seems to create the basis for new social networks. As of about three weeks after the forum, 20 percent of the participants indicated that they had followed up on the intent and actually contacted people they had met for the first time at the forum. It is quite possible that this fraction would grow significantly when measured over a long period of time.

Forum participation appears to have had a strong impact on the thinking of participants, with 95 percent indicating that they had thought about the experience at least somewhat and 40 percent had thought about it quite a bit. These strong results carry over into discussion of the experience, with 87 percent of participants indicating they had discussed the forum with family or friends, thus bringing deliberation work into existing social networks.

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**TABLE 5 SURVEY RESULTS:  
ADOPTION OF DELIBERATIVE NORMS**

**WHEN ORDINARY PEOPLE DISAGREE ON A POLITICAL QUESTION,  
HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT THEY REACH A POINT WHERE:**

	Very Important	Important	Matters Somewhat	Matters a Little	Doesn't Matter at All
26. Most people (a majority) agree. Difference of means =.48**	Pre 10% Post 26%	25% 36%	45% 23%	16% 11%	05% 05%
27. No agreement but an understanding of the views of the minority. Difference of means =.48***	Pre 23% Post 46%	42% 33%	20% 17%	13% 04%	02% 00%
28. All agree (a consensus). Difference of means =-.67***	Pre 05% Post 00%	31% 15%	31% 30%	17% 21%	16% 34%
29. They have an agreement to disagree. Difference of means =.20	Pre 14% Post 11%	35% 35%	30% 27%	17% 17%	04% 11%

\*Indicates statistical significance at the .05 level using a paired-sample t-test, \*\*Indicates statistical significance at the .01 level using a paired-sample t-test, \*\*\*Indicates statistical significance at the .001 level using a paired-sample t-test

**Table 5** presents an analysis of the likelihood that participants came away from forums with a greater belief in basic norms underlying deliberative principles. Deliberation seeks to move people away from conflict and toward the search for common ground for action. Success hinges on how people handle the disagreements. While asking participants directly about their acceptance of “common ground” would likely not work due to unfamiliarity with the concept, several proxies using more common terms can be used. These proxies are reflected in items 26-29, with data reported from both the pre-survey and post-survey.

Participants at the beginning of the forum were asked about the importance of finding majority agreement in situations of political disagreement. Barely a third thought it was important at that time,

while this percentage increased to more than half following the forums. Understanding the views of minority positions is another component of the search for common ground that is rarely considered important in traditional politics. While about two-thirds thought this was important at the outset of the forums, over three-quarters found it important following the process. Deliberation seeks agreement but not consensus, which would devalue the recognition of deep differences in values in political disagreements. The relatively low levels attached to the importance of reaching consensus in political disagreement dipped even lower after participation in the forums. Likewise, deliberation rejects simply settling for an agreement to disagree in the process of seeking common ground. Little change was observed in attitudes toward agreeing to disagree between the pre-survey and the post-survey.

These trends in the distribution of responses hold up in a more formal statistical test. As Table 5 indicates, paired-samples t-tests of the difference of means show high statistically significant differences before and after the forums on majority agreement, understanding the views of minorities, and reaching consensus in the directions expected by deliberative theory. Only agreement to disagree fails to show a statistically significant difference.

In summary, Table 5 strongly supports the idea that participation in forums leads attendees to more strongly adopt the norms of deliberation in situations of political disagreement.

**Table 6** presents the most highly analytical set of results addressing some of the key hypotheses posed for this project. The rows of Table 6 present 6 items from the surveys that can be considered as inputs to produce desired action outcomes from participating in deliberation. These include participation in previous forums (leading to a cumulative change over repeated participations), reading of the issue book prior to attending the forum, perception of how much was learned at the forum, self-report of the level of participation in the forum, overall assessment of the quality of the moderator, and perception of the diversity of viewpoints expressed during the forum. These inputs can be matched against results indicating that attending the forum had some impact on the participant's thinking or behavior. Five outputs from the surveys are included as the columns in Table 6: obtaining contact information from a new acquaintance at the forum; following up and contacting a new acquaintance; thinking about the forum afterwards; discussing the forum with family and friends; and, trying to learn more about the issues discussed at the forum afterwards. The cells of Table 6 contain two statistical tests of relationship between the input and output. The Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of relationship is presented (for its robustness in the face of mixed nominal and ordinal measures) and the Gamma ( $\Gamma$ ) test is presented (for its illustration of the direction of the relationship since all nominal measures were coded 0 for "no" and 1 for "yes" in this test). It should be kept in mind that these are correlational tests that cannot address causation.



