DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES:

A STUDY OF DIGITAL DELIBERATIVE DISCOURSE

IN THE 2012 ELECTION

by

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ABSTRACT

Democratic deliberation has been studied in various diverse environments, however, scholars have yet to examine its characteristics when conducted on political campaigns' social network sites. The present study sought to fill this gap by exploring the contextual issues that shape campaigns' and citizens' deliberative experiences on this interactive digital venue. A phenomenological theoretical approach was used to frame this research and to craft the research design that involved analysis of data collected from two sources: multimedia text published on social network sites and interviews with individuals involved with the operation of political campaigns' social network site.

Analysis of these two sources reveals that citizens participate in deliberative discourse using various strategies that are distinct to social network site technology. Specifically deliberators presented hyperlinks, personal identities, ideological beliefs, and facts about candidates' past experiences to support their opinions. Additionally, citizens developed their arguments by drawing on content that was disseminated by political campaigns, other deliberators, and media advertisements. Results also describe characteristics concerning the relationship between political campaigns and the democratic deliberation engaged on their social network sites. It was concluded that campaigns influence the nature of deliberation through the strategic operation of their social network sites. Additionally, while campaigns in the present study did not use citizen deliberation to influence policy making, campaigns widely agreed that this

discourse was valuable and should be used more broadly to influence the larger political arena. Based on the major findings that emerged, this empirical research argues that political campaign social network sites cultivate valuable deliberative discourse that can be used to inform formal governing procedures and subsequently influence broader democratic processes.

As a scholar it is my first and foremost objective to contribute to achieving social justice in society, and I dedicate this work to underrepresented voices that share my passion to create positive change in democratic political systems.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On the evening of Tuesday October 16, 2012 following the second of four televised presidential debates in the 2012 election, Barack Obama's campaign published a post on its official Facebook Page that generated more than 25,000 comments within 48 hours. The post consisted of a photo of the debate under a text caption that stated, "Team Obama had a big win in the second debate—and it's because the President has the right plan to move us forward: http://OFA.BO/e4Q94o." The tens of thousands of comments posted by Facebook users represented a diversity of opinions concerning the debate, the candidates, and various other political issues. Although these comments varied widely in length, argumentative skill, language, and political partisanship, it was clear that this digital platform had cultivated a vast space for public deliberation of political issues.

This study examines democratic deliberation on political candidates online social network sites during the 2012 United States election. Since their emergence during the 2008 presidential primaries, campaign social network sites have developed significantly as they were fully embraced by people and politicians on all levels of government in the 2012 election. As suggested in the opening anecdote, social network sites such as Facebook existed as prominent venues for citizens to engage in deliberative discourse as the public accessibility of these websites attracted the attention of millions of Americans.

Despite the capacity of social network sites to intrigue and challenge citizens, campaign professionals, and scholars, the precise role of this digital technology in democratic deliberative processes has yet to be articulated in scholarship. Past theoretical and empirical research has examined the concept of democratic deliberation in face t face, mass media, and digital contexts, but scholars have yet to consider the distinctly different communicative space generated by social network site technology. Technological innovation has undoubtedly altered the structures and forms of democratic deliberation, and the technical and cultural characteristics of social network sites lend to novel discursive conditions that warrant examination.

Background to the Study

Arguments that support and refute the democratizing influence of Internet communications are not new to scholarship. For example, in his 1994 address to participants of the World Telecommunication Development Conference in Buenos Aires, United States Vice President Al Gore proposed that the Internet would "promote the functioning of democracy by greatly enhancing the participation of citizens in decision-making" (Gore, 1996). In the mid 1990s scholarly publications reflected a similar utopian vision of the Internet as researchers such as Berman and Weitzner (1997) claimed, "The Internet presents us with an opportunity to support the highest goals of democracy. We ought to embrace the Internet and support its continued and growing use in political life" (p. 1319). In particular, deliberative initiatives have been identified as a democratic activity that could be supported and enhanced by Internet technology (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004; Price, Nir, & Cappella, 2002). Undoubtedly, utopian visions of the Internet have received a great deal of criticism; however, much of this criticism has

focused on identifying factors that hinder digital deliberation with the aim of finding ways to support more successful deliberative conditions (Dahlberg, 2011).

Since the late 1990s, digital venues dedicated to political discussions and argumentation have proliferated exponentially as there are literally thousands of sites related to politics on local, national, and global levels (Dahlgreen, 2005). Frequently occurring elections help fuel the amount of political discussion on the Internet as political candidates and campaign professionals continue to execute complex digital strategies to engage voters in online communication. In comparison to predigital campaigning that largely limited campaigning efforts to unidirectional campaign to citizen communication disseminated via outlets such as broadcast television, Internet technology allows for interactive bidirectional communication among citizens and campaigns.

In 2012, it was not uncommon for campaigns to employ an array of interactive web platforms and social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, blog network Tumblr, photosharing site Instagram, and other niche web venues like Pinterest to engage voters (Bykowicz, 2012). A study conducted by Pew Research during the 2012 election concluded that 39% of all American adults had engaged in civic or political activities using social media (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2012). Examples of social media activities reported in this research included posting thoughts about civic and political issues, encouraging others to act on issues and vote, and belonging to political or social groups that were working to advance a cause. In contrast to early online deliberative initiatives that suffered from lack of participation, the widespread use of social network sites by political campaigns and the broad discursive participation by citizens on these sites creates a new context for exploration (Dahlberg, 2001a).

Genesis and Justification of the Problem

Theoretical development is sought by democratic deliberation scholars to inform the validity of current assumptions and to expand coverage to encompass the new digital contexts in which deliberative initiatives are occurring. There have been calls in this field for more empirical studies, and for these studies to be linked more explicitly with deliberative theories (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Ryfe, 2005; Thompson, 2008). Additionally, scholars have identified the serious need for examination of democratic deliberation in organic settings (as opposed to experimental conditions) where actual initiatives occur (Ryfe, 2005). Researchers encourage the advancement of qualitative case studies to explore these real life contexts and to probe the underlying deliberative processes at work (Barabas, 2004; Delli Carpini et al., 2004). The study in this dissertation addresses all of these calls through a creative exploration of a largely unexamined digital setting. Findings from this research provide a valuable contribution to the theory of democratic deliberation by providing sound empirical evidence generated from a qualitative analysis of a real case study of deliberative discourse carried out on two political campaigns' social network sites during the 2012 election.

According to Delli Carpini et al. (2004), the impact of deliberative discursive politics is highly context dependent. While democratic deliberation has been studied in a variety of political communicative contexts, the newness of social network site technology and the time sensitive nature of electoral politics have prevented comprehensive examination of this phenomenon. Consequentially, the present study is significant because it constitutes a starting place from which to understand the phenomenon of deliberative discourse on campaign social network sites. Further, through

investigating the relationship between the campaign and the discursive content on their social network sites, this study has implications for understanding how digital deliberation influences political agendas and official decision making processes.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to understand the phenomenon of democratic deliberation on the political campaigns social network sites of one congressional race in Utah. This research seeks to explore experiences of individual citizens, campaign staff members, and electoral candidates who have engaged in this type of communication in order to provide an understanding of the collective experiences of this phenomenon. In addition to examining discursive exchanges, this study focuses on understanding the relationship between political campaigns and the discourse conducted on their respective social network sites. The research questions derived from this statement of the problem are as follows:

1. What strategies do citizens use to engage in democratic deliberation on electoral candidates social network sites?
2. What is the relationship between political campaigns and the deliberative discourse on their social network site?

Definition of Terms

Following the research questions put forth to guide this study it is important to clearly conceptualize the terms that are used frequently and prominently in this research report.

Democratic Deliberation

An analysis of democratic deliberation scholarship reveals that the term has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Differences in definitions depend on the particular characteristic(s) that are emphasized or made centralized, as well as the scope of communication the researcher chooses to include. The following definition of democratic deliberation used in this study reflects a combination of definitions from several scholars.

Democratic deliberation: public citizen discourse, in the form of formal and informal exchanges, that address issues of public concern, where disagreement exists and a collective decision is needed.

Public citizen discourse is conceived as a form of participation that is open to the public that emphasizes talking exchanges, in comparison to other types of participatory activities such as voting, volunteering, and lobbying (Chambers, 2003; Delli Carpini et al., 2004). Communicative exchanges are not limited to the face to face format, rather public citizen discourse in modern democracies should reflect the significant influence of mass media and recognize that deliberation can occur through a variety of media including phone conversations, email exchanges, and internet forums (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Page, 1996). By *formal and informal exchanges* it is recognized that deliberation can occur under flexible conditions. Unlike other scholars who situate deliberative democracy in the context of idealized formal procedural processes (Dewey, 1954; Gastil, 2000), the definition used in the present study embraces the more flexible type of asynchronous and spontaneous communication that is conducted on digital public forums. This definition also states that deliberation must focus on *issues of public concern*. To clarify, conversations that are personal in nature and unrelated to issues of broader public issues

are not considered (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). The last part of the definition contends that democratic deliberation must involve discourse where *disagreement exists and a collective decision is needed.* According to Thompson (2008), deliberation cannot exist under conditions where participants are like minded or hold similar views before entering a discussion. Rather, "Some basic disagreement is necessary to create the problem that deliberative democracy is intended to solve" (2008, p. 502). Finally, democratic deliberation must be part of a process for arriving at a collective decision, whether all deliberators agree or not (Thompson, 2008). Such collective decisions are sought in formal election processes when citizens are enlisted to produce a collective decision through the process of voting.

Political Campaign Social Network Sites

The term *political campaign social network sites* refers to particular websites that are operated by official political campaigns that represent electoral candidates.

Although structural variations related to visibility and access vary from site to site, *social network sites* are:

> Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211)

Social network sites are supported by Web 2.0 technology that allows Internet users to engage in interactive participation and shared content creation (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011). MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter are examples of social network platforms that have generated mass popularity.

On public social network sites, individuals associated with official *political campaigns* may set up accounts, which enable them to operate profiles within a social network site. As the administrator of an account, political campaigns can manage content that appears on their site within the technical infrastructure parameters set by the social network platform.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the project and provided the relevant context for the study by providing background information, the genesis and justification for the problem, a problem statement that articulates two research questions, and definitions of important terms.

Chapter 2 provides a complete, yet narrowed survey of literature that is necessary for providing a theoretical foundation for this study. Within this chapter, three areas of literature are addressed. First, democratic deliberation literature is reviewed as knowledge of existing theoretical assumptions and empirical studies serve as a foundation for analyzing the precise deliberative discourse examined in the present study. Second, digital democracy scholarship is surveyed that specifically relates to deliberation. Digital democracy has been used to inform a variety of scholarly contexts, but this section focuses on reviewing arguments concerning its relationship to supporting deliberative scenarios. The last section of the literature review surveys existing research regarding the use of social network sites in elections. This final section is important because it provides context for understanding the digital environment and the political parameters from which data in this study were collected and analyzed.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed explanation of the qualitative case study research design that was employed to investigate digital democratic deliberation on political campaign social network sites. This section begins with a description of the phenomenological theoretical frame that guided the method, followed by an explanation of the precise data that were collected from two sources: interviews with campaign staff and multimedia content published on campaigns' social network sites. In addition to justifying this particular selection of data, background information will be presented about the case study that provides the necessary context for understanding subsequent analysis. This chapter will conclude with a complete explanation of procedures used for collecting and analyzing data.

In Chapter 4, the results of this study are presented. Using the research questions posed previously to organize findings, the researcher describes the nature of social network site deliberation examined in this case study. Specifically, results address strategies used by citizens to engage in democratic deliberation on electoral candidates social network sites. Additionally, findings regarding the relationship between political campaigns and the deliberative discourse published on their social network sites are presented.

Chapter 5 presents conclusions concerning the phenomenon investigated in this research. This section begins by summarizing the study and the major findings that emerged from data analysis. Then the researcher provides an interpretation of these findings to clearly articulate their significance to the phenomenon of democratic deliberation and political communication scholarship more broadly. This interpretation transcends specific results produced by this study in an effort to write more generally

about the theoretical and empirical contributions of this body of research. Next limitations of this study are addressed by acknowledging some of the shortcomings that emerged as a result of the research design employed. Finally, suggestions for future research that will continue to improve understanding of the phenomenon are presented. Since this study was exploratory in nature, the findings produced a solid foundation for many new research questions to be investigated.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research questions posed for this study touch on three primary areas of scholarship: literature on democratic deliberation, digital democracy and deliberation literature, and literature on the use of social network sites in political campaigning. Each of these three categories is vast, and therefore a comprehensive review for each area is not feasible, nor would it be useful to informing the present research. Consequentially, this chapter will address each category of literature by providing synopses of past findings that are most relevant to this study.

Democratic Deliberation

In democratic deliberation literature scholars have focused on examining the value of deliberative processes in terms of their contributions to the vitality of a democratic government. Theoretical research largely suggests that democratic deliberation performed under certain conditions generates beneficial outcomes for political systems and society more broadly. Empirical research has lagged behind theory and practice, but a body of studies has emerged that reveals mixed support for optimistic theoretical assumptions. This section will begin by presenting an analysis of claims and conclusions that suggest that democratic deliberation is a beneficial process. Then findings that offer skeptical evaluations of democratic deliberation will be discussed.

Strengths of Democratic Deliberation

The capacity for democratic deliberation to involve collective decision making is valued as a major strength of this process (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Gastil, 2000; Gutman & Thompson, 1996; Thompson, 2008). In comparison to individual decision making, collective decisions are presumably superior because a collection of voices brings more information to bear, consequentially resulting in a more informed decision outcome (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). Processes of collective decision making have been shown to increase civic engagement as more people are allowed and encouraged to participate, which can ultimately stimulate more public spirited attitudes (Chambers, 2003; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Mendelberg, 2002).

Researchers have demonstrated that working as a collective can also increase empathy between citizens (Barabas, 2004; Chambers, 2003; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Mendelberg, 2002). According to Mendelberg (2002), "deliberation is expected to lead to empathy with the other… through an egalitarian, open minded and reciprocal process of reasoned argumentation" (p. 320). Additionally, under deliberative conditions citizens can become enlightened of their own needs, as well as the needs and experiences of others (Mendelberg, 2002). In addition to generating awareness and understanding of opposing perspectives and rationales, researchers suggest that ideal conditions of deliberation can also promote tolerance between diverse groups (Chambers 2003; Mutz, 2006).

In comparison to other types of social interaction, empirical research has concluded that deliberative interactions produce different outcomes (Schneiderhan & Kahn, 2008). When comparing deliberative groups to other decision making conditions

such as individual thinking and informal discussion, Schneiderhan and Kahn reported that participants who deliberated were more likely to change their opinions. More specifically, individuals that were encouraged to participate in discussion and provide reasons for their opinions were more likely to shift their positions. It is important to emphasize that evidence of attitude change was discovered on an individual level opposed to an aggregate level change, thus noting this important distinction. Additionally, Schneiderhan and Kahn identified inclusion in deliberation as a central mechanism to the deliberative process and they suggested that future research should concentrate on further investigation of this variable.

Neblo, Esterling, Kennedy, Lazer, and Sokhey (2010) confirmed the importance of promoting inclusion in deliberative processes concluding that American's willingness to deliberate was more widespread than expected. Using two large national samples Neblo et al. examined the constructs of inclusion and apathy—two variables cited in previous literature as demobilizing to deliberation—by comparing individual's hypothetical willingness to deliberate and their actual participation when invited to engage in a deliberative initiative. Results revealed that willingness to deliberate was much higher than research on political behavior suggests, and that the people most willing to deliberate were actually those who were turned off by standard partisan and interest group politics. "Far from rendering deliberative democratic reforms ridiculous… findings suggest[ed] that the deliberative approach represents opportunities for practical reform quite congruent with the aspirations of normative political theorists and average citizens" (Neblo et al., 2010, p. 582). From their findings, Neblo et al. suggested that

integrating deliberative frameworks into more standard forms of democratic participation in society could increase inclusion in deliberative participation.

While most researchers typically acknowledge the potential benefits of democratic deliberation presented thus far, some scholars argue that theoretical assumptions lack practicality in realistic settings due to the difficulty in cultivating and maintaining deliberative conditions (Ryfe, 2005). It has been argued that civic forums that are dedicated to democratic deliberation occur too infrequently and are too uncommon to be considered politically significant (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). In his early work Habermas (1989) articulated the impracticality of democratic deliberation in modern democracies. Drawing on ideals from ancient Greek democracy, Habermas' theory of public deliberation envisioned a "public sphere" that could serve as a social space through which citizens and political elites could engage in rational critical debate of political arguments that could become focused opinion to be used in procedural decision making. However, Habermas identified a number of cultural elements in modern society such as consumer economics, public relations, and mass media that effectively prevent citizens from engaging in the type of ideal deliberative discourse that was achieved in classic Greek politics. According to Habermas, the ideological template of the Hellenic public sphere "has preserved continuity over the centuries—on the level of intellectual history," but its realization in contemporary democracies is severely limited by modern culture (1989, p. 4).

In his later work Habermas (1996) responded to his own cultural criticism suggesting that civil society and digital technology may offer some reprise for cultivating successful democratic deliberative conditions. Like Habermas (1996), other more recent

researchers have not been preoccupied with theorizing or conducting experiments under ideal democratic deliberation conditions. Rather, scholarship reflects a desire to examine new environments such as Internet forums that appear to foster deliberative democracy, with an emphasis toward understanding how contextual factors can positively and negatively effect public deliberation (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). To illustrate this point it is useful to consider Fishkin's (1995) use of the term "incompleteness" to describe the practical shortcomings of ideal discursive conditions. Fishkin recognized that when some citizens are unable or unwilling to weigh in on arguments in a given debate, discourse becomes less deliberative because it is incomplete. According to Fishkin (1995), "in practical contexts a great deal of incompleteness must be tolerated. Hence, when we talk of improving deliberation, it is a matter of *improving* the completeness of the debate and the public's engagement in it, not a matter of perfecting it" (p. 41).

Thus far, evidence has been presented that democratic deliberation has beneficial consequences on society because it can lead to increased civic engagement, empathy and understanding of opposing viewpoints, and tolerance of diverse beliefs among various social groups. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that empirical research can provide useful suggestions for improvement and practical reform of deliberative practices in realistic settings. But as acknowledged previously, democratic deliberation research has received a fair amount criticism surrounding its usefulness and practicality in contemporary society.

Criticisms of Democratic Democracy

A summary of past research reveals that deliberation executed under less than optimal circumstances can be ineffective and even counterproductive and dangerous to

democracy. For example, Mutz (2006) analyzed surveys and experiments to develop an argument that exposure to oppositional viewpoints during deliberative discursive encounters increased deliberators' ambivalence in a manner that stifled political participation. Survey results showed that most citizens chose to avoid social conflict when discussing politics and consequentially, exposure to disagreement in deliberative settings reduced people's motivations to participate in political activities such as voting (Mutz, 2006).

Lack of inclusion and representation among participants in deliberative initiatives has also been cited as a major flaw in democratic deliberation research. Scholars claim that deliberative settings continue to be unrepresentative because they remain populated by the same group of affluent Americans (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). According to Ryfe (2005), allowing greater citizen input in policy making processes would provide a simple solution to this problem, but ultimately this is not viable because people simply do not want to participate. Ryfe explained that citizens' aversions to participating were stimulated by several issues such as feelings of cynicism toward the government, preferences for cognitive heuristics, and desires to avoid responsibility for decision making outcomes. Similarly, Sanders (1997) argued that deliberation does not appeal to "ordinary citizens, or at least not to many residents of the United States, at least not given the way we live now" (p. 348). This realization significantly contributes to unrepresentative deliberative conditions as citizens refrain from opportunities to participate in deliberation.

Sanders (1997) publication titled "Against Deliberation" explored several arguments that challenged idealistic notions of deliberation as she explained why

"[deliberation] should not necessarily and automatically appeal to democratic theorists" (p. 348). She claimed that it was not possible for society to meet the conditions required for deliberation, which include achieving mutual respect, equality in resources, and guarantee of equal opportunity to articulate persuasive arguments. To elaborate, Sanders wrote:

> The material prerequisites for deliberation are unequally distributed... because some Americans are more likely to be persuasive than others, this is, to be learned and practiced in making arguments that would be recognized by others as reasonable ones—no matter how worthy or true their presentations actually are. It is also because some Americans are apparently less likely than others to be listened to; even when their arguments are stated according to conventions of reason. (Sanders, 1997, p. 349)

Sander's argument revealed a significant threat to democratic ideals as unrepresentative deliberation can clearly subject citizens to conscious or unconscious manipulation and bias in information consumption (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Sanders, 1997). The capacity for unequal social conditions to allow certain arguments to be embraced while others are dismissed exists as a dangerous consequence of democratic deliberation.

A final problem that is consistently cited in the literature as limiting the effectiveness of democratic deliberation lies in the fact that deliberative processes are often disconnected from actual decision making (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Ryfe, 2005). As stated by Delli Carpini et al. (2004), critics complain that "civic forums are 'just talk'—idle chat that is cut off from government decision making about important issues" (p. 321). The importance of this issue was elucidated by Ryfe (2005) who argued that the realization of deliberative democracy was dependent in part on successful linking of deliberative practices to policy decisions made in a political system. Ryfe analyzed three

reasons for the disconnect between deliberation and policy making. First, deliberative initiatives may be explicitly designed to avoid linkage between deliberation and policy making. For example, rather then trying to influence policy, initiatives such as National Issue Forums (NIF) focus on achieving educational objectives through learning and reflection. Second, deliberation may serve a consulting function as in cases where representative bodies are mandated to call on citizens to share their opinions through deliberative practices such as deliberative polls and citizens juries. In such instances deliberative outcomes can serve as a useful gauge of public opinion, however representatives are not required to abide by them in actual policy making processes. Lastly, when making formal decisions officials do not consider the views of the "ordinary citizen" because they are explicitly bound to drawing on deliberation from relevant stakeholders in a defined systematic process. According to Ryfe (2005), deliberative efforts that are not incorporated in policy making represent a "structural ambivalence within deliberative democracy about the relationship between talk and action" (p. 61). Further, "It is one thing to argue abstractly that contemporary politics might be reinvigorated with greater deliberation and participation. It is quite another to make interactions between ordinary people and policy makers actually work" (2005, p. 62).

