

The Politics of the Web:

The Ideological Gap of Online Activism

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Literature Review

The New Political Scene

The Internet is a growing force in America and the world. During the past two election cycles, Internet activism has grown in prominence and importance. As more Americans turn to the Internet for news, information, and research, social movements and political organizations must harness new media strategies to reach this growing audience. While the majority of Americans still rely on televisions and newspapers for their primary news sources, a growing number of individuals under the age of 36 are turning to the Web for news, shopping, organizing, and socializing. Technology has created a new type of Internet involvement known as Web 2.0 or social media:

A large benefit of Internet technology is not simply access, but rather easy access. Cyberspace helps to mitigate the physical space that had limited access prior to this technological intervention. The Internet gives people time to be activists, by making data, expertise, connections, and intervention strategies available all at one place. The world-be activist can become politically engaged citizen simply by visiting a Web site and liking a few options. Thus, for those individuals “enabled” by technology, they can use it to accomplish tasks and gather information more quickly.¹

These technologies allow the user to engage in dialogue with candidates or organizations and create their own content to add to the conversation. As the barriers between the Internet and real life break down, social movements and political groups are adapting to keep up with this trend.

Governor Howard Dean’s presidential campaign in 2004 proved that the Internet is a powerful strategy for navigating the national political scene. Along with Web sites and social movements such as MoveOn.org and Truemajority.org, politically charged social

¹ Wyatt, Galusky, “Identifying with Information: Citizen Empowerment, the Internet, and the Environmental Anti-Toxins Movements,” *Cyberactivism*, eds. Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayres (New York: Routledge, 2004) 192.

movements have added online components to their activism and grassroots strategies. The Internet provided new strategies for online mobilizing and organizing, which complemented traditional activist techniques such as rallies, protests, letter-writing campaigns, and targeted advertising.

The Pew Internet and American Life Project's *Election 2006 Online* study found that individuals engaged in Internet activism, netroots, or cyberactivism were more likely to be liberal or progressive. Pew's report found that even though a majority of Internet users are conservative or right leaning, causes and social movements that appeal to liberal ideologies are more successful in using these online strategies.

While not directly related to party politics, social causes utilizing Internet activism typically align with one political party or ideology, creating an overlap between social causes and party politics. This combination creates a complex matrix of warring ideologies and causes with which activists quickly identify, given the two-party system that dominates American democracy. Therefore, this paper will examine the nature of the Internet in activism and political campaigns by examining why progressive movements are more successful in using online activism than right-wing causes, and if there is an underlying reason for gap in the field of Internet activism. Namely, is there evidence that the left and right utilize Internet activism differently? Is there simply a different approach to strategy and tactics or does this gap represent a more systemic difference? Furthermore, there is growing evidence that there is a shift occurring in the world of communications. Is there a reason why the progressive movement seems to have adjusted while the right clings to broadcast media and traditional tactics?

Activism: From the Field to the Web

Technology and the Internet radically changed the face of democracy in our country. Watchdog groups and the creation of the citizen journalist made the use of online tactics to organize, advocate, and mobilize grassroots supporters necessary to pressure policymakers. The Internet has ingrained itself into every aspect of modern life, and Web strategies are factored into all types of communication campaigns. While the widespread use of the Web has helped make public policy a more transparent and democratic process, some special interest groups have capitalized on emerging technologies and gained power in the public sphere.

Grassroots and activism are a part of the American political fabric. Dating back to the early part of the 20th century, “grassroots” first entered the vernacular with the creation of the Progressives Party in President Teddy Roosevelt’s attempt to be re-elected to a third term. Since then, the concept of creating political movements from the field has inextricably tied itself to politics in the United States. Subsequent elections engaged in elaborate strategies to engage the grassroots aspects of campaigns. With the emergence of the Internet in the 1990s, campaigns soon added a new layer of activities to their grassroots plans.

The expansion of the World Wide Web not only radically altered the political dialogue in the country, but made fundamental changes in the way that individuals communicate. According to some communication scholars, the Internet made several pivotal changes to modern life:

- 1) Communication moved from few-to-many to many-to-many.
- 2) The Web provides increased resources of information that are available to almost everyone because of the low-cost to access.
- 3) Communication shifted from “producer-driven to receiver-driven.”
- 4) Communication is more access-driven.

- 5) Through the Internet, organizations are able to “break segments into microsegments” and target special messages toward these groups.²

There is a fundamental shift in the way that organizations are communicating with their audiences. Through interactive 2.0 tools, such as blogs or social networking, individuals are able to engage in conversations with organizations or other individuals. Given this power, large numbers are able to bypass the traditional gatekeepers of the media and seek out information. Not only is this altering the way that mass media operates, but it is also changing the way that organizations, marketers, and political movements must engage their supporters, appease opponents, and sway the undecided.

Joe Trippi, former campaign manager for presidential candidate, Governor Howard Dean, explains this radical change from passive audiences receiving information transmitted via the television to interactive dialogue that the Internet allows:

This is bottom-up, interactive communication. Television has a top-down, one-to-many structure, and it works by making an impression so that the next time you're in the grocery store and you walk past Listerine, an image flashes in your mind of two actors so taken with each other's minty breath that they start making out. It's no different with political advertising on TV: You sit there and the ad washes over you. If it's done well, some images stick, possibly even some ideas—although in a 30 second spot, there's usually only time for one or two visceral reactions to stick. This is one of the reasons political debate in our country has been “dumbed down”—not because media consultants don't want you to think, but because no serious discussion of these issues can occur in 30 seconds.³

Since the mid-twentieth century, television and top-down approaches have dominated national political discussion. Grassroots activism was overshadowed by television advertising and lobbying dollars. However, given the conversational nature of the Internet, there has been a resurgence in political activism, which is evidenced by increased turnout at the polls

² Dean Kazoleas and Lars Georg Teigen, “The Technology-Image Expectancy Gap: A New Theory of Public Relations,” *Public Relations Theory II*, eds. Carl H. Botan and Vincent Hazelton (Mahwah: LEA, 2006) 420-421.

³ Joe Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not be Televised* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004) 36.

during the 2004 and 2006 elections after a sixty year decline in voters. Younger generations in particular seem to be the most affected by this medium. Traditionally known for being the least likely to vote, individuals under the age of 29 have started engaging in civic and activist causes, largely through the power of the Internet. According to Young Voter Strategies at George Washington University, 49% of voters aged 18-29 voted in the 2004 Presidential Election compared to 40% in 2000. There was also a 2% increase in the 2006 mid-term election with 10 million young voters casting ballots compared to the 8 million in 2002. Given the power of the Internet and inexpensive nature of these strategies, many organizations and candidates are reaching out to this new pool of voters through online activist techniques.

Defined as a, "...politically motivated movement relying on the Internet,"⁴ Web-based strategies were a natural fit for activist movements, which have traditionally adapted to new technology quickly. The ability to share information instantaneously to either targeted audiences or the general public created a boon for activist causes. The Internet also offered ways to organize large numbers of people over long distances, share ideas, pressure policymakers, and provide ways to creatively distribute messages often without the expense of traditional communication mediums. As explained by McCaughey and Ayres:

How is the Internet different from previous communications media that have influenced the nature and shape of political organizing? The Internet is immediate, even more immediate than a daily newspaper. It can be more interactive than TV. It is not only instant and transspatial but multilateral, including many participants and connecting many different activist groups. Not since the institutionalization of the U.S. Postal Service have we seen a communication development in society that can give power to individuals like this.⁵

⁴ Sandor Vegh, "Classifying Forms of Online Activism: The Case of Cyberprotests Against the World Bank," *Cyberactivism*, eds. Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayres (New York: Routledge, 2004) 71.

⁵ Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayres, Introduction, *Cyberactivism*, (New York: Routledge, 2004) 4.

New technologies continue to raise the profile of the role of activism in our society, allowing more of the public to engage in debates over policies and issues. This creates the need for organizations to scan for new technologies that can reach current and potential audiences with their messages and help establish the frame for public discourse. Coined as “Web 2.0,” these online strategies allow organizations to brand and distribute messages to targeted audiences in addition to supplementing traditional media sources. Examples of these technologies include Second Life, social networking platforms, text messages, e-mail, blogs, wikis, online forums, bulletin boards, and games. Strategies can either be entirely Web-based or complement offline activities. However, high-profile examples of using the Web to drive social change show that the Internet is a vital part of the activist strategy, as seen with the ONE campaign and the SaveDarfur.org.

While activists have used the Web to organize since its beginnings, the current concept of online activism was first seen in the 1990s with the organized protests of the World Trade Organization in Seattle, Washington and the Zapatistas in Mexico.⁶ While these two groups primarily used hacktivism as their method of protesting, they were empowered through their Internet use and gained media attention because of their tight organization. While hacktivism is not a tactic favored by most organizations, it was the more radical fringe organizations that first used online techniques successfully.

The more common form of online activism entered mainstream politics starting in the late 1990s when two groups on opposing ends of the political spectrum approached the grassroots model with differing tactics. MoveOn.org and FreeRepublic.com were both started as a result of scandals in the Clinton Administration. While existing organizations, such as TownHall.com, had already added online activism to their Web sites, these two sites

were true grassroots efforts started by individuals and slowly gained momentum across the country. Online activism remained a fringe element that existed on the extremes of both the left and the right until the 2004 Election. With the addition of the Dean Campaign model and the Bush/Cheney Mobilization Plan, online activism became a permanent part of American politics. These movements, joined by countless other Web sites, have created a rich tapestry of voices that bring democracy directly to the individual computer screen, engage the average American in politics, and improve the transparency of the political process.

Toward a Typology

With the vast and growing techniques that organizations can use to implement an online strategy, there has been some effort to codify and organize the many types of activities that organizations can implement on the Web. In addition to the variety of online tactics that activist groups use to reach their goals, Sandor Vegh has established an Internet activism typology to offer some boundaries and classification to the field. Vegh divides activities into awareness/advocacy, organization/mobilization, and action/reaction.⁷

The awareness/advocacy model includes information distribution and lobbying efforts. Awareness activities include maintaining the networks that distribute information, which is a vital part of the activism model in parts of the world lacking similar protections as the First Amendment in the United States. The Internet also made traditional lobbying efforts available to the masses. Through e-mail, blogs and, Web sites, activists can easily

⁶ Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner, "New Media and Internet Activism: From the Battle of Seattle to Blogging," *New Media and Society* 6 (2004): 87-95.

⁷ Sandor Vegh, "Classifying Forms of Online Activism: The Case of Cyberprotests Against the World Bank," *Cyberactivism*, eds. Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayres (New York: Routledge, 2004) 72-77.

access targeted policy makers and call, e-mail or write letters to the editor of the newspaper. Advocacy also includes organizing the movement and issuing calls to action.

Activist organizations first used the Internet for mobilizing and organizing as seen in the 1999 World Bank Protests in Seattle and the 2000 Republican National Convention protests in Boston.⁸ During the early days of online activism, individuals used Web sites such as MoveOn.org to organize over long distances and plan large-scale protests. This tactic continues to be one the strengths of using the Web for grassroots activism and was even utilized on international levels with the Live 8 concerts in 2005.⁹ Online activists not only use the Web to organize offline activities, but also hold virtual protests, which have been used by the tobacco-control movement as well as anti-war protestors.¹⁰ The Internet can also be used to coordinate e-mail campaigns and other creative tactics.

The action/reaction category includes the controversial activism tactics that fall under hacktivism. These activities include anything from cyberattacks to organized civil disobedience and protests. Typically seen more in international activism, hacktivism was designed to draw attention to human rights violations and has since spread to anti-capitalists and other organizations that typically take more radical positions.

Models of Activism

In addition to these types of methods, traditional activism classifications also apply to online strategies. Four typologies exist that define the different methods of online activism—grassroots, hothouse, grasstops and astroturf. True grassroots movements begin organically from a group of impassioned individuals and build over time. Generally created

⁸ Larry Elin, "The Radicalization of Zeke Spier," *Cyberactivism*, eds. Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayres (New York: Routledge, 2004) 99.

⁹ Live 8, 2 July 2005, www.live8live.com.

¹⁰ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, 26 Feb. 2006, 23 June, 2006, 23 Jan. 2007, www.tobaccofreekids.org.

by a citizen activist or an influencer, these movements can grow slowly, as evidenced by FreeRepublic.com or almost overnight, such as MoveOn.org. However, because these are community-driven movements, they are typically more successful over the long run by gradually building credibility. They often create a sense of community for the members and offer action steps that members feel passionately about. True grassroots movements yield tremendous power and eventually gain the respect of policymakers because these movements represent opinion leaders, who hold tremendous sway in their communities.