Participation in previous forums and reading of issue books had little impact on the output measures. Previous forum experience did show a statistically significant relationship to making new contacts but that failed to carry through to following up on them. It showed essentially no relationship to the other four output measures. Reading the issue book showed a significant relationship to following up on contacts made, but, strangely, not to making the contact in the first place. Little evidence of relationship to the other output variables can be seen.

The story is quite different for the other input variables, whose relationships to outputs are strongly evident virtually across the board. Respondents who agreed that they had learned about the issue at the forum were much more likely to make contacts, follow up on them, think about the forum, discuss the forum, and try to learn even more about the issue. Participation in forum discussions is strongly related to making contacts (but not following up on them), thinking about the forum, discussing it, and trying to learn more. Positive evaluations of the moderator are associated with all the outputs but following up on contacts (but keep in mind that virtually all participants thought their moderator did a good job). Finally the assessment by participants that there was a diversity of viewpoints expressed at the forum was related to all of the output measures, most strongly to thinking about the forum and discussing it.

**TABLE 6. COMPARISON OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FORUM INPUTS AND ACTION OUTPUTS**  
 $\chi^2$ =CHI SQUARE STATISTIC,  $\Gamma$ = GAMMA STATISTIC

WHEN ORDINARY PEOPLE DISAGREE ON A POLITICAL QUESTION,  
 HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT THEY REACH A POINT WHERE:

	Obtained Contact Info	Followed up on Contacts	Thought about Forum	Discussed Forum	Tried to Learn More
Previous Forums	$\chi^2$ 8.1** $\Gamma$ -.67**	$\chi^2$ .05 $\Gamma$ .06	$\chi^2$ 1.4 $\Gamma$ .18	$\chi^2$ 1.2 $\Gamma$ -.05	$\chi^2$ 4.3 $\Gamma$ -.39*
Read Issue Book	$\chi^2$ 2.5 $\Gamma$ -.35	$\chi^2$ 7.8** $\Gamma$ .62**	$\chi^2$ 1.8 $\Gamma$ .22	$\chi^2$ 6.7* $\Gamma$ .33	$\chi^2$ 1.6 $\Gamma$ .22
Learned at Forum	$\chi^2$ 28*** $\Gamma$ .50**	$\chi^2$ 19** $\Gamma$ .55**	$\chi^2$ 25** $\Gamma$ .58***	$\chi^2$ 40*** $\Gamma$ .22	$\chi^2$ 29*** $\Gamma$ .39*
Participated at Forum	$\chi^2$ 16*** $\Gamma$ .50**	$\chi^2$ 5.4 $\Gamma$ .44**	$\chi^2$ 10.9* $\Gamma$ .42**	$\chi^2$ 26*** $\Gamma$ .51***	$\chi^2$ 57*** $\Gamma$ .44***
Good Moderator	$\chi^2$ 16** $\Gamma$ .345*	$\chi^2$ 3.1 $\Gamma$ .20	$\chi^2$ 72*** $\Gamma$ .71***	$\chi^2$ 22** $\Gamma$ .45**	$\chi^2$ 32*** $\Gamma$ .45**
Diversity of Views	$\chi^2$ 17** $\Gamma$ .40*	$\chi^2$ 11* $\Gamma$ .40*	$\chi^2$ 44*** $\Gamma$ .34***	$\chi^2$ 74*** $\Gamma$ .68***	$\chi^2$ 27** $\Gamma$ .50***

\*Indicates statistical significance at the .05 level, \*\*Indicates statistical significance at the .01 level, \*\*\*Indicates statistical significance at the .001 level

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results presented above support the following hypotheses posited at the outset of this project:

- General satisfaction with the forum experience will be high.
- Short-term outcomes of forum participation will include increased adoption of deliberative norms, increased interest in and discussion about the issue, increased perception of knowledge on the issue, and personal networking with other participants.

- The diversity of views expressed within the forum and participant evaluation of the moderator will be positively related to outcomes.
- Inputs showing little or no correlation with the outcomes of the forum will include use/ readership of an issue book and previous forum experience.