As acknowledged previously, empirical work has trailed behind theoretical publication and the field of democratic deliberation suffers from failure to explicitly tie empirical research to deliberative theories (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Ryfe, 2005; Thompson, 2008). Delli Carpini et al. (2004) suggested that future research should explore Americans current political behaviors to discover what deliberative experiences are actually like. Using multiple methods such as qualitative case studies, participant

observation, and other field based research, new studies should attempt to "observe more real-world deliberative experiments that occur every day" (2004, p. 336). To further connect empirical findings to theory, Thompson (2008) recommended that future research investigate deliberation among citizens, as well as between citizens and their representatives. The present research addresses all of these suggestions for improvement, as this study contributes valuable empirical findings to this scholarly field.

Digital Democracy and Deliberation

Literature that examines deliberative democracy in digital environments seeks to understand the extent and quality of critical rational debate using Internet communications, as well as to identify factors that facilitate and hinder deliberative procedures and outcomes (Dahlberg, 2011). Proponents of digital democratic deliberation have suggested that digital technology can offer an important source for information and opportunity to extend the role of the public in the political arena (Hague & Loader, 1999; Papacharissi, 2002). Other scholars remain skeptical of the use of the Internet for practicing democratic deliberation and have warned of the dangers of polarizing effects that can potentially create alienation and disillusionment among citizens (Habermas, 1996; Sunstein, 2001). This section will review digital democracy literature, which seeks to examine the relationship between the Internet and democratic values, as it relates to online deliberative initiatives.

Positive Impacts of Digital Technology

In the early 1990s, discourse surrounding the Internet was infused with notions of optimism and hope that this new technology would somehow have a positive impact on

the depressing health of democracy (Dahlgreen, 2005). The emergence of Internet communication technologies (ICT's) provided opportunities to rethink and possibly replace the institutions, actors, and practices that were thought to contribute to frail conditions of democracy and poor public regard for the existing government (Hague & Loader, 1999). In comparison to traditional mass media, scholars pointed to characteristics of the Internet such as the endless availability of space and ideological breadth, which could ideally support the emergence of an impressive diversity of opinions. According to Delli Carpini et al. (2004), a review of early digital deliberation research reveals that the Internet once offered a solution to the challenge of "durability of changes in attitudes, opinions, and knowledge, and the practicality of the design as a means of increasing meaningful deliberation among the larger population" (p. 334). Additionally, critical scholars have enthusiastically identified the potential of the Internet to allow marginalized social groups that were traditionally excluded from mainstream media and political debate to use the Internet to gain exposure and to advance their interests (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Kellner, 1999).

Researchers have argued that the Internet can reduce many practical challenges that inhibit traditional, nondigital democratic deliberative formats. For example, use of the Internet as a communication forum enables more long term deliberation (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). Rather than being limited to strict time and place boundaries, online discussion groups allow Internet users to contribute to debates and consider others' arguments at their leisure (Tambini, 1999). Additionally, Kolb (1996) concluded that asynchronous computer mediated communication was conducive to deliberative conditions because it encouraged reflexivity and justification for speech claims. He stated,

> [T]he rhythm of e-mail and mailing list exchange encourages opposing manifestos and summaries but also quick movement from what you just said to the arguments and presuppositions behind it. Positions get examined from a variety of angles, and there will be demand for backing on specific points. (Kolb, 1996, pp. 15-16)

While Kolb (1996) addressed email and listserv formats specifically, this quote remains significant to the present study because the same type of asynchronous communication is ubiquitous in newer online communication forums such as social network sites.

Price, Cappella, and Nir provided empirical support for the strengths of online deliberation through a series of publications that examined the effects of an online deliberative initiative called The Electronic Dialogue Project (Cappella et al., 2002; Price & Cappella, 2002; Price et al., 2002; Price, Goldwaite, Cappella & Romantan, 2003). Data for their analysis were extracted from a multiwave survey that was gathered from a yearlong panel study. Using a random national sample, the project involved the organization of 60 groups that engaged in a series of monthly, real time electronic discussions about issues facing the country and the unfolding 2000 presidential campaign. According to results, online deliberation fostered increased political engagement and general communication participation (Price & Cappella, 2002). Additionally, researchers reported that encountering disagreement in political conversations contributed to individuals' abilities to ground their viewpoints in supportive arguments, and to understand opposing arguments (Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002).

As mentioned previously, broad accessibility of the Internet is conducive to democratic deliberation because it significantly increases opportunities for participation that are not possible in face to face or broadcast venues. Early research suggested that cost elements associated with Internet use were problematic as users had to incur three

significant costs including: the price of a personal computer or other hardware, the cost of Internet services, and finally telecommunications services that connected users to the online service (Berman & Weitzner, 1997). However, the availability of more affordable access options have allowed the low cost of Internet use to be advantageous for both organizers and participants in democratic deliberative scenarios. To emphasize, Pew Research conducted a national survey of Internet use at the end of 2009 and found that 74% of American adults (ages 18 and older) use the Internet (Rainie, 2010).

In addition to cost, the open architecture of the Internet has been praised for supporting democratic conditions by offering greater accessibility to information and overcoming problems of space scarcity that are relevant to print and broadcast media (Tambini, 1999). Because the web is a decentralized network, "Anyone with content to publish or ideas to exchange can do so from any point in the network," consequentially supporting a great diversity of opinions, ideas, and information (Berman & Witzner, 1997, p. 1314). According to Wilhelm (1999), democracy means inclusiveness, ensuring that all people who are affected by a policy have the opportunity to deliberate. Digital technology reinvigorates the possibility for inclusiveness, thus creating a greater availability of conflicting views to be made available for public consideration.

Problematic Issues Related to Digital Technology

Despite optimism that the open and decentralized infrastructure of the Internet leads to increased opportunities for participation in deliberative initiatives, technology alone cannot guarantee that people will be motivated to take part in the type of engaged argumentation among opposing opinions that is required for successful democratic deliberation (Bohman, 1998; Thompson, 2008). For example, Dahlberg (2001a)

examined a particular listserv that was constructed explicitly for the purposes of fostering deliberation. He concluded that while successful deliberation could be engaged through the listserv, its vitality was highly threatened by lack of participation. Dahlberg claimed that ultimately, citizens were more attracted to the popularity of commercial sites, as well as virtual communities of common interest where participants could engage in communication with like minded others. This finding supports literature that suggests that citizens prefer to avoid social conflict that arises when discussing political issues with others who hold opposing views (Mutz, 2006). When presented with increased opportunities to deliberate and be included in broader collective decision making, citizens continue to limit their exposure to discussions with like minded individuals, thus cultivating the existence of polarized opinion groups (Avery, Ellis, & Glover, 1978).

Habermas (1998) considered this tension between increased polarization and augmented inclusion in his discussion of the impact of new ICTs on public deliberation. While he acknowledged that the growth of technology increases the amount of information available to a wider public, he also expressed major concern for the fact that high pluralism in Internet audiences does not necessarily expand "intersubjectivity" or "discursive interweaving of conceptions" (1998, p. 120). Rather, to illustrate fragmentation in online populations, Habermas stated, "The publics produced by the Internet remain closed off from one another like global villages" (1998, p. 121). Dahlberg (2001a) used the term "mutually-exclusive cyber-communities" to describe this same polarizing phenomenon (p. 618). He wrote,

> While a great diversity of communication takes place across cyberspace, some of which does involve critical discussion of controversial issues, many participants simply seek out groups of like-minded others where member's interests, values and prejudices are reinforced rather than challenged. (Dahlberg, 2001a, p. 618)

For more than a decade, scholars have agreed that this issue of audience fragmentation exists as a significant threat to deliberative democracy (Graber, 2003; Howard, 2005; Sunstein, 2001). Sunstein (2001) offered a particularly pessimistic outlook for the future of digital deliberative initiatives. He claimed that the infrastructure and growth of the Internet produces social enclaves composed of very like minded content and discussion groups, which ultimately widen gulfs between extreme sides on public issues. More specifically, Sunstein identified two preconditions of democratic deliberation that are threatened by the Internet: 1) inadvertent exposure to diverse viewpoints, and 2) sharing of common experiences. In regard to the first condition, the Internet enables people to filter information resulting in restricted exposure to diverse perspectives. Howard's (2005) study of digital campaign strategy provided empirical evidence of filtering effects. Through observation of extensive information filtering carried out by campaigns in their efforts to customize digital messages, Howard concluded that the quality and quantity of shared text that could be accessed by the public was severely reduced. With reference to Sunstein's (2001) second precondition of a healthy democracy, the sharing of common experiences is also threatened by the Internet because this technology allows people to isolate themselves to only hear particular vantage points. Self isolating makes it difficult for people to understand and solve collective problems that a heterogeneous society faces together.

Contrasting findings regarding the amount of Internet fragmentation existing on the Internet during the 2004 election were reported in a study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the University of Michigan School of Information (Horrigan, Garrett, & Resnick, 2004). Using a survey that assessed respondents' exposures to

various political arguments, as well as their Internet use, media use, interest in the campaign, and open mindedness, Horrigan et al. concluded that the Internet contributes to a wider awareness of political arguments. Rather than limiting their exposure to opposing opinions, Internet users "are more aware than nonInternet users of all kinds of arguments, even those that challenge their preferred candidates and issue positions" (2004, p. ii).

A more recent Pew study provided further evidence that the Internet and social network site users in particular are frequently exposed to diverse and opposing political opinions (Rainie & Smith, 2012a). According to results from a survey conducted in early 2012, 73% of social network site users only sometimes agreed or never agreed with their friends' political postings. Additionally, they found that 28% of users usually responded to opposing viewpoints with comments or posts of their own. This behavior was especially true for citizens categorized in the most politically engaged demographic who reported that they challenged friends' social network site material about politics if they disagreed with it (Rainie & Smith, 2012b). However, this same study discovered that some social network site users employed political material that was posted on the sites to assess the vitality of their online relationships. More specifically, 18% of respondents reported shunning people in their online network for reasons such as posting something about politics that they disagreed with or found offensive. While it appears that the Internet and social network sites can facilitate exposure to divergent political perspectives, users also actively avoid or block the appearance of conflicting opinions in their online interactions.

A review of past literature demonstrates that issues regarding fragmentation, polarization, and filtering of information appear to be major concerns for research in

digital democratic deliberation. Additional problems identified by Dahlberg (2001b) include: increasing colonization of cyberspace by state and corporate interests, a deficit of reflexivity, a lack of respectful listening to others, the difficulty of verifying identity claims and information put forward, the exclusion of citizens from online political forums, and the domination of discourse by certain individuals and groups. Among his suggestions for improving deliberative outcomes on digital forums, Dahlberg suggested that new models and technologies should aim to increase audiences by offering, "seductive and easily consumable options" for deliberative engagement that would attract audiences that were previously hostile towards public deliberation (2001a, p. 629). While social network sites—the digital format under scrutiny in the present study—surely do not operate solely to stimulate a virtual deliberative space, this research attempts to explore the deliberative behavior of people using this popular and publicly accessible communication technology.

Clearly, past literature has generated mixed findings regarding the capacity of the Internet to foster a space for successful democratic deliberation. However, it is important to emphasize that digital formats vary considerably in technical and cultural structure that may significantly impact the success of deliberative activity. For example in research by Tambini (1999), multiple online civic network forums that varied in terms of their deliberative conditions were examined. Following analysis it was concluded that the vitality of deliberation was significantly influenced by contextual variables such as access and motivation. As a result of evolving digital communication there is a continuing need to assess the potential for newer technologies (such as social network sites) to cultivate successful deliberative conditions.

The next section will discuss characteristics of social network sites that make them distinct from other Internet technologies. Where other digital technologies fall short of fostering a deliberative atmosphere, the distinct design and cultural structure of social network sites may offer solutions that can support and even strengthen deliberative conditions.

Social Network Sites in Political Campaigning

The use of social network sites in elections has become commonplace for politicians as this technology has become integrated in communication media for campaigns on all levels of government. Scholars began exploring this topic during the 2006 election and the majority of this literature has concentrated on describing how social network site technology was used by campaigns (especially presidential) and whether it generated positive or negative outcomes for campaigning strategy. For example, researchers have focused on evaluating the success of social network sites in public relations efforts (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Metzgar & Maruggi, 2009). Others have examined the technical and cultural infrastructure of social network sites to comment on conventional political communication constructs such as political participation (Boyd, 2008; Geuorgieva, 2009) and political cynicism (Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma, & Ponder, 2010). Based on this review of literature there is a noticeable absence of scholarship that specifically examines democratic deliberation on campaign's social network sites. This section provides an overview of what existing literature concludes about campaign social network sites more generally in order to provide a context for understanding their potential for engendering deliberative activity that is examined in the present study.

Technical and Communication Characteristics of Social Network Sites

Although structural variations concerning visibility and access differentiate individual social network sites, they can essentially be conceptualized as Internet platforms that allow individuals to construct profiles within a bounded system, articulate lists of other users with whom they share a connection, and send public or semipublic messages (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In terms of their technical structure, social network sites offer politicians the opportunity to connect with citizens 24 hours a day and seven days a week through a method that is both inexpensive and efficient. For citizens, social network sites create opportunities to practice civic skills such as joining a political group or sharing a political link without having to dedicate too much time and effort (Vitak, Zube, Smock, Carr, Ellison, & Lampe, 2011).

The infrastructure of social network sites was enabled by Web 2.0 technologies that allow users to generate shared content on the World Wide Web. Unlike earlier applications on the Internet that limit users to consuming information in a more linear fashion, the technology of Web 2.0 fosters the construction of virtual communities inhabited by interactive participants who contribute to the creation of website content (Bruns, 2008; Lilleker & Jackson, 2011).

The Internet's reliance on bandwidth enables this media to successfully overcome barriers of geographic space and time that potentially stymie discourse between politicians and constituents. Additionally, beyond accessibility social network sites require no additional costs for communicating with one or one million people. Unlike broadcast television, which largely restricts use to campaigns with sufficient resources, the low cost of production and access associated with social network sites assists to level

the playing field for candidates, interest groups, and regular citizens (Johnson & Kaye, 2000). For example, Gueorguieva (2009) claimed that MySpace and YouTube were especially advantageous resources for low budget campaigns and political organizations during the 2006 election cycle because they provided an inexpensive means to collect campaign contributions and organize volunteers.

The scale of communication offered by social network sites is especially alluring to politicians who envision the Internet as a democratizing technology (Boyd, 2008). In their research on the 2008 election, Metzgar and Maruggi (2009) concluded that when properly employed, social media could function as a highly relevant and cost effective campaign tool. Online publication of even a very small amount of digital characters could potentially capture a nation as information travels, "from idea, to digital post, to a national audience with very few gatekeepers or powerbrokers weighing in on that information" (2009, p. 151). But while an infinite reach may be structurally possible for public social network site messages, merely publishing content does not guarantee reception (Boyd, 2008; Metzgar & Maruggi, 2009). While social network site technology offers a timely and inexpensive means for political communication to be conducted, messages may not always be used, received or interpreted as expected.

When individuals communicate using digital media, a range of cultural representations, experiences, and identities are created (Coleman, 2005). While different populations use social network sites for different reasons, studies have concluded that people primarily use this technology for interpersonal and intergroup purposes, and to keep in touch with friends or to intensify offline relationships (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007; Hanson et al., 2010). According to Bargh and McKenna (2004), relative

anonymity that exists on the Internet makes self disclosure easier, thus facilitating improved relationship formation. In comparison to face to face encounters, online communicators may be more likely to cultivate close and meaningful relationships using the Internet as a mediating device.

Recognizing characteristics of social network site relationships is important to understanding how politicians and citizens use this technology to communicate. When confronted by political information on social network sites, social network culture may cause individuals to behave differently than they would in face to face and other mass mediated environments. For example, findings from a study concerning citizens Facebook use during the 2008 election concluded that the norms of political activity on this social network site were nuanced (Vitak et al., 2011). More specifically, participants felt that personal expression of political views was appropriate, but efforts to persuade or recruit others were not. Further investigation of the use of social network sites in electoral politics is necessary in order to more fully understand the impact of this technology in campaign communication.

Social Network Sites in Elections

Unlike mass communication venues, the interactivity presented by social network sites promise increased engagement and dialogue (Hoffman & Kornweitz, 2011). For political campaigns, this means that in addition to disseminating information and capturing data about citizens, social network sites also offer a mechanism for ongoing engagement (Metzgar & Maruggi, 2009). Unlike some digital technologies that are designed and used primarily for information consumption, social network sites encourage citizens to actively engage, and to “create their own political content, distribute it online,

and comment on the content created by others" (Hanson et al., 2010, p. 585). This ability for ordinary citizens to participate in the political realm compromises the traditional top down one way communication style and forces political actors to modify their practices to a bottom up approach. According to Metzgar and Maruggi (2009), "Social media's strength lies in its communal nature and lack of strict hierarchies. Campaigns that embrace this lack of hierarchy, rather than fight it, are more likely to reap the benefits the technology can offer" (p. 161).

The disruption of political hierarchy created by social network site technology is also significant in its ability to allow silenced or marginalized voices to emerge, thus transforming the power dynamics of politics by giving voice to the nonpolitically elite (Fraser & Dutta, 2008). Social network sites make it simpler for ordinary citizens to communicate with government officials as users are presented with the opportunity to interject opinions into the political sphere in new ways that did not exist prior to the emergence of this technology.

While giving ordinary citizens a voice presents opportunity for lively democracy, Lilleker and Jackson (2011) insist there is danger in allowing the public to lead an agenda that was once carefully controlled by professional campaigners. When campaign content is user generated, candidates lose control and consistency of their image and message (Gueorguieva, 2009). Candidates' fear and resistance to interactive technology was illustrated in Stromer-Galley's (2000) early study of Internet use in the 1996 and 1998 elections. According to analysis of candidate websites and interviews with campaign staff members, Stromer-Galley concluded that the Internet was not being used to promote increased deliberation between citizens and politicians because "campaigns did not want

to open up the possibility for burdensome exchange among candidates, campaign staffs, and citizens, which could entail losing control over the communication environment and losing the ability to remain ambiguous in policy positions" (2000, p. 112).

In 2012 candidates appear to have fully overcome their early resistance to interactive digital technology. To exemplify this point it is useful to consider Barack Obama's statement for reelection that was announced through the use of multiple interactive media platforms. A year and a half prior to Election Day, Obama disseminated the question "Are you in?" using email, text messaging, Twitter, YouTube, and an app that connects supporters and their Facebook friends to his campaign website (Preston, 2011). During the summer leading up to the 2012 election the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism conducted a study to investigate the presidential candidates' uses of digital technology. In particular, they concentrated on examining the extent to which candidates used social network sites to engage in dialogue with citizens. According to Pew's analysis, social media technology was primarily used for one way messaging rather than interactive communication. "Neither campaign made much use of the social aspect of social media," as the candidates rarely replied to citizen messages or engaged in dialogue other users (Pew, 2012). This result suggests that digital democracy theory, which claims that digital technology will allow political elites to engage in a new level of dynamic conversation with voters, is not being realized in actual practice.

Results from a more recent Pew study performed the week prior to 2012 Election Day revealed that social network sites were a significant part of the process by which voters—especially young voters—talked about their ballot selections (Rainie, 2012). More specifically, the study stated, "22% of registered voters have let others know how

they voted on a social networking site such as Facebook or Twitter" (2012, p. 2). This result is important because it provides evidence that nearly one fouth of citizens are using social network sites as an outlet for expressing their political opinions.

In addition to focusing on the impact of online communication in the digital realm, researchers have also explored the extent to which social network site engagement translates to campaign communication outside the parameters of social network sites (Cogburn & Espinoza, 2011; Erikson, 2008; Geuorguieva, 2009). For example, Geuorguieva (2009) suggested that candidate involvement on the social network site MySpace could act as a catalyst to organize door to door canvassers. Similarly, Cogburn and Espinoza (2011) analyzed Obama's use of social network sites in 2008 and discussed the potential for social network site activity to build a geographically distributed virtual community that could translate to "on-the-ground activism" (p. 192). Cogburn and Espinoza concluded that the presidential candidate's social network sites "extended beyond the campaign offices and allowed staff, volunteers, and the public to stay connected" (p. 200). The dynamic between online social networking and offline social networking is important because it speaks to the potential for digital technology to strengthen democratic ideals through increased political participation in activities such as voting, volunteering, and engaging in other civic events.

As demonstrated thus far, the integral relationship between social network sites and political campaigns has stimulated a wide range of implications for democratic processes and campaign communication specifically. Boyd (2008) claimed that social network sites are especially appealing to political candidates because this technology supports the "desire to exhibit oneself for the purposes of mass validation" (2008, p. 241).

According to Slotnick (2009), there is a natural connection between social network sites and political campaigns because both are designed to encourage group formation and are dependent upon strong and persistent networking. Regarding Facebook specifically, Slotnick suggested that political campaigns and social network sites maintain a mutually beneficial relationship, as they both rely on constant communication and encourage mobilization of supporters.

Existing scholarship demonstrates the popularity of campaign communication on social network sites and also reveals many implications stimulated by this type of digital civic engagement. However, research has yet to focus on social network site deliberation, which is represented in the form of debates and compromises that occur when citizens and policymakers puzzle their way through problems that are crucial to achieving ideals of active political citizenship (Fishkin, 1991; Habermas, 1989). Chapter 3 presents the method used in this research to investigate this line of inquiry for the purposes of further understanding an important type of political communication.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study examines the phenomenon of democratic deliberation conducted on political campaigns' social network sites. The research design described in this chapter is grounded in the philosophical assumptions of a transcendental phenomenology. This theoretical frame emerged as the most appropriate qualitative approach because of its perceived capacity to authentically capture the subjective and value laden from a purposeful, nonrepresentative sample. Following a brief description of this theoretical tradition, specifics of the method that were motivated by philosophy and literature related to phenomenology will be articulated. Explicit details will be provided regarding the precise data examined, followed by a description of contextual and background information that is necessary for understanding the data. Lastly, procedures for collecting and analyzing are set forth. It should be emphasized that decisions made in this research design were purposeful and based on the potential for gaining the most comprehensive understanding of the experience of democratic deliberation on social network sites.