However, grassroots also has a negative side. The same technology that allows individuals to organize and influence democracy permits organizations to engage in astroturfing. Named after the artificial grass that lines many football stadiums, astroturfing is the creation of shadow grassroots campaigns that are fronted by fake organizations, lobbyists, corporations or public relations firms. Given blogs, e-mail alerts and Web sites such as Youtube.com, astroturfing is easy to create. The popularity of this technique has grown considerably over the past decade because political campaigners realize the power behind true grassroots movements:

Astroturfing is used for political purposes more than any other. This is because a real grassroots organization is an extremely powerful political entity. If people care enough about an issue to organize around it, it will hold great political power. It is incredibly difficult to create a real grassroots organization. A large number of people need to passionately care about an issue to organize around it, and even if there are large numbers of people who believe in a certain issue – this does not mean that they will necessarily organize around it. As a result, unethical operators will (on occasion) try to create an illusion of real grassroots support in order to influence people through deception. It is much easier to create a fake organization and try to make it look real than to help nurture and give voice to real opinions from real people.¹¹

¹¹ Paull Young, "Astroturfing: Dark Art of Politics Turned Scourge of the Blogosphere. Blog Campaigning," *Blog Campaigning*, 31 Oct. 2006, retrieved 1 April 2007 from <<http://blogcampaigning.wordpress.com/2006/10/31/astroturfing-dark-art-of-politics-turned-scourge-of-the-blogosphere/>>.

While campaign ethics is always an issue in politics, the reliance on astroturfing presents a red flag for online activism. Just like all other forms of communication, online activism calls for ethical standards and transparency. Astroturfing may manipulate movements and spur people to action in the short-run, but eventually the truth behind the organizers is discovered. This can permanently damage the movement's credibility and destroy goodwill among supporters.

In between these two models is the hothouse approach. The uses of hothouse methods have grown in popularity in the past few years. This method allows organizations to implement grassroots strategies that are carefully crafted around a strategic movement and funded from an outside source. This approach uses a bottom-up approach, but they do not hide behind front organizations and are open about sponsoring organizations. A powerful example of the hothouse model is the Bush/Cheney 2004 Mobilization Plan. While funded by the deep pockets of the Republican Party, this strategy utilized grassroots tactics that engaged and motivated average supporters in letter writing campaigns, house parties, canvassing, rallies, and online activism.

Grasstops forms another method that organizations use to reach policymakers. This is an organized effort to recruit opinion leaders and influential community members to endorse or support campaigns. This method not only forces policymakers to take notice of an issue because important constituents are speaking up, but it also draws the support of average citizens because of the involvement of respected community members. Grasstops efforts often include writing op-eds for the local newspaper or formally endorsing an issue or candidate. Grasstops represents a slightly different strategy because it can be employed by all three other methods as well. Hothouse and grassroots movements can recruit key

individuals to join their movements, and astroturfs may try to add legitimacy to their message by recruiting a respected leader to endorse their campaign.¹²

Who are Online Activists?

Two studies in recent years noticed a growing trend among political online activities. In 2004, the Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet at George Washington University released *Political Influentials Online in the 2004 Presidential Election*. Following the 2006 mid-term election, the Pew Internet and American Life Project released the *Election 2006 Online* report. Both studies found that a new type of Internet user has emerged, showing that there is a special category of Web user engaged in political activities on the Internet. While only consisting of six or seven percent of the total U.S. populations, these individuals spend considerably more time online engaged in political activities than the typical American. However, these users maintain tremendous sway in their communities and social networks and are usually considered influencers, mavens, or opinion leaders. Both studies created profiles of individuals, who did far more than occasionally visit a political Web site or use the Internet to read the news. They found that these groups may be statistically small but are very active citizens both online and offline.

According to *Election 2006 Online*, the use of the Internet to gather political information on campaigns has doubled since the last mid-term election. While television remains the dominant medium for gathering news and information, 15% of Americans used the Internet as their primary news source.¹³ Throughout the past decade, the Internet began to dominate lifestyles in ways that were not possible previously. Given the prevalence of the

¹² Tony Proscio, *When Words Fail: How the Public Interest Becomes Neither Public Nor Interesting*, (The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 2005) retrieved from <http://www.comnetwork.org/downloads/tony_proscio_when_words_fail.pdf> 15 April 2007.

¹³ Lee Rainie and John Corrigan, *Election 2006 Online*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Pew Research Center, 17 Jan. 2006.

World Wide Web in politics, *Election 2006 Online* study created two new definitions of Internet users—the Campaign Internet User and the Online Political Activist. Overall, 31% of Americans fell under the definition of Campaign Internet User. This means that more than 60 million people across the country used the Internet to gather news and information about campaigns or the election and engaged in activities such as e-mail to discuss election topics.

Pew also began tracking users who had a deeper interest in the Web and engaged in creating their own content through the use of discussion boards, blogs, videos, or other social media technologies. They found that 23% of Campaign Internet Users fell into a subgroup known as Online Political Activists (OPA). This group consists approximately, “... of 14 million people who were using the ‘read-write Web’ to contribute to political discussion or activity,”¹⁴ While overall this entire group only represents 7% of all Americans, this is a growing population that continues to generate original Web content that latent Internet users are reading and consuming.

These numbers are consistent with IPDI’s *Political Influentials Online* report in 2004, which defined this population as an Online Political Citizen (OPC). This study found that contrary to popular belief, OPCs were:

...nearly seven times more likely than average citizens to serve as opinion leaders among their friends, relatives and colleagues. OPCs are disproportionately “Influentials,” the Americans who “tell their neighbors what to buy, which politicians to support, and where to vacation...Normally 10% of Americans qualify as Influentials. Our study found that 69% of Online Political Citizens are Influentials.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Rainie, 17.

¹⁵ Joseph Graf and Carol Darr, *Political Influentials Online in the 2004 Presidential Campaign*, Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet, The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management.

While the IPDI report found that men are more likely to fall into this category than women, the Pew report noted that OPAs are equally split between men and women, showing that men and women are equally involved in netroots activities. The two studies agreed on all remaining demographic information, creating a rich profile of the typical OPA. This individual trends toward younger age groups with 30% under the age of 30 and is much more likely to have a college or graduate degree than the general public. Ideologically, OPAs are typically more moderate or liberal, and political affiliation is evenly split three ways with 34% Democrats, 31% Republican and 35% Independent.

In the *2006 Election Online* report, 52% supported Democratic candidates and the study found that liberal Democrats are far more likely to engage in online political activities than their conservative counterparts. According to the report, “Among ideological groups, liberal Democrats were most likely to be an OPA, to get political material from blogs, international news organizations, email listservs and humor or satire sites.”¹⁶ Again, this data supports the IPDI study, which found that although its population was evenly split between parties (36% Democrats and 33% Republicans), 49% of Democrats fell into the OPC category compared to only 29% of Republican participants.

While OPAs are a small part of the total American population, these individuals are influencers and hold tremendous sway in the political process. OPAs are far more likely to consider themselves activists, encourage friends to vote for a candidate, contact elected officials, be involved in their community, donate money to a political or social cause, and volunteer. Essentially, this small segment of the population, which influences everyone else, is easily accessed through the Internet. For example, these individuals are:

¹⁶ Rainie, 22.

...seven more times likely than the general public to have attended political rally, speech or protest in the last two to three months. They are nearly five times more likely to have contacted a politician, three times more likely to have written a letter to the editor, and three times more likely to belong to groups trying to influence public policy. These activities suggest that OPCs are much more heavily involved in politics and civic life than the general public.”¹⁷

The importance of the Internet and online activism only appears to be increasing. As a greater number of Americans start to use broadband and high-speed Internet connections, their access to information only increases. Furthermore, users under the age of 36 typically view the Web differently than older populations and are more likely to integrate Internet resources into everyday life, especially news and information sites. As this population ages, the role of the Internet will continue to increase in importance. Because this group yields so much power in their communities, “...if candidates, parties and issue advocacy groups want to reach the people who reach others, the place to find them is on the Internet. These citizens are active and engaged members of their communities, which suggests that their involvement many not be short-lived.”¹⁸

What is an Influential?

Developed by RoperASW, a market research firm, *The Influentials* revealed more than thirty years of researching this small population that represents only 10% of all Americans.

Described as:

the most socially and politically active Americans—[RoperASW] screen[s] them from the general population on the bass of their involvement in local affairs—the Influentials are active in their communities. They are highly engaged in the workplace and in their personal lives as well. They are interested in many subjects and are connected to many groups. They know how to express themselves and do so. And, because of their position in the community, workplace, and society, their opinions are heard by many people and influence decisions in others’ lives.¹⁹

¹⁷ Graf, 15.

¹⁸ Graf, 35.

¹⁹ Ed Keller and Jon Berry, *The Influentials*, (New York: The Free Press, 2003) 1.

In addition to these wide categories, Influentials are educated, love to read, travel, and adopt new technology. They are focused on faith, family, the home and achieving balance in their lives. While realistic about problems in society, they are pragmatic that the future can be better. Demographically, Influentials are equally split between men and women and fall across the political spectrum. They are likely to be educated with college degrees and maintain a middle-class status. Because they are so networked into their communities and maintain such varied interests, this small segment yields tremendous sway over large populations of the country. RoperASW also found that:

Influentials stood out from the mainstream not only for being forward-thinking on social and political issues: they were forward-thinking, brought an activist approach, were engaged in ideas, were attuned to new developments, and exercised influence virtually across the board.²⁰

By their very nature, Influentials are activists in political and community causes. However, "...Influentials are mavericks. Many are loyal to their political party, but there's a streak of independent mindedness. Large numbers seem to question their parties' stance on issues."²¹ Furthermore, 55% of Influentials are regularly consulted about political views and opinions by friends and family members. They prefer open systems that engage them in decision-making and have a "multiplier effect" when they share their knowledge and information within their sphere of influence. Influentials are self-reliant and problem-solvers. They often organize and start movements to solve community problems and draw from a wide variety of resources to achieve solutions.

This group is important to reach because they are the first to pick up on emerging trends such as cell phone usages or integrating the Internet in their lives. However, they also

²⁰ Keller and Berry, 97.

²¹ Keller and Berry, 119.

question the status quo and decisions made by political parties. They expect to take part in decisions and must be engaged by organizations for their input. Because they wield so much sway and are connected to many people, it is important to identify and engage these individuals in movements. Given their interest in technology and politics, this group is statistically much more involved and drawn to social media and interactive Web tools.

Who drives online activism?

While much of the research on Internet activism relates directly back to political campaigns, social movements and organizations are using these methods to attract supporters, change public policy, and solicit donations. While the range of these organizations covers the ideological spectrum, there are small numbers of individuals driving these activities. Furthermore, there are only a handful of content management programs that can support nationwide activism campaigns, such as Grassroots Multiplier, Get Active, Conviso and Democracy in America. These privately owned companies support many of the organizations operating successful online campaigns. While this limits the range of tactics that organizations can take, it provides a level playing field for any organization willing to invest in these platforms.

Furthermore, individuals working in this field typically are highly in politics or social organizations and trend toward progressive or left ideologies. These individuals are organized and regularly network to share ideas and new technologies. They are often early adopters and use new media applications. Many of them are bloggers in their personal lives and engage in social networking. Hence, while these methods reach out to millions of people, there are a very small number of organizers driving these efforts on both the left and the right.

The Demand for Online Activism

Three studies released in spring 2007 showed that not only is the public engaging in using Web 2.0 and social media, but they are expecting it. As the United States enters the 2008 Presidential race, early data suggests that online, interactive tools are a crucial part of any political or activism campaign. As the media focuses more on the online strategies of the political and activism world, greater numbers of users are visiting these sites and engaging in interactive technology.

Released in March, Burst Media,²² an online media and technology company based in Boston, Massachusetts, conducted a survey among 2,100 likely voters. The report found that 25% believe the Internet is the best place to learn about a candidate's platform. They also found that 30% of voters had visited an activism Web site geared toward specific issues. Among participants reporting an income of \$75,000 or more, this number was higher with 39% having visited an issue advocacy Web site. This shows that the Web is an integral part of the fundraising strategy if affluent populations are more likely to visit Web sites of organizations and movements.

One half of respondents said that they were willing to watch a video on a candidates' Web site of him or her discussing issues from their platform. Men responded significantly higher in this area with 50.1% versus 43.9%, suggesting that there still may be a gender gap with Internet use. Twenty-five percent of respondents were willing to download a podcast from the candidates' Web sites of him or her discussing issues. The 18-34 age group was far more likely than any other age group to utilize this technology.

