

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Influence of Leaders on the Quality of Citizen Deliberation: An Exploratory Assessment of Online Deliberation in New Zealand

Audrey Susin\* and Eduardo Ordonez-Ponce†

Leaders can be essential in setting the tone of deliberation in the public sphere, but can their discursive style influence the wider public sphere? Mass communication usually mediates leader-citizen interactions, and the proliferation of social media has presented new, large-scale opportunities to support deliberation. Further, leaders using these platforms have widespread reach. Using deliberative discourse analysis, this exploratory research studies whether leaders influence the quality of citizen deliberation and whether this is dependent on the online arena. Two leaders with contrasting communication styles were chosen: New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern and opposition leader Judith Collins. Two online arenas were included: a national news media Facebook page and the leaders' respective Facebook pages. The results found that deliberative quality was variable within the news mass media arena; however, citizens displayed higher deliberative quality when the leader did so in the leader-led online media arena.

This study suggests that leaders can use deliberative dialogue to foster more deliberative discussion among citizens when they engage as both participants and facilitators in arenas with greater access to directly support deliberation. It presents theoretical arguments for leaders to participate in legitimation processes as part of the response to the problem of scale and introduces a communication model for leaders to support deliberation in the public sphere. The model suggests that the leader's ability to affect the deliberative quality of citizens' discussions is mediated by their level of influence within that space.

**Keywords:** deliberative communication; online deliberation; deliberative quality; systemic approach to deliberation; deliberative democracy; deliberative leadership; leadership influence; leadership style

## Introduction

Leaders can be essential in setting the tone of deliberation in the public sphere (Chambers 2009; Dryzek 2010). But can leaders' discursive style influence the wider public sphere? This exploratory research studies whether leaders influence the quality of citizen deliberation. Since mass communication usually mediates leader-citizen interactions, there is a need to examine deliberation in systemic terms and consider the relevant technological affordances. To explore this, this study looks at whether a political leader's use, or lack thereof, of deliberative communication style online, in turn, impacts citizens' use, or lack thereof, of deliberative dialogue online, and if so, if this is dependent on the online arena. These questions are examined by analyzing the deliberative quality of former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's and former opposition leader Judith Collins's discussions during three periods and in two online arenas. It then analyzes the deliberative quality of online

citizen discussions and whether the leaders' impact on citizen deliberation is dependent on the online arena.

This study presents theoretical arguments for leaders to participate in legitimation processes as part of the response to the problem of scale, introducing a communication model for leaders to support public deliberation. According to the proposed model, the leader's ability to affect the deliberative quality of citizens' discussions is mediated by their level of influence within that space. While exploratory, the study suggests that when leaders have greater access to support deliberative dialogue and actively engage as both participants and facilitators, they can foster more deliberative discussions among citizens. This is an important finding with significant implications for political communication literature, helping in building a communication model for leaders that supports deliberation in the public sphere.

## Literature Review

### *Leaders' influence in shaping public discourse*

Despite deliberative dialogue showing success on a small scale (Chambers 2010), it goes against the long-understood impossibility of involving all citizens at this level in large-scale decision-making (Dryzek 2001; Goodin

\* Athabasca University, CA

† Faculty of Business, Athabasca University, CA

Corresponding author: Audrey Susin  
([audreyasusin@outlook.com](mailto:audreyasusin@outlook.com))

2000; Iyengar et al. 2019). In interpreting Habermas's critical theory, many deliberative theorists have sought to recreate the conditions that were meant as theoretical ideals to develop his critical theory of society. In his quest to resurrect the Enlightenment project of a life informed by reason (McCarthy 1984), Habermas outlined his discourse ethics and ideal speech situations as the conditions that must occur: discourse must be unconstrained, among free and equal competent participants, free from self-deception and strategic interaction (Dryzek 1990). Within this context, the aims of deliberative democracy have been criticized as unachievable (Knight & Johnson 1997). As Parkinson (2001) put it, little in mass public communication can be labeled 'deliberative.'

Further, the presupposition of political equality renders the idea impossible (Knight & Johnson, 1997). Mouffe (2000) argues that a primary shortcoming of the deliberative approach is that Habermas's 'no force except that of the better argument' (1984: 24) requires power to be eliminated in favor of realized rational consensus. This interpretation of Habermasian ideas leaves out the possibility of a leader. Despite the rigorous demands of the ideal speech situation being criticized as unattainable, Dryzek (1990) clarifies that its primary value is critical. Although Habermas has also since clarified his work, these interpretations have persisted, including the exclusion of the politicians' role in deliberation.

Applying his theory of communication and rationality specifically to the deliberative project, Habermas (2006) describes two critical conditions for this realization: a self-regulating media system, independent from its social environment; and the audience (citizens) providing feedback between an informed elite discourse and a responsive civil society. Political elite help to construct public opinion as coauthors and addresses with the expectation of ensuring the plurality of considered public opinion. In response, citizens respond to the issues articulated by the elite by setting the frame for the range of what they would accept as legitimate decisions. According to Habermas (2006), the issue should be sought with the content and format of political communication, and mediated political communication should not be required to meet the strict demands of full deliberation. In other words, it need not be given that a leader's discourse be antithesis to the deliberative project, and informal discussions that do not meet the strict demands of the ideal speech situations should be relaxed in favor of settings that contribute to the whole (Mansbridge et al. 2012). In fact, Barber (2003) places informal conversations at the center of democracy as the force that builds communities by shifting the sense of 'I' to the 'we' needed for generating political action. This 'systems' thinking enables deliberative democracy theory to start addressing its problem of scale (Mansbridge et al. 2012).

The problem however, with leaders being 'under the glare of publicity' is that without the influence of a dialogue partner, leaders speak, appealing to the broader public, but with content that is of suspect, in what Chambers calls 'plebiscitary rhetoric' (2010). Coercion in the form of persuasion cannot be separated from their speech because

their authority (Kuyper 2012) and strategic intentions will arguably be present in their communication. Moreover, what leaders say carries weight; a leader's display of incivility increases citizens' unwillingness to compromise (Gervais 2018), lowers their political trust, and increases their animosity toward the out-party (Skytte 2021).

More broadly, how leaders frame their messages to the public remains a primary way they influence citizens' opinions (Druckman & Nelson 2003). 'A framing effect occurs when in the course of describing an issue or event, a speaker's emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions' (Druckman 2001: 1042). Over the past quarter-century, numerous studies have shown that opinions can be substantially shaped by framing effects (Druckman et al. 2013).

The same forms of strategic communication can also be used for deliberative means. Frames need not be persuasion for one side but can be used to highlight thinking about different perspectives (Friedman 2007). Romsdahl et al. (2018: 2) define deliberative framing as a frame that 'emphasizes the importance of advancing and learning from multiple perspectives and empathizing with others' values.' Rhetoric is another tool that can be used to persuade citizens to legitimize others' views (Dryzek 2010).

Against the backdrop of supporting the creation of a good deliberative system, the role of leaders remains largely unstudied (Kuyper 2012). To keep mass deliberative democracy from becoming utopian and unrealistic, Chambers (2010) and Dryzek (2010) have proposed a monological role for leaders as deliberative orators where asymmetrical and mediated communication follows along deliberative lines. For example, Dryzek (2010) describes the role of rhetoric as crucial in Mandela demonstrating his understanding of the discursive psychology of his most radical constituents by validating the discourse of struggle while marginalizing the discourse of violence.

Several scholars have put forth the idea of including leaders as active participants in deliberative processes, both within citizen assemblies (Flinders et al. 2016; Lees-Marshment 2016; Suiter et al. 2016) and in everyday informal talk (Lees-Marshment 2016; Hendriks & Lees-Marshment 2019). Because elite framing remains a substantive part of public opinion formation (Druckman 2001) and is largely an elite-driven activity that constitutes most citizens' democratic experience (Leeper & Slothuus 2018), more attention should be given to what role leaders should play in support of the deliberative project, especially given their widespread reach and the problem of scale that currently plagues deliberative theory.