Phenomenology

According to Creswell (2007), "a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 57). Phenomenology is used when an understanding of common experiences is needed in

order to develop practices or policies. This theoretical framework is appropriate for addressing the research questions proposed in this study. A deep understanding of deliberating on political campaign social network sites is sought so that the experience of democratic deliberative initiatives can be strengthened for future participants. Drawing primarily from Creswell's (2007) and Moustakas' (1994) literature on using phenomenology as a method, the procedure employed in this study involves collecting data from several persons who have lived through and can describe the phenomenon, followed by analysis that will produce a description that conveys the overall essence of the experience. Phenomenologists believe that it is impossible to separate method from philosophy because human experience is formed around the interests and intentions that give it meaning. Consequentially, a philosophical overview is a necessary precursor to explaining the method used in this study.

Phenomenological scholarship is a highly varied field of inquiry that reflects the thinking of a number of philosophers including Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, and Alfred Schutz (Miller, 2005). Two main approaches to phenomenology include hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental or psychological phenomenology, the latter being the approach used in the present investigation. As described by Moustakas (1994), a transcendental phenomenology is focused less on researcher interpretations (a feature that is central to a hermeneutical phenomenology), and concentrates more on describing the experiences of participants. The transcendental approach is influenced heavily by the work of Husserl—regarded by Vandenberg (1997) as "the fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century" (p. 11)—who was concerned with foundational issues of how we come to know the world

(Miller, 2005). Husserl's (1931, 1973) philosophy opposed empirical science procedures that claimed to produce sovereign truths. Rather, he believed that the foundation for philosophic understanding was discovered through the primacy of lived experience. For Husserl, lived experience (sometimes referred as Lebenswelt or "life world" in phenomenological literature) was the primary context from which all human endeavors—including natural science—take their beginnings and orientation.

There are several basic assumptions that are shared by most phenomenologists. First, phenomenology involves the search for the essence, or the central underlying meaning of experience (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Natanson, 1973). Second, there is emphasis on intentionality of consciousness (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). This concept comes from Husserl's idea that knowledge is not found in external experience, but rather in individual consciousness that is always directed toward an object; and consequentially, meaning of that object is always relative to one's consciousness derived from personal background and current life events. Third, philosophy of phenomenology necessitates that a researcher must "suspend all judgments about what is real—the 'natural attitude'—until they are founded on a more certain basis" (Creswell, 2007, pp. 58-59). Husserl (1931, 1973) used the term "epoche" to describe the process of bracketing information, or setting aside prior knowledge, as crucial to gaining a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon that is free from interference of interpretive influences. This point is especially relevant to the transcendental approach as hermeneutic and existential phenomenologists argue that it is impossible to completely bracket prior conceptions and knowledge because consciousness cannot be separated from being (Heidegger, 1962). LeVasseur (2002) offered a modification to Husserl's

philosophy of bracketing suggesting that this thinking could be understood as an extension of natural curiosity. When we become curious "we no longer assume that we understand fully, and the effect is a questioning of prior knowledge" (2002, p. 417). According to Creswell (2007), identifying and specifying personal philosophical assumptions prior to collecting data allows the focus of their study to be directed toward participants opposed to personal experiences of the researcher.

To summarize, phenomenologists attempt to discover the essence of a phenomenon by learning what an experience means for a person through recognition of individual consciousness. From individuals' descriptions, more general or universal descriptions can be derived to capture the essences or structures of an experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Data

The data in this study were gathered from two different sources: social network sites of two different political campaigns and interviews conducted with people involved with social network site communication for each of the respective campaigns. The campaigns selected for analysis represented opposing candidates that ran in a congressional race in Utah's newly formed 4th District during the 2012 general election. The Democratic candidate, Jim Matheson, ran as a sixth term incumbent from Utah's 2nd District. His digital strategy for communicating campaign information to voters included the use of email updates, Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube. The Republican candidate, Mia Love, was serving her first term as mayor of Saratoga Springs, a position she was elected to in 2009. Her digital strategy consisted of the use of Twitter and Facebook.

These two campaigns were selected among other electoral races throughout the United States for three main reasons that included: 1) ideal activity level, 2) potential for comparison, and 3) competitiveness of the race. First, based on preliminary observation of social network sites the two sites selected for analysis reflected frequent and lively critical argumentation of political issues, as opposed to other campaigns' social network sites that appeared to have been neglected by either the campaign staff or citizens. Additionally, there was a manageable amount of content being published on each of these sites that was conducive to the type of in depth qualitative analysis that was necessary for revealing the complexity of the phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To clarify this point, an attempt to collect and analyze a massive quantity of multimedia content produced on national campaigns' social network sites would have resulted in data overload (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Trying to process the amount of data produced on sites such as Obama's or Romney's Facebook Pages would have made it difficult to obtain the useful and relevant information needed to answer the inquiries sought in this study.

Second, rather than considering just one campaign in an electoral race it was necessary to examine data from the competing candidate. This provided a more complete understanding of what it meant to engage in deliberation concerning this political event. Because phenomenology seeks to understand a more general or universal perspective as opposed to an individual's experience, collecting data from two candidates allowed the researcher to capture a more holistic understanding of this deliberative experience (Moustakas, 1994). By observing text on both campaigns' social network sites it was possible to detect whether similar individuals or groups were engaging on both sites, and

how communication differed in terms of deliberative approaches and outcomes. Additionally, looking at opposing sides of the race allowed the researcher to explore whether there was deliberative communication being engaged between the two sites in the form of responding to, or referencing content on the opposing candidate's site. For example, deliberation between the sites could be facilitated by reposting or hyperlinking between the sites.

The third reason for selecting the Matheson vs. Love election was because it represented a highly competitive race in which both campaigns carried out aggressive media campaigns, held debates, and received significant coverage in local news outlets. In addition to communication featured on Matheson's and Love's social network sites, letters to the editor published in news outlets, as well as the prevalence of volunteer efforts throughout the precinct provided evidence that this election was being publicly discussed. As indicated by the closeness of preelection polls and the final vote count, this race also stimulated considerable disagreement among the electorate (Romboy, 2012a; Canham, 2012a, 2012b). To summarize, a high level of competition, as indicated through aggressive campaigning, media coverage, public discussion, and public disagreement, constituted a combination of elements that presumably motivated democratic deliberation, thus creating an ideal case study for the current research.

Background Information About Data

The race between Matheson and Love was the first congressional election for Utah's 4th District that was formed when the Utah Legislature drew new congressional boundaries for the 2012 election. This district contained southwestern Salt Lake County, western Utah County and all of Juab and Sanpete counties. Slightly more than one month

prior to Election Day, local and national media referred to this race as "among the most hotly contested congressional fights in the country" (Gehrke, 2012a). Another source suggested that monetary contributions totaled "an unheard of amount of money for a House race in Utah" (Canham, 2012b). According to final totals released after Election Day, Matheson defeated Love by just 768 votes in a competition that was the most expensive House race in Utah history (Canham, 2012a).

This section presents background information about the election in an effort to provide context for understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Knowledge about the candidates, as well as the amount of expenditures and donations, issues prevalent in media discourse, and the communication strategies executed by both campaigns are necessary for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the deliberative experience under investigation.

Prior to the creation of Utah's 4th District, Jim Matheson had been Utah's only Democratic House member representing Utah's 2nd District for the past six consecutive terms. After redistricting that occurred on December 15, 2011 divided the 2nd District into four parts, Matheson announced he would run in the 4th District where he faced new competitor Mia Love who reportedly "push[ed] him harder than any of his past opponents" (Romboy, 2012a). Matheson, 52 years old at the time of the election, was a sixth generation Utahn whose father had served two terms as governor (Romboy, 2012a). After studying at Harvard and earning an MBA from University California Los Angeles, he worked in the energy industry developing privately owned power plants. After moving back to Utah with his wife and two sons, Matheson served in Congress beginning in 2000 when he was first elected to office.

Candidate Mia Love had a very different story to tell in her campaign narrative. Before being elected the first African American female mayor in Utah, 36-year-old Love had been employed as a fitness instructor and also served on the Saratoga Springs City Council. Throughout her campaign she retold the tale of her upbringing as the daughter of Haitian immigrants who had arrived in the United States with just $10 in their pockets (Romboy, 2012a). After graduating with a fine arts degree from the University of Hartford, Love moved to Utah where she met her husband, joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), and had three children. In 2003 she won a seat on the Saratoga Springs City Council and eventually became mayor in 2009. Part of the national attention that was directed toward Love's campaign was stimulated by the historic fact that if she had defeated Matheson she would become the nation's first African American Republican congresswoman.

From the start, political partisanship was a prominent issue in campaign media discourse as both candidates fought for the Republican vote in a district that was heavily populated by Republican voters (Romboy, 2011). Love's campaign platform demonstrated her strong partisanship to the Republican Party. She was described by *The San Francisco Chronicle* as the "darling of tea party Republicans," and was honored with one of few slots to speak at the Republican national convention in August 2012 (Foy, 2012). Following her convention speech, Love received a great deal of support from high profile Republicans including former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Arizona Senator John McCain, vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan, and House Speaker John Boehner (Gehrke, 2012b; Romboy, 2012b). Her campaign focused on depicting close ties

to presidential candidate Mitt Romney, which was especially reflected in her television ad campaign that aired during the final weeks of the election (Canham, 2012c).

For Matheson, the message of his political bipartisanship was strongly conveyed in his campaign communication. In an interview with *The Salt Lake Tribune*, Matheson emphasized his independent status and Republican appeal stating, "I've always worked across the aisle and that's the way solutions to complex issues get resolved" (Gehrke, 2012c). In addition to past voting records that revealed Matheson's ability to persuade Utah Republicans to vote for him, his television ads touted his crossover support from prominent Utah Republicans (Gehrke, 2012c; Gehrke, 2012d; Roche, 2012). During debates against Love, Matheson claimed, "he would be the first Democrat to reach across the aisle to help Romney if he wins the election," and consistently stated that he was an independent voice that puts Utah first rather than a party (Burr & Canham, 2012; Gehrke, 2012c).

The strength of national attention that this congressional race received was evidenced by the amount of independent outside spending by individuals or organizations. Unlike contributions that were coordinated with the official campaign, this outside spending was neither limited nor regulated. As of October 15, 2012 third party groups had reportedly pumped more than $5.4 million into the race that was split almost evenly in support of the candidates (Canham, 2012e). By Election Day more than $6 million was spent by outside groups and resources that state political parties shifted to Utah's 4th Congressional District (Canham, 2012a). Matheson received contributions from Democrat supporting PACs such as Center Forward and House Majority PAC. Love's campaign was heavily financed by the National Republican Congressional Committee,

tea party groups FreedomWorks and Club for Growth, and former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (Canham, 2012b; Canham, 2012d; Canham, 2012e).

Overall both candidates received the bulk of their donations from PACs that helped fund hours and hours of ads that blanketed Utah broadcast channels during this election (Canham, 2012a, 2012d). Local media outlet *Deseret News* described the ad war between Matheson and Love as "a raging inferno" (Romboy, 2012c) and in a different article wrote, "Both candidates have saturated the airwaves with commercials that make the other look sinister. They and their supporters have poured millions of dollars into one of the nastiest and most expensive ad wars in recent memory" (Romboy, 2012a). In addition to the ad expenditures reported to the Federal Election Commission (FEC), thousands of dollars were also spent on issue oriented ads paid for by political nonprofits that were not required to file with the FEC (Canham, 2012d).

Outside of paid media spots, Love and Matheson also received free television access through four separate debates that were hosted by local media outlets between September 26 and October 2 (Gehrke, 2012a). Issues emphasized during these debates included: energy, federal spending cuts, and funding for special education (Foy, 2012; Romboy, 2012c; Gehrke, 2012a; Gehrke, 2012f). Following the debates, an independent poll released by Brigham Young University's (BYU) Center for the Study of Election and Politics illustrated the closeness of the competition as Matheson and Love were tied at 43% with 14% of voters undecided (Gehrke, 2012f; Romboy, 2012a).

Both candidates used social network sites Twitter and Facebook during the election. Love began using Facebook to campaign in November 2011 and posted consistently every one to two days until Election Day. Matheson's use of these sites was

carried over from his 2010 Congressional campaign. In addition to Twitter and Facebook Matheson also operated a YouTube channel where he posted previously aired television ads and other videos produced by both his campaign as well as voters.

Procedures

The procedures used in this study were derived from Creswell's (2007) and Moustakas' (1994) literature on using phenomenology as a method. They were designed to achieve what Natanson (1966) claimed to be the central endeavor of phenomenology, "to transcend the natural attitude of daily life in order to render it an object for philosophical scrutiny and in order to describe and account for its essential structure" (p. 3). The following sections will explain the precise procedures used for collecting and analyzing data that allowed the researcher to develop the most comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being investigated.

Data Collection

As introduced previously, data for this study were drawn from the social network sites of two political campaigns and interviews conducted with people involved with the social network site efforts for each of the respective campaigns. Interviews captured the life experiences of individuals involved with the phenomena and enabled the researcher to generate a comprehensive description of the relationship between each campaign and its social network site. Digital data from social network sites were also collected because this content reflected the way that democratic deliberation was promulgated for public consumption. To clarify, social network sites existed as the means by which geographically distanced citizens communicated with each other and made deliberative

discourse available to the public. It is acknowledged that this documented data does not capture the "lived experience" of democratic deliberation in the strictest sense of that term, but given the fact that campaign social network sites are special in their capacity to allow deliberators to remain anonymous (to a certain extent) and to publish content whenever and wherever they please, the collection of documented content is not entirely a distortion of lived experiences.

Social network sites. Social network site data collection was limited to content featured on the official Facebook Pages of the two candidates—Jim Matheson and Mia Love—that competed for Utah's 4th District congressional seat. Matheson's campaign Facebook Page (not to be confused with his congressional Facebook Page) was located at the web address: http://www.facebook.com/MathesonUT. Love's Facebook Page was located at http://www.facebook.com/miablove. Facebook was selected instead of other social network site platforms such as Twitter and YouTube because the distinct discourse produced on Facebook was consistent with the researcher's conceptualization of democratic deliberation presented in the Chapter 1. To review, the definition of democratic deliberation was specified as: public citizen discourse, in the form of formal and informal exchanges, that address issues of public concern, where disagreement exists and a collective decision is needed. The first criterion, "public citizen discourse," was met because accessibility and participation on the Facebook Pages was open to the public. Additionally, deliberation literature suggests that past studies have suffered from unrepresentative samples of participants that failed to include all relevant parties (Ryfe, 2005). Consequentially, the researcher purposely selected the largest social network site that has sustained popularity among political campaigns for the longest amount of time in

an attempt to study the venue that could potentially involve the greatest amount of participants (Stone, 2009; Williams & Gulati, 2009).

The second criterion "formal and informal exchanges" was also met because the technical structure of the Facebook Pages enabled users to exchange messages at their convenience as the forum was open to participation twentyfour hours a day, seven days a week. The third criterion in the definition, "address issues of public concern," was met because the discourse on the Pages largely addressed issues surrounding the election, such as the policy positions of the candidates. This information was of public concern because it assisted citizens in making informed voting decisions. The remaining criterion, "disagreement exists and a collective decision is needed" was also satisfied because the Facebook Pages featured opposing views pertaining to the looming collective decision that called upon citizens of the 4th District of Utah to decide which candidate should represent them in Congress. Other social network sites used by the candidates failed to meet one or more criteria that would allow communication to qualify as deliberative discourse so use of these other sites would have prevented the most in depth phenomenological understanding sought in this study. Ultimately, Facebook existed as the social network site that was the most conducive to the ideal deliberative conditions theorized in past literature and consequentially it was selected for scrutiny.

Specific data that were collected for coding included all posts and comments featured on both Matheson's and Love's campaign Pages during the month leading up to Election Day—between 12:00 am on October 6, 2012 and 11:59 pm on November 6, 2012. A total of 6,671 comments were collected from 132 posts. More specifically, 1,135

comments were collected from 72 posts on Matheson's Facebook Page and 5,536 comments were collected from 58 posts on Love's Facebook Page.

To explain what is meant by "posts" and "comments" it is necessary to briefly describe the technical and aesthetic infrastructure of Facebook at the time when these data were collected. The Page format set by Facebook enabled the structure and design of both candidates' Pages to be identical. From top to bottom, each Page featured a "cover photo," followed by a "profile picture" and basic information about the candidate. Below these elements was the "timeline," described by the Facebook Help Page as "a collection of the photos, stories, and experiences that tell your story" (see Figure 1 and 2). On the timeline, Page administrators could publish "posts" that included text, images, or multimedia, and then visitors could publish "comments" under any given post (See Figure 3). The timeline organized posts in chronological order with the most recent updates at the top of the page. This organizational design allowed audiences to view a running dialogue of posts and their related comments that were published.

Constrictive time parameters for collection were established in an effort to collect a manageable amount of data that would allow for a thorough, in depth analysis and would prevent against data overload (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The month leading up to Election Day (between October 6, 2012 and November 6, 2012) was selected because past research suggests that citizens demonstrate increased attention and engagement in politics immediately prior to elections (Tolber & Mcneal, 2003). Additionally, during this timeframe the particular congressional race being examined in the present study received heavy coverage in the media as voter polls were released and candidates pursued aggressive advertising campaigns (Canham, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; 2012d; Romboy,

2012a, 2012c, 2012d). Consequentially, this time frame constituted a period represented by interesting and passionate political discussion, especially in comparison to earlier points during the campaign and the weeks and months following Election Day.

The digital nature of social network sites enabled the collection of all content—text, photos, videos, and hyperlinks—from the specified posts and comments by copying and pasting digital text from Facebook to an electronic document using Microsoft Word software. All data were collected from both Pages at 11:59PM on November 6, 2012 and saved in electronic computer files. Since Facebook's timeline design existed as a digital archive of activity it was possible to access previously published content from previous days and weeks.

Social network site data were extracted from a publicly accessible space and therefore it was not necessary to conceal Facebook usernames during data collection and analysis procedures. Consistent with ethical guidelines for conducting Internet research, informed consent of participants is not required if the online phenomena can be accessed by anyone with an open Internet connection (Rosenberg, 2010). Although individuals were required to create a Facebook account if they wanted to publish content on Matheson's or Love's Facebook Pages, access to view content was open to anyone with an Internet connection. According to Rosenberg, "public discourse must always be open for scholarly analysis and critique, and, in lack of restricted entrance, there is no need for consent or even anonymizing" (2010, p. 24). Findings presented in subsequent chapters reflect the precise names that were attached to quotes extracted from social network sites at the time the data were collected. It should be noted that Facebook allowed users to

create any username and therefore users' display names were not necessarily a reflection of their true identity.

The digital nature of this environment allowed the researcher to enter and exit the research site without leaving traces of observation or data collection activity. Therefore this study had no effect on the ways that Facebook users participated on the site. Further, it is important to state that the researcher refrained from publishing original content on either of the candidate's Facebook Pages in an effort to avoid manipulation of the deliberative experience being studied.

Interviews. Data were also collected from interviews with campaign staff involved with social network site communication for Matheson's and Love's campaigns. Conducting in depth interviews with individuals who could describe their experience of living through the phenomenon revealed information concerning the relationship between the campaign and the deliberative activity on their social network sites. Knowledge of this relationship was crucial to gaining a deep and thorough understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Because phenomenology seeks to draw a common understanding from individual life experiences, the researcher carefully selected as many interviewees as could be identified who had experienced the phenomenon in this case study (Creswell, 2007). Individuals were selected using a snowball sampling technique that began with sending an email to each campaign using the primary contact information listed on their campaign websites. The social media directors of both campaigns responded to the researcher's emails and were helpful in recommending other members of the campaign staff that were directly involved with Facebook efforts, or could offer a perspective regarding its use. In

an effort to collect information from as many people as possible the researcher requested interviews from 8 individuals. Due to the busy work schedules of the campaign staff, 6 of these 8 interviews were completed. Interviewees included the social media directors and the communication directors from both campaigns, as well as one candidate and one communication assistant who was involved with updating content on social network sites.

Excluding the one candidate, all interviews were conducted in person at the office headquarters of each campaign. Both offices were located within the Salt Lake City area. Interviews were conducted during the week prior to Election Day from October 30, 2012 to November 1, 2012. In comparison to an earlier date, it was important to conduct interviews close to Election Day because by this time the interviewees had developed a greater understanding of Facebook use within the context of the campaign. Due to the candidates' busy preelection schedules, these interviews had to be completed following Election Day on February 6, 2013. Unlike the other interviews that were conducted in person, the one candidate reached for this study was interviewed over the phone.

Prior to beginning each interview, participants were provided with an informed consent document that all interviewees reviewed and signed. This consent form ensured ethical research and was consistent with principles designated in the Belmont Report that state that anyone recruited for a study should, 1) participate on a voluntary basis, 2) be able to understand what the study will demand of him or her, 3) be able to understand the potential risks and benefits of participation, and 4) have the legal capacity to give consent (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). The University of Utah Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved all research involving human subjects in this study.

All interviews were moderately structured using an interview guide. This semistructured guide allowed for flexibility to ask questions in different ways to provide clarity, as well as to allow interviewees to develop topics and raise unknown issues concerning their experiences with social network site use that they felt were important. Development of interview questions was motivated by two key questions proposed by Moustakas (1994) as being important to understanding the lived experience of participants. Key questions were: 1) What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? and 2) What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? From Moustakas' broad questions several subquestions were created that were both specific to the phenomena under investigation and could help answer the research questions posed in this study. Questions were framed and directed toward unearthing participants' experiences, feelings, beliefs, and convictions about the phenomenon in question. Topics addressed in the interviews included: objectives for Facebook use, the role of Facebook in relation to other communication tools, monitoring of Facebook content, communicating with other Facebook users, the use of Facebook content for developing campaign strategy or policy decisions, and opinions regarding deliberative discourse on their Facebook Page. A final clearinghouse question was posed at the end of each interview that asked, "Is there anything else you want to tell me about Facebook or social network use in the campaign?" Topics that emerged from this last question varied considerably as it gave the interviewees an important opportunity to share some aspect of their personal experience that they felt was significant.