²² BurstMedia, "Likely Presidential Voters Already Using the Internet," *Online Insights*, 1 March 2007, retrieved from <http://www.burstmedia.com/assets/newsletter/items/2007_03_01.pdf> 15 April 2007.

Opposition Web sites for both political and activist campaigns were visited by almost 30% of respondents. Nearly 60% of this group visited the sites to learn more about the organization's or candidates' positions. Nearly 50% of the respondents visited sites to learn about the opposing Web sites tactics or strategies, and 26% visited with the intention comment or send the organization an e-mail.

Additionally, BurstMedia found that users were more likely to click on an advertisement for an advocacy group than a political campaign. However, once they clicked on a political ad, 60% of this group remained on the site and utilized other features, such as signing up for e-mail alerts, watching a video, e-mailing the candidate, commenting or volunteering.

Among respondents who clicked on advocacy ads, 52% continued to explore the Web site. Of these users, 41% signed an online petition, 35% sent an e-mail to an elected official, 35% e-mailed the organization, 31% signed up for e-mail alerts, 30% watched a video or made a comment, 25% became members, 19% made an online donation, and 12% signed up to volunteer.

Conducted in mid-April, Gomez, Inc., a Web-application management company, commissioned a nationwide phone survey.²³ The survey found that 43% of respondents had already visited or planned to visit the Web site of a presidential candidate's Web site. Furthermore, 58% of this group believed that there is a direct link between the candidates' Web site and the winner of the 2008 general election.

These two studies show that a significant number of voters are viewing the Internet as a critical part of the decision-making process when deciding for whom to cast their ballot,

²³ Gomez, Inc., "Gomez Survey Reveals Significant Voter Intention for Online Donations to 2008 Presidential Election," Press Release 11 April 2007, retrieved from <http://www.gomez.com/company/press_releases/20070411b.html> on 15 April 2007.

support financially, volunteer their time, and research opposing views. These studies show that the Internet can no longer be viewed as an extra tactic to reach younger populations, but a key part of an overall campaign plan. Political campaigns and activist organizations need to establish a Web-strategy in order to find a place in the dialogue of America.

Hitwise, an Internet marketing company, released a study at the Web 2.0 Conference in April 2007 finding that only 20% of people visiting “cybertstops,” popular Web sites such as YouTube, Flickr, and Wikipedia, uploaded content. The remaining 80% passively consumed the media. It is, “estimated that about 1% of a site's visitors are "creatives" -- enthusiastic and frequent uploaders of site content; some 20% are "contributors" who might do some uploading and add comments and tags to a site's content; and the rest of the visitors are just watchers.”²⁴ However, digital gurus believe that the visitor is still more engaged in online formats than when watching television. When a visitor watches a YouTube video, they are watching the video, watching other videos with *similar* content, reading comments, and perhaps leaving comments. Even though only a small percentage of visitors upload content to user-generated Web sites, participants are more engaged than watching television.

Furthermore that type of site continues to increase in popularity. Hitwise also found that Web 2.0 photo sites account for 56% of all photo site traffic on the Internet, and visits to the most popular user-generated Web sites increased by 668% from 2004 to 2006.

These studies show that while a vast majority of people are expecting and visiting interactive Web sites, a small percentage are actively engaged in participating in the dialogue or creation of content. These numbers are consistent with the Pew Internet & American

²⁴ John P. Mello, Jr., “Analyst: Web 2.0 Users Would Rather Watch than Upload,” *TechNews World* 20 April 2007, retrieved from <<http://www.technewsworld.com/rsstory/56984.html>> on 20 April 2007.

Life's *2006 Election Online* report and the Institute of Politics, Democracy and the Internet's *Political Influentials Online in the 2004 Presidential Election*. Collectively, these studies show that there is an overall trend that a small segment of individuals are highly-engaged with Web 2.0 technology and expect to find it on Web sites for political candidates and advocacy groups. While large percentages of the remaining populations are also visiting extremely popular Web sites, such as YouTube, they aren't as engaged in the discussion. This shows that online activism and social media have the ability to reach everyone, but Influentials are far more likely to utilize this resource. It is important for organizations and campaigns to reach this select group and build relationships with them.

Content Analysis of Activism Sites

This project analyzed ten Web sites geared towards political activism. Based on the literature review and study of the field, it was hypothesized that the most popular sites are simple and grassroots driven. There is clear branding, a few key points on the homepage with links for more details. The homepage features a clear call to action, and the site represents a larger movement in which users have established a strong sense of community

Methodology

In order to narrow down the almost infinite number of activist organizations that maintain Web sites, several criteria were created in order to select ten sites to examine:

- 1) Web site must be popular and widely known using Alexa ratings.²⁵
- 2) Web site is clearly partisan towards a certain ideology.
- 3) Web site issues calls to action.
- 4) Web site is interactive.

These criteria produced a list of five progressive or liberal Web sites and five right-wing or conservative Web sites that used online activism. While blogs are a crucial part of both the political landscape and Internet activism, for this project, they were viewed as a tactic of overall activism strategy (i.e. a Web site might also host a blog, but the Web site included more components than just a blog). Furthermore, because Internet activism responds to the constantly-changing field of politics, the Web sites are fluid and dynamic. This makes a complete analysis of each Web site impossible because they are constantly changing.

Therefore, the researcher examined each Web site over the months of March and April

²⁵ *Alexa.com is an independent Web site that monitors overall traffic to all sites on the World Wide Web. They provide rankings of top sites by genre.

2007. The ten Web sites were examined through a matrix of ten different measurements including model used, type of site, design and layout, publicity, community, and history (see Appendix A).

Web Site/Organization	URL	Ideology
Democracy for America	www.democracyforamerica.org	left
Democrats.com	www.democrats.com	left
The Democratic Underground	www.democraticunderground.org	left
Michael Moore	www.michaelmoore.com	left
MoveOn.org	www.MoveOn.org	left
American Conservative Union	www.conservative.org	right
American Family Association	www.afa.net	right
Free Republic	www.freerepublic.com	Right
Media Research Center	www.mediaresarch.org	Right
TownHall	www.TownHall.com	Right

Table 1 Web sites examined

Emergence of Models

Through a detailed analysis of these ten Web sites, several overall trends emerged regarding the type of models used, strategy of the movement and implemented tactics. These Web sites all fell under the three of the four types of activist Web sites—grassroots, hothouse, and grasstops categories.

Grassroots

As stated earlier, grassroots movements begin spontaneously from individuals in the field.

Four of the ten Web sites fell into this category—MoveOn.org and Democracy for America on the left and Free Republic and American Family Association on the right.

Responding to the impeachment hearings of President Clinton, Joan Blades and Wes Boyd created an online petition to, “Censure President Clinton and Move On to Pressing Issues Facing the Nation,”²⁶ and recruited hundreds of thousands of individuals to join. Unlike Free

²⁶ “About Us,” retrieved from <<http://www.moveon.org/about.html>> on 17 March 2007.

Republic, which largely serves the Republican Party and other conservative causes, MoveOn.org formed several political action committees and creates grassroots campaigns based on issues facing the nation.

This model primarily relied on the Internet to organize and recruit members and promote its causes. Unlike the other models, it was not a Web site–focused movement. Instead, it used the World Wide Web as a tool to achieve its objectives rather than its primary strategy. While the movement began before the modern concept of online activism began, it has started to implement these tactics such as e-mail alerts and host videos. Strengths of this model include creating a sense of community, issuing clear calls to action, advocating a wide variety of issues, and beginning as a true grassroots movement. With more than 3.3 million members across the country, MoveOn.org continues to be a major player in the expanding world of online activism.

Democracy for America also developed from a grassroots perspective. Beginning as the online campaign for the Dean for America campaign during the 2004 election, this Web site has attracted tremendous attention and scholars point to this Web site as the preeminent model for online activism. According to the Web site, Democracy for America was:

...inspired by the presidential campaign of Howard Dean, [and] is a political action committee dedicated to supporting fiscally responsible, socially progressive candidates at all levels of government—from school board to the presidency. DFA fights against the influence of the far right-wing and their radical, divisive policies and the selfish special interests that for too long have dominated our politics. DFA has a long-term goal to rebuild the Democratic Party from the bottom up—it will take time, but we must start building a base now for the future.²⁷

While this site continues to serve as a strong rallying point for the left, it has kept to traditional grassroots approaches by primarily serving as an organizing and training resource. The Web site features its own social networking service, DFA Link that allows members to

²⁷ “About DFA,” retrieved from <<http://www.democracyforamerica.com/about>> on 17 March 2007.

create profiles and plan meetings. The focus of this Web site is to organize local action and does not issue calls to action through the homepage, nor does it implement other online tools that are seen with other sites such as MoveOn.org or Democrats.com.

On the conservative side, Free Republic and the American Family Association exist under the grassroots model. Jim Robinson started Freerepublic.com in 1996 as a conservative Internet forum:

As a conservative site, Free Republic is pro-God, pro-life, pro-family, pro-Constitution, pro-Bill of Rights, pro-gun, pro-limited government, pro-private property rights, pro-limited taxes, pro-capitalism, pro-national defense, pro-freedom, and-pro America. We oppose all forms of liberalism, socialism, fascism, pacifism, totalitarianism, anarchism, government enforced atheism, abortionism, feminism, homosexualism, racism, wacko environmentalism, judicial activism, etc. We also oppose the United Nations or any other world government body that may attempt to impose its will or rule over our sovereign nation and sovereign people. We believe in defending our borders, our constitution and our national sovereignty.²⁸

One decade later the Web site is known for its “Freepers,” who lead grassroots campaigns aimed at targets such as Dan Rather’s “Memogate” and the sex scandal of the Clinton Administration. This Web site is a prime example of creating a community from which supporters can obtain an identity. Often attracting members of the far-right, this Web site engages supporters in political debate and discussion as well as organizing local level protests and raising awareness of issues. Attracting more than 200,000 members, Free Republic serves as one the largest movement for conservatives.

The American Family Association is an example of an organization that transferred its activities online. Started in 1977 by Don Wildmon, the organization adapted its grassroots tactics to the Web. Dedicated to promoting, “traditional family values, focusing primarily on the influence of television and other media – including pornography – on our society.”²⁹

²⁸ Jim Robinson, statement, 22 March 2004, retrieved from <<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1103363/posts>> on 17 March 2007.

²⁹ “General Information,” retrieved from <<http://www.afa.net/about.asp>> on 17 March 2007.

This Web site relies on traditional grassroots activities such as letter writing campaigns, protests, boycotts, and contacting elected officials.

Hothouse

Four other Web sites utilized the hothouse model. Similar to nurturing plants in a greenhouse, these movements are carefully fostered and fertilized. This method uses strategic, grassroots tactics to develop a movement and is usually created by an existing entity rather than from individuals. The Democratic Underground, Democrats.com American Conservative Union, and Media Research Center utilize this method. While The Democratic Underground and Democrats.com were both purposely started to promote ideals of the Democratic Party, motivate supporters, and advance issues, the remaining two organizations were founded long before the creation of the Internet. The American Conservative Union and the Media Research Center both began as think tanks, existing to promote conservative agendas. They have since added grassroots activities to their Web sites in order to engage their visitors and harness online activism to advance their goals.

The Democratic Underground started in 2001, “to protest the illegitimate presidency of George W. Bush and to provide a resource for the exchange and dissemination of liberal and progressive ideas. Since then, DU has become one of the premier left-wing Websites on the Internet, publishing original content six days a week, and hosting one of the Web's most active left-wing discussion boards.”³⁰ Often seen as the liberal equivalent of Free Republic, The Democratic Underground is also organized as an Internet forum. Through this Web site, members can discuss topics, share ideas, organize and advocate issues and calls for actions. Attracting more than 100,000 members, Democratic Underground also creates a

³⁰ “About Democratic Underground, LLC,” retrieved from <<http://www.democraticunderground.com/about.html>> 17 March 2007.

sense of community by allowing members to comment on threads, discuss issues, and plan offline events.

Similarly, Democrats.com is also an Internet forum. Billed as the “aggressive progressives,” Democrats.com was launched at the 2000 Democratic National Convention by strategists Bob Fertik and David Lytel. A good example of an existing organization investing in online activism, Democrats.com was started, “...to create the leading news and community Web site for the progressive base of the Democratic Party, in order to lead the fight against the radical right and the Republican Party.”³¹

The American Conservative Union differs slightly from other political movements. It was organized in 1964 as a grassroots movement to promote the Goldwater type of conservatism, has hosted the annual CPAC convention in Washington, D.C. since 1974. With the growth of Internet activism, the ACU added online tools to their Web site to engage their supporters in civic activities. Claiming more than one million members, the ACU has also moved towards a more grassroots approach through the Internet.

