

Hello, this is Martín Carcasson. I'm a Communication Studies Professor at Colorado state University and the Director for the CSU Center for Public Deliberation.

I'm putting together this short video to talk about the idea of deliberative interviews. We do a lot of training of facilitators at the CPD and, you know, in most cases the facilitation experience we're working towards is a small group of five or six people at a table kind of working through an issue. But deliberative interviews can be an important aspect of the work that we do to really understand issues better, to hear voices, and to make sure, you know, we're getting a broad sense of the issue from multiple perspectives. So, this video is going to kind of think through, as a supplement to training that we assume that you have already had, to think through the role of the facilitator and basic moves and how it works specifically more on a one-on-one kind of situation.

To start with I kind of want to talk a little bit about the concept of facilitation overall. I mean the root of the word, going back to the Latin, "to facilitate" means to make easy, right. So, the idea is you know someone in the interview or in a group process whose goal is to really kind of help that group do things easier. In particular the things that we talk about with group facilitation is to bring out kind of the wisdom in crowds, to avoid to pitfalls of group think and polarization, to help groups kind of understand each other more, and ideally to kind of set up that situation so the group can do the creative problem solving work that's so important.

So, in interviews, it can be similar in many ways, right. We're working to bring out the wisdom in the individual, right, to just spark high quality critical thinking and to avoid the pitfalls of psychology that support problematic reasoning. We know that people generally are what psychologists call "cognitive misers." We don't like to think that much, right. Once we make our decision, our brains are kind of designed to kind of protect that decision and defend it from attack in some important ways. That fuels confirmation bias, which is when our brains are seeking out information that we already believe. It's really a filter that keeps us from thinking critically. So, you know, a good deliberative conversation really works to kind of overcome these things, right. Group conversations can be particularly powerful to bring people together because the deliberative facilitator can really facilitate that mutual understanding, to undo the false assumptions that people might bring to the conversation, and really that face to face interaction can spark these "aha" moments that are so important to the work that we do. But a lot of that can also happen on a one-on-one deliberative conversation.

One important aspect that we talk about with the CPD is kind of this notion of wicked problems and this process of wanting to put the wickedness in the problem versus the people, right, and how that sparks different kinds of conversations. This kind of really applies to the thought of a deliberative interview, we don't need multiple people to bring out the wickedness in problems because the wickedness, the tensions are within the problem versus between people, right. So, when you really think about issues from this kind of deliberative perspective, you are identifying the underlying tensions and bringing them out and individually people have to kind of have these deliberative processes to think through issues. So, a one-on-one

interview can still bring out these tensions and help people work through them and really kind of elevate the conversations we have in important ways.

So, a deliberative interview is more than just kind of capturing someone's existing opinion or discovering that. Ideally it is a process that helps elevate their thinking and helps them be creative and think about different things and kind of bring it out. And ultimately, they refine their opinion and it is more useful, not only to them, but also to us as we're trying think about that issue. The interviewer is facilitating that process, is making it easier for them to do that, right. So with that as just kind of a quick intro, I'm going to share my screen here and bring out some of the materials from the basic training that we do for our community guides that looks at both the role of the facilitator and some basic kind of facilitator moves. Just to kind of think about how that might work differently within more of a deliberative interview versus facilitating a small group, right.

Well so the first role is to "remain impartial about the subject of the forum." That is still important here, right. The facilitator is not trying to get them to think in a certain way, they're not bringing their own values in a way, but they are committed to elevating their thinking, right. So, how can the facilitator kind of make the interventions in the conversations and ask the questions that really kind of help people elevate their thinking.

"Help participants develop their mutual understandings and consider a broad range of views." You know, obviously you're not doing the work of mutual understanding across perspectives represented at the table but you can still do a lot of this work, right. A lot of a deliberative interview is to get people to think about different perspectives, to consider a broad range of views, to push back on some of the assumptions they might be making if they haven't really been thinking critically about the different sides of that assumption. And you'll see kind of the probing questions can really help bring that out.