All interviews were recorded using two digital audio recording devices to ensure that they were successfully saved for subsequent analysis. Rather than relying solely on field notes, it was important to employ technology in order to capture an objective documentation of the interview discourse and to facilitate the storage, organization, and retrieval of data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). As explained by Lindlof and Taylor, use of audio recording allows the interviewer to engage more fully in the conversation. At the completion of each interview session digital recordings were transferred to a password protected computer and saved in electronic digital files that could be accessed for analysis at a later date. Because researchers may easily become absorbed in the data collection process and can fail to reflect on what is happening, the qualitative practice of "memoing" was also employed following each interview session (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following Miles and Huberman's (1994) guidelines for memoing, this procedure entailed writing field notes that recorded what was heard, seen, experienced, and other thoughts that developed during the course of collection and reflecting on the interview process. These memos were dated and stored in electronic files so that they could be used later during data analysis.

While individuals that were interviewed represented a range of roles and identities within the campaigns, the names and titles of interviewees were rendered irrelevant to the researcher during procedural and writing phases of this research. This allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of the collective experience—as opposed to individual experiences—that was sought in this phenomenological case study. This decision also preserved the confidentiality of the participants who explicitly wished to

remain anonymous. Lastly it should be noted that all digital recordings of interviews were destroyed upon completion of this research.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological analysis involves a reduction process wherein the researcher takes steps to reduce the meanings of the experience to their essential structure (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Description is key to the phenomenologist's quest to search for all possible themes and meanings that can be conceived from the lived experience. The analysis procedure for this study was derived from the phenomenology method outlined by Moustakas (1994) and included the following steps: bracketing, horizonalization, clustering meanings, producing textual and structural descriptions, and finally producing an essential invariant structure. A brief description of each step will now be provided.

Bracketing. Bracketing, or "epoche" is a process that requires the researcher to set aside their own experiences related to the phenomenon as much as possible in order to approach data with a fresh perspective. Moustakas (1994) suggested that making an explicit attempt to separate from subjective beliefs and assumptions allows the researcher to be a better receptacle of others experiences. In addition to completing this step at the beginning of the analytical process, the researcher also documented personal biases and subjectivities before each of the subsequent steps to prevent past experiences from intervening into attempts to understand others' lived experiences.

Horizonalization. In this second step the researcher reads through his or her data and highlights "significant statements," sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how individuals experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Each statement, or horizon of experience, has equal worth and statements are nonrepetitive and

nonoverlapping. For organizational purposes computer software was employed in this step to create a spreadsheet that clearly charted the distinct statements that were extracted from the data (Creswell, 2007). More specifically, the use of a spreadsheet enabled the researcher to create a column to record significant statements, and to create as many subsequent columns as necessary to record notes and codes related to a given statement. For example, when analyzing citizens' comments published on social network sites it was useful to create a column that contained significant statements, as well as an additional column that contained the exact text and multimedia from the post that stimulated the significant statement. This organizational scheme enabled the researcher to quickly recall the context in which a significant statement was made, and also allowed for easy reference to the day and post where the statement was originally published.

Because social network site data are originally produced in a digital format, it was simple to copy and paste this content into a spreadsheet. However, to analyze interview data it was necessary to first process digital audio recordings through a transcription procedure. Transcribing entailed listening to recordings of each interview and transcribing key words, phrases and statements. Participants' exact quotes were copied as much as necessary in an effort to allow the voices of the participants to speak, which was conducive to generating a more accurate understanding of individual experiences. From these transcriptions, significant statements were extracted and added to the analysis spreadsheet.

Clustering meanings. In this third step the researcher clusters significant statements to develop themes. By interrogating the meaning of the various clusters, central themes were determined "which expresses the essence of these clusters" (Hycner,

1999, p. 153). In this stage it was necessary to navigate back and forth through the list of significant statements created in the previous step, as well as original data recordings and memos so that themes were accurately formulated to represent lived experiences of democratic deliberation on campaign social network sites.

Themes constructed from clustering significant statements were then further condensed to create categories of major contextual issues that were identified during observation and analysis of the phenomenon.

Textual and structural description. In this step composite summaries were written to describe the textual and structural properties of the major contextual issues that were strategically categorized in the previous step. These summaries explained *what* happened when the phenomenon was experienced, and also contained explanation of the context or setting of the experience to reveal *how* the phenomenon was experienced. As a result of following this phenomenological method, textual and structural descriptions accurately reflected the context or "horizon" from which the themes emerged (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas 1994).

Textual and structural descriptions are presented in Chapter 4. For organizational and clarity purposes, these summaries were organized around the research questions posed in Chapter 1.

Essential invariant structure. This final step involved drawing on the textual and structural descriptions produced in the previous step to write a composite description that presented the essence of the phenomenon. More specifically, the aspects of the experiences that are common to all participants are invariant structures and revealed the essential nature of the phenomenon. This summary is contained in Chapter 5.

Figure 1. Screen shot of Matheson's campaign Facebook Page captured from http://www.facebook.com/MathesonUT on October 22, 2012. This figure illustrates the structure and aesthetic elements that appeared on Matheson's Facebook Page.

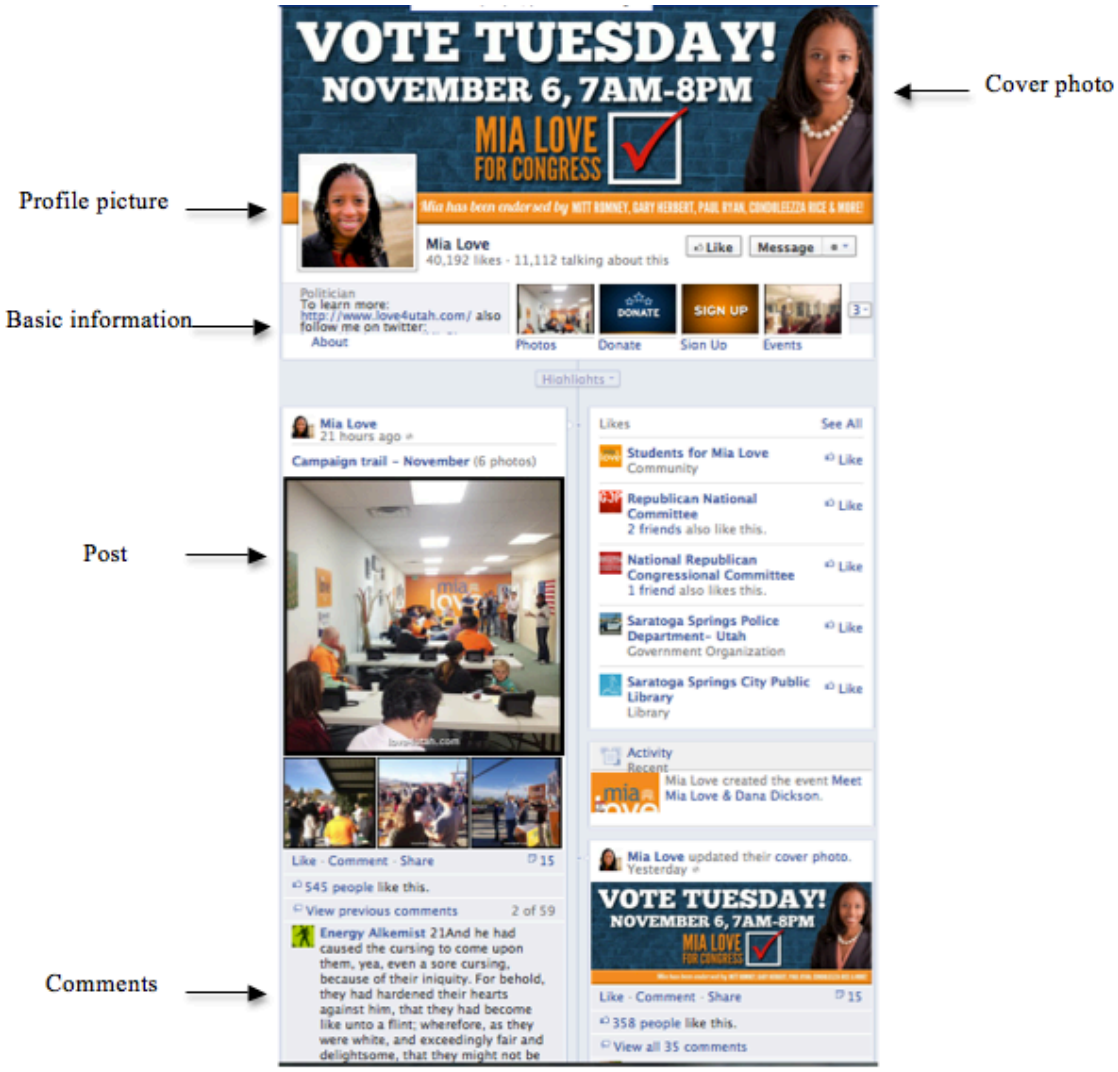

Figure 2. Screen shot of Love's campaign Facebook Page captured from http://www.facebook.com/mialove on November 4, 2012. This figure illustrates the structure and aesthetic elements that appeared on Love's Facebook Page.

Figure 3. Example of Facebook "post" and "comments" captured from http://www.facebookmialove on November 4, 2012. This figure illustrates what a post and comments look like on Facebook Pages.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results presented in this chapter reveal characteristics of the nature of democratic deliberation conducted on two electoral candidates social network sites. As explained in Chapter 3, the phenomenological data analysis method that was employed in this study produced findings that describe the textual and structural properties of the major contextual issues surrounding the democratic deliberation examined in this case study. In this chapter, composite summaries that were produced from the analytical clustering procedure prescribed in Chapter 3 are organized to respond to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Following a concise explanation of the meaning and significance of each category, relevant examples and quotes that were extracted from data will be presented in an effort to illustrate the function of the category in the context of an actual deliberative scenario.

Strategies Used by Citizens to Engage in Democratic Deliberation

The first research question asked: What strategies do citizens use to engage in democratic deliberation on electoral candidates social network sites? Findings responding to this question were derived from scrutiny of the social network site data collected in this case study. To review, these data included all multimedia text and images published during the month preceding Election Day on the campaign Facebook Pages of Utah

congressional candidates Jim Matheson and Mia Love. As expected, democratic deliberative discourse that was consistent with the researcher's conceptualization posed in Chapter 1 (democratic deliberation was defined as public citizen discourse, in the form of formal and informal exchanges, that address issues of public concern, where disagreement exists and a collective decision is needed) was observed throughout the data collected as citizens used the public Facebook Pages of the two electoral candidates to present their political perspectives and respond to other's opinions. Additionally, the researcher's anticipation of lively debate and disagreement was significantly represented in exchanges between citizens featured on both candidates' sites. A diversity of opinions was reflected in deliberation as citizens articulated varying levels of support for candidates, policy issues, political ideologies, and democratic processes.

Before proceeding to a description of findings it must be acknowledged that in addition to identifying deliberative communication on the social network sites, the researcher also observed other types of communication that did not fit the conceptualization of democratic deliberation used in this study. For example, brief expressions of support or opposition to candidates were observed throughout the data collected. To demonstrate, comments from a post published on Mia Love's campaign Page on November 6, 2012 included the following expressions of support that were not classified by the researcher as contributing to deliberative discourse: Rich Edmiston wrote, "Good Luck Mia"; Damon Troy Allen wrote, "God Speed today Mia…!!!"; and Lily Gonzalez wrote, "You go girl!!!" (Mia Love, 2012d). Likewise, this post also featured the following expressions of opposition to Love: Arnett Gayle wrote, "Nice try but, yu [sic] gonna loose"; Stephen Murdock wrote, "barf"; and Fred Ketterer wrote, "No

thanks not my flavor" (Mia Love, 2012d). While these types of comments may contain value for other studies concerning political communication on social network sites, they were not evaluated in the present study as the research questions and method used in this investigation sought to concentrate on understanding the nature of democratic deliberation.

Analysis procedures produced seven categories of findings that represent the strategies used by citizens to engage in democratic deliberation on the two electoral candidates social network sites. The researcher will now elaborate on each of these categories and provide examples to illustrate analytical descriptions. In the subsequent presentation of findings, direct quotations were extracted from the Facebook Pages of both candidates in the form of individual statements and discursive exchanges. All quotes are cited using the Facebook usernames that were associated with each comment as they appeared on the Page. The post that the content was featured within will also be referenced. When presenting discursive exchanges involving more than one citizen, the time that the comment was published will also be cited in an effort to provide some context for the deliberation.

Citizens Use Hyperlinks to Support Opinions

Citizens employed the use of hyperlinks to support their opinions when participating in deliberation on candidates' Facebook Pages. To understand the significance of this digital strategy it is first necessary to explain the operation and purpose of a hyperlink. When featured on a website, a hyperlink, or a link, is an element such as a word, phrase, or image that links to another place on the same site or to an entirely different site. Hyperlinks facilitate quick and efficient Internet browsing because

clicking on a link redirects a user to a different web location. In the present case study, deliberators embedded hyperlinks in the body of their comments to offer additional information that pertained to, and supported their arguments. The use of hyperlinks in deliberative discourse is unique to digital communication platforms and emerged in this study as a strategy for enhancing written opinions. Three subcategories of hyperlinking were identified that included: linking to different Facebook Pages, linking to stories on news outlets' websites, and linking to external websites.

Hyperlinking to different Facebook Pages. Citizens published comments that included hyperlinks to other Facebook Pages operated by individual persons or groups within the Facebook social network site. On Facebook, hyperlinked text was differentiated as blue, in comparison to plain nonhyperlinked text that was black. Clicking on hyperlinked text redirected the user to a different Page in the social network site that may have included a range of content such as photos and other information that contributed to supporting the opinion being conveyed by the deliberator.

In the data analyzed deliberators linked to Facebook Pages operated by persons or groups that may or may not have been participating in the deliberative discourse occurring. An example of linking to a Page belonging to a group that was not involved in transpiring deliberative discourse was identified in a comment published on Jim Matheson's campaign Page by Facebook user Donald Bush. Bush's comment included the following hyperlink to a story about Love that was published on the Facebook Page of the Republican Security Council: http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=327637117335466&set=a.265394146893097.

53820.101173139981866&type=1&theate (Matheson for Congress, 2012a)[1]. The linked Republican Security Council Page reported results from three voter polls that showed Love defeating Matheson in the electoral race. The linked Page also featured a photo of Love as well as a positive statement about her political character. In this example, embedding a hyperlink to a different Facebook Page functioned to provide additional information that supported Bush's opinion regarding Love.

Citizens also provided hyperlinks to the Facebook Pages of other individuals or groups involved in transpiring deliberation in an effort to identify or respond to a specific comment. For example, in deliberation involving multiple Facebook users regarding the policy positions of the presidential candidates, Facebook user Jennifer Jensen Davis started her comment by including a hyperlink to Elizabeth Eyes Delgado Clark who was also participating in the deliberation (Matheson For Congress, 2012b). Davis' hyperlink functioned to let the other Facebook users involved in the conversation know that she was responding to Clark specifically. Including a link to Clark's Facebook Page also enabled readers to easily view Clark's profile information and learn more about her by simply clicking on the hyperlink.

As demonstrated in these examples, hyperlinking to other Pages within the Facebook social network site was a strategy used by citizens to reference information and draw attention to specific persons' or groups' Facebook profiles. Hyperlinking within the Facebook site was significant because it allowed readers to be redirected to profile Pages

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[1] Guidelines for referencing content from social network sites such as Facebook were not included in the American Psychological Association's publication style manual at the time when this study was conducted. Therefore, the style used for citing Facebook content was derived from the method used to cite a website. Material from Facebook is referenced in this study according to the post where the content was originally published.

that featured background information about users. The ability to access profiles of other deliberators is a characteristic of social network sites that is distinct from other deliberative venues.

Hyperlinking to news stories. Citizens embedded hyperlinks in their comments that linked to news stories published in online newspapers such as *The New York Times, Politico,* and *Deseret News*. For example, Facebook user Peggy Wilson used this strategy to explain why Love should not support presidential candidate Mitt Romney (Mia Love, 2012a). To elaborate, Wilson embedded a hyperlink to a story on *The New York Times* website that discussed Romney's position to eliminate emergency management disaster coordination. Inclusion of this hyperlink allowed Wilson to provide evidence for her opinion without having to write a long comment that summarized the contents of the article. Hyperlinking to the website of a trusted news outlet such as *The New York Times* also functioned to enhance the credibility of Wilson's opinion.

Hyperlinking to external websites. Citizens included hyperlinks in the text of their comments that redirected the users to a variety of external websites such as personal blogs, interest groups, government sites, Wikipedia, and campaign websites of electoral candidates. For example, in deliberation concerning the political partisanship of Matheson supporter Bill Applegarth, Facebook user Riverton Utah wrote that Applegarth was a "RINO" (Matheson for Congress, 2012c). To elaborate on what is meant by this term, Riverton Utah presented a hyperlink to the "Republican in Name Only (RINO)" Wikipedia Page, which displayed additional information regarding the origin and usage of this term. This use of a hyperlink by Riverton Utah simultaneously helped to explain

the language expressed in his or her comment and provide support for the opinion expressed.

Another example of this subcategory of hyperlinking was observed in deliberation about funding special education that was engaged on Jim Matheson's campaign Page. Facebook user Cathie Chansamone Costanzo wrote the following:

> I am mom to a severely autistic child. I fight for funding for programs and being a child of a vet, and former federal govt. [sic] worker, every child in the state gets extra federal funding for programs to help keep local property taxes down. We also, thanks to grants and student aid, have a very highly educated workforce and high school graduation and univ [sic] attendance rates in the USA. Source, www.ed.gov the agency that has ensured this in our state. [sic] and [sic] nces.ed.gov. they [sic] are created to ensure the equality and enforce the anti discrimination laws, that without, she [Mia Love] would not have been able to attend college let alone run for office as a minority. I am a minority and those laws have helped many improve quality of life and for the disabled before [sic]. (Matheson for Congress, 2012d)

In this quote Costanzo supplied hyperlinks to two external government websites, www.ed.gov and nces.ed.gov, in an effort to cite where she retrieved the facts to support her opinion. Instead of simply stating the source of information or presenting facts without citing a source, Costanzo used a hyperlink to defend and add credibility to her claims. This allowed other Facebook users to check the validity of Costanzo's statement and also access further statistics and information related to the topic. Similar to the function of the other subcategories in this category, hyperlinking to external websites was a strategy used by citizens to enhance their arguments and advance their opinions in deliberative discourse.

Citizens Use Content in Campaign Posts to Guide Deliberation

Citizens drew on the content featured in Facebook posts (that was published by the campaigns) to engage in democratic deliberation. Specific topics, policy issues,

people, and places that were depicted in posts appeared to stimulate subsequent comments that reflected deliberation related to particular topics addressed in posts. Analysis revealed that citizens responded to questions and statements contained in posts, and also used this content to develop their opinions about candidates. To further explain the significance of this category, findings were divided into two subcategories based on the type of content contained in posts.

News articles guide deliberation. Both Matheson's and Love's campaign Facebook Pages exhibited posts that featured hyperlinks to online news articles written about the 4th District election, or one of the candidates specifically. Inclusion of a hyperlink in a Facebook post allowed users to easily click on the link and be redirected to the news outlet's website where the article was originally published. Hyperlinked news outlets observed in this case study included online periodicals such as *Deseret News, The Salt Lake Tribune,* and *U.S. News & World Report*, as well as television and radio stations such as KUER, KSL, CNN, and Utah's Fox 13 News. Statements, quotes, and photos contained in the hyperlinked news articles existed as fodder for deliberation.

For example, on October 24, 2012 Jim Matheson's campaign published a post that featured a link to a news article written in *The Salt Lake Tribune* and a quote extracted from the article that said:

> 'To suggest that somehow Utah can make do without this, go talk to the people who run these special ed programs in our schools. …It's not feasible, it's not realistic and it's an uninformed position on the part of my opponent,' Matheson said. (Matheson for Congress, 2012d)

In the subsequent comments published under this post, several different Facebook users deliberated Love's and Matheson's positions on funding for special education and the issue of special education in general. Drawing on content from *The Salt Lake Tribune*

article, Facebook users presented their opinions and asked questions related to the issue. For example, Facebook user Ray Rizer questioned the position of Love writing, "Am I misinterpreting her walk-back? Is she saying the federal funds should go directly to the states for special ed?" (Matheson for Congress, 2012d). A different Facebook user Ryan Lufkin quoted the article to support his opinion writing, "Earlier this year, Love put out a fairly specific proposal to cut federal spending that included eliminating all federal education subsidies.' Sounds like Mia Love is the one who should be ashamed..." (Matheson for Congress, 2012d). A third Facebook user Beverly Nelson Martinez offered her opinion regarding the issue stating:

> What would our kids do without special education? flounder! and what would regular ed. [sic] teachers do with all of those kids with severe disabilities in their classrooms? whole classrooms would flounder [sic]. Sounds like we better make dang sure Jim Matheson is re-elected! (Matheson for Congress, 2012d)

This example shows how the campaign's inclusion of a hyperlinked news article in their post functioned to stimulate deliberation regarding the issue of special education. While some posts contained comments that addressed a range of unrelated topics, this example demonstrates how citizens can use post content—and news articles especially—to provide a focus for deliberation. Other posts that featured news articles generated a similar result as citizens used material extracted from the article to engage in a focused deliberation.

Text captions guide deliberation. Text in Facebook posts typically operated to make an announcement, or to describe or emphasize something about a photo or graphic depicted in the post. Topics included in this text often became the focus of subsequent deliberative discourse as citizens responded to the language featured in the post.

For example, on October 16, 2012, Mia Love's campaign published a post with a text caption that stated, "I'm humbled to have the support of Mitt Romney in this race. 'Like' if you'll be watching Governor Romney win tonight's debate!" (Mia Love, 2012b). Below this post subsequent citizen deliberation was concentrated around Mitt Romney's allegiance to Love, and Romney's performance in the presidential debate—the two topics introduced in the post's text caption.