Started in 1987 to prove that there is a liberal bias in the mainstream media, the Media Research Center also adapted to online methods in similar ways to the American Conservative Union and the American Family Association. The MRC works, “to set out to prove — through sound scientific research — that liberal bias in the media does exist and undermines traditional American values, but also to neutralize its impact on the American political scene.”³² While the organization was started as a think tank, the MRC started activist techniques to further its mission and motivate supporters to take action.

³¹ “About Democrats.com,” retrieved from <<http://www.democrats.com/about>> 17 March 2004.

³² “About the Media Research Center,” retrieved from <<http://www.mediaresearch.org/about/aboutwelcome.asp>> 17 March 2004.

Grasstops

While many political Web sites including blogs and columnists fall under the grasstops category, MichaelMoore.com was the only Web site analyzed in this project that was an extension of an opinion leader. Developed from his success with *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Michael Moore developed his Web site to motivate fans to support troops serving in Iraq and engage in political activities that he supports. Through his Web site and e-mail alerts, he continues to engage supporters and influence the political scene in America.

Strategies and Tactics

These ten Web sites also fell under two categories of strategies and tactics—traditional grassroots, and cyberactivism. Traditional grassroots takes common offline activities and provides a digital platform to modernize it. Examples are e-mailing letters to the editor, online petitions, and writing letters to elected officials. Cyberactivism utilizes interactive formats to engage supporters. These tactics include virtual protests, online forums or chats, and blogs.

A third model is emerging with the 2008 Presidential Election. This model takes cyberactivism a step further with social media tactics. Seen primarily in the race for the party nominations, these Web sites utilize social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Myspace, Flickr, and LinkedIn; mobile social networking platforms; Youtube videos; blogs, blogrolls and feeds; online organizing tools, social bookmarking Web sites, such as del.icio.us; and podcasts. Since many of these tools were introduced since the 2004 election, their effectiveness needs to be tested. It is likely that after the 2008 Election, many of these methods will be incorporated into the existing Web sites to better engage users interactively.

Traditional Grassroots

Three of the Web sites analyzed were from organizations established long before the

Internet became a part of American lifestyles. These three organizations—The American Family Association, Media Research Center and the American Conservative Union began as traditional grassroots movements inspired influence American culture and politics toward the right. With the advent of the Web, these organizations took their activities online. However, while they have included grassroots opportunities, they have failed to take advantage of social media and cyberactivism. They primarily rely on the Internet to collect e-mail addresses and then spread viral messages about boycotts and protests through e-mail alerts. They've merely updated the way their tactics are conducted rather than engage in the new possibilities that the user-generated Web allows. On the left, MoveOn.org was established in the early days of the Internet and still relies on traditional grassroots approaches to organize, promote, and motivate supporters. Even though they have the capability to engage in more cyberactivism, this movement continues to rely on traditional grassroots methods that were moved online.

Cyberactivism

These organizations used the power of the Internet to drive their movements. Free Republic, Democrats.com, and The Democratic Underground are all user-generated online forums. While they all require membership to join, users are free to post anything that complies with the terms of use rules. These Web sites debate current events, issue calls to action, and organize offline events. While they still sometimes employ traditional grassroots tactics, such as writing elected officials or signing petitions, the Internet is essential for these movements to carry out their missions.

Online Activism Survey

An online survey was also conducted for this project, which investigated the correlations between Web use and political ideology. Approximately 445 people participated in the survey, which was promoted virally through e-mail, social networking Web sites, blogs, and Internet forums. (See Appendix B). The survey questioned participants about the ten Web sites analyzed in this project as well as other information on activism, Web consumption, and political views.

Ideology and Party Affiliation

Of the 445 participants, 41% called themselves conservative, while 30% said that they were liberal and another 20% identified themselves as moderate. An additional 6% said that they were libertarian.

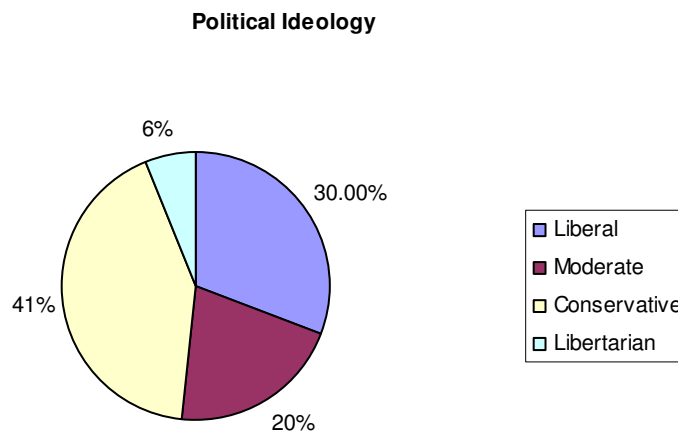


Figure 1

Politically, 47% said that they were Republicans, 37% were Democrats, 4% were Libertarians and 13% claimed some other kind of party affiliation.

Political Affiliation

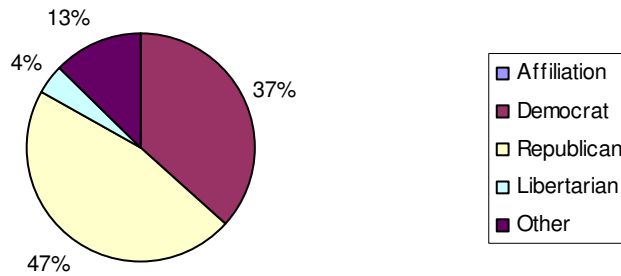


Figure 2

When broken down by political ideology, 86% of liberal respondents considered themselves to be members of the Democratic Party. Conversely, 86% of all conservatives considered themselves to be members of the Republican Party.

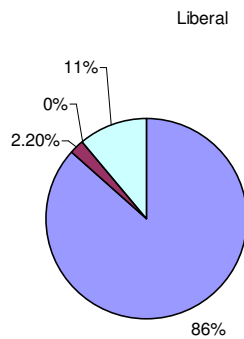


Figure 3

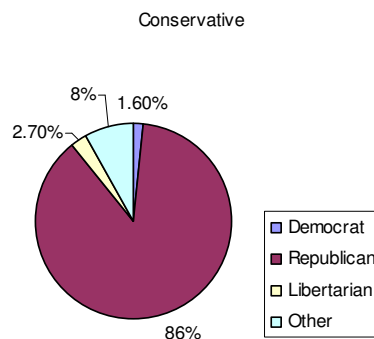


Figure 4

Majorities of respondents identifying themselves as moderate or libertarian also claimed to be members of the Republican and Democratic Parties.

Moderate

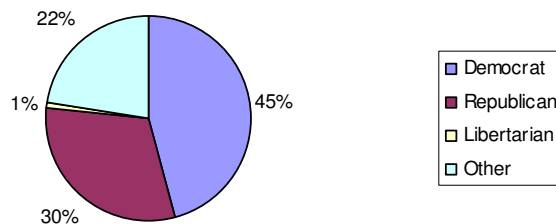


Figure 5

It is interesting to note that of the respondents who were ideologically libertarian, only 37% affiliated themselves with the Libertarian Party. A majority identified as Republicans.

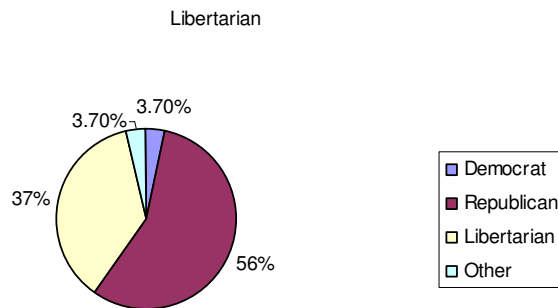


Figure 6

Web Consumption

Respondents were also asked if they visited the same ten Web sites that were studied for content analysis and asked which ones they thought were helpful or worth visiting again. The most popular Web site on the left was MoveOn.org with 26% claiming to have visited at least once in the past year and 12% thought that it was helpful or worth visiting again. The next most popular Web site on the left was The Democratic Underground with 16.1% and then Democrats.com with 11.8%. On the right, Free Republic was favored with 31.4% having visited and 27.3% finding it helpful. This was followed by TownHall.com with 25.9% and 16.5% wanting to visit again.

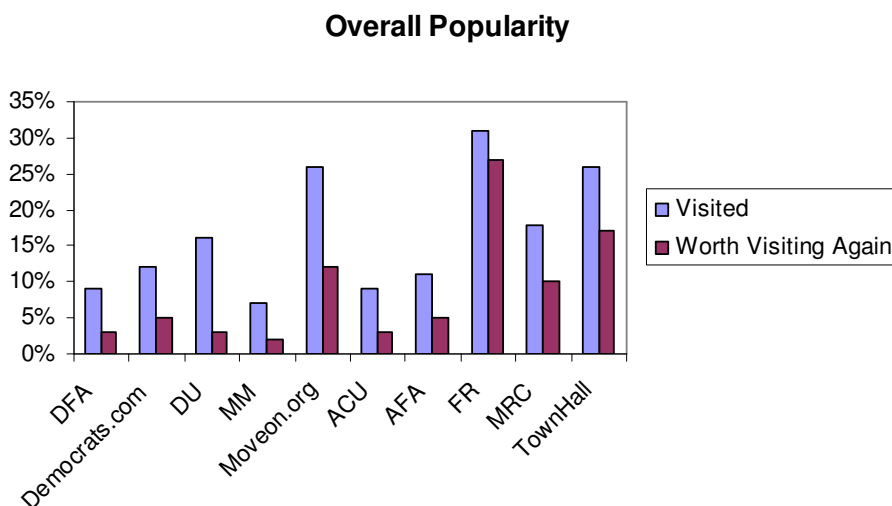


Figure 7

Overall, MoveOn.org, Free Republic, and TownHall were the most popular Web sites, which is not surprising because they receive the most attention from traditional media. When broken down by political ideology, these three Web sites were also the most visited and believed to be worth visiting again. Subsequent research needs to be done to see if these Web sites are the most popular because of media attention or because of other factors. When divided by political ideology, MoveOn.org, Free Republic and TownHall continued to be the favorite sites.