Kuyper (2012) suggests that leaders fill the role of facilitator/moderator in deliberations in mini-publics. This aligns with later research by Strandberg et al. (2015; 2019), which, although did not look at leaders, demonstrated facilitators' success in influencing better deliberation in citizen discussions. Despite the enthusiasm of many deliberative democrats toward mini-publics in response to the frustration of finding mechanisms to

influence deliberation at the macro level, Lafont (2015) argues that focusing on mini-publics diminishes the legitimacy of the deliberative system as a whole. 'The lattice structure of leadership' also fails to account for the counterforce of leadership by intensely focusing on the leader's role as representative. If democracy is tasked with tracking citizens' preferences (actual or counterfactual), Beerbohm (2015) highlights the insoluble role of democratic leadership when viewed as either opposed to participatory self-government; or as a follower, responsive to citizens' preferences. In response, he proposes the Commitment Theory of democratic leadership. Though not a deliberative account per se, the Commitment Theory envisions instances of democratic leadership in which leaders do something *with* their followers in a joint cooperative effort. For example, President Lincoln changed citizens' views on slavery and their commitment to ending it (Beerbohm 2015). As an action performed with citizens, there is a presupposition of a shared understanding in the interlocking of intentions. Perhaps then, to effectuate a democratic or deliberative account of leadership where shared commitment is created, leaders must first elicit what Habermas described as the mutual understanding that necessitates the formation of rational opinion.

The large-scale influence of a leader's communication on the deliberative system has been limited to monological addresses. Social media opens avenues not available to deliberative orators like Mandela where politicians can connect and respond directly with large citizen audiences (Ross & Bürger 2014; Sørensen 2016). The internet has helped increase the number of politically active people (Gibson et al. 2005) and has been suggested as an important new source of political information (Bode 2016). Indeed, online platforms have advantages that extend beyond reach, with informal talk fostering political disagreement that tends to be avoided offline (Rossini & Maia 2021). While the relationship between political messaging and political knowledge is weak (Eveland 2004), interpersonal discussions can increase political learning by engaging in slower, central-route information processing (Jung et al. 2011). Left to their own accord however, online deliberations tend to be less deliberative than those guided by a facilitator to follow rules of engagement (Strandberg 2015). Even in groups with like-minded individuals, which usually leads to group polarization (Sunstein 2000), the presence of facilitators can alleviate opinion polarization (Strandberg et al. 2019). A study by Esau et al. (2021) found that as regulatory guides or rules of engagement for discussion decrease, so does the overall quality of deliberation. Political leaders are increasingly using social media to connect to constituents (Ross & Bürger 2014). Rather than limiting the leader's role to facilitators of mini-publics, participants of citizen assemblies, or orators, bolstered by their mass media reach, social media allows them to participate in and facilitate large-scale citizen discussions. This study explores the possibility for leaders to promote listening and understanding amongst citizens of diverse opinions by expanding the transmission of deliberative ideals to the broader, informal public sphere.

As participants with citizens in dialogue, leaders can model deliberation for citizens and influence them through deliberative talk, rhetoric, and deliberative frames. Simultaneously, while facilitating the discussion, they can pass on the rules of engagement for the respectful exchange of opinions.

## Methods

To achieve the purpose of this article, leaders' speeches were analyzed, along with the corresponding sample of citizen online discussions. Former Prime Minister of New Zealand Jacinda Ardern and former opposition leader Judith Collins were chosen because both use Facebook Live to communicate with citizens in real-time, have different communication styles, and are female leaders within the same geographical area. The leaders' gender was held constant because perceptions of the effectiveness of female and male leaders can vary according to position and institution (Paustian-Underdahl et al. 2014). Additionally, New Zealand and its political leaders were considered as a useful context for this exploratory research for three main reasons. First, New Zealand is a country broadly committed to democratic norms and values, being among the top five strongest democracies in the world (Levine 2004; Willige 2017). Second, former Prime Minister Ardern has been globally acknowledged for her leadership style (Simpson et al. 2022), which was tested when faced with a massive shooting and the COVID-19 pandemic, both events that created discussion and opposing views to her policies (Every-Palmer et al. 2021; McGuire et al. 2020). And third, just like in other parts of the world, New Zealand society is getting increasingly intolerant and polarised (Porat 2023; Jaworska & Vásquez 2022), an issue exacerbated by social media that more experienced politicians argue somehow helps explain Arden's resignation (Clark 2023). While these features shed some light on the institutional context that supports deliberative dialogue in New Zealand, highlighting their regulative, normative, and cultural dimensions (Scott 2013), further research is encouraged to deepen the role that institutional factors play in citizen deliberation.

Video clips of interviews conducted on news and radio channels, as well as sessions in the House of Commons, and their Facebook Live sessions and tweets between July 2020 and June 2021 were assessed to understand Ardern's and Collins' communication styles and use of deliberative talk. Additionally, Ardern's interviews and Facebook Live sessions while campaigning before taking office in September 2017 were reviewed to assess for differences in her communication style under this context, of which none were found. Thus, it was decided she would serve as an effective comparison. Since Collins' Facebook Live sessions only took place during the campaign period, two sets of interviews with the leaders from a national show were included.

Three separate contexts were considered: 1) during the campaign period in August 2020, 2) during the non-COVID lockdown period and on a non-COVID subject in November 2020, and 3) during the COVID lockdown and discussing COVID-related subjects in March 2021. The subject of the discussions was held constant where possible: the

housing bubble during the non-lockdown COVID period and COVID during the COVID period. During the campaign period, both conversations had the broader COVID subject. Ardern discussed the decision to push back the election date, vaccination, and initiatives to buffer the impacts of lockdowns. Collins discussed the impact of COVID on farming, current regulations, and international workers' VISAs. Discussions coded from Facebook comments (citizens) and leaders (videos), female political leaders, New Zealand, and interviews chosen close together in date for the comparison period were held constant.

Three interviews from each leader were analyzed, along with the corresponding comments made by citizens on Facebook, for a total of six leader interviews and six citizen discussions. The interviews and Facebook Live sessions that were closest in date were chosen within the date ranges of the three contexts as comparisons. The interviewer was held constant and, when possible, the specific topic of discussion under the broader topic of COVID-19.

Video posts were transcribed, and the number of comments and views were recorded. Each video post's comments were then copied sequentially into a spreadsheet. The first 100 sequential comments were coded from each television interview comment section. Since comments often followed a discussion thread and responses to leaders' video comments, and because this study aims to explore deliberation within the context of the conversation, this study did not make a random selection of comments as similar studies have done (for example, Esau et al. (2021)). The first 200 sequential comments out of 395 were copied for analysis from the comment section of Collins's Facebook Live video. Because Ardern's video had over 10 thousand comments and extracting them in a sequential order was not possible, 418 of the first comments marked as most engaged (number of replies) in sequential order were copied into a document. Ultimately, a final sample of 1,018 user comments and 82 leader speech instances were analyzed across three different contexts.

Comments from the leaders and citizens were analyzed for their deliberative discourse quality using qualitative content analysis based on a combination of a modified version of Steenbergen et al.'s (2003) discourse quality index (DQI) and elements from Stromer-Galley's (2007) deliberative coding scheme. The modified version of the DQI was developed to better align with the current research in deliberation: the addition of narrative in the form of storytelling and personal impact to the justification of claims (Boswell 2013; Young 2002). Additionally, similar to the modification made by Elstub et al. (2021), all speech instances were coded, not just those making demands as the original DQI requires (Steenbergen et al. 2003) to capture the overall level of respect within the discussion. DQI incorporates a participation score to capture the ability of participants to participate freely in the discussion. A score of 1 is provided for a speech instance where normal participation was possible and 0 when it was interrupted by a speaker (Steenbergen et al. 2003). Because participants' speech instances are not interrupted in this arena (text-based), the participation code was removed from the DQI score (Elstub et al. 2021).