Regarding the debate in particular, the time stamp on individual comments revealed that citizens offered their opinions about the debate as it was being broadcast live on television. Just after the debate ended, Facebook user David Irthum offered his opinion writing, "do not pay attention to the polls. They are so easily doctored. The candidate you want for President shod [sic] not be a pay thing or the complexion of the person. Look at what you value as an USA citizen and vote for that person" (Mia Love, 2012b). Among other reactions to the debate, Facebook user Judie Hampton wrote, "Romney continued to be STRONG! He did a great job! Congratulations, Mitt on another Outstanding Debate! First POLL out....Romney WON 65% to 35%!!! Romney/Ryan and Mia 2012" (Mia Love, 2012b). Other citizens also engaged in deliberation about the performance of presidential candidates in the debates using observations, quotes, and media commentary to support their opinions.

This example demonstrates how the precise textual content from Love's campaign post functioned to guide the topical focus of citizen deliberation. With regard to the debate specifically, the text in Love's post functioned to alert citizens of a virtual space where they could deliberate about an important political event. Without being prompted

by the text in this post, it is uncertain whether citizens would gather on Love's Facebook Page to share their opinions about this topic.

As demonstrated by these two subcategories, drawing on content from a campaign's posts existed as an important strategy employed by citizens to engage in democratic deliberation in this case study. Hyperlinked information and text captions functioned to influence the characteristics of subsequent deliberation by providing guidance or concentration for the topics that emerged in discourse.

Citizens Use Identity Claims to Support Opinions

In presenting their deliberative opinions citizens often revealed information about their identity such as their political partisanship, gender, race, occupation, and geographic residence. Although Facebook users have the option of making various amounts of personal information available for public access by controlling the content displayed on their profiles, identity disclosure in deliberation was observed as a way to draw attention to a particular characteristic that a speaker wished to emphasize. To further explain how this strategy functioned in the context of deliberative scenarios it was useful to cluster findings according to the type of identity claims presented. Consequentially, four subcategories of findings were developed.

Disclosing race or ethnicity. Citizens disclosed their race and/or ethnicity within the text of their comments in efforts to support their opinions. This discursive strategy was significant because it operated to provide cultural context behind the speaker's opinion. While clues about the race or ethnicity of deliberators may be more apparent in face to face venues, the relative anonymity allotted to deliberators on social network sites enables this information to be less obvious.

An example of this subcategory was observed in a comment published on Love's Page by Facebook user Eddie Tafoya. In an effort to strengthen her criticism of Love's political affiliations, Tafoya began her comment with an identity claim writing:

> As a woman who is also a minority, for you [Love] to support them [Romney and his vice presidential candidate] is disgraceful, they won't support womens [sic] rights and won't do anything to stop minorities from getting the shaft. You are seriously in need of some soul searching. (Mia Love, 2012g)

In this quote, Tafoya disclosed her identity as a way to relate to Love by emphasizing their similar "minority" status. When employed in this context, use of an identity claim added cultural context that could possibly justify the deliberator's grounds for offering criticism.

A different example of this subcategory was observed in deliberation concerning Love's partisan allegiance as Facebook user Rolando Morales Guarderas wrote, "It's shameful you [Love] sold out just to feel accepted […] it's typical of immigrant's children to try [to] join the so called 'melting pot,' it doesn't mean you give up on who you are" (Mia Love, 2012c). Cindy Brangard responded to Guarderas stating, "@Rolando dude leave her alone I support her too and I'm Hispanic and it doesn't mean I should vote Democrat or be a liberal robot…" (Mia Love, 2012c). In this example cultural identity was disclosed in an effort to strengthen Brandgard's opinion that ethnicity and citizenship status does not automatically dictate political partisanship.

Disclosing geographic location. Citizens identified with their geographic location—or more specifically the city, state, or country in which they lived—when expressing their political opinions in Facebook comments. This strategy appeared to be especially prevalent in deliberation about voting decisions as citizens announced the location from which they would cast their ballot for Love or Matheson. Citizens living

outside Utah's 4th district also disclosed their geographic location in an effort to express disappointment for not being able to vote for one of the two candidates. It is significant to acknowledge that this subcategory was mainly observed within comments that conveyed support for one of the candidates, opposed to comments that criticized candidates, or addressed opinions about policy or political procedures.

When comparing the two candidates' Pages the researcher observed more citizens on Love's Page identifying with geographic locations outside of Utah's 4th District suggesting that Love engendered more Facebook support from outside of the district. This was exemplified in the comments of a post published on by Love's campaign on Election Day that featured a text caption that said, "The polls close at 8:00 p.m. If you're still in line at that time, stay in line—you WILL be allowed to vote […]" (Mia Love, 2012j). The comments that followed this post contained citizens expressing their voting decisions and their locations, which consisted of dozens of states, two countries, and multiple cities in Utah. Examples included:

> Cathy Crawford: Mia, The best of luck to you today. We are proud of you here in St. Louis. May God bless you and your family. (1:54pm)
>
> Vanessa E Mari: Good luck Mia, all the way from Canada! (2:22pm)
> Diana Roder: If I lived in UT, Mia... I WOULD VOTE FOR YOU! :) Good luck to you! WIN ! ! ! From NV (2:23pm)
>
> Christine Julian Slater: not in your area but rooting for you from under the thumbs of Boxer and Feinstein here in CA (2:26pm)
>
> Linda Bonds Peterson: Watching you from AL. Good luck Mia. I am supporting you from across the country. Feels promising! (2:42pm)
>
> Bret Tolbert: Would love to vote for you Mia but I live in SC. Maybe we can vote for you in 2020 after the Romney presidency is completed. Just saying! (2:49pm)
>
> Janice Basley: Good luck Mia from Allen Park, Michigan!! P.S- just want to tell you our 19 year old daughter voted in her first election today and said she wished

she could vote for you!! :) (2:50pm) (Mia Love, 2012j)

While these quotes were all from a single post, the researcher observed examples of this strategy being used throughout the data collected. Similar to the other subcategories in this category, citizens disclosed their geographic identity in an effort to share cultural information that could function to contextualize opinions in social network site deliberation.

Disclosing political partisanship. Citizens disclosed their political partisanships by indicating their ideological affiliation or their allegiance to a particular political party. This category was most frequently observed in discursive exchange that involved citizens identifying with either the Republican or Democratic parties. Many examples of this subcategory were observed on Jim Matheson's campaign Page; perhaps as a result of the number of posts that touted the amount of Republican support he received from Utah voters, despite his Independent status and bipartisan political objectives. On Matheson's Page citizens consistently disclosed their political party affiliation to support their opinions about Matheson. For example, Facebook user Sharmayne Roundy wrote, "Its funny to make an accusation […] of someone [Matheson] who is looking at the people and issues not voting along dogmatic party lines! I'm a republican [sic] voting for Romney and Matheson because they are the best choices for their offices" (Matheson for Congress, 2012h). Other examples include Belva Whitbeck Parr who stated, "I am a Republican supporting Jim Matheson" and Ana Bausset who wrote, "I am a Democrat and support Jim Matheson!" (Matheson for Congress, 2012e).

This subcategory of identity is especially significant in the context of deliberation about political issues. Disclosure of partisanship identity functioned in the context of

campaign discourse to situate the speaker in an ideological camp, which also enabled other deliberators to understand the foundation from which an opinion was expressed.

Disclosing occupation. This subcategory encompasses comments written by citizens who disclosed their occupational identity to support their opinions. In particular, it was observed that citizens used this strategy to present their opinions concerning a specific policy issue that affected their employment conditions. This type of identity disclosure enabled deliberators to demonstrate to their readers that their opinion was important because they could personally identify with the policy being discussed.

For example, Facebook user Megan McFadden Zierse disclosed her occupational identity to provide support for her voting decision writing, "As the wife of a police officer, I chose not to vote for Mia! http://www.mathesonforcongress.com/news/view/matheson-endorsed-by-utahs-largest-organization-of-law-enforcement-officers " (Mia Love, 2012k). (To provide context for this example it is important to note that during the campaign Love had been criticized for proposing a budget that would eliminate federal grants to local police departments, while Matheson received campaign support from the Utah State Fraternal Order of Police's (FOP) (Gehrke, 2012g).) In Zierse's quote she disclosed her identity as being associated with police officers in an effort to comment on the candidates' policy positions regarding law enforcement. As indicated by Zierse's statement, the candidates' beliefs about a specific occupation that affected her livelihood ultimately influenced her voting decision as well as her expression of political opinion.

In a different post that featured deliberation concerning the value of teachers to the Utah educational system, Facebook users voiced their occupational status as teachers

to inform their opinions concerning Matheson's policy position on education (Matheson for Congress, 2012m). The following quotes responded to Matheson's post which featured the text, "LIKE and SHARE if you agree with Jim that teachers put their students first. Thank you to all Utah teachers.":

> Dave Thompson: I LIKE HIS [Matheson's] TAG-LINE, but don't believe it. I have actually been a licensed teacher in Utah recently - resigned after 4 months - right after election time. Utah's local AND NATIONAL representatives may say "thank you" to Utah teachers, but Utah is still in the VERY BOTTOM among states in funding per student. "THANK YOU" didn't do it for me. I wasn't in it for the salary - already knew that was crap. This "tipping of hat" is offensive. […]
>
> Shannon Callahan: i [sic] am a kindergarten teacher and we have to pay for so much out of our pockets we love our kids and jim [sic] is the best choice for us he is honest a good man and comes from one of the best familys in utah just like his father Scott loved him and the whole family he loves teachers and he will do the best job for us and everyone else [sic] (Matheson for Congress, 2012m)

As illustrated by these examples, occupational identity was disclosed in an effort to demonstrate that the speaker had expertise or close associations with a particular political issue being deliberated. This sub-category further demonstrates how identity disclosure, in the context of Facebook deliberation, was a strategy used by citizens to support their political opinions.

Citizens Use Political Ideology to Present Opinions about Candidates

Citizens drew on their knowledge and ideas related to political ideologies to articulate their opinions about electoral candidates. While several ideological positions were cited throughout the data, deliberative discourse mainly involved comments about conservatism and liberalism. To elaborate, deliberation involved discussion of political, economic, and social beliefs that are commonly associated with conservative and liberal ideological frameworks. Analysis revealed that citizens attempted to associate candidates

with particular ideological beliefs in an effort to comment on the candidate's political character and her or his ability to be an effective congressional representative. Within this category of findings, two subcategories were formed in order to enhance understanding of how ideological language functioned as a strategy used by citizens to engage in deliberation.

Ideology as conveyed through political parties. When presenting opinions about political candidates, citizens discussed the candidates' associations with particular political parties and the ideological beliefs associated with those parties. Establishing the partisan preferences of candidates emerged as a popular topic in this case study as citizens debated how the beliefs of the two candidates—that were both attempting to appeal to conservative voters—aligned with the beliefs conveyed by the Republican and Democratic political parties. According to analysis, knowledge of candidates' ideological beliefs was important to citizens because it suggested how she or he would represent Utah voters if elected to Congress.

To exemplify how citizens drew on political party ideology to present opinions about a candidate it is useful to turn to a post from Matheson's Facebook Page published on October 23, 2012. Comments in this post reflected deliberation concerning the partisanship of Matheson as citizens remarked on his ideological stance has impacted his voting record in Congress. Facebook user Sarah A. Dean wrote (Matheson for Congress, 2012g):

> A vote for Matheson is a vote for Pelosi as Speaker of the House and for the Democratic Agenda. Higher taxes, more spending, more debt, abortion at taxpayer expense, government control of health care, etc. If these are your values, vote for Matheson, if not vote for Love. (Matheson for Congress, 2012g)

Another Facebook user Robert Raleigh wrote:

> By voting against Obamacare, he [Matheson] certainly didn't put this particular Utahn first, and many others, as far as I'm concerned. He should stop running as a Democrat, so that people won't be fooled into thinking he supports Democratic causes, as he does so only about half the time. (Matheson for Congress, 2012g)

In these examples Dean and Raleigh associated Matheson with the Democratic party and the values that they believed were represented by Democrats. Deliberating political party leadership and the ideologies that citizens associated with political parties functioned as a strategy used by citizens to present their opinions concerning candidates past and future political behaviors.

Ideology as conveyed through presidential candidates. This category was formulated to represent instances when citizens articulated an opinion about Matheson or Love by associating them with the political ideology of one of the presidential candidates. To express their support or criticism of the Congressional candidates, citizens cited affiliations or allegiances to either Romney or Obama, and the ideological beliefs that were represented by the presidential candidates.

This subcategory was observed in the comments of an October 26, 2012 post on Matheson's Page that featured the text caption "Are you voting early for Jim? Take a picture of yourself at the polls and tag Matheson for Congress!" (Matheson for Congress, 2012i). Facebook user Lori Rae Jensen responded to this post by criticizing Matheson for his contradictory ideological behaviors:

> I voted for you [Matheson] and I voted early. Now that you are out with ads stating how well you'd work with Romney, I wish I hadn't. Utah has benefited from the ACA (all those kids on missions that can stay on their parent's insurane [sic]), we benefitted from the stimulus, and we are working WITH the President on Welfare reform. Shame on you for running away from your record. You're as bad as Paul Ryan stating he didn't vote for defense cuts. I really liked your father as a Governor and wish you were more like him. (Matheson for Congress, 2012i)

In this same post Facebook user Gerda Bals offered her opinion about Matheson

and his (dis)association from presidential candidates and party ideology writing, “Obama and Mitt are far from being alike and Jim does NOT support Obama. He votes for what is right no matter which party proposed something… I am for Mitt as well, but would absolutely support Jim” (Matheson for Congress, 2012i).

On Love’s Facebook Page citizens commented on Love’s political ideology by deliberating how closely her beliefs aligned with Romney’s. Facebook user Charles Coleman wrote, “Anyone who votes for Mitt Romney cannot in good conscience vote for anyone but Mia Love. We need someone who will support a Romney agenda. We can't vote for Jim Matheson who have [sic] consistently voted for an Obama agenda” (Mia Love, 2012c). In a different post Facebook user Joe Quackenbush stated:

> “Mia will do ANYTHING Romney wants. That's pretty clear. And, Romney's position is that kids should get all of the education thier [sic] parents can AFFORD! And, if that's not a middle class slap in the face, I don't know what is!” (Mia Love, 2012f)

As demonstrated by the examples extracted to illustrate this subcategory, citizens deliberated the ideological agendas and beliefs of Matheson and Love by drawing on their affiliations with the presidential candidates. This strategy was identified throughout deliberative discourse on the candidates’ Facebook Pages and appeared to be especially prevalent in posts where the candidates announced their support for one of the presidential candidates and/or the policy positions held by these party leaders.

Citizens Use Other Deliberator’s Comments to Develop their Own Opinions

Analysis of deliberative comments revealed that citizens drew on the arguments put forth by other deliberators in their efforts to develop and advance their own opinion.

This strategy was made possible by the technical structure of Facebook Pages, which displayed archived comments in chronological order allowing audiences to read a running conversation that spanned over time. Characteristics of this digital forum enabled citizens to access and reference comments that had been published at a previous point in time by other Facebook users. In some cases, references to previously published comments were clarified when citizens addressed each other directly using the Facebook usernames that were displayed in comments.

One example of this strategy was observed in deliberation engaged on Love's Facebook Page that surrounded Romney's background and personal characteristics that qualified him to be president (Mia Love, 2012c).

> Cynthia Bernardo Valenzuela: I did not bad mouth Romney I would not do that I believe he is a good person overall but I am guessing the thousands of people he has put out of work may have something negative to say about Gov. Romney. He and his wife still have never lived like the average American […] I am happy to pay my taxes and thankful I can at 30% to support those rich folks that pay only 14% and will not even provide the years they paid less... (6:42pm)
>
> Jonathan Bickel: Cynthia. You say he put thousands out of work. Where did you get that information? He also saved thousands of jobs by saving companies that would have failed totally and had to fire everyone. GM which obama [sic] says he saved is now building all their new plants in China. Yes outsourcing. No jobs for americans [sic] even though obama [sic] used our money, not his, to bail them out. At least Romney put his own money at risk. (7:42pm) (Mia Love, 2012c)

Following this exchange, other citizens cited the opposing positions of Valenzuela and Bickel to develop their own opinions about Romney's and Obama's personal and policy histories.

A second example of citizens using other's comments to develop their opinions was identified in the following deliberation involving three Facebook users from Love's Page on October 22, 2012 (Mia Love, 2012c):

> Shauna Martin Timmerman: Being in Idaho, I can't vote for Mia, but I'd like to. All the talk about what she would take away is about how to cut our huge deficit. SOMETHING has to change. It will probably won't be easy, but it must be done (3:46pm)
>
> Mary Ellen Crawford Griffith: I agree Shauna! People need to stand on their own two feet more. (4:15pm)
>
> Robin Rastello: People use to stand on their own two feet and when they couldn't[,] family, friends, neighbors, charities and church's did the work. Welfare was suppose to end poverty. It failed miserably. There are as many or more people in poverty today, then when welfare was started. It should be ended, except for the elderly and disabled. And eventually faded out all together and given back to local charities and church's to do that work again. (6:24pm) (Mia Love, 2012c)

This example shows how citizens used ideas and language from other's comments to construct their responses. Facebook users built on each other's arguments, and in some cases displayed increased enthusiasm as deliberation progressed. This category is significant because it demonstrated the capacity for social network sites to allow citizens to engage with each other by accessing opinions that were expressed at different times and geographic locations. In using this digital venue to deliberate, citizens had the opportunity to process other's opinions at their own pace (rereading comments if necessary) and take the time to develop their own opinions using an array of archived ideas catalogued on Facebook Pages.

Citizens Use Facts About Candidates' Histories to Support Opinions

In deliberation involving which candidate would best represent Utah citizens in Congress, Facebook users employed facts about the candidates' personal and professional histories to support their opinions. In contrast to comments that contained predictive statements regarding how a candidate would behave if elected to office, this category encompassed deliberative discourse in which citizens constructed their opinions by citing

information related to the candidate's past experiences. Within this category of findings, three subcategories illustrate how this strategy was used in the present case study.

Citing past government performance. In efforts to present an informed opinion about a candidate, citizens cited the candidate's past performance in office. To review, both candidates were working as elected Utah officials at the time of the election as Love was the mayor of Saratoga Springs and Matheson represented Utah's 2nd Congressional District. Citizens referenced the candidate's policy and voting records, as well as other aspects of their governing performance such as public appearances and initiative development to support deliberative opinions. To exemplify this subcategory, the following deliberation regarding Matheson's policy record was extracted from his Page on November 2, 2012 (Matheson for Congress, 2012j):

> M.d. Baumbach: I always think about what Jim said about Obama care- he said "it is there. I[t] isn't great. We need to fix it" and he worked towards that. Jim has represented the BEST of Utah. (1:32pm)
>
> John Pace: Hey M.d., he didn't sponsor one single bill to improve it. He DID sponsor legislation to defund perhaps the strongest cost-control aspect in Obamacare -- along with the furthest right-wingers in Congress. Then after promising NOT to repeal it in 2010, he voted TO repeal it in 2012. Jimbo [Matheson] is a liar. And, for better or worse, it appears his lack of integrity is finally coming home to roost. (3:49pm)
>
> Suzy Applegarth: He sponsored a bill, which passed, that saved Utah from being a nuclear waste dump for Italy, when the state legislature rigged an election to allow high level nuclear waste to be placed in Granstville. Matheson stopped the transport across federal highways. Without him, Italy will get cheap power, we will get their waste. Thanks, Republicans. He has integrity. I question if you do, Pace. Your trolling facebook. (4:01pm)
>
> John Pace: Suzy, as a Dem delegate in 2010, mere months after his vote to oppose it, I was able to personally ask Matheson about his future support of Obamacare. Based largely upon his assurances, I voted for him in 2010, as I'd always done before. But it turns out that he straight-out lied to my face at both the SLCo [Salt Lake County] and state conventions. Add that to decisions like voting AGAINST the VAWA [Violence Against Women Act] that EXCLUDES the Utahns most at

> risk of sexual abuse and assault, thousands of Native American girls and women living on Indian reservations. Instead choosing to support the downright hateful House GOP [Grand Old Party] alternative. Add that to failing for THREE STRAIGHT YEARS to hold ONE face-to-face unscripted townhall meeting. And he wants to represent us in the People's House? Compare that to the courage of Gabby Giffords, who held such meetings AFTER getting shot through the brain! No, I wouldn't vote for Love in a million years. But it's her positions I oppose. Not only are Matheson's positions wrong, but he is a spineless, pandering liar. (4:19pm)
>
> Justin Banks: Add the balanced budget amendment. Either he knows it's stupid and voted for it anyway, or he's an idiot. Either way. I'm not a Love voter, but I'm sure as hell not voting for someone that will stoop to that level of idiocy. (4:25pm)
>
> Bryan Young: I don't vote for many Democrats, but you [Matheson] have my vote this year, mainly because of your record with the NRA. They gave you an "A" for your support of the 2nd Ammendment! [sic] Thx! [sic] (4:50pm) (Matheson for Congress, 2012j)

This deliberation example involved five citizens using evidence of Matheson's past policy and voting record to comment on his qualifications as a candidate, as well as his integrity, honesty, and intelligence. Drawing on Matheson's past performance in Congress allowed citizens to inform and support their opinions about his character.

In comparison to Matheson's Page, Love's Page featured significantly less deliberation about her record in office. Perhaps this was because she had spent less time working for the government, or because her position as a city official ranked lower than Matheson's congressional position. However, the following quote reveals an example of this category being represented on Love's Facebook Page. Facebook user Jeremy Vick wrote:

> I know many of you love her, but here is [in] Saratoga Springs, UT. We do not feel the same. Nice person on the outside, but she has lied to us over and over her in Saratoga Springs. When the flood hit here in our city, she was [the] only a person that was not honest with us. So with that, I guess she does fit Washington well. Also, she was not productive before the flood. She did nothing to protect our homes, blamed everyone else and took no action. Sounds like Obama to me. Read

> this article as well, http://www.ksl.com/?nid=757&sid=20018743 she does not have the experience to go to Washington!!!!!!! (Mia Love, 2012h)

In this quote Vick cited examples from Love's history in office to explain why he believed she lacked the proper experience to work in Congress. Similar to the previous example extracted from Matheson's Page, Vick cited the candidate's past record in office to comment on personal characteristics such as honesty. This observation was also noticed in deliberation concerning Matheson's policy position on abortion (Matheson for Congress, 2012, and Love's policy position on women's rights (Mia Love, 2012g). Citing facts about candidates' policy records and performances in office was a prevalent strategy used by citizens to develop opinions in deliberative discourse.