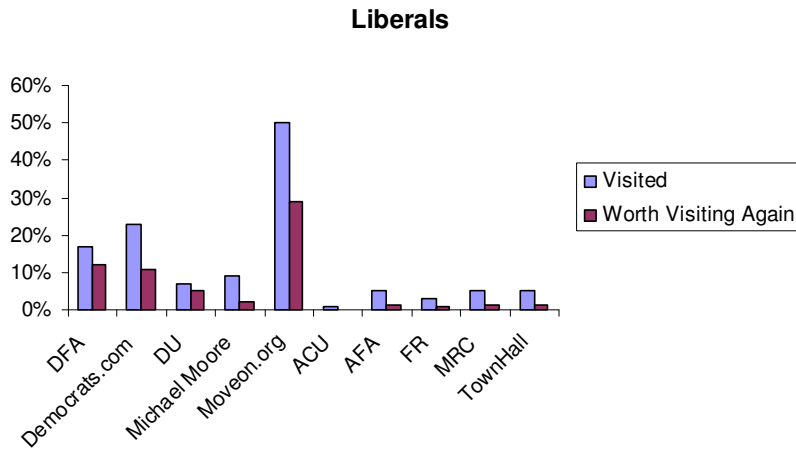


Figure 8

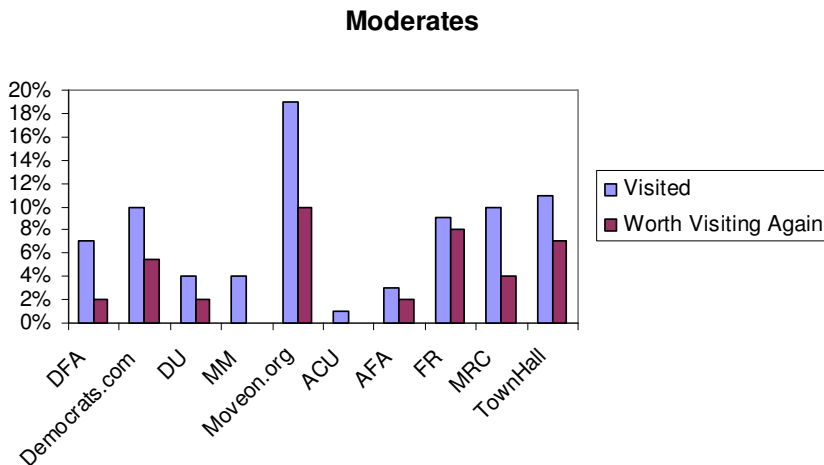


Figure 9

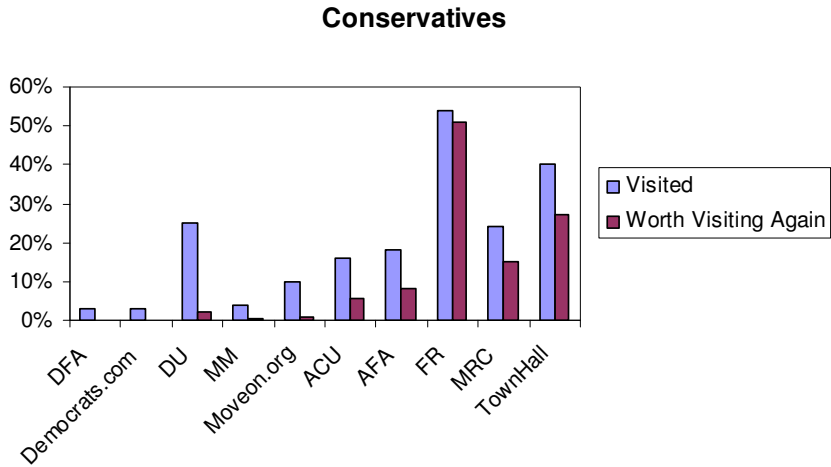


Figure 10

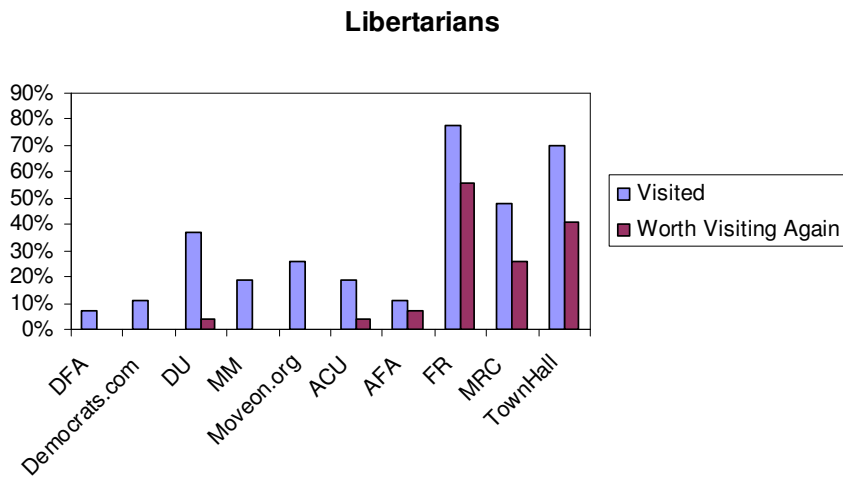


Figure 11

Even though respondents visited Web sites, the value of visiting again was significantly lower across all ideologies. This suggests that Web sites should research to see if they are responding to their audiences appropriately.

Types of Web Sites Preferred

When asked if respondents liked interactive Web sites with bulletin boards, a call to action and the ability to comment, 53.3% somewhat like them and 22% very much liked them. When asked how they felt about more analytical Web sites that contained news stories and blogs, 41.5% claimed “somewhat” and 45.1% responded “very.” Respondents were then

asked what type they preferred, and 59.1% replied a combination of both and 36.1% said more analytical Web sites were their favorite.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents said that they use the Internet for reading the news with 92.1% and research with 83.8%. Other top activities were shopping (66.7%), surfing (60.8), reading blogs (52.6%) and instant messaging (38.5%). Only 38.2% said that they used social networking platforms and only 18.7% had blogs or wikis.

Respondents Receiving E-mail Alerts

A majority of respondents receive e-mail alerts from some type of organization—67% of liberals, 57% of moderates, and 53% of conservatives, but only 33% of libertarians claim to receive an e-mail alert from some type of social cause or movement.

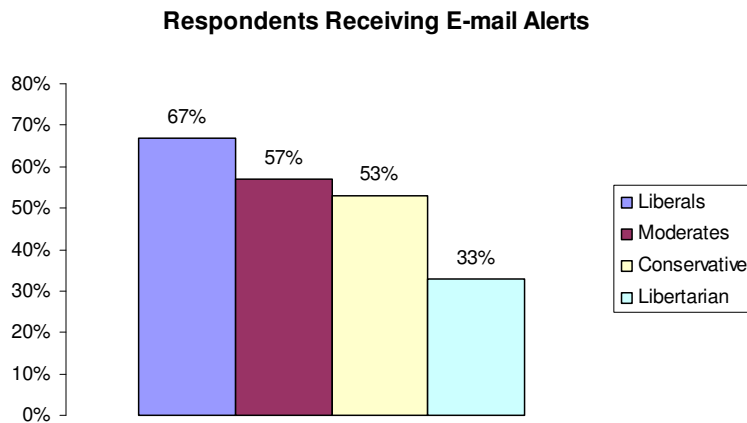


Figure 12

When divided by ideological preference, more conservatives and libertarians received alerts from the Republican Party, while moderates and liberals received alerts from the Democratic Party.

Ideology and Party E-mail Alerts

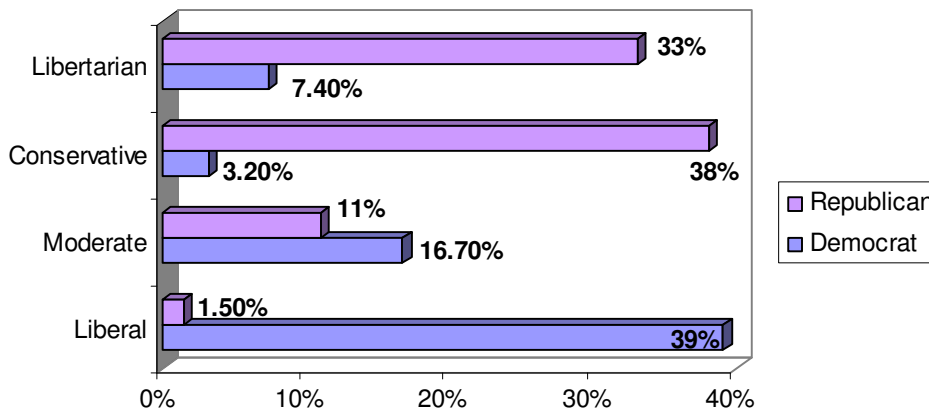


Figure 13

Web Consumption

Not surprisingly, high numbers across the board used the Internet for reading the news, 81% liberals, 78.8% moderates, 79% conservatives, and 92% libertarian. Similarly, overwhelming percentages used the Internet for research: 79.5% liberal, 74% moderate, 67% conservative and 85.1% libertarian. About half of all respondents used the Web for shopping with 57% of conservatives, 56% of libertarians and 50% of liberals and moderates. All other factors widely differed. Respondents were asked if they used certain social media technologies to discuss politics or social issues. Responses varied by ideology rather than type of issue, meaning that a person was just as likely to use a type of technology to discuss a political issue as they were to discuss a social issue.

New Media Use

A majority believe that online activism does help bring about change for social causes although and slightly more believe that it helps political issues, parties and campaigns. 71.2% had used e-mail to discuss a social cause or movement, and slightly fewer used e-mail to discuss a political topic (68.3%). While 40.6% used blogs to post about social causes,

38.9% used them for political purposes. Participants did use instant messaging to discuss politics with 23.8% versus 19% for social causes. 27.1% used social networking sites for social causes and slightly fewer, 24.3% used them for political purposes. 12% used videos to discuss social causes and 10% used them for political discussion. Very few used wikis at all with only 3.9% for social movements and 2.2% for politics.

With the exception of e-mail, libertarians reflected a much higher use of social media than other ideologies. According to survey results, this group was much more likely to use technology to discuss political or social issues than other ideologies, especially with more obscure mediums, such as wikis. These results show that it would benefit advocacy organization to know the ideology of their supporters and reach out to them according to the technologies that they prefer. Results also show that with the exception of blogging, conservatives, liberals and moderates use technology at the same rates to discuss politics or social issues. Conservatives appear to be much more likely to blog than liberals, with 40-41% compared to 30-31%, which is consistent with general perceptions of the blogosphere.