"Allowing participants to own the process and topic as much as possible." It's somewhat easier to do in a one-on-one situation, right. They're getting a lot of the attention, so you're trying to find that right balance between the script, the set of questions you might be given and where the interview is really taking the conversation. We certainly would like to set up scripts, there are certain questions we do want to ask as part of the process if we were interviewing multiple people, but we also want the interviewer to know that they have to kind of balance that with the participant, right. We want to hear their stories; we want to hear what's important to them and we can certainly kind of get off the script if necessary, to honor that and to honor their time.

Now this one is one that is certainly not as relevant, typically with a deliberative interview you are focusing on a one-on-one, you're allowing them to dominate in a way as you go thorough.

And last, "modeling the ground rules." One of the difficulties of facilitating a group conversation is the facilitator is wearing so many different hats, right. They are wanting to really

listen to the person speaking but they really have to think about the process and what's next, and in particular, they have to be, you know, head on a swivel looking at nonverbals trying to get a sense of how people are reacting to this and what you might dig into. So, the nice thing about a deliberative interview is you're not worried as much about that and you can really focus much more on the listening process and really kind of give that person most of your undivided attention other than again thinking about the next steps in the process.

So, shifting now to think about the deliberative moves. Obviously, the focus here is on listening, right. You're really giving that interviewee hopefully the sense of really paying attention to what they're saying, really considering that important, really trying to capture them and understand it. You see the power of questions here, obviously, with a one-on-one interview. You know transition questions are those question that you might be provided as part of the process, that were asking a kind of set of questions. But the probing questions are probably the most important questions on the interview, right. You're really trying to get them to dig deeper and kind of think about things. And this is where I think, you know, thinking about the impartiality can be important. The mindset of the deliberative interviewer with probing questions has to be kind of focused on, basically curiosity, right. You're really just trying to understand them. You're not probing, you're not pushing back, you're not wanting to necessarily defend their positions, you're wanting them to think through their position and kind of work through that is a way. So, make sure with those probing questions, that the way they are perceived by the interviewee is kind of a respect and a curiosity to understand the position versus a kind of pushback in a sense.

You won't have reaction question, though you know in some ways you won't have reaction questions in getting people to respond to each other, you can certainly have reaction questions that you're bringing in perspectives, right. And that's probably one of the more difficult things for a deliberative interviewer, is managing that balance of being impartial but getting people to really think about how others might react to that. So, the facilitator might need to play a little bit more with devil's advocate or bringing voices in the room and essentially ask reaction questions, but getting people to think about how others might react to each other, to their opinions, and bring those kinds of perspectives in. You know, tradeoff questions might not be as critical to a deliberative interview as it would be in a deliberative process where were really bring out those tradeoffs, but as I said earlier you know, focusing on the wickedness of the problem versus the wickedness in the people, you still might have an important role for tradeoff questions, right. You still might need to kind of push some of the interviewees to think about the consequences of their perspective. So, the value of bringing up those tradeoffs might still be there just in a little bit of a different context, right.

Now paraphrasing will be similar, you'll actually be able to do a lot more paraphrasing because it's a one-on-one situation, so you're not focused as much about getting other voices in. So using paraphrasing for all the different reasons we talked about in terms of making sure that they feel heard, making sure that you're understanding them well, but also in some ways to kind of push them a little bit, to have them explore some of the assumptions they are making.

And last, silence will still be a function, right. Dealing with silence in a group situation is kind of easy because there's multiple people there and they'll also be uncomfortable and fill that silence. And a one-on-one situation though, we still want to emphasize that that silence is okay as long as you can tell from the nonverbals that that silence is based on someone really thinking through something and kind of making sense of something, allow them to do that, right. So, it's not that you have to fill the air as much as you normally kind of think it those type of situations.

So that's it. We just kind of wanted to think through some of those basic roles and basic moves as a facilitator that you know initially was certainly trained in terms of running a small group conversation and focus a little bit more on how many of these you know still apply in many situations but also might be tweaked a little bit as you think about that one-on-one interview. But it is still a deliberative interview, you're still wanting to kind of help people work through those issues, see different sides of things, then hopefully, again, be creative. So, you're capturing their opinion, you're hopefully refining their opinion, and ideally in some ways you're allowing them to create a new option, to you know be creative and thinking about how we might be able to solve these shared problems that our communities are struggling with, thank you.