The scores from each category of the DQI were added to create an index on a scale from 0–1.

The modified DQI, despite the addition of narrative to content justification, lacked important measures to understand the context of the conversation that is also important for deliberation, such as group heterogeneity (Sunstein 2000), the degree to which the discussion remained on topic (Stromer-Galley 2007), and engagement or reciprocity (Habermas 1984, 1985). As such, additional coding measures were added based on Stromer-Galley's (2007) coding scheme, including the number of participants who agreed and disagreed with the leader's position and the number of comments on topic. Furthermore, to supplement the measures of engagement and reciprocity, the number of comments that took the form of metatalk, the number of social talk instances participants engaged in, and the number of replies to other citizens' comments were coded. **Table 1** summarises the aspects coded in both the leaders' and citizens' comments and the measures used to capture these aspects. Coded speech instances and comments from citizens and leaders were analyzed using the individual measures and the modified DQI. The study had one coder; thus, intercoder reliability was not obtained. To account for this, the coder completed several independent revisions for each discussion to ensure consistency.

## Results

All the discussions contained a heterogeneous mix of citizens with views for and against the opinion of leaders (**Table 2**), discussions were on topic for much of each discussion, and citizens displayed reciprocity by responding to one another and the leader.

Though the number of participants who replied to others decreased in both leaders' Facebook Live discussions with citizens to 32.14% (Collins) and 35.31% for Ardern (**Table 3**), more citizens posted social greetings to Ardern.

Little social talk was present within the news mass media conversation threads (1%–3%). Similarly, leaders used minimal social talk during these. The leaders' use of social talk increased in their Facebook Live talks, as did citizens, with Collins' speech instances, comprising 17.14% social talk and the corresponding citizen discussion 20.5%. Ardern used a lot of social talk (80%), and citizens responded using a higher amount as well (51.2%) (**Table 3**).

Only Ardern used metatalk during her COVID period interview, clarifying the interpretation from the interviewer of comments she had made. Citizens' use of metatalk varied (5%–50%), with the highest found in response to Ardern's interview and the lowest in response to Collins' interview from the Non-Lockdown COVID period (**Table 3**).

The highest overall deliberative quality (DQI = 0.59) was associated with the leaders' Facebook mass media arena when Ardern also scored high on deliberative quality (DQI = 0.66). Comparatively, when the leader scored low on deliberative quality within their Facebook mass media arena (DQI = 0.34), so did citizens (DQI = 0.29). Similar results were not observed in the news mass media arena, where DQI scores were variable and did not always align with the leader using more or less deliberative talk (**Table 4**).



**Table 1:** Aspects, measures, and definitions of deliberation analyzed.

Aspect	Measure	Definition	DQI Score
Equality (DQI) <sup>α</sup>	Participation	Equal opportunity to participate.	Not included
Reason Giving (DQI) <sup>α</sup>	Level of justification	Level of justification or completeness of the justifications made of the demands or appeals of the speech including implicit references.	(0) No justification. Participants makes an appeal without giving a reason for it. (1) Inferior justification: Reason provided but the participant does not make the link the appeal to the reason or only supports it using illustration. (2) Qualified justification: Participant makes one single complete inference for why an appeal should be accepted. (3) Sophisticated justification: Participant makes a minimum of 2 complete justifications for the same appeal or one complete justification for two separate appeals.
	Content of justification	Whether appeals or demands were made in terms of reference to narrow group interests, the greater good, the difference principle, or personal experience.	(0) Explicit Statement concerning group interests (1) Neutral Statement (2) Explicit Statement of the common good in utilitarian terms (2b) Explicit Statement of the common good in terms of the difference principle (2C) Statement of personal impact
Respect (DQI) <sup>α</sup>	Respect for groups	Measured respect toward all groups participating in the discussion or affected by the policies discussed in the discussion.	(0) No respect (1) Implicit respect (2) Explicit respect
	Respect for demands	Measured whether participants respected the demands or appeals of others.	(0) No respect (1) Implicit respect (2) Explicit respect
	Respect for counterarguments	Measured whether participants respected the counterarguments made by others whose views they didn't agree with.	(0) Counterarguments ignored (1) Counterarguments included but degraded (2) Counterarguments included – neutral (3) Counterarguments included and valued
Aim for consensus (DQI) <sup>α</sup>	Constructive politics	Whether participants attempted to reach consensus by making mediated proposals that considers the appeals or goals of each group, or whether they merely sit on their Position without attempt to reconcile or consensus build.	(0) Positional politics: No attempt by the Speaker to compromise, reconcile, or build consensus. (1) Alternative proposal: Speaker makes a proposal that does not fit the current agenda and is not relevant to the current debate. (2) mediated proposal: Speaker makes a mediated proposal that fits the current debate in attempt to compromise, reconcile, or build consensus.
Other aspects measured:			
Engagement <sup>β</sup>	Reciprocity	Engaging in dialogue vs. monologue.	This study measured the number of participants who replied to other participants' comments within the discussion to capture whether they are simply talking past each other and stating their positions or talking to each other in a back-and-forth exchange.
	On Topic	Number of participant comments on topic.	
	Metatalk	Talk about talk' when participants demonstrate reflecting on the conversation.	Sought clarification or to clarify one's own Statements or Statements of others, summarise the consensus of the group, state perceived conflicts in the discussion.
	Social Talk	Greetings, praise, apologies, general social chit chat	
Heterogeneity <sup>β</sup>	Disagreement	Number of participants with diverse views.	This study used the Proportion of people who agreed or disagreed with the opinion of the leader speaking in the Video they were commenting on.

α: (Steenbergen et al., 2003); β (Stromer-Galley, 2007)

**Table 2:** Group heterogeneity of citizen discussions.

	COVID Period		Non-lockdown COVID Period		Campaign Period	
	Collins Mar 9 Citizen's Discussion	Ardern Mar 7 Citizen's Discussion	Collins Nov 17 Citizen's Discussion	Ardern Nov 29 Citizen's Discussion	Collins Aug 25 Citizen's Discussion	Ardern Aug 18 Citizen's Discussion
<i>Agree with opinion of leader*</i>						
Yes	4.17%	19.40%	8.33%	17.54%	42.86%	67.51%
No	79.17%	46.27%	51.67%	40.35%	10.71%	4.52%
Unsure	16.67%	29.85%	40.00%	38.60%	41.96%	24.86%

\*only applicable comments were coded

**Table 3:** Engagement.

		Engagement (in percentage of frequency)			
		On Topic	Reciprocity	Metatalk	Social Talk
<b>News Arena – COVID Lockdown period</b>					
<i>Collins Mar 9, 2021 Trans-</i>	Collins' speech (N = 7)	–	–	0	14.29
<i>Ardern Mar 7, 2021 Community</i>	citizen's discussion (N = 100)	95	64.58	11	2
	Ardern's speech (N = 13)	–	–	7.69	0
	citizen's discussion (N = 100)	92	64.18	18	3
<b>News Arena – non-lockdown COVID period</b>					
<i>Collins Nov 17, 2020 Housing</i>	Collins' speech (N = 9)	–	–	0	0
<i>Ardern Nov 29, 2020 Housing</i>	citizen's discussion (N = 100)	93	66.67	5	0
	Ardern's speech (N = 8)	–	–	0	25
	citizen's discussion (N = 100)	74	87.72	50	1
<b>Leader's Facebook – campaign period</b>					
<i>Collins Aug 25, 2020 Campaign</i>	Collins' speech (N = 35)	–	28.57	0	17.14
<i>Ardern Aug 18, 2020 Campaign</i>	citizen's discussion (N = 200)	59	32.14	23.5	20.5
	Ardern's speech (N = 10)	–	140*	0	80
	citizen's discussion (N = 418)	86.84	35.31	4.31	51.2

\*Responded to one or more citizens within a speech instance.