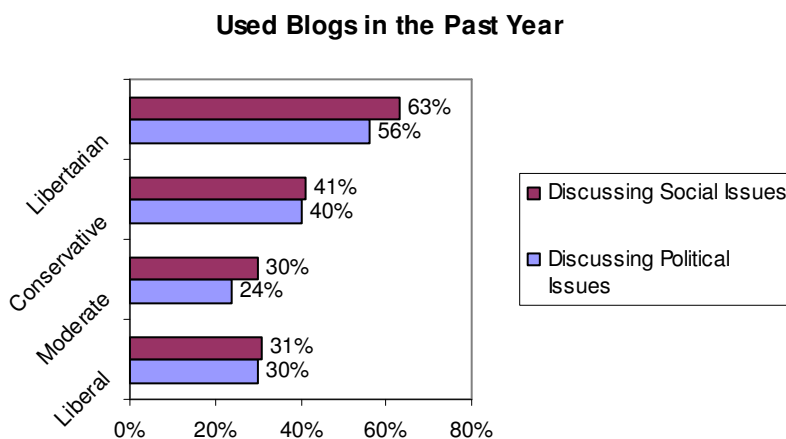


Figure 14

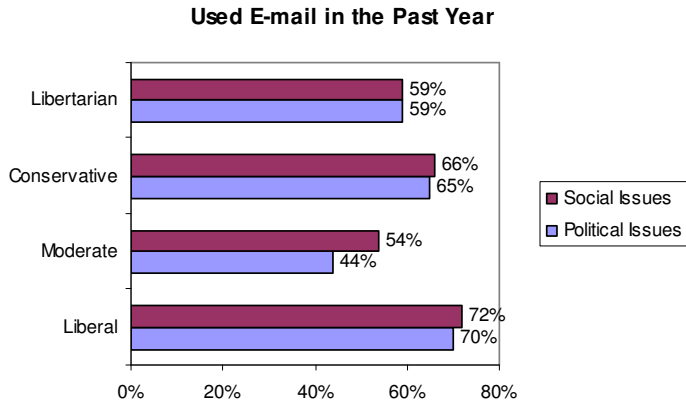


Figure 15

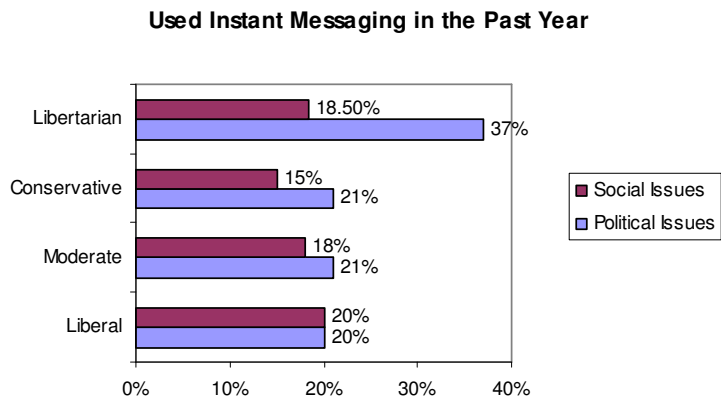


Figure 16

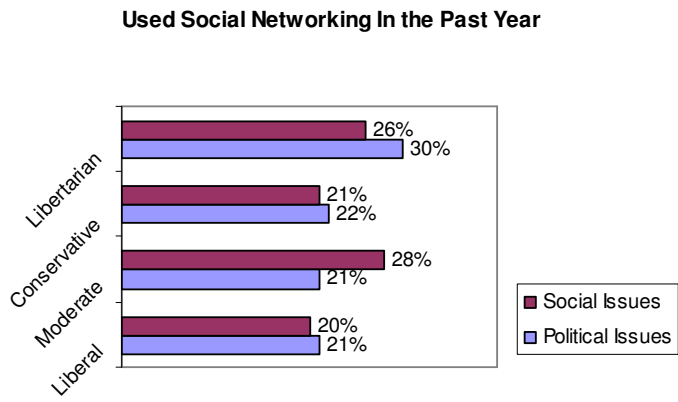


Figure 17

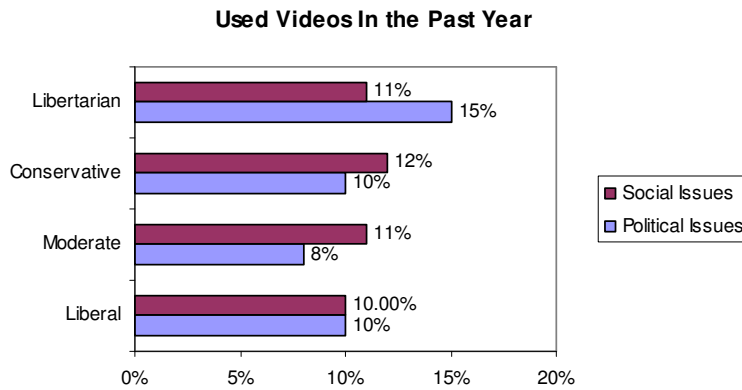


Figure 18

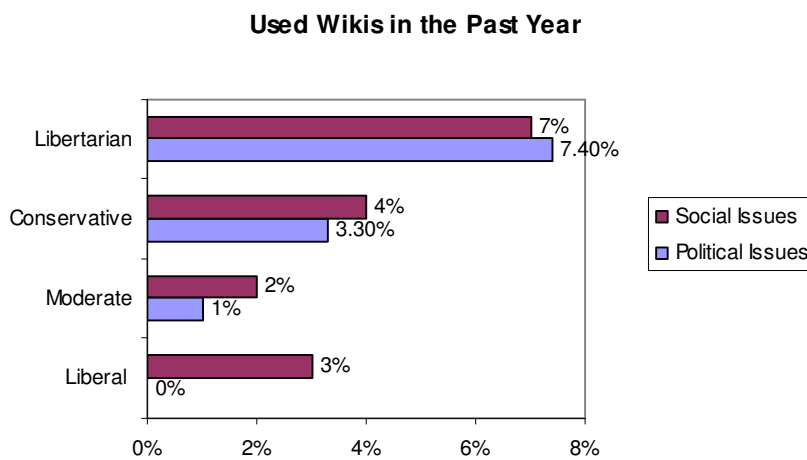


Figure 19

Political and Civic Involvement

While 43.3 % did not consider themselves to be activists, survey respondents were involved civically. 69.5% signed a petition, and 53.9% emailed an elected official within the past year. 41.3% had boycotted a product or service. Calling an elected official, participating in a rally or protest, and writing a letter to the editor of the paper were each completed by about 20% of the participants.

A majority also receive e-mail alerts with 63.6% from a variety of organizations although 59.4% do not receive alerts from political parties. Of the 40.6% that do receive alerts from parties, 56.6% were from Republicans. However, given the sample heavily favored Republicans, this is expected. Almost all participants are registered to vote in the

United States with 97% of the sample, and 88.4% said that they voted in the 2006 Election.

One hundred percent said that they expect to vote in the 2008 Presidential Election.

Similar to other polls, a majority of respondents had signed an online or offline petition.

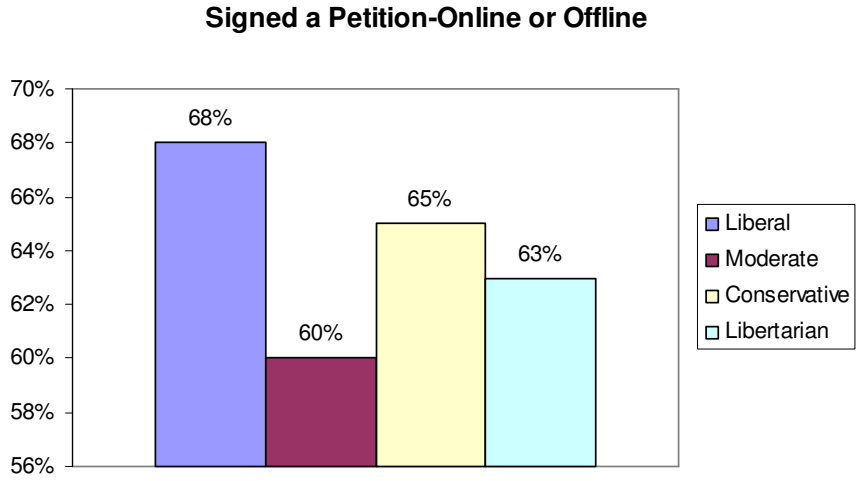


Figure 20

A large number of respondents also e-mailed an elected official in the past year.

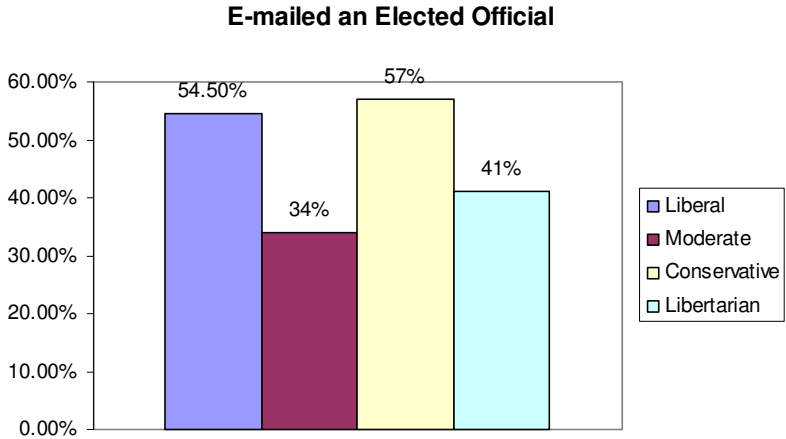


Figure 21

All subsequent actions that were surveyed produces differing responses when cross tabulated with political ideology.

Called an Elected Official

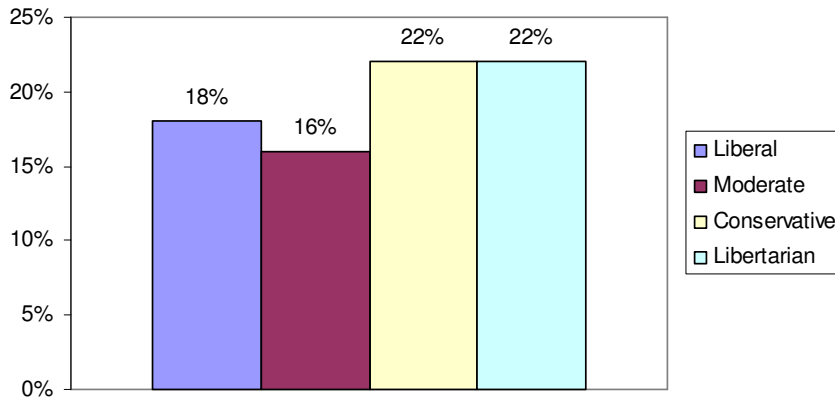


Figure 22

Participated in a Protest--Real or Virtual

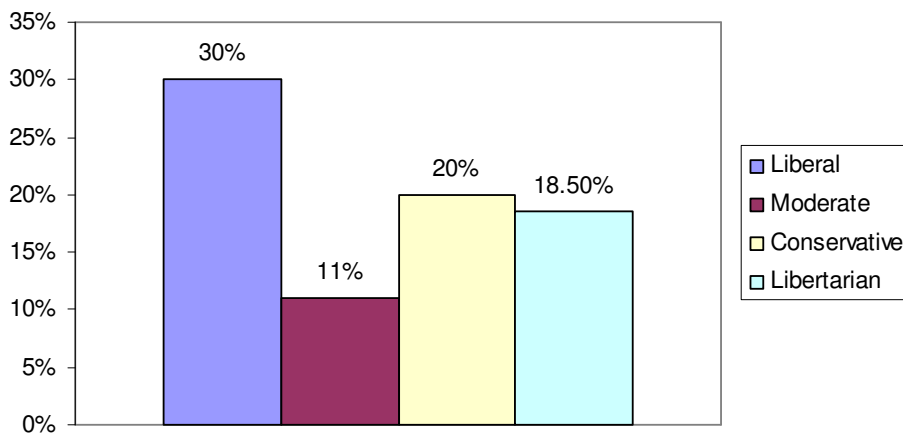


Figure 23

Participated in a Rally

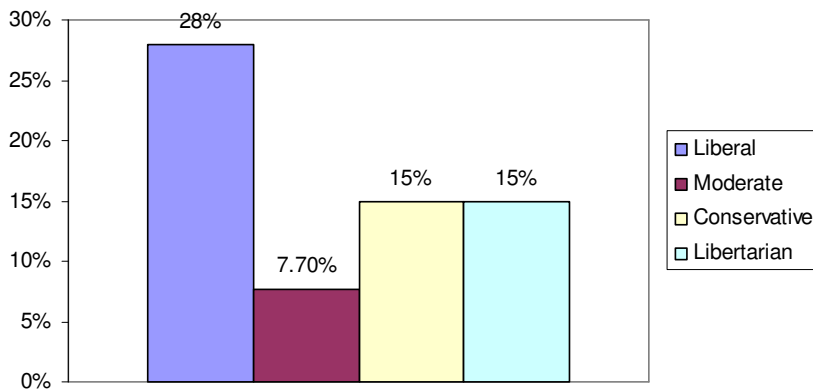


Figure 24

Boycotted a Product, Service or Company

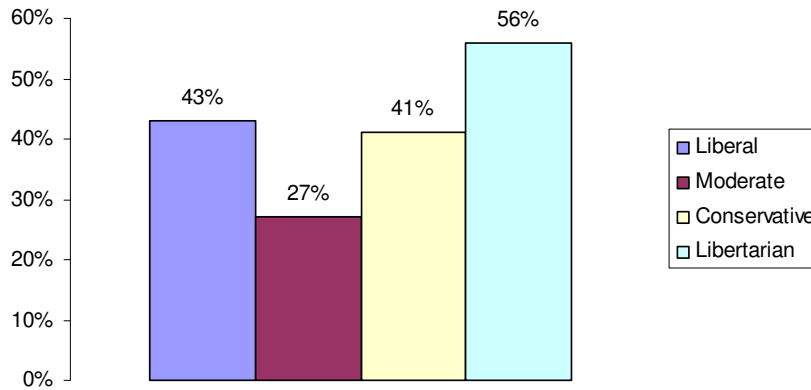


Figure 25

Demographics

60.3% of survey respondents were female and 24.4% were between the ages of 25-29. This is likely explained because the survey was distributed by a female graduate student in this age bracket. Approximately 50% of the respondents were under the age of thirty, which might account for the heavier use of social media in comparison to the overall population.

Additionally, this sample was extremely educated with 48.3% holding a college degree and 33.8% with a graduate degree or higher. An overwhelming majority of all political ideologies said that they had voted in the November 2006 Election—78% of liberals, 75% of conservatives, 85% of libertarians, and 69% of moderates. Percentages were higher when respondents were asked if they planned to vote in the 2008 Presidential Election—88% of liberals, 86% of moderates, 82% of conservatives, and 93% of libertarians.

The Current Debate

While this project was conducted, a debate emerged in the blogosphere about the lack of interactive, Web 2.0 strategies on the right. While this debate focused on the Republican Party's failure to incorporate these emerging tactics into campaign strategies, the situations that were highlighted were consistent with the research findings of this project.

The issue emerged early in April after 2008 presidential campaigns had to file fundraising reports for the first quarter of 2007 with the Federal Election Commission. Reports revealed that the Democrats were far more successful at online fundraising than Republicans. A *Washington Post* article on April 5 attributed this to the use of new media strategies on the left:

Collectively, the Democratic candidates raised nearly \$80 million in the first quarter, outpacing the Republican field for the first time since the Federal Election Commission began closely tracking such figures in the 1970s. Republicans took in just over \$50 million in that same time frame, suggesting that a restive electorate and creative Internet strategies have fundamentally shifted the fundraising landscape for both parties.³³

Pundits and advisors on the right and left immediately weighed in on the blogosphere. According to Matt Stoller of MyDD.com, a leading left-wing blogger, believes that the reason is the right's refusal to open up and lose control of messages:

...the Internet's rise in politics is part of a larger shift in the nature of our political system that is radically reshaping both parties. The Democratic Party is "ahead" not in the sense that its have learned the new tools, but because the party is becoming much more open and aligned around left-wing ideology that is ascendant in America. The Republican Party will go through this shift as well, maybe in two years, maybe in

³³ Anne E. Kornblut and Matthew Mosk, "Obama's Campaign Takes in \$25 Million," *The Washington Post*, 5 April 2007, sec: A01.