A number of the posited hypotheses remain to be tested in continuing research. In addition to testing other hypotheses using descriptive and bivariate analyses, future analyses will include multivariate tests conducted on each of the output variables to determine the relative contribution of input variables.

If these preliminary results hold up in the long run, what do they mean in answering the broader project questions? First, the clearly positive change in attitudes toward democratic process underlying the search for common ground (responding to political disagreement with emphasis on reaching majority agreement while understanding the views of minorities and rejecting consensus) bodes very well for the ability of forums to produce positive results in the process of community politics. Second, forum participation does lead to increased thinking, learning, discussion, and networking. Whether the level of these activities is satisfactory depends on one's expectations, but it is important that they all occurred to a significant degree. As noted at the outset, if they did not occur it would be impossible for forum work to have an impact on community politics. Finally, the preliminary results indicate that there are different strengths of relationships between the inputs into producing action results from forums and the outputs that occur. As the complete results are tabulated and studied they should point to areas where better design choices can be made by forum organizers to maximize the immediate participant actions after attending forums and thus the impact of forums on community politics.

## UPDATE

This research project completed a series of studies intended to establish the impact of deliberation on participants. I am trained equally in political philosophy and empirical social science. While I have long been attracted to deliberative practice as an implementation of participatory democratic philosophy, the meager empirical research on its effectiveness put the question of measurable impact forefront in my mind as I began to work with students to host deliberative forums.

As a result of the concern over the paucity of systematic data from deliberations, we included a systematic research component in most forum series we have run. The Developing Deliberative Practice project provided an opportunity to complete the testing of hypotheses about the adoption of deliberative norms and to test some new hypotheses about what people did after forums. As indicated in the report and summary, the research confirmed that participation in deliberation generally supports the adoption of deliberative norms. More important for this project, people who participate in deliberation become more interested in the issues, talk about the forum with others, and network with others they meet at the forum.

The completion of this research has directly informed my practice. First, although there is somewhat more empirical research on the impact of deliberation today, conducting my own assessments has greatly reduced my personal concern that we rely too heavily on anecdotal evidence for the impact of deliberation. Second, it has pointed the way forward to make more direct connections between the deliberative forums my students and I host and the practice of community politics. This second result deserves more comment.



Since the research project was completed, we have hosted two more series of forums (I relocated to Stetson University in the meantime). The first of these was on a proposed state constitutional amendment that would have required voter approval of changes to local development plans. The second, and most recent, was on “complete streets” or supporting the use of public streets for walking, cycling, and mass transit in addition to cars. In both cases, insights from the Developing Deliberative Practice research were employed to leverage what happened after the forum. The program and instructions we issued to participants drew their attention to obtaining contact information from the people they met and to discuss the forum with others after the event. We followed up with participants more explicitly after each event to further encourage networking. These changes in design and practice paid off.

In the case of the first series, it led to a working relationship with the local government and a whole new forum series under their sponsorship to involve citizens in long-term planning for the city’s future. More recently, the networking effort from the first forum series has led to our involvement with a master plan being developed by the local Main Street Association. Likewise, the second forum series, on complete streets, resulted in follow-up projects due to the design choices we made based on our research. One of these projects is to create or relocate sidewalks surrounding a local community center with heavy pedestrian traffic, especially by children. A second spin-off from the complete streets forums is an ongoing relationship with a nonprofit bicycling association.

The insights gained from the Developing Deliberative Practice research allowed us to realize more effective links to community politics because we had used systematic empirical analysis to better understand what happened at forums that led people to want to engage after the event and what the mechanisms were that people employed to stay engaged with the issue after a forum concludes.

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## APPENDIX

### TEMPLATE PROJECT DOCUMENTS

### FORUMS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

This document provides the draft protocol and instruments for the deliberative forum assessment project run by Bill Ball at The College of New Jersey. The survey pre- and post- tests will be adapted to the needs of specific forums, as will the data collection protocol.

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#### PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES

This project is designed to measure short-term outcomes of participation in NIF-style deliberative forums and correlate those outcomes to various types of inputs to the process. The goal is to systematically discover what participants think and do shortly after forums and how forum organizers can improve their processes to optimize the positive impact of forum participation on the opinions and behaviors of participants.