Citing qualifications for working in Congress. Data analysis revealed that citizens deliberated candidates' abilities to be successful representatives in Congress by citing their qualifications. More specifically, citizens described candidates' credentials and professional experiences in an effort to support their opinions. For example, Facebook user Jan Smith La Bard discussed the importance of considering both candidates' qualifications before making a voting decision. La Bard wrote:

> Matheson has an MBA, Mia Love has a college degree in Drama. Having an MBA myself, the business person is better equipped for this type of a position. Also, Ms. Love is against the federal funding of student loans for college students; however that is how she got her education and without that help, she would not have been able to complete her degree. Are you willing to take this opportunity away from other prospective college students? […] Please take the time to study and select the best candidates for each position. It is just like when I hire people for certain jobs...it is the same principle. We must hire the best person for this job. I feel that the best person is Jim Matheson for Congress for Utah. (Matheson for Congress, 2012l)

In a different example from Love's Facebook Page, citizens deliberated candidates' qualifications for working in Congress by commenting on their amount of experience (Mia Love, 2012h):

> Joe Quackenbush: She just lacks experience and will not be respected or taken seriously in DC. She's little more that a Tea Party/coinservative [sic] puppet in the same vein as Dan Quayle and Sarah Palin. She'll be an embarassment for Utah. (9:31pm)
>
> Tammi Diaz: I am Voting for Jim Matheson!! Mia Love just does not know how too [sic] [do] the Job, [sic] you [Love] are out of Touch [sic] with the people of Utah. (9:44pm)
>
> Kaye Watson: And how much experience did old Jim have when he started? (9:48pm)
>
> Cody Stoddard: Kaye, none. (9:59pm)
>
> Chrissy Johnson: I've lived in Utah all my life and Mia Love has represented Utah better in this campaign than Matheson has in all his years in Congress! (10:39pm)
>
> Ginnie Broadbent: She [Love] lacks the experience, for one, and secondly, alot [sic] of the information in her ads against Matheson are lies...I have looked up his voting record, and she is incorrect. (10:21am)
>
> Patrick Stamps: She may lack experience, Ginnie Broadbent, but Matheson needs to go. One by one all of the career politicians in Utah are biting the dust, and now it's his turn. (10:37am) (Mia Love, 2012h)

As demonstrated in this deliberation, citing candidates' experiences, or lack thereof, was a strategy used by citizens to comment on their qualifications for working in Congress. Type and amount of experience appeared to be important to citizens as this information was used to support opinions about the qualifications of candidates.

Citing personal history. This subcategory was created to encompass instances when citizens used facts and knowledge regarding candidates' past personal lives to support their opinions. The following example shows two Facebook users discussing the validity of Love's claims about her childhood (Mia Love, 2012i):

> Arthur Dobbs: There are a lot of rumors about your [Love's] immigration status. […] I also find it interesting that you say your family did not receive goverment [sic] aid when the hospital you were born in was funded by the federal government and allowed your mother to give birth to YOU free of charge. (11:07pm)
>
> Steve Weir: Arthur, she lies about her parents not receiving any government help. No one comes to a new country with $10 and makes it on their own. They need the government for their legal papers, identification, help getting a job, as well as help with food, transportation, shelter, and healthcare -- especially for pregnancy and birth. (4:40pm) (Mia Love, 2012i)

This exchange between Dobbs and Weir, illustrated how citizens referenced knowledge about Love's personal history to develop an argument about her character.

Citizens also referred to their past personal interactions with the candidates to develop their opinions about them. Facebook user Art Coombs expressed his personal experience with Love writing, "Mia I have known you for many years. You are one of the most caring, bright, kind, individuals I have ever met. I so hope you win. Our country needs more leaders like you" (Mia Love, 2012j). On Matheson's Page Aaron Hildreth stated, "I interned for Matheson and can say first hand he actually understands what is going on and really cares. Can't say the same thing for most people in Washington " (Matheson for Congress, 2012j). Opposed to citing formal policy positions or credentials to support their opinions, this category demonstrated how citizens referenced personal information and experiences to develop opinions about the candidates.

Citizens Use Information From Ads to Support Opinions

When engaging in deliberation about one of the candidates or the 4th District election more generally, citizens cited campaign advertisements that were disseminated through media outlets such as broadcast television, direct mailing, phone calls, or Internet advertising. Discussion about ads appeared to enter deliberative discourse on Facebook

for three main reasons: to deliberate the validity of claims made in the ads, to express disgust and disapproval of negative content contained in the ads, and to use facts presented in the ads to support opinions.

Validity of ads. Citizens commented on the validity of statements made in specific ads to develop their opinions about the candidates. Examples of this subcategory included citizens questioning the truthfulness of ad content, providing corrections to ad content, and offering arguments to counter ad content. The following exchange was extracted from Matheson's Page to illustrate how Facebook users questioned the validity of ads (Matheson for Congress, 2012n):

> Christopher Davis: I love the last Mia Love PAC ad. Starts with "Matheson is lying about Mia Love's tax record". [sic] Now silence. Then "Mia will work with Mitt Romney to cut taxes." Whoa, hold on now. Rewind. Where I come from, if you call someone a liar, you have to back that statement up. But that's the problem with Mia. All talk. Show me a number that doesn't add up to a 119% property tax increase. And do it without blurting out "Oh look! It's Elvis." when you feel cornered. (9:36pm)
>
> Craig Wayman: Interestingly enough, one of Mia Love's recent fliers stated that she lowered property taxes in Saratoga Springs. Amazing what the public will eat up. Bought and paid for by the GOP. (2:03pm) (Matheson for Congress, 2012n)

In this exchange Davis and Wayman addressed Love's position on taxes that was disseminated through television ads and fliers. In a quote from a different post Facebook user Dave Thompson commented on the validity of ad content more broadly writing, "I am also SICK of the Matheson / Mia Love tv dirty political fighting. I would vote for neither. How can there be so many 100% conflicting "facts" thrown at each other" (Matheson for Congress, 2012m).

As demonstrated, questioning the validity of ads was a strategy used in by citizens in deliberation to develop their opinions about candidates.

Negative ads. Citizens expressed disapproval of candidates in deliberative discourse by referring to negative ads disseminated during the course of the campaign. The following discursive exchange was extracted from Mia Love's campaign Page to illustrate this subcategory (Mia Love, 2012k):

> Melanie Hall: Mia. I am completely sick of all your [Love's] negative campaigning [sic]. I WILL NOT BE VOTING FOR YOU. (9:04pm)
>
> Julia Harlin Tillou: Melanie, I guess you aren't troubled by the multitude of lies that fill my mailbox from Matheson's campaign, or the lies that are on tv [sic] over and over about Mia. (9:08pm)
>
> Nick Naylor: A week doesn't go by that you [Love] don't send me negative flyers. Why would I vote for a business as usual politician. I want somebody who has the courage to turn away from the negativity. (9:20am)
>
> Linda Anderson: Nick, your other option is Matheson....of course, he has had NO negative adds, right! (9:48am)
>
> Nick Naylor: Pointing to Mia Love's opponent doesn't suddenly make what Love is doing ok. It only reinforces politics as usual and fuels dysfunctional government. Same negative attitude, new letter at the end of our representatives name. (10:23am) (Mia Love, 2012k)

As indicated by this exchange, citizens took turns criticizing both candidates' negative campaigning in order to express their support for a given candidate.

In a different example, citizens cited the amount of negative ads they received to develop opinions to support voting decisions:

> Lois Grace: I would not vote for this train wreck of a women anyway, but if I hear or see one of her commercials or radio adds one more time, I'm boycotting Saratoga Springs. […] If she is this annoying as a candidate, think of how she'd be with a national platform..... (12:14pm)
>
> Josh Hartman: Amen Lois. I've not received one advertisement from Matheson at ALL. I get bombarded with Mia Love propaganda every day. It's quite old. (12:15pm)
>
> Curtis A. Orton: HATE all the negative political ads you [Love] have flooded our airwaves with! Hope you lose badly! (12:29am)

> Steve Hodnett: Curtis the neg [sic] ads were started by Matheson (5:39am) (Mia Love, 2012k)

The examples provided above demonstrate that referencing negative content or the amount of negative advertising disseminated by electoral candidates was a strategy employed by deliberators to present their political opinions.

Using ad facts. As opposed to questioning or showing disapproval of the content or frequency of advertising, citizens also used facts or statements featured in ads to support their opinions. In this subcategory the researcher observed that exposure to ads helped citizens learn about the candidates, which consequentially led to developing political opinions and voting decisions. For example, in deliberative discourse concerning the political partisanships of the candidates, Facebook user Rod Burkholz posed a statement that was questioned by another deliberator. To provide supporting evidence for his statement, Burkholz wrote, "As a registered Democrat, I get Jim Matheson emails and he, himself told this story in one of those emails. I'm sure I could find it […]" (Mia Love, 2012k). This subcategory reveals that referencing ads or specific content contained in ads represented yet another a strategy used by citizens to engage in political deliberation.

Relationship Between Campaigns and Citizen Deliberation

The second research question asked: What is the relationship between political campaigns and the deliberative discourse on their social network site? Categories of results that responded to this question were derived from analysis of the interview data collected in this study. As described in Chapter 3, the researcher interviewed 6 individuals from both Love's and Matheson's campaigns that were involved with social

network site campaigning. Interviewees represented a diversity of roles and levels of involvement with the campaigns' social network site communication strategies.

Analysis procedures produced 5 categories of findings that characterize the relationship between political campaigns and the deliberative discourse that was engaged by citizens on their Facebook Pages. In this section the author elaborates on each of these categories by describing the function and significance of each category as they relate to Research Question 2, as well as the broader objective of this research, which was to understand the experiences of humans who have lived through the phenomenon of democratic deliberation on social network sites.

Since this research sought to understand the collective experience of individuals involved with deliberation on social network sites, it was not necessary to disclose the names or titles of individual interviewees. While differentiating interviewees according to their role within the campaign may reveal significant findings in a different study, anonymity was maintained in the present study in an effort to focus on understanding and generating findings that could explain a collective experience. In an effort to provide clarity for understanding results the researcher assigned numbers to identify interviewees. Numbers were assigned randomly and were not intended to reflect any type of grouping or organizational pattern.

Citizen Deliberation Influences Campaign Strategy

Citizen deliberation engaged on the candidates' social network sites functioned to influence communication strategies being executed by the campaigns in this case study. According to interview data, Facebook existed as just one media component that was part of a larger integrated communication plan that continued to be constructed and modified

during the course of the campaign—right up until Election Day. The capacity for discursive deliberation to influence campaign strategy revealed an important finding because a campaign's communication efforts can potentially influence rhetoric surrounding potentially the election, as well as voting outcomes.

This category illustrates a significant characteristic of the relationship between campaigns and deliberation on their social network sites, as analysis of interview data revealed that Facebook deliberation was influential to the campaigns' communication strategies in two key ways: to assess the effectiveness of messages and to support other media platforms. Subcategories were created to elaborate on the significance of these two findings.

Facebook used to assess message effectiveness. According to analysis, the campaigns used Facebook to assess the effectiveness of communicative messages. Interviewees suggested that Facebook could be used as a platform where they could experiment with new communications techniques. More specifically, the framing, wording, and concepts behind new ideas were tested on Facebook so that the campaigns could learn how voters were receiving and interpreting messages. Voter feedback was made possible as a result of the interactive infrastructure of public Facebook Pages, which enabled anyone to publish their reactions to messages. This was observed during analysis of Matheson's and Love's Facebook Pages, which revealed that citizens expressed confusion, criticism, and support related to specific content published in the campaigns' posts.

This type of digital feedback was valuable to the campaigns because responses from Facebook users were gauged as a measure of successful communication delivery.

According to one interviewee, citizens' reactions to Facebook messages helped them to assess the clarity of a given message. Questions or confusion expressed by citizens alerted the campaign that their message needed to be reframed or "tweaked" (Participant 3). A different interviewee explained that experimenting with different message styles on Facebook allowed their communication team to understand the importance of visual images (Participant 1). Participant 1 said, "We've kind of gone completely away from just text posts because we've found the engagement is huge when you include a photo—or, you know, some kind of image." According to analysis, campaigns valued their efforts on Facebook because it offered them the opportunity to test different message styles and improve the effectiveness of their communication over the course of the campaign.

To further exemplify the experimental nature of Facebook messages, the following quote was extracted from an interview with Participant 2: "What it enables us to do is very inexpensively experiment and try something. And when we can see that it's working [...] maybe we want to put more money and more effort and more targeted information behind this idea." In this statement, the interviewee emphasized that the low cost of disseminating messages using Facebook was a primary reason that experimental communication was possible on this medium. Because campaigning on Facebook required minimal financial investment—especially in comparison to other media platforms such as television—campaigns felt more comfortable experimenting on this platform without fear of wasting economic resources. As described by Participant 2, evidence of positive feedback on Facebook—as revealed through citizens' comments—functioned as a valid indicator of successful communication that could justify the allocation of more resources toward advancing a particular message. This was supported

by statements from two different interviewees who described an instance when a particular messaging strategy that was originally intended for Facebook only, demonstrated such high levels of engagement that it was turned into a series of television ads (Participant 1; Participant 2).

The amount and type of engagement that was stimulated by a given message was also cited in other interviews as an important measure of effectiveness. According to Participant 1, Facebook "is a great way to engage with people and voters. We can kind of get feedback from them […] and see what's working and what people react to well." Further, this interviewee said, "If there's high engagement we'll keep doing it. Like if we post a video that people really like we will think 'Oh maybe we should do that again" (Participant 1). Facebook was considered to be "a huge learning experience" for interviewees who contended that their Facebook Page had improved significantly over the course of the campaign as a result of their ability to efficiently test and develop better strategies quickly and with minimal financial repercussions (Participant 1; Participant 2).

As demonstrated, Facebook technology existed as a valuable media for campaigns to enhance their communication efforts because of its flexibility delivery options, low cost of use, and potential to stimulate interactive feedback. Campaigns used voters' opinions that were expressed in deliberative discourse to understand how their messages were being received and how they could improve the clarity and delivery of their campaign communication.

Facebook used to support other media platforms. Data analysis revealed that Facebook existed as one media platform that was integrated into campaigns' larger communication plans, which included other social network sites such as Twitter and

YouTube, as well as various other media platforms such as television, radio, billboards, direct mail, and email. In the context of the campaigns' broader communication strategies, interviewees perceived Facebook as a medium that could support other media platforms because it could effectively reinforce or adjust the meaning of messages being disseminated elsewhere. Deliberation conducted on their Facebook Pages produced feedback that the campaigns could use to adjust other messages and events being pursued by the campaign on nondigital venues.

While the previous subcategory suggested that Facebook could serve as a platform for experimenting with new content, not all messages posted on Facebook were "new." To clarify, material posted by the campaigns often originated from a different media source and was being redisseminated on Facebook in an effort to reinforce a message. Many interviewees claimed that this technique was used to reach a broader audience that was not being exposed to nondigital campaign messages. For example, Participant 2 said:

> The main objective is to get a broader delivery […] we're trying to reach audiences that we can't capture by having something in the newspaper—either online or in the hard copy—or on the television local news, or you know, through an email alert. […] These are people that we think utilize Facebook and Twitter as one of their main sources of information. And so we're distributing the information on the platform that we think they use, that they're you know most comfortable using. (Participant 2)

According to Participant 2, Facebook delivered campaign messages to citizens that were not receiving the information from other media sources. To elaborate, Facebook allowed the campaign to "very quickly" and "very effectively" share content from their website and rebroadcast stories that appeared in the local news (Participant 2). Similarly, Participant 5 suggested that Facebook was valuable to their campaign because it enabled

people who were not being exposed to campaign communication through television ads, walks, or calls to become involved in the campaign. Posting photos, videos, graphics, and other material on Facebook that originated on a different media outlet allowed the campaign to capture the attention of new supporters and reinforce messages to existing supporters (Participant 2; Participant 4; Participant 5).

As acknowledged previously, interactive features of Facebook enabled citizens to express their opinions about campaign communication, which consequentially provided the campaign with feedback about their media outreach. By posting a message on Facebook that originated on a nondigital media platform, citizens were afforded opportunities to respond to the message. This characteristic was observed by the researcher in a post published on Love's Facebook Page on October 30 that featured a video of her latest television advertisement (Mia Love, 2012m). Reposting television content on Facebook enabled citizens to respond to the ad, consequentially providing the campaign with information about how their message was interpreted by audiences. Expressions of confusion or disapproval functioned to alert the campaign that they needed to make adjustments in their media strategy while expressions of support verified the success of the campaigns' communications. Using Facebook deliberation to support the effectiveness of messages disseminated on other media platforms represented an important relationship that was conveyed in this subcategory.

Citizen Deliberation Does Not Influence Formal Political Procedures

While interviewees acknowledged the value of Facebook to create a virtual space where citizens could engage in deliberation concerning political issues, they did not believe that this deliberation influenced formal political procedures. To elaborate, this

category encompasses findings that Facebook comments did not affect the political agendas of the candidates, nor did they influence candidates decisions executed in formal policy making scenarios. This category exposes an important relationship between the campaign and the deliberative discourse on their Facebook Page because it illustrates a significant disconnect between citizen deliberation and formal political procedures. From analysis of interviews, three main reasons emerged to explain this finding and will now be presented in the subsequent subcategories.

Content in comments prevents deliberative influence. Interviewees suggested that despite the importance of some deliberation on their Pages, other comments lacked value to both the campaign, as well as other participants involved in deliberation. For example, one participant described their campaign's Page in the following quote:

> On [the candidate's] page people really haven't gotten into much of a discussion […] It's mostly a place where people go to talk about their excitement about the campaign […] And I think people like to keep it casual and just keep it a place where they can talk about what they think about [the candidate] and what [the candidate is] doing and um, not too much in depth policy discussion. (Participant 5)

In this statement the interviewee suggested that citizens' comments lacked depth and seriousness needed to contribute to policy deliberation. A different interviewee expressed a similar sentiment stating:

> I don't think it's a deep discussion. I don't see any comments where they [citizens] bring up a pertinent piece of an issue that I hadn't thought about […] but I do think you get people sharing their perspective and their interest and their story. (Participant 2)

In the examples presented in this subcategory interviewees explained that comments from their Facebook Pages were irrelevant in terms of their contribution to in

depth policy discussion, and consequentially they would not be valuable in formal policy procedures.

Focus on dissemination prevents deliberative influence. This subcategory represents a second reason that emerged in data analysis to explain why deliberation did not influence formal policy procedures. Interviewees explained that the deliberation engaged on their Facebook Pages was important to helping them learn the opinions of voters; however, they also contended that Facebook was primarily used as a way to send information, as opposed to receiving information. The campaigns' strategic concentrations on disseminating content prevented deliberation from being used in formal political procedures.

For example, when explaining how citizens' comments were used during the campaign, Participant 6 said:

> Facebook was a chance for me to get my message out. […] I saw Facebook—in my campaign anyway—was used more for exporting information. […] It was more of a dialogue between people than it was [the candidate] and people. You push the message out there and then we'll let people discuss it themselves. (Participant 6)

This participant continued on to explain that the amount of comments and "likes" that were stimulated by a particular post was very important to the campaign because it indicated how many people responded positively to particular campaign messages. However, the actual content contained in messages was not as closely monitored. Focus on sending as opposed to receiving content was also emphasized by Participant 1 who claimed, "Obviously you should take what people say on the Internet with a grain of salt."

Concentration on sending messages rather than receiving them influenced deliberation because campaigns were not dedicated to inciting debate. Participant 4

suggested that Facebook could function as a space for lively virtual deliberation but ultimately, “it depends on what you post.” Participant 4 stated, “we're just kind of trying to put out a message—not really getting too specific on issues so it doesn't really bring up that dialogue.” As illustrated in this subcategory, focusing on message dissemination prevented deliberation from being influential in formal political procedures.

Political process prevents deliberative influence Based on data analysis, interviewees claimed that formal decision making procedures prevented deliberation on their Facebook from having a significant impact. More specifically, because the formal procedures that were required for policy making did not require or even suggest that politicians consult deliberation engaged on their campaign Facebook Page, interviewees did not consider it to have a significant influence.

For example, Participant 6 explained that Facebook deliberation could not be used to directly impact policy as a result of the laws in place that outline the precise procedures for making policy decisions. To support their position, Participant 6 stated, “You have to understand that I have council members and you can’t make decisions without the council members the same way the President can’t and shouldn’t make decisions without Congress.” This interviewee acknowledged that Facebook deliberation was useful in helping them understand how citizens react to policy decisions, but official governing procedures prevented it from having any direct impact on policy making.

Citizen Deliberation is Valued by Campaign

While results indicated that citizen deliberation may not directly influence formal policy procedures, findings in this category reveal that the use of Facebook to promote engagement and to provide a space for productive deliberative discourse was believed to

be valuable and beneficial by campaigns interviewed in this case study. It is important to clarify that while interviewees expressed their beliefs that Facebook deliberation was significant to political processes, they also acknowledged that these benefits were not necessarily realized in practice. Interview dialogue surrounding results in this category lacked concrete examples of how citizen deliberation had political consequences outside the communication strategy employed by the campaign. This finding reveals that interviewees were cognitively aware that deliberation on their Facebook Page could have significant consequences for strengthening democratic practices. Additionally, they expressed support for using this type of deliberation in the larger political arena to influence more formal decision making processes. The relationship between the campaign and Facebook deliberation that was identified in this category is significant because it provides justification for embarking on future deliberative initiatives that would explicitly connect deliberation with formal policy procedures.

