Using Social Networks for Library Funding Advocacy: A Discourse Analysis of the Save the Miami-Dade Public Libraries Social Media Campaign

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Abstract
In July 2013, the social media campaign, *Save the Miami-Dade Public Libraries* (SMDPL) sought to influence the Miami-Dade Mayor and County Commissioners to reverse proposed budget cuts and maintain existing library funding levels. This study examines the SMDPL campaign by conducting a discourse analysis of the SMDPL Facebook posts and Twitter account @MIALibraries to examine the public value statements and interactive policymaking process using Moore's Creating Public Value Theory. Information sharing using social network sites can be important sources of the wishes of a community but may not direct the actions of public officials and can become a source of community conflict. While the use of SNS may be disruptive in disseminating or implementing an unpopular policy that is desired by public officials and may be an inefficient way to obtain consensus, the pursuit of social equity may outweigh the potential obstacles and challenges facing public officials navigating social networks.

1   Introduction

Social network sites (SNS) have emerged alongside traditional media platforms as dynamic forums for advocacy, public protests, natural disaster responses, public sector communication and crowd sourced solutions, drawing on social capital and engaging multiple stakeholders with diverse roles of agency into conversations about social phenomena (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Gonzalez-Bailon, 2013; Merchant, Elmer & Lurie, 2011; Tufekci, 2013). This pilot study seeks to understand if and how library funding advocacy discourse may establish a community's consensus on public library values. Framing the discourse using the theory of Creating Public Value (CPV) (Moore, 1995). This study examines the information shared using social network sites, Facebook and Twitter, for the universal, public sector and public library values shared; and, identifies interactive characteristics, including positioning, to examine policymaking processes such as problem definition, agenda setting, solution creation, and consensus building.

The social media campaign, *Save the Miami-Dade Public Libraries* (SMDPL) sought to influence the Miami-Dade Mayor and the County Commission to maintain existing library funding levels. This pilot study examines the library funding advocacy campaign's information sharing discourse that may have influenced the outcome of the subsequent Miami-Dade County Commission vote by moving policy making into the public sphere.

2   Background

On July 17, 2013, Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez, and a majority of county commissioners, agreed to a proposed budget that would close 22 libraries throughout Miami-Dade County, and layoff over 400 employees. No public referendum was needed for the cuts to take effect. The libraries involved included many with multiple socio-economic risk factors such as linguistic isolation, minimal educational attainment, low median income, low average home value and use of library services such as Internet and computer access as a social safety net (Mon, 2013). Miami-Dade County commissioners voted on September 10, 2013, opting to use emergency funds to reinstate library services and retain all county employees.

2.1   Statement of the Problem

In the 2011-2012 Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study (PLFTAS), the American Library Association (ALA) reported that public library systems' average total operating expenditures decreased for the fifth year in a row, with an anticipated decline of 5.3% in FY 2012-2013. Almost half the states

report cuts in state funding to public libraries, reduced spending for collections, a decrease in full-time equivalent staffing for three years in a row (23.2%) and 21.5% of libraries reporting a decrease in public service hours (ALA, 2014). These data inform library directors, policymakers at local and state levels and to the communities served by public libraries (ALA, 2014). Local campaigns arise to challenge these decreases and create awareness and support by engaging diverse stakeholders in a discourse about the inherent value of public libraries.

Information sharing using social network sites can be an important source of the wishes of a community but may not direct the actions of public officials, becoming a source of community conflict. While the use of SNS may be disruptive in disseminating or implementing an unpopular policy that is desired by public officials and may be an inefficient way to obtain consensus, the pursuit of social equity may outweigh the potential obstacles and challenges facing public officials navigating social networks (Hale, 2011; Mintrom, 2012).

This study will use the domain-specific content coding approach in computer-mediated discourse analysis (Herring, 2004) based on the universal, public sector and library values as informed by the literature on public value for the semantic domain; and an interactive domain framework will describe a selected thread of the SMDPL discourse originating on the Twitter account and then migrated to the Facebook account. The interaction framing is based upon the policymaking values described in public policy literature (Smith, 2010; Weissert & Weissert, 2008) that includes problem definition, agenda setting, solutions, consensus building (the process), and consensus (the agreement).