The project will be coordinated by Bill Ball and his team at TCNJ. Bill will take the lead in preparing data collection instruments, analyzing the results, writing up the outcomes, and ensuring the methodological integrity of the project. Invited forum organizers will take the lead in contributing specific content questions about their forums for the instruments, collecting data on their forums, and returning them to Bill. Bill will provide \$200 per forum in support funds on receipt of completed data, up to a maximum of 50 forums. Forum organizers will also receive the summarized data from their forums. They may collaborate in the writing and publishing of reports, if they so choose.

The following are the key procedures necessary for the project to be successful:

1. For the purposes of this project a “forum” is a group of participants deliberating together with a moderator assigned to the group to run the process. An event may include more than one forum meeting simultaneously. Each forum will receive a unique number. It is vital that the forum number be included on all data forms collected (forum info. sheet, contact information, pre-test surveys, and post-test surveys).
2. There will be three forms of data collection for the project. The first is a forum information sheet to be completed by the forum organizer or forum moderator. The second is a pre-test survey to be completed by each forum participant before the forum deliberation begins. The third is a post-test survey to be completed by each forum participant two to four weeks after the forum has ended. It is expected that the forum information sheet and pre-test will be completed on paper at the start of a forum session. The post-test may be completed: on paper and mailed; through a phone call; or online. In addition it is necessary to have the participants' contact information on file linked to the forum number so that the post-test survey can be given to them. The forum organizer or moderator should explain to participants the purpose of the pre-test and post-test and how the information collected will be used. This can be done orally or with a cover letter. It is important to convey to participants that their information will be anonymous. Bill Ball can provide assistance with the data collection effort (mailing, web form construction, limited phone polling).
3. Each forum organizer should submit a few specific questions to measure views on the content of the issue discussed in the forum. These will be similar to or the same as those found in the NIF issue book surveys.
4. This data collection effort can be conducted without precluding others, such as the use of the NIF survey.

## HYPOTHESES TO BE STUDIED

Short-term outcomes of forum participation will include increased adoption of deliberative norms (political tolerance, respect for minority views, less desire for consensus), increased interest in and discussion about the issue, increased perception of knowledge on the issue, and personal networking with other participants. Little opinion change on the issues discussed will be observed. General satisfaction with the forum experience will be high.

Inputs highly correlated with outcomes will include the diversity of views held and expressed within the forum and the demographic diversity of participants.

Inputs moderately correlated with outcomes will include the experience of the moderator and participant evaluation of the moderator, the strength of the participant's opinions on the issues, and the length of the forum.

Inputs showing little or no correlation with the outcomes of the forum will include use/readership of an issue book, previous forum experience, level of civic engagement, and socioeconomic status of the individual participant.

Data collection instruments follow.

## FORUM INFORMATION SHEET

This form should be completed by the forum moderator or organizer.

Forum number: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic of the forum: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of the forum (zip code): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the forum (mm/dd/yy): \_\_\_\_\_

Length of the forum (in minutes): \_\_\_\_\_

Has the moderator moderated a forum before? (check one)

Yes

No

Has the moderator received formal training in moderating a forum? (check one)

Yes

No

What kind of issue book will be used in the forum? (check one)

No issue book

NIF published issue book

Locally written issue book

## PRE-SURVEY

Your responses to this survey will be kept confidential and will be anonymous.

I. We would like some information that will allow us to pair your responses here to those in the follow-up survey. This information will not allow your answers to be associated with you.

Please enter the last 3 digits of your home phone number:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please enter your zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

II. Next, we would like to collect some demographic information. We are asking for this information solely to determine how well our survey respondents match the general population.

Please enter your age: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you (check one):

- White, non-Hispanic
- Hispanic
- African American
- Native American
- Multi-Ethnic
- Other

Indicate the highest level of school or college you have completed (check one):

- Have not completed high school
- High school degree or equivalent
- Some college
- College degree or higher

What was your total household income last year? (check one):

- \$0-\$20,000
- \$20,000-\$40,000
- \$40,000-\$60,000
- \$60,000-\$80,000
- \$80,000-\$100,000
- \$100,000 or more

Are you (check one):

- Female
- Male

III. The main part of the survey asks for your responses to a series of questions about today's forum and more generally about your views.