Belief that the campaign should promote deliberation. Interviewees agreed that democratic deliberation was a positive activity that should be encouraged by the campaign through the operation of their Facebook Pages. According to analysis, interviewees revealed techniques they used for supporting deliberation, and also expressed a desire to develop better practices for stimulating deliberative discourse. This finding was exemplified in statements that involved discussion of strategies that could be used to stimulate engagement. For example, Participant 6 said, “Most of the time you’ll see that I ask questions on my Facebook Page. […] Putting things out there is a good way of starting the dialogue, letting people talk, and keeping them engaged.” In addition to posing questions to enhance citizen involvement, a different interviewee suggested that

conducting surveys using Facebook could "boost engagement" (Participant 2). In explaining the benefits of surveys, Participant 2 said, "I think those [surveys] would get you more debate because we'd be talking about you know, the issue of the day."

The researcher also observed that interviewees believed that they could support the deliberation engaged on their page by controlling for content that was not productive to advancing deliberative discourse. Interviewees claimed that this could be achieved by removing certain citizen comments that interfered with the progress of deliberation. For example, the following quote illustrates the nature of content that should be removed to support deliberation:

> I think if we can see people being abusive of the page. They're not furthering the dialogue, they're not engaging in the substance […] It's becoming more of a rant and they're just monopolizing the space. […] I think that people who come to your page and see that kind of stuff—I think they're turned off. And who knows if they're even turned away? If they would even come back? So we don't want them to be a deterrent of other people visiting the page and engaging. (Participant 2)

Another interviewee shared a similar opinion stating that comments should be removed if they were interfering with communication on the Page (Participant 1). More specifically, Participant 1 stated:

> Some people are obviously trolls on your page and you'll see them comment on every single thing you post. And if it gets out of control people can't even have a conversation on your page because this person is constantly commenting so much. (Participant 1)

While interviewees largely agreed that they should delete as few comments as possible in an effort to maintain transparency on their Page, they also believed that removal of comments could be justified by the need to protect visitors to their site from having a negative experience. As demonstrated by this finding, campaigns believed it was

important for deliberation to be conducted in a manner that would ensure that social network site audiences experienced their campaign communications positively.

Belief that constructive conflict is beneficial. According to analysis, interviewees appreciated when citizens voiced their opinions and believed that representation of diverse perspectives was an important quality of their Facebook Page. The researcher identified approval of constructive criticism as a central theme as interviewees expressed the need to embrace conflict that was conveyed in an appropriate manner. For example, Participant 6 said, "I am always looking forward to dialogue and what people are saying. I find it just really interesting and rewarding to listen to people on both sides." This interviewee continued on to explain the importance of listening to various perspectives of "people who are really looking for solutions to problems" (Participant 6).

Participant 1 also explained the significance of preserving their Facebook Page for healthy debate. They said:

> I think it's kind of interesting to see what other people's views are and kind of their thoughts and opinions on what's going on. Because I mean there are few spaces where you can really do that you know? Unless your debating politics around the dinner table of something. It's kind of cool to be able to go on to a page and kind of see what other people are saying. (Participant 1)

According to these quotes, interviewees enjoyed reading diverse points of view that were expressed on their Facebook Pages. Although they believed it was important to delete some content on their Page, interviewees also agreed that disagreement could be conducive to stimulating engagement. For example, Participant 4 explained the importance of conflict stating, "We do have criticism on [the Page] and it's great because the other users will jump on them and defend whatever their attacking." Similarly, "Participant 6 said, "It's easy to remove comments, but we found that we wanted people

to kind of express themselves positive and negative. And for every one person that responded negatively we would have 20 other people go after them." According to these quotes, disagreement among Facebook users was valued by the campaign because it motivated citizens to speak up and defend their political position.

Belief that deliberation should influence governing. Although Facebook deliberation had minimal influence on formal political processes, the researcher discovered that interviewees believed that this discourse was significant enough to have a greater influence on future governing activities. For example, Participant 4 explained that while they did not consider citizens comments too seriously during the course of the campaign, this interactive media could have more impact when engaged on a congressional representative's Facebook Page. They suggested that in the context of operating a congressional office, Facebook comments could be equitable to a constituent phone call as they both functioned as a means for citizens to express opinions and communicate with political leaders (Participant 4).

A different interviewee also described the potential for Facebook to be used in a greater capacity outside the context of the current campaign (Participant 3). While disseminating messages had been the primary objective for Facebook use during the campaign, Participant 3 suggested that it could and should be used "as a way to create a community and dialogue" for future political purposes.

Based on the evidence presented thus far, interviewees conveyed confidence in the potential for Facebook deliberation to influence governing practices. Similarly, Participant 6 suggested that Facebook deliberation contributed to political discussion, debate, and the quest to find different solutions to relevant social problems. They

expressed the following opinion regarding the value of Facebook in democratic processes:

> I think that somebody who is using Facebook right is doing the American people justice because they're going out and they're listening to people who really want to have a dialogue and they're actually going out and talking about those kinds of things. (Participant 6)

As demonstrated by this subcategory, political campaigns agreed that although they did not see Facebook deliberation impacting governing in the context of their own campaign Pages, they believed that it could and should be used by politicians as a platform for consulting with citizens and accessing the perspectives and opinions of voters.

Citizen Deliberation Is Controlled by Campaigns

From analysis of the data, the researcher concluded that interviewees largely agreed on the importance of operating their Facebook Page based the values of transparency and freedom of political opinion. However, they also believed it was necessary to maintain their Pages by exerting a considerable amount of control over the content that was published and accessible for public viewing. Unlike other media platforms such as television news that required campaigns to relinquish total control over their messages, the technical infrastructure of Facebook allowed campaigns to maintain complete command over their content at all times. As stated by Participant 1, "We're using Facebook as a way to put out our own message. It's a way where you can really control what you want to say." This belief was emphasized in a quote from Participant 2 who said:

> We can write it the way we want. We can illustrate it the way we want. We can time it the way we want. And so there's no intervening filter. Part of it doesn't get

> left on the cutting room floor like a news story does because they need to fit it into 90 seconds. And so it's exactly what we want to say, when we want to say it. (Participant 2)

The theme of control was identified throughout data analysis and was especially prevalent in three distinct contexts that included control over tone, delivery, and language that was contained in campaign messages. Each of these findings will now be explained in further detail in an attempt to demonstrate how citizen deliberation was controlled by campaigns, and the significance of this characteristic in the relationship between campaigns and the deliberation conducted on their Facebook Pages.

Controlling message tone. Controlling the tone of messages that were published on Facebook was a primary objective of Facebook use that was identified by several interviewees. More specifically, interviewees claimed that it was important to maintain a positive presence on Facebook so that audiences would develop a positive image of the candidate. For example, according to Participant 5, “Our goal with everything with social media is we want to keep it positive. We want to keep it on [the candidate’s] message and you know, it's really going to remind people why they like [the candidate].” Another interviewee emphasized that in comparison to media messages disseminated on other platforms, it was especially important to remain positive on Facebook because Facebook messages were conveyed to audiences as if the candidate was speaking (Participant 4). According to Participant 4:

> We're very positive on Facebook. Like whereas we'll have mailers that go out that will talk [negatively] about the opponent, Facebook we just try and stay as positive as possible because it's the candidate that's speaking through Facebook. So we want people to like [the candidate]. (Participant 4)

Because Facebook messages appeared to come directly from the candidates, interviewees envisioned Facebook as a medium that could humanize their candidates by

depicting them in a casual and nonthreatening manner. Participant 2 explained that posting content that depicted their candidate enjoying a hobby or spending time with their family helped to "give [the candidate] a dimension as a real person and not some sort of obscure person that they can't relate to." In comparison to other media platforms that delivered messages about candidates' experiences and policy positions in a more serious manner, Facebook messages were constructed in a more casual tone in an attempt to humanize the candidate.

As revealed in this analysis, controlling the tone of Facebook was an important strategy practiced by the campaigns. Interviewees suggested that this influenced the deliberation on their Pages because disseminating positive and casual messages often stimulated positive and causal responses. Participant 4 claimed that if their campaign wanted to create more serious deliberation on their Page they could possibly change the structure of their message and tone by posing controversial questions in their posts. In this way controlling the message tone was a primary strategy used by the campaign that had consequences for style and amount of deliberation engaged on their page.

Controlling message through targeting. Marketing strategies such as message targeting that were practiced by the campaigns also functioned to control citizen deliberation. Several interviewees explained that they crafted their messages to target very specific audiences in their efforts to promote engagement on their Page. To illustrate this point the following quote was extracted from an interview with Participant 2:

> It's not advertising, it's targeted communication. It's the same way you would look at a demographic for a television newscast. We're assuming that Facebook is the same kind of targeted outlet [and] we want to provide information that we think is going to match their [audiences] interests […] and their communication circle. (Participant 2)

As illustrated in this quote, the campaigns adjusted their messages to engage certain Facebook demographics by appealing to the interests and the social networks that were associated with Facebook users' profiles. In addition to using profile information to target messages, campaigns also employed the interactive component of this technology to understand how their messages were being received. According to Participant 2:

> The technology allows you to do direct one on one targeting. […] Cause in the old days you might run an ad in the newspaper and you wouldn't even know if the right people—I mean you sort of have an idea of who's reading the Sunday paper—but with Facebook the people tell you. The tools are there to be so specific in your targeting so you know you're hitting the right audience with the right message at the right time, which is what politicians want to do. (Participant 2)

As expressed in this quote, explicit attempts were made by the campaigns to reach certain individuals or populations, opposed to engaging the voting public equally. Sending specific content to specific Facebook users meant that individuals engaging in deliberation could have had different motivations for participating. To clarify, the process of message targeting may have provoked certain deliberators to participate, as well as stimulate certain topics to surface in deliberation. Consequentially, this subcategory revealed an important way that citizen deliberation could be controlled by the campaigns.

Controlling language. In addition to controlling the tone and delivery of their own material, campaigns also exercised direct control over the content published by citizens. This was largely accomplished by removing citizens' comments that the campaigns considered to be inappropriate for their Facebook Page. In the researcher's analysis of deliberation on the candidates Facebook Pages it was observed that comments had clearly been deleted. This was apparent through the disruption of deliberation that occurred when

a citizen responded to a particular comment that was no longer accessible in the stream of comments.

When asked about their policy for removing citizens' comments, interviewees identified derogatory language as a primary reason for deleting a comment. One campaign's policy was explained by Participant 6 in the following quote:

> Anything that is derogatory or really offensive—we'll take some of those off. There are things that I do not think that people should put on other people's Facebook Page. It's not good and it's not positive and it has no room. Foul language, anything that's racist, anything that is derogatory, anything that insults anybody else on Facebook. I just don't want to have the people that are trying to communicate with me being exposed to something that may be very offensive and hurtful. (Participant 6)

As demonstrated in this statement, campaigns believed that there was a defensible code for deleting inappropriate language (Participant 2; Participant 6). While disagreement in dialogue was considered to be a positive characteristic, interviewees agreed that presentation of an opposing view needed to be articulated using nonoffensive language. As explained by Participant 6:

> There may be 'You know, I disagree with you on this, have you thought about this?' I can understand that. What I don't condone or don't get into is people that are just like, 'Well you're an idiot.' I want people to come out and discuss [using] positive dialogue. (Participant 6)

Another interviewee stated that their campaign deleted citizens' comments that featured derogatory language about their opponent such as calling them a "bitch" (Participant 1). As demonstrated by the examples in this subcategory, policies for removing content from Facebook were made through a subjective decision making process completed by the campaigns. According to interview analysis, controlling language was an important maintenance strategy that campaigns considered to be conducive to stimulating engagement and deliberation on their Facebook Page.

Citizen Deliberation Lacks Campaign Participation

While analysis reveals that the communication strategies executed by political campaigns influence deliberation in various ways, interviewees acknowledged that they do not directly participate in deliberative discourse that is conducted on their Page. Campaigns refrained from interjecting their opinions in citizen deliberation as interviewees explained that they did not publish comments under their posts. This category is significant because it illustrates the role of campaigns in deliberative discourse as passive listeners, as opposed to active speakers. This finding is further explained in the following subcategories that present reasons offered by the campaign for not participating in dialogue.

Campaigns do not respond to comments. Interviewees claimed that they did not publish comments under their posts, therefore refraining from participation in any type of deliberation. This finding was confirmed in the researcher's analysis of social network sites as there was a noticeable absence of comments published by the campaigns. This was true even in instances when direct questions were posed to the candidates (Matheson for Congress, 2012o). As explained by Participant 6, Facebook deliberation featured "more of a dialogue between people than it was [the candidate] and people. You push a message out there and then we'll let people discuss it themselves." Interviewees' policies for not responding to comments resulted in their lack of participation in deliberative discourse.

Campaigns respond to questions. While interviewees stated that they wished to refrain from engaging in dialogue exchanged within the comments of their Page, they did respond to certain individuals through direct messages. Unlike comments that were

publicly visible, direct messages allowed Facebook users to engage in private exchanges. Many interviewees claimed that they received far too many messages to respond to everyone, however they made exceptions to answer specific questions, especially inquiries about how to volunteer or donate money. For example, Participant 1 said, "Some people will direct message us and say, 'I want to volunteer, how do I do that?' Or, 'I want a lawn sign.' But that's really the only direct contact we have." This interviewee justified their response explaining, "For the most part we kind of stay out of it because we're not really sure—like if you start commenting then when do you stop? And if we responded to everything someone said that would be our whole day, answering Facebook questions" (Participant 1). Participant 5 provided a similar explanation for only responding to questions about donating resources stating, "There's so many [comments] that there's no way that we can even answer a fraction of them. So for the most part we don't."

Among the few exceptions for directly communicating with citizens, campaigns stated that they primarily responded when citizens asked questions concerning donating resources to the campaign. For example, one interviewee said:

> We've done a couple of fundraising pushes on Facebook. Like, something like, 'We need 25 Facebook fans to donate $25' […] people comment and say 'I donated' so I'll thank them from the Page. Or there were some people who would ask for the mailing address to send the check to so I would get on there and post that as well. (Participant 4)

Another interviewee explained a similar exception for engaging in direct communication with citizens stating, "Sometimes there will be a question in the comments, 'Can you help me?' And we will reply and say, 'Please call my office' and we'll put a phone number and a name. […] It's more about providing information rather

than having a back and forth" (Participant 2). As demonstrated by these quotes, campaigns engaged in direct communication with citizens for the purposes of helping them contribute to the campaign, but they did not attempt to engage in deliberation about political issues.

Results presented in this chapter described the textual and structural properties of the major contextual issues that were observed in analysis of democratic deliberation conducted on two political campaigns' Facebook Pages. As motivated by the phenomenological method that was utilized, findings were conveyed to clearly reflect what happened when deliberation was engaged and how characteristics of the digital setting impacted humans' experiences with this communication phenomenon. In the following chapter the researcher will offer an interpretation of these results in order to emphasize their significance and influence in relation to democratic deliberation theory and broader democratic processes.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Given the widespread prevalence of digital communication in electoral politics and the seemingly increasing popularity of using social network sites for political purposes, this study sought to understand the nature and function of democratic deliberation, particularly in the context of political candidates' social network sites. The researcher wanted to explore what happened when deliberation was experienced and how the digital setting influenced the phenomenon in question. Therefore, the specific research questions posed in this study were: 1) What strategies do citizens use to engage in democratic deliberation on electoral candidates social network sites? And 2) What is the relationship between political campaigns and the deliberative discourse on their social network sites?

To answer these questions a transcendental phenomenological method was used because it allowed the researcher to qualitatively explore the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals who were involved with the phenomenon being examined. Opposed to focusing on personal interpretation, this phenomenological method allowed the researcher to concentrate on generating a deep understanding of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Because phenomenology involves the search for the essence, or the central underlying meaning of the experience, procedures used in this

study produced a general or universal description of the experience so that the practice of democratic deliberation could be strengthened for future participants (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Natanson, 1973).

In selecting the data that would be included in this study the researcher sought to identify an electoral race in the 2012 election that featured candidates with social network sites that contained lively critical argumentation of political issues. Additionally, the data needed to represent a highly competitive race between opposing candidates to ensure that disagreement and debate would exist among the electorate. Based on these criteria, Utah's 4th District Congressional election was selected, which featured the race between candidates Jim Matheson and Mia Love. From these two campaigns, data were collected from interviews conducted with individuals that were involved with social network site activity. Additional data were collected from each candidate's Facebook social network site Page during the month preceding Election Day.

Both sources of data were analyzed using a phenomenological analysis process wherein the researcher reduced the meanings of participants' experiences to their essential structure. To elaborate, significant findings that were identified during analysis were combined to form themes that revealed major contextual issues associated with the data. These results described the strategies used by citizens to deliberate on social network sites, as well as the relationship characteristics of the campaigns and the deliberation featured on their social network sites.

This final chapter synthesizes and analyzes the data discussed in the previous chapter and uses this analysis to present the essence of the phenomenon, or rather the common experience of participating in democratic deliberation on political campaigns'

social network sites. Before proceeding however, the major findings from this study will briefly be presented.

A content analysis of social network sites produced seven categories of results that explained the most prevalent strategies used by citizens to engage in democratic deliberation. First, citizens included hyperlinks in the text of their comments to provide support and emphasis for their political opinions. By linking to different web locations within the social network site, as well as news outlets' websites and other external websites, deliberators provided additional information and credibility to support their statements.

Second, citizens drew on content posted by the campaigns to guide the topics and arguments that surfaced in deliberative discourse. Responding to questions and statements concerning policies, people, and places that were depicted in the campaigns' posts help citizens develop their political opinions presented in deliberation.

Third, citizens disclosed information about their personal identity to support their opinions. Revealing various cultural identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, political partisanship, or occupation was observed as a strategy employed by citizens to contextualize their perspectives and to demonstrate expertise or personal experience to support their opinions.

Fourth, citizens integrated discussion of political ideologies into their comments to articulate their opinions about political candidates. To comment on the political character of Matheson or Love, the researcher observed that citizens associated them with the ideological positions of political parties or presidential candidates.

Fifth, citizens developed their opinions by drawing on ideas and information conveyed in other deliberators' comments. The capacity to access an array of diverse comments that were archived by social network sites was a strategy used by citizens to construct their own opinions.

Sixth, to support opinions about a given candidate, citizens presented facts regarding the candidates' personal and professional histories. Citing the previous governing records of a candidate, as well as referencing their qualifications or personal histories was a technique used by citizens when engaging in deliberative discourse.

And finally seventh, political advertising disseminated about the candidates emerged as fodder for discussion as citizens referenced material contained in ads to develop their opinions. Citizens were observed deliberating the validity of ads, expressing disgust and disapproval of negative ad content, and using facts presented in the ads to support their positions.

The results presented thus far contribute to understanding the nature of democratic deliberation on political campaigns' social network sites by describing various communication strategies that were used by deliberators to develop and convey their opinions within the technical and cultural infrastructure of this digital venue. This phenomenon was further explored by accessing the lived experiences of people working on campaigns' social network sites. Due to the measure of control that campaigns maintain over the operation of their social network sites, knowledge of this relationship was crucial to understanding the phenomenon being explored. Analysis of interviews with these individuals produced five major categories of findings that describe significant

characteristics of the relationship between campaigns and the democratic deliberation engaged on their social network sites.

First, campaigns used the opinions presented in deliberation to enhance their understanding of how citizens were interpreting their communications materials. Citizen feedback that was conveyed through social network sites was used by the campaigns to assess the effectiveness of new communications strategies, and to support messages being disseminated on other media outlets.

Second, deliberation was not influential on formal political procedures as this discourse did not affect candidates' political agendas or policy decisions. Lack of value in citizens' opinions, formal procedures of decision making, and the campaigns' concentrations on sending opposed to receiving messages were all cited as reasons that prevented deliberation from taking a toll on formal political procedures.

Third, deliberation was valuable to campaigns' as they believed that this type of communication should be used more broadly to influence the larger political arena. Specifically, campaigns believed that constructive conflict was beneficial, and that they should do more to promote deliberation on their social network sites.

Fourth, campaigns exercised a measure of control over deliberative discourse as they expressed the need to closely monitor the tone and delivery of their messages, as well as remove certain inappropriate language published by citizens. These strategies employed in social network site operation influenced the style and progression of democratic deliberation.

Fifth, the voice of the campaign was absent from deliberative discourse on campaigns' Facebook Pages. Campaigns demonstrated a policy for refraining from

interjecting their opinions in citizens' deliberative discourse, therefore establishing their role in deliberation as passive listeners opposed to active speakers.

Discussion

Several contributions to democratic deliberation theory grow out of insights produced by scrutiny of electoral campaigns' social network sites. These contributions help explain an important process of political communication, which carries implications and applications for broader political systems. In this section the researcher will present three theoretical propositions that derived from findings in this research. The propositions generated from this exploratory study should be tested in future research projects and deliberative initiatives.

Participation in Democratic Deliberation Is Enhanced by Social Network Site Technology

Existing research has concluded that the effectiveness of democratic deliberation is highly context dependent, and consequentially there is a continuing need to explore newer digital communications venues to assess their potential to cultivate successful deliberative conditions (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Tambini, 1999). During the months leading up the 2012 election the researcher noticed the prevalence of social network sites in campaign communication and a preliminary observation of various campaigns sites revealed their potential to exist as a space for lively democratic deliberation. Thus, the present study was born and constitutes the first examination of democratic deliberation on social network sites. In this section the researcher will discuss implications for

democratic deliberation scholarship that derive from the technical and cultural infrastructure of social network site technology.

Analysis of candidates' social network sites revealed that citizens employed multiple strategies to strengthen their political opinions when deliberating on this distinct digital venue. For example, results revealed that citizens used digital hyperlinks to improve the clarity and strength of their arguments. More specifically, when used properly hyperlinks functioned to enhance the credibility of citizens' statements and to provide additional information to support their political perspectives. It is suggested that this strategy could result in more informed deliberators, but future research is needed to specifically examine the uses and gratifications of hyperlinking to determine whether this digital element can actually improve deliberative outcomes.