**Table 4:** Summary of DQI.

DQI Score											
COVID Period				Non-lockdown COVID Period				Campaign Period			
Collins Mar 9, 2021 Trans-Tasman Bubble TVNZ Breakfast		Ardern Mar 7, 2021 Community Boarder Case TVNZ Breakfast		Collins Nov 17, 2020 Housing Bubble TVNZ Breakfast		Ardern Nov 29, 2020 Housing Bubble TVNZ Breakfast		Collins Aug 25, 2020 Campaign Period Facebook		Ardern Aug 18, 2020 Campaign Period Facebook	
Collin's Speech Instances	Citizen's Dis-cussion	Ardern's Speech Instances	Citizen's Dis-cussion	Collin's Speech Instances	Citizen's Dis-cussion	Ardern's Speech Instances	Citizen's Dis-cussion	Collin's Speech Instances	Citizen's Dis-cussion	Ardern's Speech Instances	Citizen's Dis-cussion
0.58	0.33	0.67	0.37	0.66	0.42	0.73	0.27	0.34	0.29	0.66	0.59

Regarding features of the DQI, reason-giving was captured by the level of justification or completeness of the justifications made by demands or appeals and the content of the justifications, whether these appeals or demands were made using narrow group interests, the

greater good, the difference principle (Steenbergen et al. 2003) or by a statement of personal impact (Dryzek 2000; Young 2002). In the news mass media arenas, leaders made most appeals using sophisticated justification. While scores varied, citizens also used justifications to

support their statements in all discussions, and most did so using neutral statements. The only discussion with a high number of citizens making statements containing no justifications (43.27%) was the citizen discussion in Collins' Facebook Live discussion. Similarly, in this discussion, both the leader (45.45%) and the citizens (26.92%) made more explicit statements concerning narrow group interests rather than neutral statements, referencing the common good, or statements of personal impact. In contrast, Ardern made no statements concerning narrow group interests, and citizens, in response, made a minor percentage of appeals concerning group interests (2.01%) (Table 5).

Respect was captured according to the DQI. Results were as expected in the leaders' Facebook Live arena: the leader displaying high levels of respect showed citizen discussion displaying the same (Table 5). In the news mass media arenas, leaders were respectful toward other groups. Collins, however, degraded 25% of counterarguments that she disagreed with in the non-lockdown COVID period. Citizens' level of respect varied regardless of the leaders' use of respectful messaging. In the leaders' Facebook Live arena, while Ardern's communication remained consistent with the other arenas, Collins displayed significant differences in the level of respect she conveyed in all categories. Notably, 53.57% of Collins' discussions showed no respect toward other groups, 73.91% showed no respect toward the demands of others, and 100% of her comments ignored the counterargument of others. The citizens' discussion in response to Ardern's Facebook Live arena, where she displayed zero instances of disrespect, had the highest levels of respect of any of the talks coded. Citizens' respect was more explicit, and the majority responded to counterarguments of those they disagreed with neutrally or in a way that explicitly valued the opposing opinion.

The percentage of comments made aiming for consensus by displaying constructive politics, where speakers made mediated proposals across all discussions, was variable among leaders ranging from 0%–100%. Citizens making mediated proposals was low (3.33%–8.43%), with the highest levels observed in discussions where leaders made them.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore if leaders influence the quality of citizen deliberation by examining whether their use, or lack thereof, deliberative communication style online, in turn, impacts citizens' use, or lack thereof, deliberative dialogue online and if so, if this was dependent on the online arena.

The citizens' discussions in both arenas met the criteria of deliberation. Citizens' discussions contained opposing views, had relatively high levels of reciprocity and engagement on topic, and used justifications to support statements. This means that citizens heard diverse perspectives, responded to each other on-topic, and did so with justifications to support their statements, rather than simply talking past each other, all criteria for deliberation and deep consideration of issues where

opinion change can take place (Stromer-Galley 2007). This finding was unlike Halpern and Gibbs' (2013), who found that although Facebook provides a deliberative space for political discussion, citizens deliberate superficially.

When the leaders stated their appeals without providing justifications, citizens also made a higher number of comments without providing any justifications. Collins' Facebook Live was the only talk where a leader made comments without providing any justifications. She also produced more comments that provided an inferior level of justification. By comparison, all comments from Ardern during this period contained qualified or sophisticated levels of justification. Generally, citizens' comments responding to the leaders' posted videos on Facebook saw a lower level of justification than the discussions from the TVNZ Breakfast interviews. This appeared to be partly because the threads responding directly to the leaders' Live videos contained many comments without appeals or claims such as greetings or praise.

Looking at the content of justifications, the leaders mainly made neutral comments, followed by statements of the greater good. Citizens also commented neutrally. That is, they did not reference any specific group interests, nor did they reference the common good or make statements of personal impact/storytelling. This was not the case for citizens responding to Collins' Facebook talk, which had increased comments referencing narrow group interests, as did Collins. Although this talk was about the impact of the current policies on agriculture, there was little in the way of stating impacts in a way that related to the common good or difference principle. Instead, many comments from Collins used an inflammatory tone with unjustified statements.

All citizens' discussions justified most of their comments, supporting their opinions and considering, through their responses, one another's statements. The aim for consensus, where citizens made mediated proposals in an attempt to compromise or reconcile (Steenbergen et al. 2003), was fairly low throughout all discussions. A finding consistent with other online deliberations (Esau et al. 2021; Stromer-Galley 2007).

Level of respect was the most salient factor of the DQI score, followed by level of justification.

Turning to the research question: whether leaders' use of deliberative talk in discussion elicited greater deliberation amongst citizens online and, if so, was it dependent on the arena, the results suggest that it depends. The discussion with the highest overall deliberative quality was associated with the leaders' Facebook mass media arena when the leader also scored high on deliberative quality. When the leader scored low on deliberative quality within their Facebook mass media arena, so did citizens. These findings were not observed in the online News mass media arena where DQI scores were variable and did not always align with the leader using more or less deliberative talk, which could be for a variety of reasons.

In the News mass media arena, the leaders' use of deliberation is largely limited to a participant in dialogue with the interviewer. Here, the interviewer leads the conversation, and the leader responds to their questions.