Have you attended a forum run by this organization in the past? (check one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

If written background material was provided to you for this forum, did you have the opportunity to read it? (check one)

- I did not receive any material.
- I received material but did not have the opportunity to read it.
- I received material and was able to read it.

In general, do you consider your political views to be (check one):

- Strongly liberal
- Somewhat liberal
- Middle of the road
- Somewhat conservative
- Strongly conservative

During the past twelve months, how many meetings have you attended about an issue facing your community or school? (check one)

- I attended many meetings.
- I attended a few meetings.
- I attended one meeting.
- I wasn't able to attend any meetings.

**WHEN ORDINARY PEOPLE DISAGREE ON A POLITICAL QUESTION,  
HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT THEY REACH A POINT WHERE: (Check one response per line)**

	Very Important	Important	Matters Somewhat	Matters a Little	Doesn't Matter at All
Most people (a majority) agree	<input type="checkbox"/>				
No agreement but an understanding of the views of the minority	<input type="checkbox"/>				
All agree (a consensus)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
They have an agreement to disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**INDICATE HOW MUCH YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.  
(Check one response per line)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A person should be encouraged to express their views publicly even when most people don't want to hear what they have to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I consider myself to be knowledgeable about the issues to be discussed at this forum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BRIEF CUSTOM QUESTIONS ABOUT OPINIONS ON ISSUES DISCUSSED IN FORUM GO HERE.

Thanks for completing the survey!

Forum number \_\_\_\_\_

## POST-SURVEY

Your responses to this survey will be kept confidential and will be anonymous.

I. We would like some information that will allow us to pair your responses here to those in the earlier survey. This information will not allow your answers to be associated with you.

Please enter the last 3 digits of your home phone number:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please enter your zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Please enter your age: \_\_\_\_\_

II. We would like to ask you about what happened during the forum you participated in. Please answer to the best of your ability.

How much did you participate in the discussions during the forum? (check one)

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- I don't remember

Did you obtain contact information from anyone you met for the first time at the forum? (check one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

Have you contacted anyone you met for the first time at the forum since the event listed? (check one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

How much did you find yourself thinking about the forum in the days after it concluded? (check one)

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- I don't remember

How much did you discuss the forum with family or acquaintances in the days after it concluded? (check one)

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- I don't remember

How much have you tried to learn more about the issues discussed at the forum? (check one)

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Quite a bit
- I don't remember

**WHEN ORDINARY PEOPLE DISAGREE ON A POLITICAL QUESTION,  
HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT THEY REACH A POINT WHERE: (Check one response per line)**

	Very Important	Important	Matters Somewhat	Matters a Little	Doesn't Matter at All
Most people (a majority) agree	<input type="checkbox"/>				
No agreement but an understanding of the views of the minority	<input type="checkbox"/>				
All agree (a consensus)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
They have an agreement to disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**INDICATE HOW MUCH YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.  
(Check one response per line)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I enjoyed participating in the forum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I learned more about the issues discussed during the forum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would attend another forum like this one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The moderator in my group did a good job in running the forum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The moderator in my group frequently intervened to guide the discussion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There was a diversity of viewpoints expressed in my group during the forum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There were ample opportunities to participate in my group during the forum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have sought out additional information on the issues discussed at the forum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**INDICATE HOW MUCH YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.  
(Check one response per line)**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
A person should be encouraged to express their views publicly even when most people don't want to hear what they have to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BRIEF CUSTOM QUESTIONS ABOUT OPINIONS ON ISSUES DISCUSSED IN FORUM GO HERE.

Thanks for completing the survey!

Forum number \_\_\_\_\_

## ABOUT THE KETTERING FOUNDATION

Kettering Foundation is a nonprofit operating foundation rooted in the American tradition of cooperative research. Kettering's primary research question is, what does it take to make democracy work as it should? Kettering's research is distinctive because it is conducted from the perspective of citizens and focuses on what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation. The foundation seeks to identify and address the challenges to making democracy work as it should through interrelated program areas that focus on citizens, communities, and institutions. The foundation collaborates with an extensive network of community groups, professional associations, researchers, scholars, and citizens around the world. Established in 1927 by inventor Charles F. Kettering, the foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that does not make grants but engages in joint research with others.

*Developing Deliberative Practice: The impacts of deliberation* reflects the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its directors, or its officers.

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Presented to the Kettering Foundation April 2, 2008.