The option to deliberate anonymously is another characteristic of social network sites that may positively impact participation in democratic deliberation. While deliberators in the present study were observed disclosing a range of information about their identity such as their race, ethnicity, gender, and occupation, citizens certainly were not required to share any identifying information. To clarify, publishing content on social network sites typically requires users to create an account and a profile. But users are not obliged to provide their true identity and therefore it is possible to anonymously participate in deliberation using a pseudonym. Anonymity options on social network sites may elicit a positive influence on deliberation by increasing inclusion and representation of participants—two variables cited in past research as debilitating the effectiveness of deliberative outcomes (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Neblo et al., 2010; Schneiderhan & Kahn, 2008). In the present study anonymous presentation of political preferences were

identified throughout the data as deliberators offered information concerning their partisanship, ideology, and voting decisions; thus confirming Vitak et al.'s (2011) conclusion that individuals felt that personal expression of political views on social network sites was appropriate. This finding has important implications that support the use of social network sites for future democratic deliberation initiatives, but it is suggested that further research should survey deliberators to more clearly understand their feelings about identity disclosure in the context of deliberative discourse.

In addition to offering the option to remain anonymous, participation in democratic deliberation on social network sites is also enhanced by an absence of time and place constraints that plague other deliberative initiatives. In the present study the researcher observed deliberators contributing to deliberative discourse throughout the globe at all hours of the day. Additionally, deliberative conversations appeared to span over several days and weeks. The capacity for social network sites to archive deliberative comments over long periods of time enabled citizens to reference their own past comments, as well as historic comments written by other citizens participating from various geographic locations. These characteristics of social network site deliberation not only offer a convenient way for people to participate, they also fostered a broader inclusion of voices. As explained by Delli Carpini et al., (2004), inclusiveness exists as an important variable in democratic deliberation as it allows more information to be brought to light, which is assumed to result in more informed deliberative outcomes. These findings regarding digital contextual variables should be tested in future research by conducting a comparison of deliberation in social network site versus face to face venues.

Thus far, this section has interpreted the results from the present study to argue that participation in democratic deliberation can be enhanced through the use of social network site technology. It is suggested that social network sites offer a response to Dahlberg's (2001a) call to invent new models and technologies that could increase deliberative engagement among citizens that were previously hostile towards public deliberation. Indeed, findings from the present research confirm that social network sites offer new opportunities for citizens to articulate their opinions using strategies that are not available in other deliberative venues.

Political Campaigns Influence the Nature of Democratic Deliberation

Considering the relationship between political campaigns and the deliberation engaged on their social network site, as well as the specific strategies that were employed by citizens to engage in deliberation it is concluded that political campaigns can be highly influential to the nature of citizen deliberation. The researcher acknowledges that the particular environment under scrutiny in the present study undoubtedly enhanced the strength of this finding, however, this acknowledgement does not render this conclusion insignificant to democratic deliberation theory. Due to the centrality and significance of campaigns and elections within a democratic political system, deliberation conducted outside the parameters of a campaign operated venue can still be influential to campaign communication (Buchanan, 2001). In this section the results from the present study will be interpreted to present implications regarding the influence of campaigns in democratic deliberation.

Previous research in digital democracy expressed serious concern regarding the capacity of interactive media to allow citizens to lead a political agenda that was once

carefully controlled by professional campaigners (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011). An early study of political candidates' Internet uses concluded that politicians were resistant to technologies that would allow them to lose control over the communication environment (Stromer-Galley, 2000). More than a decade later in the 2012 election interactive technology was fully embraced on all levels of government, but results from the present study suggest that campaigns continue to fear loss of control over their message as they engage in strategic measures to control the content, tone, and progression of deliberation. Although social network sites have been recognized as a technology that compromises the traditional top down one way communication style because they allow citizens to participate in content creation, the present study demonstrated that campaigns continue to control content produced by citizens on this digital platform (Gueorguieva, 2009).

To exemplify this point, campaigns interviewed in the present study believed that they could control the amount and intensity of deliberative discourse engaged on their social network site through the framing of their messages. More specifically, campaigns indicated that they strived to maintain a positive and casual presence on social network sites, which did not stimulate the type of in depth policy debate that typically characterizes democratic deliberation. However, interviewees also stated that if they were to pose questions about specific policies and controversial issues, campaigns believed that they could incite citizens to engage in more serious debate. Further research concerning this finding is needed as the capacity for campaigns to stimulate or stifle deliberation through the framing of their messages has valuable implications for future deliberative scenarios.

Campaigns also exhibited control over deliberation through their ability to delete comments from deliberative discourse. This finding meant that campaigns had the power to silence certain opinions; consequentially giving them the jurisdiction to decide which beliefs would be represented in this publicly accessible deliberative forum. Analysis of interviews revealed that the power to remove certain content from deliberative discourse presented a significant tension for the campaign as they were forced to negotiate the desire to be transparent and the desire to censor particular language. While campaigns stated that they welcomed the expression of diverse and conflicting opinions, they also believed that particular criticism should be deleted that was not productive to advancing deliberation. More specifically, campaigns believed in supporting democratic deliberation by controlling for trolls (people who disrupt the flow of Internet discussion by posting inflammatory or irrelevant messages) and other offensive language that threatened the vitality of ongoing discourse. It would be beneficial to further examine campaigns' policies for removing content from their social network sites as this practice has considerable implications for deliberative outcomes.

A final comment on campaigns influence over citizen deliberation was derived from the researcher's content analysis of the candidates' social network sites. From these findings it was concluded that citizens use content produced by political campaigns such as television advertisements to guide and support opinions presented in deliberative discourse. While the influence of such media messages have been studied in previous political behavior research, a review of literature reveals that they have not been examined explicitly in the context of deliberative discourse. Further research concerning the impact of campaign messages on deliberation is needed to understand the extent to

which they can provide guidance and focus in discursive settings. It may be assumed that campaign messages are more influential in the context of deliberation concerning electoral candidates, but future studies should investigate how they may influence other political topics as well. Additionally, it is important to note that the impact of campaigning on democratic deliberation may become increasingly more significant in future elections as the campaigns interviewed in the present study expressed a desire to enhance deliberation through the operation of their social network sites.

Democratic Deliberation on Social Network Sites Can Influence Policy Making

The present investigation illustrates the potential for political campaigns' social network sites to facilitate linkage between democratic deliberation and policy making. Concerns cited in past democratic deliberation research suggested that civic forums were "just talk" because deliberative processes were often disconnected from actual decision making (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Ryfe, 2005). In this section the researcher discusses findings from this study that demonstrate how deliberative outcomes on political campaigns' social network sites could be incorporated into future policy making.

To discuss implications for democratic deliberation in policy making it is important to acknowledge the category of findings in the previous presentation of results that addressed reasons why deliberation did not actually influence formal political procedures. In this category, the political leaders that were interviewed identified various reasons that deliberation engaged on their social network site was not used in more formal decision making procedures. However, these same interviewees also contended

that deliberation *could* have a greater role in formal decision making, and that campaigns *should* be more active in stimulating this type of discourse among their constituents.

To illustrate, political leaders explained that the content on their social network sites lacked the depth needed for this material to be useful in policy making. They suggested that more serious policy discussion could be cultivated on their sites if they were to undertake a more active role in facilitating this type of communication. Interviewees offered various ideas for stimulating deliberation among the citizens visiting their sites, which included posing questions about popular policy topics, as well as intervening more in deliberative discourse. The campaigns analyzed in this case study revealed that by adjusting their messages they could effectively adjust the depth of deliberation on their sites, consequentially rendering citizen comments more useful in formal policy making. A different examination of political campaigns' deliberative venues is needed to determine whether campaigns can effectively influence the depth of content presented in deliberation. Additionally, further questioning of political leaders is necessary to confirm whether they would actually more willing to allow serious deliberation—as opposed to light hearted casual commentary—to influence their political agendas.

Campaigns' strategic concentrations on message dissemination existed as another reason that deliberation was not used in policy making. Interview analysis revealed that political leaders primarily used social network sites as a platform for distributing information, and consequentially they were less interested in the messages that they received. This result supported Pew's (2012) report that concluded that presidential candidates in the 2012 election used social media more message distribution than social

interaction. But despite this finding, it is significant to acknowledge that campaigns said that they wished they had a better understanding of how they could use the interactive tools available in social network site technology to more effectively engage in dialogue with their constituents. Instead of employing this technology to broadcast announcements, interviewees expressed a desire to increase their back and forth communication with voters so that they could enhance their understanding of the electorate. By using social network sites for two way communication, opposed to one way message dissemination, campaigns believed they could gain valuable feedback from voters that could be used in formal decision making. Again, further research is needed to test this belief as it could have important implications for strengthening policy making procedures.

Official procedures for policy making emerged as a third element in this case study that prevented deliberation from being integrated into formal governing activities. This finding supported Ryfe's (2005) claim that the defined systematic process that explicitly binds politicians to drawing on deliberation from specific stakeholders, as opposed to "ordinary citizens," prevents deliberation from entering policy making processes. While this research does not propose that official procedures be reformed to require politicians to consult the deliberation on their social network sites in their decision making processes, it does suggest that the newness of social network site technology in the 2012 election may have prevented political leaders from understanding its potential value. Interview analysis confirmed that social network sites were still in their formative stage as campaigns confessed that they were challenged to embrace this new technology before they fully understood how it could be used most effectively. But immediately prior to Election Day, campaigns believed that they had come to recognize

the value of social network sites not only for campaigning, but also for accommodating citizen deliberation that could be useful in a broader political arena.

Perhaps the use of social network sites will have matured by the next election cycle, and therefore it would be beneficial for future research to reexamine the potential for deliberation to influence formal decision making procedures. Based on conclusions from this research, political leaders seem increasingly more willing to use social network sites as a legitimate venue for extracting the opinions of voters, and engaging in dialogue that would improve the effectiveness of their leadership.

These findings illustrate political leaders' willingness for social network site deliberation to be used in policy making, however the fact still remains that campaigns examined in the present case study did not exhibit this belief in their own conduct. This finding confirms the structural ambivalence that characterizes a disconnect between democratic deliberation and policy making (Ryfe, 2005). As proposed by Ryfe, "It is one thing to argue abstractly that contemporary politics might be reinvigorated with greater deliberation and participation. It is quite another to make interactions between ordinary people and policy makers actually work" (2005, p. 62). The present research argues that political campaign social network sites exist as an especially advantageous venue for facilitating the linkage between democratic deliberation and policy making for two reasons. First, unlike other political social network sites that are operated by interest groups or politically active individuals, campaign sites offer a direct line of communication between representatives and their constituents. Second, unlike nondigital deliberative venues such as face to face environments, social network sites enable the type of ongoing, inclusive deliberation that produces more impactful deliberative

outcomes. In the next election cycle this research encourages political candidates to use the empirical findings from this study to justify a broader incorporation of the deliberation engaged on their social network sites in their governing. Additionally, it is suggested that contributions to democratic deliberation theory that are put forth in the present study should be scrutinized in future election research so that these emerging assumptions may be confirmed, contradicted, and extended.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study, most of which were derived from the case study method that was used to examine the nature of democratic deliberation on political campaigns' social network sites. Additionally, the digital environment presents the qualitative researcher with a number of challenging responsibilities, not the least of which is to describe coherently the visual experience for readers who have not visited social network sites. Although the present research attempted to explain the nature of democratic deliberation as completely as possible, there are still a number of critical gaps that merit attention.

To examine the behaviors of citizens engaging in deliberation on the campaigns' social network sites the researcher chose to employ an unobtrusive observational approach rather than conducting interviews. To clarify, instead of using self reported measures to explore this phenomenon the researcher derived meaning of citizens' experiences by analyzing the content they published on the social network sites. It is acknowledged that this decision prevented the researcher from gaining in depth insight into citizens' motivations and feelings regarding their deliberative participation. By conducting interviews the researcher may have generated a better understanding of why

citizens used this specific digital environment to express their opinions, and whether they believed their participation was influential to the greater political realm—if at all. Despite this limitation, it should also be recognized that interviewing social network site deliberators could have disrupted the natural environment that the researcher wanted to preserve. More specifically, the researcher was apprehensive about questioning deliberators for fear that scholarly intervention would cause citizens to behave differently in future participation on the sites. The researcher believed that the decision to refrain from interviewing citizens limited the potential for stifling democratic deliberation in a naturally occurring environment.

The timing of data collected from interviews exists as another limitation of the research design. In crafting the method to be used in this study the researcher remained cognizant that an attempt to examine campaign communication would be influenced by the occurrence of Election Day. Therefore, the decision to conduct interviews during the week prior to Election Day was based on the assumption that campaigns would have developed a solid understanding of their use of social network sites at this point. Additionally, the researcher was aware that following Election Day campaign headquarters would cease to exist and the individuals working on the campaigns might disperse, consequentially making it difficult for the researcher to conduct interviews with as many people as possible. While these reasons justify the researcher's interview timing, it is suggested that retrospective interviews conducted after Election Day could have elicited additional insightful and candid responses. While interviewees were assured that their answers would remain completely confidential, it is suspected that the looming date of the election may have prevented them from fully articulating their opinions about

citizens' behaviors and their willingness to engage with the electorate. Additionally, it is suggested that conducting interviews after this specific date would have allowed campaigns time to reflect on their experiences, thus increasing the clarity of their perceptions concerning their social network site operation.

A final limitation that must be addressed emerges from the case study approach that inherently limits the scope and sample of data analyzed. In researching political social network sites in the 2012 election there was certainly no shortage of data available as political groups throughout the globe operated sites that attracted millions of users. Reasons for selecting the case study method were justified in Chapter 3 and the limited scope of data that were collected in the present study was conducive to the qualitative exploratory nature of this study and the researcher's objective to produce an in depth understanding of the phenomenon. However, it must be acknowledged that other electoral races existed that also met the criteria for selection. For example, analysis of other congressional campaigns, as well as political campaigns for different levels of government such as local and national races may have generated new and different findings. Additionally, because the researcher's phenomenological approach attempted to unearth a common experience—opposed to distinct experiences of individuals—examination of more cases could have increased the generalizability of findings to help confirm that the results from the present study were in fact applicable to scenarios beyond the context of a single electoral race.

Beyond increasing the number of cases studied, this research is also limited in its scope of only examining one social network site platform—Facebook. While it was clearly justified why Facebook was selected among other social network sites used by

political campaigns, it would be beneficial to examine other digital interactive platforms such as YouTube that offer the potential for democratic deliberation to ensue. Consistent with previous democratic deliberation scholarship that encourages the continuous examination of new technologies, it is suggested that future research employ the results from the present study to examine different and newer social network site platforms that may potentially facilitate successful deliberative conditions (Delli Carpini et al., 2004).

Suggestions for Future Research

The present study exists as the first of its kind to examine the nature of democratic deliberation on political campaigns' social network sites and has established a foundation for a number of areas of inquiry to be investigated in future research. To begin, further investigation concerning the linkage between democratic deliberation on and formal policy making should be examined in the context of elected officials' social network sites. Political leaders that were interviewed explained that in comparison to their campaign sites, they believed that deliberation could have more impact on policy making when expressed in the context of candidates' congressional sites. For example, one participant suggested that elected officials should equate social network site messages to constituent phone calls or email, as all of these media exist as ways for citizens to express their opinions to their representatives (Participant 4). Opportunity for this research is vast as most elected officials in the United States operate at least one social network site, and according to Rainie et al. (2012), 39% of all American adults have engaged in a civic or political activity using social media. It is suggested that future investigation of elected officials' uses of deliberation conducted on their social network

sites could reveal a stronger connection between deliberation and policy making that could have important implications for democratic deliberation research.

Another suggestion for future research addresses the prevalence of negativity on political campaigns' social network sites. In the present study, negative language was observed in both content produced by the campaigns, as well as citizens' deliberative exchanges. It has been widely acknowledged in political science and political communication scholarship that negative campaigning has important implications on voters' attitudes about candidates and democratic processes (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994; Kahn and Kenny, 1999; Lau & Rovner, 2009). Consequentially, the study of negative campaigning should be extended to social network sites, especially because interviewees identified the importance of maintaining a positive presence on this communications platform. The present researcher observed minimal negativity within campaigns' social network site messages, however the few negative messages that were published stimulated a massive response from citizens. When campaigns published a message that attacked their opponent, citizen comments reflected increased deliberation as citizens attempted to defend their political opinions using supporting evidence. Using social network sites as a platform for data collection, future research should draw on existing literature in negative campaigning and literature on democratic deliberation to more closely investigate the role that negative messages play in democratic deliberative discourse.

A final suggestion for future research involves a more in depth investigation of how campaigns' messages can influence the nature of deliberation conducted on their social network sites. Analysis revealed that policy issues, people, and places that were

depicted in campaigns' posts appeared to stimulate subsequent citizen discussion. The current focus on deliberative discourse guided the researcher to concentrate on examining content that appeared to cultivate deliberation, however it is suggested that future research should also investigate what type of materials fail to stimulate deliberation. For example, analysis from this study revealed a noticeable lack of deliberation and diversity of opinions under campaign posts that featured photos of children. Additionally, the researcher noticed that Love's Facebook Page featured a significantly higher amount of posts and comments, however this quantitative difference did not appear to relate to enhanced deliberation. This observation suggests that Love's campaign communication may have stimulated less deliberative discourse. Future analysis of campaign social network sites should attempt to improve understanding of the characteristics of campaign content that support or suppress democratic deliberation. In addition to contributing to scholarship, this research would also have practical implications for professional campaigners as interviewees largely agreed that a major strategic objective was to increase engagement on their social network sites.

In the 2012 election cycle there was no denying the prevalence of political campaigning that permeated throughout social network sites. As this technology continues to increase in popularity, the implications of this type of communication on the future of democratic processes must be taken seriously. There is a need to monitor how this technology influences the ways that politicians execute their campaign strategies, and how changes in digital campaigning impact voting outcomes and citizens opinions about their government and democratic elections. How does the appearance and conduct of political candidates' on social network sites influence the way that citizens perceive their

political leaders? How does the intervention of campaign communication in these digital social spheres influence the ways that citizens behave and negotiate relationships with others on these sites? And how does political participation on these sites influence citizens' ideas about politics and their civic engagements conducted offline?

Conclusions drawn from the present study indicate that campaigns maintain a dominant role in the ways that election communication appears on social network sites. While citizens are often encouraged to participate in campaign communication, the power to control election discourse ultimately lies in the hands of the campaigns. In addition to deciding which political issues obtain prominence, campaigns also manage the amount of election information that appears, and which citizens' opinions are important enough to receive visibility on these websites. Consequentially, it is imperative that researchers continue to monitor the social network site activities of political campaigns and to critically analyze their conduct in terms of its influence on broader democratic processes.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Each participant in this study was provided with this consent form to read and sign prior to conducting interviews.

The Use of Social Network Sites by Political Campaigns

The purpose of this research study is to explore the use of social network sites by political candidates in elections. Doctoral candidate Stephanie E. Bor is conducting this study in order to learn how candidate's Facebook Pages can exist as a virtual space for citizen deliberation of political issues.

As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a brief interview with the researcher to share your opinions regarding the use of Facebook in their campaign. The risks of this study are minimal. The risks associated with this study are similar to those you may experience when discussing personal or professional opinions with others. If you feel upset from this experience, you can tell the researcher, and she will tell you about resources available to help.

I cannot promise any direct benefit for participating in this study. However, I hope the information I glean from this study may help citizens and politicians understand how Facebook can be used successfully as a space for public deliberation of political issues.

Your name will be kept with your responses from the interview. However, if you would like to remain anonymous in publications and/or presentations, your name and organization will be removed, so only the researcher will know your identity.

The interview—from start to finish—will be recorded with a digital voice recorder to ensure accuracy in verbatim quotations and responses used in publication. The digital voice file will be transcribed, or converted, into a Word document, so your

actual voice will not be recognized. I will store the both the digital and text files generated from the interview in a password-protected computer for about six months and delete them after that duration. Thus, I will be the only person with access to the media.

If you have questions, complaints or concerns about this study, you can contact Stephanie E. Bor at 530-519-7267. If you feel you have been harmed as a result of participation, please call their faculty advisor, Dr. Robert Avery, at 801-581-5343, who may be reached Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Utah IRB may be reached by phone at (801) 581-3655 or by e-mail at irb@hsc.utah.edu.

It should take no more than 30 minutes to complete this activity. Participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to take part. You can choose not to finish the interview or decline to answer any question without penalty or loss of benefits.

By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

Thank you very much for your participation with this important research.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The researcher used this semistructured interview guide to conduct all interviews.

1) What is your position on the campaign staff?

   Probing questions:

   a) What is your relationship to the campaign's social network site efforts?

   b) What is your relationship to the campaign's Facebook Page?

2) What are the objectives for your Facebook Page?

   Probing questions:

   a) Does your Facebook Page serve an advertising purpose? Please explain why or why not.

   b) Does your Facebook Page help you target voters for direct communication? Please explain why or why not.

   c) What is the value of your Facebook Page to the campaign?

3) How does the campaign Facebook Page differ from other social media use in the campaign (i.e. Twitter)?

   Probing questions:

   a) Are there specific technical aspects of Facebook that you recognize? Are these aspects beneficial or not beneficial?

   b) Are there specific cultural aspects of Facebook that you recognize? Are these aspects beneficial or not beneficial?

4) How do you monitor your Facebook Page?

   Probing questions:

   a) What is your policy for deleting content posted on the Page?

   b) Do you ignore particular messages?

c) Do you contact users directly through private messaging?

5) How does the content/information posted by users effect or modify the course of the campaign?
   a) How do citizen's messages effect or modify your campaign strategy?
   b) How will content published on Facebook during the campaign affect formal policy making decisions or priorities in policy agenda?
6) How do you respond to messages received via Facebook?
   a) To what extent do you engage in dialogue with citizens in posts?
   b) To what extent do you engage in dialogue with citizens in private messages?
7) How does your Facebook Page can serve as a virtual space for deliberating political issues?

   Probing questions:

   a) How do you see deliberation occurring on the Page?
   b) Do you encourage deliberation on the Page?
8) Is there anything else you want to tell me about your Facebook Page?

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