³⁴ Matt Stoller, "Where are the Republicans.com," *MyDD*, 8 April 2007, retrieved 15 April 2007 from <<http://www.mydd.com/story/2007/4/8/1243/35299>>.

four, or six, but it will catch up with modern America. But it's going to be a very different structure with different leaders than it is today...³⁴

Todd Zeigler of *The Bivings Report*, the official blog of The Bivings Group, an Internet strategy agency wrote:

The problem is bigger than that. It is one of mindset. At this point, the majority of Republican campaigns just don't have the stomach to run the kind of social campaigns being deployed by Barack Obama and John Edwards. The desire for complete control is still too strong. So you end up not blogging and with fake social tools like McCainSpace.³⁵

There is some agreement that the issue of conducting a controlled top-down campaign is the main problem with right-wing politics and activism. Given the power of the Republican party and loyalty that members feel towards it, few conservatives have broken with the party and struck out on their own. However, this brings up the question why the Democratic Party did not face this same problem. *The Hotline* blog at the *National Journal* offers a possible explanation:

The DNC did not dream up *Atrios*, and Howard Dean did not create *Daily Kos*. While the netroots strongly identify themselves with Dems, they are a separate movement formed after years of frustration over Clinton's impeachment, Gore's loss in FL, and the Iraq War. The Blogometer argues that the GOP is not going to see a potent online force until it spends a similar journey through the wilderness.³⁶

This explanation fits with the general findings of this project. The most lasting and effective netroots movements were created organically by individuals who used this new medium to further their beliefs. This idea supports the theory of "underdog innovator," that the political party that is out of power will turn to alternative mediums to mobilize their supporters and spread their message. This pattern follows the success of the conservative movement in the

³⁵ Todd Zeigler, "Matt Stoller: Where are the Republicans.com," *The Bivings Report* on 8 April 2007, retrieved 15 April 2007 from <<http://www.thebivingsreport.com/2007/matt-stoller-where-are-republicanscom/>>.

³⁶ The Hotline, "4/10:It's Gonna Get Worse for GOP Before It Gets Better," *The National Journal*, 4 April 2007, retrieved 15 April 2007 from <http://blogometer.nationaljournal.com/archives/2007/04/410_its_gonna_g.html/>.

early 1990s when it capitalized on talk radio, the most interactive medium at the time. To date, the right has so dominated talk radio that most attempts on the left, such as AirAmerica, have struggled.

The underdog innovator idea is also present in United Kingdom politics. In the U.K., the Conservative Party or Tories are much more advanced than the Labour Party with Web 2.0 and social media. Conservative Party leader, David Cameron recently launched Webcameron.com, a video blog or vlog that promotes his political messages through Internet videos. The Tories have also seen more success with online grassroots efforts such as ConservativeHome.com and 18DoughtyStreet.com, an unofficial Conservative Party Web television site that broadcasts five hours of new material everyday. These efforts show that similar to old-fashioned grassroots efforts, supporters of minority parties are more willing to embrace new technology and create buzz through social media.

The Democratic Party appears willing to tap into existing movements because they saw how successful the Dean campaign was. Given the limited resources of the campaign, managers turned to the burgeoning field of netroots to promote Howard Dean. The fact that the campaign created more buzz than the candidate struck a chord with the left and in subsequent elections they have been more willing to engage in open-system campaigns and integrate Web 2.0 and social media into their strategies. The greatest success of the Dean campaign may have been reaching out and cultivating relationships with a new breed of supporters through the Internet. Once Howard Dean took over leadership of the Democratic National Committee, the party was able to tap into this network and use these resources for the party's gain. Therefore, does a conservative netroots movement completely independent of the Republican Party need to emerge before politicians on the right can engage these supporters? The success of MoveOn.org and even the whistleblower successes

of Free Republic point toward this direction. However, Michael Turk, writer of the *Kung Fu Quip* blog and former Bush/Cheney 2004 online manager, believes that it is possible to build the system and then recruit supporters:

My point is that Republicans will, without question come to a point where they need effective infrastructure to either a) head off a loss or b) regain power. We can build an infrastructure for the audience that we have now, or the audience we want (and know we will eventually have). If we prepare our operation for a different audience, when we need it, it will be available. If not, we must spend even longer in the wilderness because we have to build it first.³⁷

However, Turk also points out another fundamental difference in the operations of the two parties. The Democrats have embraced open-systems and word-of-mouth marketing while the Republicans rely on advertising-based campaigns. He explains,

The GOP is about advertising, the Democrats are about marketing—and there is a serious and significant difference. I fundamentally believe that word-of-mouth marketing now drives the vast majority of our culture—from which movies we watch to what cars we drive, and which candidates we elect. The Internet is the focal point of word-of-mouth marketing in the world, and the Republicans don't get that.³⁸

This crucial point also picks up on a debate the larger communications and marketing world is currently discussing. In 2006 Edelman Public Relations started devoting more resources towards online ventures, signaling to the public relations world that open-ended, social media campaigns were the wave of the future:

Also known as social media, the digital Web 2.0 movement - which was once a new frontier in the [marketing communication] industry - has become both a rallying cry for PR pros emboldened by a flagging traditional ad model, and an increasingly common tool in today's PR professional's arsenal. While appraising and evaluating social media is often complex, it has impacted the profession in three specific ways: it has added a new medium and hundreds of thousands of new outlets PR pros must ponder when pitching; it has provided companies and their agencies an inexpensive way to push their unfiltered message out into the increasingly cluttered media space

³⁷ Michael Turk, "The GOP Online Part II," *Kung Fu Quip*, 7 April 2007 retrieved 19 April 2007 from <<http://www.kungfuquip.com/archives/678>>.

³⁸ Turk, 9 April 2007.

online; and it has opened up a heretofore unimagined conduit of conversation between corporation and customer.³⁹

Given that this is the issue that the communications profession is currently debating, it is not surprising that the political and activist worlds are facing this challenge. The use of social media and Web 2.0 tactics on the right-wing of the political spectrum may not be solved by the Republican Party building a platform that embraces these perspectives or the creation of a completely organic grassroots movement. The issue of the political right's use of online tactics may simply be the best example of a changing paradigm in the world of communications. However, as election cycles pass, this is will be a growing issue, as the blog,

Lunchbucket Conservative notes,

Republicans lost their way somewhere along the road and with it went the connection they made with people who felt Washington and government had turned a tin ear to their concerns. Now, as a new generation of the electorate comes of age in a socially networked world, Republicans are at the risk of becoming irrelevant and—more importantly—unconnected.⁴⁰

However at this juncture, the Democrats and left-wing of the political spectrum may be in the best position in the entire communications and political world to deal with this fundamental change. As Joe Trippi expressed in the Washington Post, “We built it and they didn’t. Now it’s paying big dividends.”⁴¹

³⁹ Keith O’Brien, “A Digital State of Play,” *PR Week*, 23 April 2007.

⁴⁰ Lunchbucket Conservative, “Dems’ Net Fundraising: A new virus or just the common cold for GOPers,” *Lunchbucket Conservative*, 11 April 2007, <<http://lunchbucketconservative.com/2007/04/11/dems-net-fundraising-a-new-virus-or-just-the-common-cold/>>, retrieved 20 April 2007.

⁴¹ Anne E. Kornblut, and Matthew Mosk, “Obama’s Campaign Takes in \$25 Million,” *The Washington Post*, 5 April 2007, sec: A01.

Best Practices of Online Activism

Analysis of these ten Web sites revealed five best practices that benefit online activist Web sites, which in turn help political parties and social causes. While the most powerful movements are spontaneously built from a true grassroots movement, it is possible for existing organizations to push organic movements forward. As the Internet becomes more powerful in the American political process, online activism is likely to play an integral role in most campaigns.

1. Never engage in astroturf tactics.

Not only is astroturfing unethical, it is an easy way to destroy the reputation and credibility of any movement or organization. While it is easy to plant videos on Youtube.com or create a fake petition, it is just as easy for bloggers or citizen journalists to check up on the movement and discover that it is funded by a political organization, corporation, lobbyist, or communications firm. Entire Web sites exist to catch astroturfing on the Web. This is likely to play a big part in the upcoming 2008 election, but it is advisable for organizations to stay away from this technique. Some guerrilla activism may be questionable, but astroturfing is clearly unethical. All organizations wishing to enact real policy changes or elect candidates should try to maintain ethical and transparent tactics. No matter how well astroturf activities are planned, there is an army of bloggers or opposing activists working to catch this type of activity. These tactics violate most codes of ethics for communications and marketing professions and should be avoided.

2. Localize messages and opportunities to create opportunities for buy-ins.

Web sites that provide ways for supporters to localize their message are far more successful at recruiting and retaining members and pushing their messages forward. While

the Web is extremely helpful in engaging users, organizing, research, and messaging, online activists are still people and enjoy seeing issues that they believe in promoted at the local level. Democracy for America's DFALink is a smart idea for sustaining long-term membership at their site. The DFA also offers further training for their supporters to push them into the next level of activism. Free Republic has also experienced success by hosting state forums for members to discuss issues pertaining to their state, build camaraderie, and host local events and meetings. If a message can be tailored to the local level, supporters are far more likely to join the organization and support it.

3. Create a sense of community.

Grassroots modeled movements typically create a strong sense of community on their Web site. The key to this is making the Web site interactive and allowing members to engage in discussion. The Democratic Underground, Democrats.com and Free Republic accomplish this naturally due to their format as an Internet forum. These three Web sites have not only created a strong identity that new members can adopt, but have also created their own jargon. When individuals join these sites, they find like-minded people, build friendships and develop a strong sense of loyalty to the movement. TownHall.com has added this feature by hosting blogs on the Web site, showing that it is possible to create a community feel even after the movement has started. Joe Trippi explained this, "If you pay attention to the community that you are building, then the community will step up and do the work."⁴²

4. Develop online to offline opportunities

Online activism is primarily successful in organizing, recruiting, informing and persuading members to engage in activities. While some activities are geared towards the

⁴² Joe Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not be Televised* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004). 87

Web, such as signing a petition or e-mailing an elected official, organizations that have both online and offline activities are the most successful. It is this combination of engaging members online and recruiting them to take part in “real life” activities that builds the most beneficial online activist.

5. Encourage relationships.

Lasting movements are built on strong relationships. Individuals must feel connected to something that is bigger than they are. While movements often center around key figures, successful movements not only encourage a sense of community, but also the ability to create relationships, either virtually or in real life. Supporters should be encouraged to form relationships with each other, in addition to building close ties and loyalty to the movement or organization. Messages need to be real, heartfelt, and genuine. Supporters should never feel as though they are a number or a lowly foot soldier in a vast army. A good example of this is to contrast the Dean Model and the Bush/Cheney Mobilization Plan. The Dean Model established relationships with smaller target groups. Correspondence was written by real individuals and supporters were engaged through open communications, such as a blog. Members were motivated to not only campaign for their candidate, but to also volunteer and participate in community programs. The Bush/Cheney Plan, however, used grassroots tactics but through top-down communication. Individuals were organized, but no sense of community was achieved and the movement fell apart soon after the election, whereas the Dean campaign reorganized into Democracy for America.

5. Target the influencers.

At this point, online activism only attracts six to seven percent of Americans. However, these people are overwhelmingly the influencers, early adopters, and opinion leaders. While organizations may try to target everyone who falls into their target

demographic, realistically, they should only target this small population. By narrowing their focus towards recruiting these individuals, organizations can effectively implement localized programs that generate support and action for nationwide causes. However, organizations need to reach these key individuals to rally groups in the field and motivate them to join the organization and get involved.

General Findings from Research

The initial search for Web sites yielded several results. Primarily, there are considerably more liberal or progressive Web sites that fit the cyberactivism model. However, is this because netroots fits progressive ideology more, or has the right simply not used this available strategy?

Initial findings of conservative Web sites found that overall more conservative Web sites exist on the Internet than progressive ones, which is consistent with the political ideology of all Web users. However, conservative Web sites trend toward blogs, columns, or alternative media outlets, and do not fit the activism model. Furthermore, leading conservative Web sites are typically driven by personality. For example, Rushlimbaugh.com, AnnCoulter.com, Michellemalkin.com, and Instapundit.com are among the most popular Web sites on the right-end of the political spectrum. However, none of these are interactive beyond posting comments to blogs, nor do they issue calls to action.