This analysis describes the interactive framing that includes positioning to understand "how people construct meaning from moment to moment" (Ribeiro, 2006, p. 48) describing "the resource orientations of participants" (p. 50) as they attempt to appropriate the meanings in the thread exchange to establish meaning that is in dispute as part of the library funding advocacy. The values represent elements of public policymaking viewed from an information sharing perspective, thus providing the study with an opportunity to contribute to the interdisciplinary literature on the nature of information used for diverse purposes and on multiple platforms.

2.2 Research Questions

The overarching question for the larger study asks how the use of social network sites for library funding advocacy demonstrate what the public values about libraries and public sector institutions.

Specific questions that will be examined in this pilot study include:

R1. What *universal values, public sector values, or library values,* if any, are shared using the Save the Miami-Dade Public Library Facebook and Twitter pages for library funding advocacy?
R2. In what ways are *agenda-setting* and *problem definition* expressed, if at all, using the SMDPL Facebook page / Twitter account for information sharing about library funding policy making?

This design complements the dual theory framework that guides this multi-purpose study, using an analysis of data that seeks to 1) describe and explain interactional aspects of the phenomena; and 2) understand any correlation to real-world outcomes (Zimmerman, 2014).

3   Literature Overview

3.1   Social Networks and Public Sector Policymaking

Social networks facilitate conversations between individuals and include both face to face, print and online SNS (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). Networked publics function as a subset of social networks, an online version of other types of publics that offer individuals ways to gather, collaborate, and connect for various purposes such as social, cultural, civic and advocacy (boyd, 2010). Social networks offer an expanding channel of feedback that is often unpredictable in its diffusion and potent in its ability to provide power to a collective voice (Alford, 2009).

3.2   Theoretical Background

*Creating Public Value (CPV)*aims to examine the process of networked community governance (Benington & Moore, 2011) in which those who are governed are more actively involved in problem

definition, policy making and in the development of resources (through crowdsourcing online and third-sector initiatives).
2011).

The SMDPL social media campaign established a discourse in which the values of public libraries were publicly deliberated, examined and used to define the issues surrounding a proposed reduction of a long-term institution's cultural role, the termination of many of its employees, and the virtual elimination in many low-income communities of access to social services via library facilitated Internet service.

3.2.1   Creating Public Value
Previous studies using CPV indicate that use of a public value analysis can identify a community's core public values (Benington & Moore, 2011); for an institution such as a library, which faces repeated challenges to its funding, lacking a consensus on community values could be argued to be an unresolved issue that perpetuates discourse over ongoing funding crises. CPV articulates a proactive response to systemic change and seeks to answer more basic questions about the role of governance and the emerging citizen involvement in democratic and public spheres (Benington & Moore, 2011). Framing the discourse using universal, public sector and public library values and the policy making processes of problem definition, agenda setting, solution creation and consensus building provides a way to identify values expressed and may illuminate a greater understanding of information sharing by a diverse range of stakeholders engaged in discourse about what the public values.

4.0 Method
4.1 Study Design
This pilot study tests a mixed methods design including a discourse analysis of a select Facebook and Twitter thread using NVivo10 analysis software, a web-based survey of social media participants, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in a sequential, exploratory design. Discourse analysis of the SMDPL Facebook page and Twitter account will describe and explain the dynamic interaction of information sharing in a deliberative process.

The discourse surrounding library funding advocacy will be operationalized to examine the universal, public sector and library-specific public values shared by stakeholders; and the problem-definition, agenda-setting and consensus-building characteristics employed. The roles of stakeholders will be analyzed to identify the values shared by diverse participants' (professional library advocates, librarians, library managers, citizen participants, political/public agents, Facebook/Twitter administrators,). The larger study will analyze the 2013 funding conflict deliberated in context of the Facebook and Twitter accounts and will yield the content of the postings, the critical incidents to which they were related, the values shared by participants, and the influence of the discourse on the actions of political/public agents.

5.0 Conclusion
As a result of SNS integration into increasingly networked government programs, citizen participants are able to "collaborate in decision-making processes and to incorporate broad involvement across groups of individuals and organizations" (Hale, 2011, p. 10). In the public sector, information generated by SNS manifests as policymaking capacity for public agencies to address public problems (Hale, 2011). CPV provides a way to understand advocacy efforts like those focused on the 2013 Miami-Dade Public Libraries' funding crisis and describe the interaction of the participants and the processes employed in the values deliberation and the policy making process.

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