**Table 5:** Breakdown of deliberative quality of leader and citizen discussions.

	COVID Period						Non-lockdown COVID Period						Campaign Period					
	Collins March 9, 2021 Trans-Tasman Bubble TVNZ Breakfast		Ardern March 7, 2021 Community Boarder Case TVNZ Breakfast		Collins Nov 17, 2020 Housing Bubble TVNZ Breakfast		Ardern Nov 29, 2020 Housing Bubble TVNZ Breakfast		Collins Aug 25, 2020 Campaign Period Facebook		Ardern Aug 18, 2020 Campaign Period Facebook							
	Speech Instances	Citizen's Discussion	Ardern's Speech Instances	Citizen's Discussion	Collin's Speech Instances	Citizen's Discussion	Ardern's Speech Instances	Citizen's Discussion	Collin's Speech Instances	Citizen's Discussion	Ardern's Speech Instances	Citizen's Discussion						
<b>Level of justification</b>																		
0 no justification (as % of applicable comments)	0.00%	10.13%	0.00%	24.29%	0.00%	15.85%	0.00%	15.52%	4.55%	43.27%	0.00%	4.36%						
1 inferior justification	0.00%	18.99%	0.00%	12.86%	12.50%	14.63%	0.00%	24.14%	18.18%	15.38%	0.00%	46.98%						
2 qualified justification	16.67%	37.97%	23.08%	20.00%	12.50%	29.27%	0.00%	39.66%	40.91%	31.73%	25.00%	32.55%						
3 sophisticated justification	83.33%	32.91%	76.92%	42.86%	75.00%	40.24%	100.00%	20.69%	36.36%	9.62%	75.00%	16.11%						
<b>Content of justifications</b>																		
0 explicit statement concerning group interests	0.00%	3.85%	0.00%	5.71%	0.00%	3.66%	0.00%	0.00%	45.45%	26.92%	0.00%	2.01%						
1 neutral statement	83.33%	67.95%	100.00%	74.29%	100.00%	86.59%	83.33%	79.31%	27.27%	63.46%	75.00%	86.24%						
2 explicit statement of the common good (utilitarian)	16.67%	21.79%	0.00%	8.57%	0.00%	2.44%	16.67%	18.97%	27.27%	5.77%	25.00%	3.02%						
2 explicit statement of the common good (difference principle)	0.00%	2.56%	0.00%	4.29%	0.00%	3.66%	0.00%	1.72%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.69%						
2 statement of personal impact	0.00%	3.85%	0.00%	7.14%	0.00%	3.66%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.85%	0.00%	5.03%						
<b>Respect toward groups</b>																		
0 no respect	0.00%	73.74%	0.00%	49.48%	0.00%	28.00%	0.00%	67.37%	53.57%	37.35%	0.00%	9.60%						
1 implicit respect	100.00%	26.26%	100.00%	47.42%	100.00%	71.00%	100.00%	29.47%	42.86%	62.65%	88.89%	45.33%						
2 explicit respect	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.09%	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%	3.16%	3.57%	0.00%	11.11%	45.07%						
<b>Respect toward the demands of others</b>																		
0 no respect	16.67%	74.47%	0.00%	59.77%	0.00%	35.87%	0.00%	74.42%	73.91%	54.78%	0.00%	13.55%						
1 implicit respect	66.67%	24.47%	84.62%	39.08%	100.00%	63.04%	100.00%	23.26%	17.39%	45.22%	100.00%	32.58%						
2 explicit respect	16.67%	1.06%	15.38%	1.15%	0.00%	1.09%	0.00%	2.33%	8.70%	0.00%	0.00%	53.87%						
<b>Respect toward counterarguments</b>																		
0 counterarguments ignored	66.67%	7.50%	0.00%	17.39%	0.00%	19.18%	0.00%	51.28%	100.00%	25.00%	0.00%	13.64%						
1 counterarguments included but degraded	0.00%	62.50%	0.00%	43.48%	25.00%	27.40%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	60.00%	0.00%	15.91%						
2 counterarguments included but neutral	0.00%	30.00%	42.86%	36.23%	25.00%	50.68%	60.00%	14.10%	0.00%	10.00%	100.00%	61.36%						
3 counterarguments included and valued	33.33%	0.00%	57.14%	2.90%	50.00%	2.74%	40.00%	1.28%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	9.09%						
<b>Constructive politics</b>																		
0 positional politics	100.00%	95.56%	66.67%	94.20%	0.00%	86.75%	0.00%	95.18%	100.00%	100.00%	50.00%	91.38%						
1 debate	0.00%	1.11%	0.00%	1.45%	0.00%	4.82%	0.00%	1.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.45%						
2 mediated proposal that fits current agenda	0.00%	3.33%	33.33%	4.35%	100.00%	8.43%	100.00%	3.61%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	5.17%						
Total DQ Score (out of 100)	0.58	0.33	0.67	0.37	0.66	0.42	0.73	0.27	0.34	0.29	0.66	0.59						

Ardern (2020, August 18); Breakfast (2020a, November 17); Breakfast (2020b, November 29); Breakfast (2021a, March 7); Breakfast (2021b, March 9); Collins (2020b, August 25)



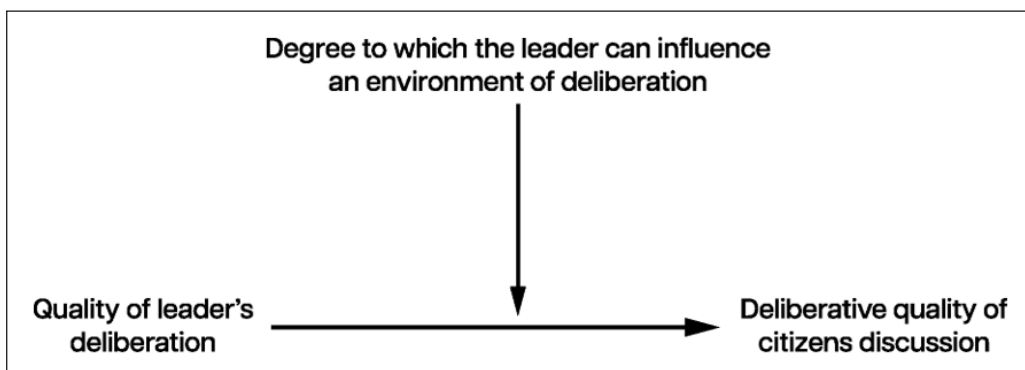
While the leader can respond in varied ways, they do not have control over the tone of the discussion or whether the interviewer raises issues using frames that highlight polarization or conflict. For example, during the opposition leaders' interview during the non-lockdown COVID period, the interviewer introduced the topic by stating the level of criticism from both sides of the political spectrum of Ardern on 'her government's apparent lack of effective action on the housing crisis as house prices continue to go through the roof' (Breakfast 2020a: 0:00:08). The topic, before the discussion started, was already framed as conflictual and unfair. Additionally, in the interviews with Collins, the interviewer, Jenny-May Clarkson, did not push back on any of her responses in any of the talks coded. By comparison, Ardern received considerable pushback and critical questioning. While the deliberative style of Ardern's responses may have been enough to influence citizens to discuss with higher deliberative quality in the other talks, the frustration from both Labour and National supporters (Ardern's and Collins' parties, respectively) may have had a greater impact on the resulting quality of the discussion.

Alternatively, in other arenas where the leader controls the content, such as their social media page, they can consistently ensure a deliberative frame is delivered to citizens throughout the entire Live discussion. In this arena, leaders also have more freedom to guide citizens to abide by 'rules of engagement' much as a facilitator/moderator would and support understanding of different viewpoints by the frames and rhetoric they offer. In this way, leaders using this arena can model as participants in dialogue and guide it as facilitators of deliberation. Thus, the following framework is proposed where a leader's ability to influence the deliberative quality of citizen's discussions is mediated by the leader's level of influence on the deliberative space of that discussion (**Figure 1**).

This proposed model aligns with Habermas's (2006) view of leaders at the center as coauthors and distributors, along with mass media, of public opinion by constructing and articulating prevailing public opinion back to citizens, who in turn respond to the issues articulated by elite discourse and set the frame for the range of what decisions they would accept as legitimate. Together, politicians, in constructing and articulating public opinion to citizens, and citizens in responding to these articulations, create a filtering and self-regulating mechanism for creating

public opinion (Habermas 2006). The politician's use of deliberative communication would positively affect the normative requirements for generating more considered public opinion through framing relevant issues, including required information, and supporting appropriate contributions (Habermas 2006). First, by framing the relevant issues or range of acceptable issues for citizens to consider in decision making on an issue, leaders act to define the relevant issues for consideration. Second, leaders support the inclusion of required information by supporting citizens by creating an environment where other perspectives are more likely to be heard and considered to support access to the information prerequisite for reasoned opinion formation. Third, leaders can support appropriate contributions by supporting increased mutual understanding among citizens, so a plurality of views is included and considered. The proposed communication model for leaders supporting deliberation in the public sphere suggests that the ability of the leader to influence the quality of citizen deliberation using the mechanisms presented by Habermas (2006), is dependent on the leader being able to access these mechanisms in that arena and thus dependent on their influence within the deliberative space. Specifically, environments where leaders can guide discussions toward mutual perspective-taking and understanding as participants, facilitators, and rhetoricians of deliberative communication.