Progressive Web sites appear to be more action-oriented. They engage the user in an issue and list possible ways for that individual to get involved. Conservative Web sites largely debate the topic or issue opinions, but offer no opportunity to get involved. Web sites geared towards conservatives mostly highlight news stories, engage in scholarly debate about issues or advocate a soapbox stance. Progressive sites, on the other hand, define a problem, list ways to solve it or build awareness, and often provide the tools to take action.

Progressive Web sites and movements are doing a tremendously better job at connecting with their base and motivating people to action. Not only are the Web sites better designed with modern graphics, white space, easier navigation, online tools, ability to localize, and immediate calls to action, but they also cover broader areas. Web sites such as

MoveOn.org and Democracy for America cover a range of topics that appeal to progressives. Right-wing or conservative sites appeal to much more splintered demographics. These Web sites, while receiving the highest traffic for conservative causes, are extensions of organizations that existed long before the creation of the World Wide Web. They have somewhat adjusted and added online tools, but have not reorganized with a grassroots focus that MoveOn.org, Democracy for America, and Democrats.com all have. The American Family Association only appeals to conservative Christians concerned with protecting Judeo-Christian values in America, while the Media Research Center focuses on holding traditional media outlets accountable. The American Conservative Union operates more as a political action committee and hosts the well-known CPAC conference every year. TownHall.com promotes an array of conservative voices and opinions, but does little to create community or motivate supporters to action. None of these organizations enjoy the widespread appeal and zealous support that DFA and MoveOn.org hold among the political left.

Conclusion

Why does an ideological gap exist in online activism? No single reason explains this gap, but rather a combination of several situations that include the changing role of communications and the rapid change in technology over the past decade. On a larger scale, there is a paradigm shift currently going in communications. Traditional communications models are being challenged, and new ways to communication are possible and affordable. This change particularly affects political communication, which has relied on broadcast and mass communication for the past forty years. Not only is it possible to achieve efficient and affordable one-on-one, one-to-mass, mass-to-one and mass-to-mass communication, but audiences now expect it. Online activists are typically much younger and educated than the average American. These users are very Web savvy and wary of manufactured political messages.

Communicators and the mainstream media are slow to respond to this change. Not only is this a difficult time in the field, but given the huge dichotomy between senior citizens, the most likely age group to vote, and Millennials, a growing voting bloc, most campaigns struggle to reach everyone. Since seniors are dependable voters, and consume broadcast media, it is understandable that campaigns are hesitant to try new methods. Furthermore, because technology is changing so quickly, it is difficult to judge what method will stick and become an integral technology and what is simply a fad.

Another explanation may be a difference in structure in the right and the left. The conservative right largely identifies with the Republican Party, which operates from a rigid hierarchy. While referencing blogs and the larger blogosphere, Jacobs, "...argues on the one hand that left-wing blogs tend to emphasize discussions on an array of issues, providing

detailed content and community comment. On the other hand right-wing blogs tend to observe the chain of command in the Republican hierarchy. They practice the Web equivalent of the bullet vote by directing their Web traffic to a single story. This magnifies their impact in the mainstream media. The right-wing blogosphere ‘stays more on message,’ and has easier access to larger media outlets than the lefty-blogosphere.”⁴³ The right continues to be highly structured and organized. It is understandable that splinter, grassroots organizations would not be welcomed in the disciplined culture of the conservative movement and Republican Party.

This difference can be also been seen regarding the issue of control between the two movements. While the left has embraced grassroots movements such as MoveOn.org and Truemajority.com, the right has often fought public battles with members of its own movement. Organizations and Web sites that differ from the keywords and talking points are often disciplined and debated among party members. The culture of the right does not allow for members to internally discuss issues and matters and expects members to accept official messages, whereas the left operates differently. By their very nature as a big-tent movement, the left accepts a myriad of voices and opinions. The culture of this movement allows for disagreement and discussion. The left is willing to lose control of a message and allow its members to spread it throughout their individual spheres of influence. The right, however, expects all members to stay on message and use specific talking points that the organization approves.

Furthermore, initial research shows that Internet consumption across the political spectrum goes beyond an ideological divide. There is preliminary evidence that users on the

⁴³ David Jacobs, “Internet Activism and the Democratic Emergency in the U.S.,” *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*. 5 (2005): 66-77.

left simply utilize the Web differently than on the right. While this area has not been researched, according to Michael Turk, former Bush/Cheney 2004 online manager at the Republican National Committee:

We did some cursory work on this at the RNC and Bush Campaign and saw indications that there are specific differences. For instance, our examination of the partisan make-up of Web sites revealed that Democrats are more likely to spend time on sites like Yahoo Greetings and MSN Greetings while few Republicans visited such sites. Republicans tended toward sites with more of an emphasis on individual activity (e-commerce, investing, news). There was much less GOP traffic to “social” or “community” sites.⁴⁴

Thus, preliminary research shows that right-wing users are much more individualistic, whereas left-wing or progressive are much more collective. They tend to use the Web for organizing and socializing implementing bottom-up approaches. The right, on the other hand, is very centrally organized by the Republican Party. They still operate on a top-down model with official talking points being picked up by prominent bloggers and alternative news sites. The Democratic Party does a better job of representing a variety of voices within the party. They have been able to capitalize on these independent Web sites and integrate them into officially sanctioned activities. Part of this strategy has been to let go of controlling the message. While these independent sites largely stay on message from the parties, the Democratic Party no longer has control over what users are saying. Sometimes they agree and stay on message, and sometimes they don't. However, Democrats allow a variety of voices to be issued. The Republican Party still attempts to rigidly control messages. They fail utilize grassroots tactics that require a free-flow of information from the base. While this

⁴⁴ Michael Turk, e-mail, 13 April 2007.

ensures that all messages do stay on target, they are quickly losing ground as the political communication paradigm shifts towards a more democratized model. As user-generated content becomes more important in social media, the right must change communication goals and operations and allow a collection of voices to be heard.

Given the increasing rates of blogging and social networking, the left approaches this problem better. The issue of message control is a hot issue in the larger field of communications. Due to the power of politics in modern society, control is a subject that all political parties and movements must address. It is possible that traditional views of controlling the message are no longer valid in our media saturated environment. This is a difficult view especially in the political field where news changes by the minute. Campaign personnel are only just beginning to see the full ramifications of not only a 24/7 news cycle, but a system where all archives, records, previous statements, photos and information are instantly accessible to anyone with a connection to the Web.

On the other hand, the explanation may be far simpler. Online activism came of age in an era when the right controlled much of the political power in the United States. In the 2004 election cycle, the conservatives had a clear candidate with President Bush and did not need to utilize grassroots efforts to campaign. Because President Bush already drew massive attention from mainstream media, traditional campaign tactics sufficed. This underdog mentality seems to have helped mobilize and organize progressives and the Democratic Party, and their efforts appear successful with the results of the 2006 election. Given the growing importance of the Web in politics, the left side of the political spectrum is much more organized and willing to embrace online activism to help win elections. The right is now realizing the importance and attempting to quickly mobilize as the 2008 primary season approaches. However, given the best practices and previous successes of the ten profiled

organizations, evidence shows that these movements need to be true grassroots efforts.

Organized astroturf or hothouse approaches are not perceived to be genuine by the American people and are less likely to employ sustained success, as the Bush/Cheney Mobilization Plan of 2004 shows.

Furthermore, campaigns and organizations need to do a better job of understanding the profile of an online activist. At this stage of the integration of the Web with everyday life, no campaign is going to successfully reach everyone. This may be possible in the future as the wall between the virtual world and the real world disappears, the digital divide is eliminated, and the average American becomes a more sophisticated user. Until that point, campaigns need to be targeted towards the Influentials. While this is only roughly 10% of the population, this small group influences everyone else. The online activist is key to successful viral or word-of-mouth marketing. Campaigns need to cater towards these individuals or risk making the situation worse.

Recommendations and Future Research

- Fully integrate traditional communications functions with Web 2.0. Bring the traditional marketing and public relations teams together with the Web and grassroots teams to improve relations with bloggers, activists and media and make out all tactics seamless.
- The Internet needs to be viewed as a strategy in the larger campaign not as an additional tactic.
- Movements must begin as true grassroots or organic efforts—the public sees through top-down, “hothouse” efforts and astroturf methods. Larger parties should identify these movements and seek to build relationships with the leaders in order to tap into these resources. Instead of trying to quiet them or bring them under the

direction and control of campaign managers, political parties should work with them, share resources, and build mutually beneficial relationships.

- Organizations can no longer control the message. Realize this and plan ahead for contingencies. Plans must be fluid and organic. In an era of interactive communication, scripted messages are no longer successful. Web consumers are extremely savvy and sense disingenuous, fake, or staged messages. Bloggers especially focus on these moments and will jump on opportunities to expose the opposition.
- Political parties and organizations need to engage in online activism if they are not already. As subsequent generations reaching voting age, they are geared towards fully integrated strategies. While reliance on broadcast campaigns may work for several more election cycles, younger people are coming of age and starting to vote in greater numbers. Voter turnout for the 18-29 group increased by 9% in 2004 with 20.1 million young people casting ballots compared to 15.9 million in 2000. The 2006 mid-term election also saw an increase in younger voters. It is estimated that 10 million voted in 2006 compared to the 8 million in 2002. If this trend continues, organizations must get their names out and start reaching out to the youth demographic.
- There needs to be further research into the idea that the right and left ends of the political spectrum consume the Internet differently. If this is true, than these voters need to be reached differently and campaigns tailored toward them. It also warrants further research into moderates, “swing voters,” and people who identify themselves as “middle-of the-road.”

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Appendix A

Content Analysis

	Measurements	Democracy for America	
Model Used	grassroots/grasstops/astroturf	grassroots	
Type of site	Activism/Analytical/Hybrid	Activism	
Founded	Year		2004
Tactics	traditional/online/hybrid	hybrid	
Web site design/layout			
Ease of navigation	easy, moderate, difficult	easy	
Branding	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	somewhat	
Prominence of activism links	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	somewhat	
Availability of online tools	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	very	
Blogs	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	very	
banners/badges	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	not at all	
blogroll	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	not at all	
Interactive	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	very	
Strong graphics	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	somewhat	
About page	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	very	
Activism			
Clear call to action	not at all, not really somewhat, very	not really	
Online tools	not at all, not really somewhat, very	somewhat	
Frequency of updates	frequency	every other day	
Frequency of e-mail alerts	number		0
Ability to take immediate action	not at all, not really somewhat, very	not really	
Ease of joining	easy, moderate, difficult	moderate	
Costs to join	amount		0
How much information required	easy, moderate, difficult	moderate	
Number of opportunities to get involved	number	5 offline/0 online	
Local opportunities	not at all, not really somewhat, very	very	
Community			
Shared definitions	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	somewhat	
Jargon/Vernacular	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	not really	
Number of Members	number	n/a	
Identity as a movement	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	very--progressive	
Defined ideology	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	very--progressive	
Online to offline actions	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	very	
Negotiations (about internal issues)	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	not at all	
Personal Gain	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	very	
Opposition			
Is opposition clearly identified?	not at all, not really, somewhat, very	not really	

American Conservative Union	American Family Association	Free Republic	Media Research Center
grasstops Hybrid	grassroots Activism	grassroots Hybrid	grasstops Activism
	1964	1977	1987
online	grassroots	Hybrid	grassroots
easy very very very not at all somewhat not at all somewhat very very	moderate somewhat somewhat very not at all not at all not at all somewhat somewhat very	easy not really somewhat very not at all very very somewhat somewhat	difficult somewhat somewhat very somewhat not at all not at all somewhat not really somewhat
very very somewhat somewhat very easy	very very very very difficult	very not really hourly 0 n/a very very	somewhat very very very very difficult
	0	0	0
easy 10+ online not at all	easy 10+ somewhat	10+ very	difficult 10+ online not at all
not really not really 1 million+ very very somewhat not really somewhat	somewhat not really n/a very very somewhat not at all somewhat	very very 200,000+ very very very very very very	not really not really n/a not really very not at all not at all not at all
not really	very	very	very

Town Hall

grasstops
Hybrid

1995

online

Difficult
somewhat-banners have
logos
not really
very
somewhat
not at all
somewhat
very
not really
somewhat

very
very
daily

0

very
easy

0

difficult
10 online/0 offline
somewhat

somewhat
not really
n/a 3,546 bloggers
very--conservative
very
not really
not really
not really

not really

Appendix B

Survey questionnaire and results (see attached pages).