Other factors can explain the variability of DQI scores observed apart from the leader's influence over the discussion. For example, comparing group heterogeneity, the News arena likely had more diversity in political opinions than the leader-led Facebook arena, which, despite still comprising a heterogeneous group discussion, saw a greater number of each leader's followers. Additionally, more citizens commenting in the News mass media arena disagreed with the views of the leader being interviewed. It could be that the leaders' influence over deliberative quality, if it exists, is bidirectional. As Lisa Disch (2011) explains, leaders are at one influencers of and influenced by citizen opinions and orient forward in speculation. Citizens elect representatives who they feel would advance their desired direction and preferences (Mansbridge 2009), even if those preferences are co-created. In this sense, potential constituents who are more deliberative may seek more deliberative leaders, with both updating their opinions accordingly, just as political



**Figure 1:** Communication model for leaders supporting deliberation in the public sphere.

leaders may adopt a less deliberative style because that is what their constituents want. Future research can seek to answer this by measuring how a leader's deliberative communication influences the discussion quality of randomized participants.

Alternatively, the variability could be due to the topic of discussion itself and the degree of controversy (Ziegele et al. 2014). Leader's scoring lower on the DQI also saw corresponding lower DQI in the citizen discussions in the News mass media arena except for the housing bubble talk. In the case of the housing bubble talk, Ardern obtained the highest score in terms of deliberation. At the same time, the subsequent citizen discussion received the second-lowest score among the analyzed conversations. This might reflect the complex nature of the housing crisis and its impact on the perspectives of New Zealanders (Giovannetti 2022). The housing bubble talk was different in that it was contentious on both sides of the political spectrum, including Ardern's party (Breakfast 2020a). So, while Collins's talk on the housing bubble from citizens remained more deliberative, especially concerning the level of respect, she presented suggestions on how to fix the bubble, and her complaints aligned with citizens on both political sides. Ardern, on the other hand, ran on a platform that addressed housing prices (Manon 2020). During this interview, Ardern stood by the current measures while attempting to explain the external forces for the current sharp increase in house prices as being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and how this similar issue was occurring in other comparable OECD countries. The other coded talks had less cross-party conflict, with clear supporters on each side. Prior content analysis of news articles contradicts these results, where topics with clear sides increase incivility (Coe et al. 2014). However, the same research by Coe et al. (2014) found that news articles containing quotes from a high-profile source with an identifiable partisan leaning, such as Barack Obama, generated the most incivility in online discussions. It is possible that Ardern's high-profile identifiable partisan, coupled with her explanation of the deteriorating housing market despite her mandate to address the issue, played a more significant role in the ensuing incivility of the citizen discussion on housing, despite the absence of a clear partisan divide between Labour and National supporters on the housing issue. Furthermore, housing is an issue that affects millions of New Zealanders across the country, who most probably voted for Ardern based on her housing platform, a promise her government had to work on, something that opposing non-governing parties do not have to achieve.

Another possible factor is the role that previously received cues from a political leader may have played in the level of disrespect observed in the citizen discussion. While Ardern's cues to respect differences toward groups and others' opinions have remained consistently deliberative before and while in office, Collins's rhetoric fluctuated depending on the platform she used. Of supporters who would have listened to her on other platforms like Twitter and her personal Facebook page, they would have heard primarily bonding rhetoric from

Collins that, in addition to energizing those with similar views and beliefs, showed disrespect toward Labour and 'the left.' For example, by attacking Ardern's character and sowing the seeds of distrust rather than pointing out areas of policy disagreement and why:

'Honestly, we've got to get rid of this government, it's just they're destroying our country' (Collins 2020b: 0:09:22)

'They're completely useless' (Collins 2020b: 0:06:25)

'You can see the same old Left misinformation spread' (Collins 2020a)

This aligns with research showing that higher levels of incivility among politicians are linked to an unwillingness to compromise (Mutz 2007), lowers trust toward politicians, and increases animosity toward the opposing party (Skytte 2021). It should be noted here that opposition leaders have, as Waldron (2012) points out, an institutional obligation to loyal opposition that is important to democratic systems. Although this study assesses communication against the standards of deliberation and points out the seemingly negative effects that come from displays of incivility from leaders, it remains to be addressed how these interactions may negatively or positively impact the wider deliberative system.

Upon closer inspection of the respect scores from the housing bubble discussion, the higher number of citizens showing no respect toward other groups or demands were those who did not agree with Ardern and/or those who agreed with the opposition party. The majority of citizens who agreed with Ardern also responded in a neutral (respectful) manner toward counterarguments from those they did not agree with. Despite these differences, proponents and those in opposition to Ardern had higher levels of disrespect than in other discussions where the leader displayed higher deliberation. Previous research shows that when citizens are exposed to counterattitudinal incivility from political elites, that is, elites with opposing attitudes from their own, in this case, Ardern's supporters hearing incivility from Collins, it increases condemnation toward the other group by triggering defensive anger (Gervais 2018). In this discussion, both Ardern and Collins's supporters displayed higher levels of disrespect, and Ardern's supporters could have been triggered by defensive anger of prior exposure of incivility from Collins.

Regardless of the reasons for the variability in the quality of citizen deliberation observed in the News arena, deliberation, at its core, is about having conversations with those who could be affected by a decision. In the News arena, leaders had no opportunity to engage with citizens or respond to their counterarguments. Notably, previous studies of online deliberation highlight the importance that facilitators (Strandberg, 2015) and passing on rules of engagement (Esau et al. 2021) have on the quality of deliberation. Moreover, the presence of a facilitator was of greater importance than group heterogeneity: even

homogeneous groups that tend to polarize did not when guided by a facilitator (Strandberg et al. 2019).

Basing the leader's level of influence within the backdrop of a *participant in dialogue* aligns with Cho et al's. (2009) OSROR model of communication effects that demonstrates that the influence of opinion leaders is generated in the interpersonal political discussion and cognitive reflection of citizens. Through a two-step flow, political conversation amongst citizens is an intermediary between political messages from leaders and public opinion. This study differs from the OSROR model by developing a theory for leader-led political communication that includes the influence of the democratic principles of normative reasoning. This may be supported by two mechanisms outlined in the Elaborative Likelihood Model of Persuasion (Cacioppo & Petty 1984), which shows that increasing the personal relevance of messages to the listener and the strength of arguments can act to increase the use of more elaborative, central route processing required for paying careful attention to arguments that conflict with their pre-existing prejudices and rely less on heuristics, making opinion change more likely (Petty & Brinol 2002). The leader increases the personal relevance of their messages by using deliberative talk within the conversation, legitimizing others' viewpoints, values, and identities. When combined with the potential for leaders to enhance the likelihood of citizens perceiving stronger arguments during discussions and relying less on heuristics, it can contribute to fostering an environment that values diverse perspectives and legitimizes citizens' experiences. These may also support social learning processes toward diverse groups as the important precursor to deliberation (Kanra 2020). Along with other modes of persuasion outlined by Kruglanski et al. (2004), such as decreasing the processing difficulty by disseminating information on complex policy issues and decreasing ego-defensiveness by creating cues of safety for sharing different opinions, are other ways the leader may influence greater likelihood for the elaboration required to consider opposing views. Facebook itself may increase the perceived accountability of citizens when sharing their opinions, another route for increasing the likelihood of elaboration (Tetlock 1985; Kruglanski et al. 2004).

### Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. First, only one talk each from the leader-led mass media arena was included in the analysis, so this is an exploratory research. Further, it was not possible to hold both the date and topics constant for the leader-led mass media arena regarding the study design itself, although they both included topics under the umbrella of COVID. The analysis did not include talks from the leader-led mass media arena outside the campaign period, which may have generated different results. Participants also differed in the talks coded, so that could not remain constant either. Third, the study used as independent variable the institutional input (information provided, type of communication) and the communicative throughput (level of deliberation measured as civility, reason-giving, constructiveness) as the dependent variable.

It excluded any measure of the productive outcome of deliberation (consensus, changes in trust, opinion change) (Friess & Eilders 2015). Finally, the study did not look at how the institutional context of New Zealand may have shaped the quality of deliberation. Reflection on the institutional factors that may impact the influence of the leader on deliberation should be explored in future work.

### Conclusion

This exploratory study suggests that when leaders have greater access to support deliberative dialogue by taking on the role of both participant and facilitator, they can influence citizen deliberation.

This study presents theoretical arguments for leaders to participate in the legitimation process in civil society as part of the response to the problem of scale. It suggests the potential for continuing to explore the leader's influence over deliberation and developing the mechanism to draw on for supporting more authentic public opinion. A communication model for leaders supporting deliberation in the public sphere is presented, proposing that a leader's ability to influence the deliberative quality of citizen discussions is mediated by the leader's influence of the deliberative space. It may be that leaders, as participants and facilitators within citizen deliberation, support creating a safe space for citizens to share and learn from each other by promoting listening and understanding that goes beyond simply *messaging* how citizens should respond to *demonstrating* it by providing the road map for how to. This study invites further research to determine whether leaders can, in dialogue with citizens, influence the quality of deliberation.

Ultimately, to keep the deliberative project practical, it must come to terms with leaders as an inevitable influence within the deliberative system, for better or worse. Thus, it should seek to develop the knowledge base to guide leaders' communication in support of that goal.

### Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

### References

- Ardern, J. (2020, August 18). [LiveVideo]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/jacindaardern/videos/905843686604909/>
- Barber, B. (2003). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. University of California Press.
- Beerbohm, E. (2015). Is democratic leadership possible? *American Political Science Review*, 109(4), 639–652. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055415000398>
- Bode, L. (2016). Political news in the news feed: Learning politics from social media. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19(1), 24–48. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1045149>
- Boswell, J. (2013). Why and how narrative matters in deliberative systems. *Political Studies*, 61(3), 620–36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2012.00987.x>
- Breakfast. (2020a, November 17). *Judith Collins on Soaring House Prices*. [Video]. Facebook. <https://www>



- facebook.com/Breakfaston1/videos/judith-collins-on-soaring-house-prices/1781930968646979/
- Breakfast.** (2020b, November 29). *The latest From Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern*. [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/337418942718/videos/776697659854676>
- Breakfast.** (2021a, March 7, March 9). *Latest from Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern: One New Case of Covid-19 Has Been Identified at the Border*. [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/Breakfaston1/videos/latest-from-prime-minister-jacinda-ardern/453249499058451/>
- Breakfast.** (2021b, March 9). *National Leader Judith Collins on Vaccine Plans and Travel Bubbles*. [Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/Breakfaston1/videos/national-leader-judith-collins-on-vaccine-plans-and-travel-bubbles/442741510115293/>
- Cacioppo, J. T., & Petty R. E.** (1984). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *NA – Advances in Consumer Research*, 11, 673–75.
- Chambers, S.** (2009). Rhetoric and the public sphere: Has deliberative democracy abandoned mass democracy? *Political Theory*, 37(3), 323–50. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591709332336>
- Chambers, S.** (2010). Open versus closed constitutional negotiation. In (Eds.), *Deliberative Democracy in practice*, (78–91). UBC Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774816793-005>
- Cho, J., Shah, D. V., McLeod, J. M., Scholl, R. M., & Gotlieb, M. R.** (2009). Campaigns, reflection, and deliberation: Advancing an O-S-R-O-R model of communication effects. *Communication Theory*, 19(1), 66–88. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.01333.x>
- Clark, H.** (2023, January 19). *Statement on resignation of rime Minister Jacinda Ardern*. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5db70d7dbad4060ba79d3ae6/t/63c8fc01f51fc8571d01568d/1674116097805/Statement+on+Jacinda+Ardern+resignation.pdf>
- Coe, K., Kens, K., & Rains, S. A.** (2014). Online and uncivil? patterns and determinants of incivility in newspaper website comments. *Journal of Communication*, 64(4), 658–679. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12104>
- Collins, J.** (2020a, July 17). *You can see the same old Left misinformation spread*. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JudithCollinsMP>
- Collins, J.** (2020b, August 25). *Q+A with Judith Collins and David Bennett*. [Live Video]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/judithcollinsmp/videos/596924027671702/>
- Disch, L.** (2011). Toward a mobilization conception of democratic representation. *American Political Science Review*, 105(1), 100–114. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055410000602>
- Druckman, J. N.** (2001). On the limits of framing effects: Who can frame? *The Journal of Politics*, 63(4), 1041–66.
- Druckman, J. N., & Nelson, K. R.** 2003. Framing and deliberation: How citizens' conversations limit elite influence. *American Journal of Political Science*, 47(4), 729–45. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5907.00051>
- Druckman, J. N., Peterson, E., & Slothuus, R.** (2013). How elite Partisan polarization affects public opinion formation. *American Political Science Review*, 107(1), 57–79. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000500>
- Dryzek, J. S.** (1990). *Discursive democracy: Politics, policy, and political science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139173810>
- Dryzek, J. S.** (2001). Legitimacy and economy in deliberative democracy. *Political Theory*, 29(5), 651–69. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591701029005003>
- Dryzek, J. S.** (2010). Rhetoric in democracy: A systemic appreciation. *Political Theory*, 38(3), 319–39. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591709359596>
- Dryzek, J. S., & Braithwaite, V.** (2000). On the prospects for democratic deliberation: Values analysis applied to Australian politics. *Political Psychology*, 21(2), 241–66. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00186>
- Elstub, S., Thompson, R., Escobar, O., Hollinghurst, J., Grimes, D., Aitken, M., McKeon, A., Jones, K. H., Waud, A., & Sethi, N.** (2021). The resilience of pandemic digital deliberation: An analysis of online synchronous forums. *Javnost – The Public*, 28(3), 237–55. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2021.1969616>
- Esau, K., Fleuß, D., & Nienhaus, S. M.** (2021). Different arenas, different deliberative quality? Using a systemic framework to evaluate online deliberation on immigration policy in Germany. *Policy & Internet*, 13(1), 86–112. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.232>
- Eveland, W. P.** (2004). The effect of political discussion in producing informed citizens: The roles of information, motivation, and elaboration. *Political Communication*, 21(2), 177–93. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600490443877>
- Every-Palmer, S., Cunningham, R., Jenkins., & Bell, E.** 2021. The Christchurch osque shooting, the media, and subsequent gun control reform in New Zealand: a descriptive analysis. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 28(2), 274–285. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2020.1770635>
- Flinders, M., Ghose, K., Jennings, W., Molloy, E., Prosser, B., Renwick, A., Smith, G., & Spada, P.** (2016). Democracy matters: Lessons from the 2015 citizens' assemblies on English devolution.
- Friedman, W.** (2007). *Reframing “framing”* (occasional paper no 1). Center for Advances in Public Engagement.
- Friess, D., & Eilders, C.** (2015). A systematic review of online deliberation research. *Policy & Internet*, 7(3), 319–39. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.95>
- Gervais, B.** (2018). Rousing the partisan combatant: Elite incivility, anger, and anti-deliberative attitudes forthcoming in political psychology. *Political Psychology*, 40(3), 637–55. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12532>
- Gibson, R. K., Lusoli, W., & Ward, S. J.** (2005). Online participation in the UK: Testing a “contextualised” model of internet effects. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 7(4), 561–83. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856x.2005.00209.x>



- Giovannetti, J.** (2022, August 6). New Zealand shows how a housing crisis can become a catastrophe. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-new-zealand-housing-crisis/>
- Goodin, R. E.** (2000). Democratic deliberation within. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 29(1), 81–109. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2000.00081.x>
- Habermas, J.** (1984). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society*. (Vol. 1). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J.** (1985). *The theory of communicative action: Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason* (3rd ed, Vol 2). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J.** (2006). Political communication in media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research. *Communication Theory*, 16(4), 411–26.
- Halpern, D., & Gibbs, J.** (2013). Social media as a catalyst for online deliberation? Exploring the affordances of Facebook and YouTube for political expression. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3), 1159–68. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.10.008>
- Hendriks, C. M., & Lees-Marshment, J.** (2019). Political leaders and public engagement: The hidden world of informal elite–citizen interaction. *Political Studies*, 67(3), 597–617. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321718791370>
- Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., & Westwood, S. J.** (2019). The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11(22), 129–46. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051117-073034>
- Jaworska, S., & Vásquez, C.** (2022). COVID-19 and the discursive practices of political leadership: Introduction. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 47, 100605. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2022.100605>
- Jung, N., Kim, Y., & de Zúñiga, H. G.** (2011). The mediating role of Knowledge and efficacy in the effects of communication on political participation. *Mass Communication and Society*, 14(4), 407–430. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2010.496135>
- Kanra, B.** (2020). Binary deliberation: The role of social learning in divided societies. *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 8(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.123>
- Knight, J., & Johnson, J.** (1997). What sort of political equality does deliberative democracy require? In (Eds.), *Deliberative democracy: Essays on reason and politics* (pp. 279–320). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kruglanski, A., Fishback, A., Erb, H. P., Pierro, A., & Mannette, L.** (2004). The parametric unimodel as a theory of persuasion. In (Eds.), *contemporary perspectives on the psychology of attitudes: An introduction and overview* (1st ed., pp. 399–422). US: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Kuyper, J. W.** (2012). Deliberative democracy and the neglected dimension of leadership. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 8(1), 1–32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.126>
- Lafont, C.** (2015). Deliberation, participation, and democratic legitimacy: Should deliberative mini-publics shape public policy? *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 23(1), 40–63. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12031>
- Leeper, T. J., & Slothuus, R.** (2018). Deliberation and framing. In *The Oxford Handbook of deliberative democracy* (1st ed., pp. 556–572). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198747369.013.37>
- Lees-Marshment, J.** (2016). Deliberative political leaders: The role of policy input in political leadership. *Politics and Governance*, 4(2), 25–35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v4i2.560>
- Levine, S.** (2004). Parliamentary democracy in New Zealand. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57(3), 646–665. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsh050>
- Manon, P.** (2020, October 1). Ardern vows to tackle housing crisis as New Zealand readies for early voting. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/newzealand-election-int-idUSKBN26M7PG>
- Mansbridge, J.** (2009). A “selection model” of political representation. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 17(4), 369–398. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2009.00337.x>
- Mansbridge, J., Boman, J., Christiano, T., Fung, A., Parkinson, J., Thompson, D. F., Warren, M. E., & Chambers, S.** (2012). A systemic approach to deliberative democracy. In (Eds.), *Deliberative systems: Deliberative democracy at the large scale* (pp. 1–26). New York: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139178914.002>
- McCarthy, T.** (1984). Translator’s introduction. In J. (Ed.), *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society*. Polity Press.
- McGuire, D., Cunningham, J. E., Reynolds, K., & Matthews-Smith, G.** (2020). Beating the virus: An examination of the crisis communication approach taken by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Human Resource Development International*, 23(4), 361–379. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1779543>
- Mouffe, C.** (2000). *Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism* (series: Reihe Politikwissenschaft/Institut für Höhere Studien, Abt. Politikwissenschaft, 72). Wien: Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS).
- Mutz, D. C.** (2007). Effects of “In-your-face” television discourse on perceptions of a legitimate opposition. *American Political Science Review*, 101(4), 621–635. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540707044X>
- Parkinson, J.** (2001). Deliberative democracy and referendums. In (eds.), *Challenges to democracy: Ideas, involvement and institutions* (1st ed., pp. 131–52). London: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230502185\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230502185_9)
- Paustian-Underdahl, S., Walker, L., & Woehr, D.** (2014). Gender and perceptions of leadership effectiveness: A meta-analysis of contextual moderators. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036751>

- Petty, R. E., & Brinol, P.** (2002). Attitude change: The elaborative likelihood model of persuasion. In (Eds.), *Marketing for sustainability: Towards transactional policy-making* (pp. 176–90). IOS Press.
- Porat, I.** (2023). Court polarization: A comparative perspective. *Hastings International and Comparative Law Review*, 46(1), 3.
- Romsdahl, R., Blue, G., & Kirilenko, A.** (2018). Action on climate change requires deliberative framing at local governance level. *Climatic Change*, 149(3), 277–87. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-018-2240-0>
- Ross, K., & Bürger, T.** (2014). Face to face(book): Social media, political campaigning and the unbearable lightness of being there. *Political Science*, 66(1), 46–62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032318714534106>
- Rossini, P., & Maia, R.** (2021). Characterizing disagreement in online political talk: Examining incivility and opinion expression on news websites and Facebook in Brazil. *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 17(1), 90–104. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/10.16997/jdd.967>
- Scott, W. R.** (2013). *Institutions and organizations: Ideas, interests, and identities*. Sage publications.
- Simpson, A. V., Rego, A., Berti, M., Clegg, S., & Pinae Cunha, M.** (2022). Theorizing compassionate leadership from the case of Jacinda Ardern: Legitimacy, paradox and resource conservation. *Leadership*, 18(3), 337–358. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/17427150211055291>
- Skytte, R.** (2021). Dimensions of elite partisan polarization: Disentangling the effects of incivility and issue polarization. *British Journal of Political Science*, 51(4), 1457–75. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123419000760>
- Sørensen, M. P.** (2016). Political conversations on Facebook – The participation of politicians and citizens. *Media, Culture and Society*, 38(5), 664–685. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715620924>
- Steenbergen, M. R., Bächtiger, A., Spörndli, M., & Steiner, J.** (2003). Measuring political deliberation: A discourse quality index. *Comparative European Politics*, 1(1), 21–48. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cmp.6110002>
- Strandberg, K.** (2015). Designing for democracy? An experimental study comparing the outcomes of citizen discussions in online forums with those of online discussion in a forum designed according to deliberative principles. *European Political Science Review*, 7, 451–74. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773914000265>
- Strandberg, K., Himmelroos, S., & Grönlund, K.** (2019). Do discussions in like-minded groups necessarily lead to more extreme opinions? Deliberative democracy and group polarization. *International Political Science Review*, 40(1), 41–57. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512117692136>
- Stromer-Galley, J.** (2007). Measuring deliberation' s content: A coding scheme. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 7–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.50>
- Suiter, J., Farrell, D., & Harris, C.** (2016). The Irish constitutional convention: A case of 'high legitimacy'? *Constitutional Deliberative Democracy in Europe*, 33–52.
- Sunstein, C. R.** (2000). Deliberative trouble – Why groups go to extremes. *The Yale Law Journal*, 110(1), 51. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/797587>
- Tetlock, P. E.** (1985). Accountability: The neglected social context of judgement and choice. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 7, 297–32.
- Waldron, J.** (2011). *The Principle of Loyal Opposition*. NYU School of Law, Public Law Research Paper no.12–22. New York: New York University School of Law.
- Willige, A.** (2017). Which are the world's strongest democracies. In World Economic Forum. Last modified February (Vol. 23, pp. 2017).
- Young, I. M.** (2002). *Inclusion and democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198297556.001.0001>
- Ziegele, M., Breiner, T., & Quiring, O.** (2014). What creates interactivity in online news discussions? An exploratory analysis of discussion factors in user comments on news items. *Journal of Communication*, 64(6), 1111–1138. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12123>

**How to cite this article:** Susin, A., & Ordonez-Ponce, E. (2023). The Influence of Leaders on the Quality of Citizen Deliberation: An Exploratory Assessment of Online Deliberation in New Zealand. *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 19(1), pp. 1–14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.1335>

**Submitted:** 13 June 2022      **Accepted:** 11 July 2023      **Published:** 22 September 2023

**Copyright:** © 2023 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



*Journal of Deliberative Democracy* is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by University of Westminster Press.